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affects**

Pitcher, B.

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Belonging to a Different Landscape: Repurposing Nationalist Affects

Abstract

This is an article about the embodied, sensual experience of rural landscape as a site where racialized feelings of national belonging get produced. Largely impervious to criticism and reformation by 'thin' legal-political versions of cosmopolitan citizenship, it is my suggestion that this racialized belonging is best confronted through the recognition and appreciation of precisely what makes it so compelling. Through an engagement with the theorization of affect in the work of Divya Praful Tolia-Kelly, I consider the resources immanent to the perception of landscapes of national belonging that might be repurposed to unravel that belonging from within. I suggest that forms of environmental consciousness can unpick the mutually reinforcing relationships between nature and nation, opening up opportunities for thinking identity and belonging in different ways, and allowing rural landscapes to become more hospitable places.

Keywords: affect, belonging, environment, landscape, nationalism, nature, race

Belonging to a Different Landscape: Repurposing Nationalist Affects

In this wish the author will be joined by persons of pure taste throughout the whole island, who, by their visits (often repeated) to the Lakes in the North of England, testify that they deem the district a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy. (Wordsworth 1835: 88)

William Wordsworth's injunction to aesthetic and emotional engagement with England's Lake District aligns the ostensibly subjective criteria of taste with a communitarian logic of national identity. Population and place are co-constitutive, and the senses of the perceiving subject complete the feedback loop that confirms the fit between the two. The appeal to subjectivity serves to naturalize a nationalized landscape, providing a felt confirmation of belonging to it. The neatness of this manoeuvre belies Wordsworth's skilful marshalling of taste to serve a very particular – and novel – vision of the nation. Structuring the sensual pleasure of the Romantic subject in the lakeland landscape are of course all the elements that appear to be absent from it: the society, politics and economy of industrial capitalism are the hidden prerequisites of Wordsworth's 'tourist gaze' (Urry and Larsen 2012). By the early nineteenth century the Lake District's apparent wilderness has already been profoundly shaped by the 'social violence' and 'class robbery' of parliamentary enclosure acts which had systematically privatised hitherto common land (Thompson 1963: 237-8). Nationalized landscapes have an astonishing capacity to absorb ongoing histories of conflict and struggle over access and ownership. While today Lake District real estate is traded in a global market – consider the recent alleged \$2.9m bid by 'Indian Billionaire' Lakshmi Mittal to purchase one of its northerly mountains (Rapoza 2014) – its significance as a symbol and guarantee of national identity is undiminished (indeed, it is surely the Lake District's status as part of a national brand that partly determines its market value). The argument I will set out here is concerned with the persistence of this association between rural landscape and national identity, and the hold that nationalism continues to have over the ways in which we tend to imagine and relate to landscape. It seeks to get to grips with the sensual, embodied and material constitution of nationalist subjectivity that Wordsworth describes, and will suggest that the feelings that appear to play such a significant role in the production and reinforcement of national belonging may also provide a key to opening up alternative kinds of belonging that undermine and subvert it.

Sociologically-informed work on nationalism has been long engaged in the project of unpicking its illicit essentialist appeals 'whether ethnic, civic or banal' (Malešević 2006: 228). The task of revealing nationalism's political character necessitates critical engagements beyond the realm of explicitly

political actors, for national identity and belonging is also embedded in the texture of 'everyday life' (Skey 2011). Nationalism animates the way we think about and relate to our material world, and by securing the rural landscapes we dwell in as national property it plays a part in generating racially exclusive cultures of belonging. As Sarah Neal has suggested, non-human elements are important in the construction of a 'primordial ethnicity' that is experienced corporeally as it is 'filtered through ideas of soil, land, generations [and] nature' (Neal 2009: 68). Rather than deny or refuse the experience of these sensual connections with rural landscape on the grounds that they reinforce racialized nationalism, it will be my suggestion that it is possible to displace nationalism's hold over material landscapes by considering alternative modalities of landscape belonging that build on precisely the same bodily experiences. By taking these feelings seriously without conceding them to nationalism, I want to avoid two conceptual manoeuvres: first, those that leave nationalism essentially untouched by rewriting national belonging in multicultural terms (see Fortier 2008; Pitcher 2009); second, positions that, by counterposing as an alternative to the nation more expansive pluralistic forms of global or transnational identification, effectively reinforce nationalism's legitimate purview over specific landscapes (see Cheah et al. 1998; Calhoun 2008). Rather than leaving nationalism's jurisdictional claims uncontested and investing our critical energies in less territorially fixed configurations of belonging, I will suggest that it is through embodied connections to landscape that the 'entrenched cartographies of the nation' (Whatmore 2002: 146) can be pulled apart and reworked. Like other recent attempts to avoid polarizing the (national) particular and the (cosmopolitan) universal, this is an argument for attachment not detachment (Tabak 2015), for more belonging, not less belonging.

In making this argument, I would like to foreground the significance to sociology of recent work on the subject of race that has come out of the field of cultural geography, part of a diversity of approaches that can be glossed (though not without contention) as 'non-representational theory' (Thrift 2008). Such work has been informed by the broad theoretical shift in social theory that attempt to displace the human subject in favour of more relational and heterogeneous understandings of the social. To develop a fuller understanding of what race is and what it does, it is necessary to recognize how the thinking subject is but one element of a wider collection of qualitatively different entities – from nonhuman animals to objects to environments, tools and technologies, amongst other things – that come into relationships with one another. To this combination of human and extra-human actants, work on race in cultural geography has also focused attention onto aspects of the human that lie outside or at the margins of language and thought – on the register of 'affect' – which have tended to be partitioned as off-limits in theoretical traditions that read the world as a text.

These two aspects – acknowledgement of the extra-human and the affective – are present, for example, in Deleuzian accounts of the 'molecularity of space', where racial distinction comes into being through precognitive 'gestures, gaits [and] excitements', of 'gut feelings and imaginations' in the 'atmosphere' of a classroom (Saldanha 2010 294) or a tourist beach

(Saldanha 2007). Race becomes an event on the streets of a postindustrial town 'as swirling affects, memories and images stick to particular assemblages of skin, car, and road' (Swanton 2010: 448). The unsaid looms large in multicultural encounters comprised of 'gestures, fleeting glances, strained silences and the discreet performances of othering that have come to mark difference' (Nayak 2011: 554). Such ways of giving attention to the 'instinctive' or 'precognitive' in 'the flicker of an eyelid, the hint of a smell, the trace of an utterance' (Amin 2012: 93) do not invalidate more sturdy, regular or permanent analytics of racial formation – a familiar repertoire of discourses and representations – for all these accounts are attentive to the afterlife of racializing affects resulting in patterns, repetitions, consistencies, stabilizations and sedimentations. Yet at the same time they rightly insist on the critical affordances of the affective register, and its capacity to 'address those emotive forces that otherwise escape, evade, and exceed, or are belittled by, academic accountings' (Tolia-Kelly and Crang 2010: 2309) in attempts to 'better cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds' (Lorimer 2005: 83).

I begin my argument with an interpretation of the work of the cultural geographer Divya Praful Tolia-Kelly, who provides a very useful framework for thinking about the role that the affective register can play in disrupting culturally nationalist discourses of belonging by triggering imaginative connections with landscapes experienced at other times and in other places. Considering the significance of sensual, embodied engagements in practices of belonging to the English landscape, I elaborate a reading of the affective realm as a crucial terrain for both the reinforcement and contestation of cultural nationalism. Instead of simply rejecting exclusionary sentiments of nationalist belonging as illicit and unacceptable, I will indicate the possibility of alternative frameworks of belonging that feed off precisely the same affective resources that give nationalism life. Acknowledging the significance of the idea of nature in consolidating English national imaginaries, I will go on to argue that growing environmental concerns and investments provide opportunities to engage with the material landscape through divergent scales, rhythms and temporalities that can be productive of very different forms of landscape belonging.

Race and the English landscape

While it is common to characterize contemporary English urban life in multicultural terms, there is still a tendency to think of English rural landscapes as places that are culturally uniform and historically white. A rural-urban binary builds a contrast 'between the imagined white homogeneity of the countryside and the imagined multi-Othered heterogeneity of the city' (Neal 2002: 447). While in truth the countryside's apparent homogeneity conceals complex histories of racial diversity,¹ the imagined whiteness of the countryside consolidates racially exclusive ideas about identity and belonging,

¹ Consider, for example, the mapping of 'Black presences and the legacies of slavery and colonialism in rural Britain' by Susanne Seymour described at <<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/isos/research/rural-legacies.aspx>>.

playing into entrenched primordial fantasies about the landscape of England as a place to which white English people have some kind of claim to priority or origin (Neal 2009: 62-6). Even white European migrant workers come to be marginalized in rural settings as 'not quite white' (Moore 2013). Though racialized minorities may possess formal citizenship through birth or naturalization, an informal realm of social or cultural citizenship founded on entitlements to and identifications with the rural landscape can thus remain firmly out of reach (Neal 2002, 2009; Neal and Agyeman 2006b). As Divya Praful Tolia-Kelly suggests, these forms of citizenship can accordingly be understood in ecological terms:

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 (Tolia-Kelly 2010: 4).

This process of embodied connection and identification can be described as constituting 'affective economies of citizenship', securing the value and representativeness of English landscapes, and working to 'imbue those able to properly enjoy them with the virtues of citizenship' (Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010: 2316; see also Neal 2009: 16). There is, from this perspective, a special role for affect that is constitutive of both the quality and qualities of the national landscape *and* of the belongingness of the subject who is at home within it. As is suggested in my reading of the quotation from Wordsworth that opens this article, affects play a consolidating role, reinforcing the fit between English subject and English landscape:

The appreciation and appropriation of English landscapes are continually figured through a notion of the 'appropriate' culture of engagement with the landscape. These are in the forms of practices, visualisations, and a sense of the 'proper' aesthetics and the 'appropriate' nature of an 'English' body that belongs to that culture (Tolia-Kelly 2006a: 342).

The experience of becoming an embodied English subject is thus 'understood as a process that always comes into being in conjunction with the landscape around us' (Macpherson 2010: 4; Waterson 2013: 70). A phenomenological orientation to the co-constitution of subject and place requires us to 'think plurally about the capacities for affecting and being affected, and to engage with the notion that various individual capacities are differently forged, restrained, trained and embodied' (Tolia-Kelly 2006b: 216). There is accordingly a racialized dimension to the contemporary dynamics of 'elective belonging' in which subjects prioritize the physical over the social markers of landscape as they make a 'strong claim on place' in a 'fusion of aesthetic, emotional and instrumental attachment' (Savage 2010: 118, 126). On the face of it, an understanding of affect in the constitution of ecological citizenship, informed by this acknowledgement of the differential 'power geometries' (213) of race and culture appears to describe a quite insurmountable problem for racialized minorities whose claims on the culture of Englishness is already placed in question. If English identity and belonging are predicated on

affective capacities towards the English landscape, then surely affect can only bolster minorities' sense of estrangement from it?² Their unbelonging is produced not only through racially exclusive discourses of landscape, race and nation, but also through their own failure to identify with landscapes that are described in those terms. How do you feel at home in a place that constitutes you as a stranger to it?

While recognizing the significance of this way in which estrangement compounds rejection, Tolia-Kelly's work also gives us a means of thinking about affect as a way to break out of its double-bind. In an article exploring British Asian descriptions of landscape, Tolia-Kelly acknowledges but departs from earlier and perhaps expected accounts of landscape and racialized minorities, such as those of the black photographer Ingrid Pollard, with her focus 'on alienation, exclusion, and discordance' (Tolia-Kelly 2006a: 345). In Tolia-Kelly's reading, the English landscape becomes a site of identification, pleasure and desire. In their engagement with the aesthetics of the countryside, first generation British Asian subjects do not transcend discourses of the nation – the framework of cultural nationalism remains a conduit of identity and belonging – but this is a cultural nationalism that speaks to the experience of diaspora. The English landscape resonates with other landscapes, 'of rural life in India, East Africa, and Bangladesh' (345). Landscapes evoke diasporic memories, and in doing so express forms of 'British Asian Englishness' (356) that are simultaneously mobile, transnational and at home. For Tolia-Kelly, an understanding of the materiality of landscape is key to its ability to simultaneously engender these otherwise incommensurable discourses of belonging: in one of her examples, it is in a water pump, 'a single material object' that 'the aesthetics of colonial India and British citizenship' are intertwined (346). In another, 'English rain' makes 'English mud' for the Governor General of colonial India. Rather than underwrite the specificity of a particular location, landscape's materiality is instead what facilitates an imaginative transfer across time and space: material 'textures' (343) cut across nations and continents, triggering past memories of landscape and place. The sensual experience of the material landscape – involving landscape's non-discursive, affective qualities – is precisely what allows for this process of 'translation' across different national contexts (see also Askins 2006: 165; Risbeth and Powell 2013: 169). It is the affective that provides a point of articulation that permits the formation of plural forms of identity and belonging. It is the affective that allows for the productive 'confusion' between different national landscapes that Tolia-Kelly reads as a form of diasporic citizenship. If different cultural nationalisms operate at the level of discourse, demanding that particular landscapes belong to and are defined by their single national context, the affects of landscape have the capacity to shift between or meld together these national discourses, in accordance with the life experience of the diasporic subject.

² Consider, for example, the account of this black British migrant to the English countryside: 'The countryside is not for Black people, it's almost as though they [White people] make us feel it's not our place, but theirs. We are not considered natives to the countryside.' (in Bhopal, 2014: 500).

This account of two different registers of landscape – the discursive and the affective – is an argument for their interrelationship, not their autonomy. It is not as if one register is truer or more meaningful than the other (affect should not be confused with the real on account of its nonrepresentability), it is rather that they work in different ways. Both are indexes of the material landscape, but neither are identical to it. In Tolia-Kelly's work the affective register is shown to play an important role in displacing 'a rooted and singular English landscape iconography' (Tolia-Kelly 2006a: 356) in favour of transnational landscapes of belonging. While there is no complete autonomy between affect and discourse, there remains a gap between the two. Discourses of cultural nationalism make a proprietorial claim on the particular configurations of climate, inorganic matter, plant and animal life that comprise the material components of a particular landscape, but the affective resonances of that same material landscape may gesture in an alternative direction. They reveal that there is more than one way of understanding, inhabiting, and belonging to it. As sensual elements that escape and exceed the authorization of culturally nationalist discourses, affects 'interweave' space and time, collapsing together 'specific [national] locations' such that 'the soil of Kenya' may become 'a memory of Uganda' (Tolia-Kelly 2010: 30, 77). Affects awaken 'body-memories' as 'shards of *other* environments' are collaged together (79). They articulate a triadic relationship between 'past lived environments, imagined and ideal ones, and present lived landscapes' (79).³

Tolia-Kelly's insights into the role of affect – and specifically the gap I have just elaborated between the affective and the discursive – provide us with an interesting way of returning to the embodied English subject, racialized as white: s/he who is at home in the English landscape, and whose 'appropriate' body facilitates an 'appropriate' culture of engagement with that landscape.⁴ If the affects of the material landscape can, as has just been suggested, become a way of switching between or combining together discrete discourses of national landscape, then we no longer need to describe the working of affect on this subject as necessarily consolidating an existing discourse of English national belonging. Because affects have the potential to make imaginative connections to other places, it would be incorrect to reduce our understanding of landscape affects to a single nationalist discourse as if they were the natural and inevitable product of it, even if that is exactly what they appear to be. Crucially, the point here is that the affects of the material landscape should never be thought of as identical to any particular discourse of landscape. While affects can be, and are, 'captured' in discourses of the nation, they retain a capacity to be 'captured' differently.

³ Affect here is an element of the 'radical openness' ascribed to a 'lived' or 'third' space in Lefebvrian readings of rural space (see discussion in Neal and Agyeman 2006a: 4-5).

⁴ It is worth noting here that the 'white English subject' I evoke here is intended to describe a dominant racialized association between whiteness, rurality and Englishness. This is an abstraction that of course underplays the differences that may persist within – or indeed be antagonistic towards the very idea of – the 'white English subject', including different and competing visions of the English landscape and English culture.

Beyond the rejection of racialized belonging

I accordingly want to suggest that it is insufficient to reject outright this subject's attachments to the English landscape. Those of us interested in a politics that challenges and contests racialized nationalism may be drawn to strategies that debunk and disprove it, intent on championing multicultural versions of national belonging, but these strategies do little to displace landscape affects that work to consolidate racially homogeneous conceptions of national identity. They do not work on frequently unconscious and unacknowledged capacities for and dispositions to connection, attachment and belonging to the 'national' landscape. Formal assertions of plural citizenship rights operate on a different register to, and cannot necessarily engage, an affective citizenship economy. Moreover, I want to suggest that the practice of straightforwardly rejecting racialized attachments to landscape is to reject too much. For we are not only rejecting an exclusionary, racialized identity discourse, but also, implicitly, the affective charge that lends it meaning and legitimacy, but which is not identical to it. As the 'legitimate' subject of the English nation inhabits the English rural landscape, walking through its 'pleasant pastures' and 'upon England's mountains green' (Blake 1958), the affects of this sensual and embodied engagement touch and reinforce them in ways that simply cannot be countered, undone or disproven by a critique that inhabits a discursive register. Footsteps on dewy grass; cold moorland air drawn deep into the lungs; the touch of chalk, clay and flint, or sandstone or granite; the moulding scents of deciduous leaf litter: all of this can trigger a sense of belonging that is not easily disproven by counter-assertions of multicultural citizenship, which tend still to index an urban, rather than rural, politics of identity. While Tolia-Kelly's example indicates that non-white subjects are not debarred from their own affective engagements with landscape, such practices do little to displace the symbolic proprietorship of white subjects over the national space. The affects of rural landscape cannot be displaced, because the belonging that they play a part in constituting is as meaningful as any other. Indeed, it might be said that they play a crucial role in consolidating a felt-but-never-spoken racialized sense of priority to the nation, cementing feelings of 'primordial ethnicity' (Neal 2009: 62-6) that describe a rootedness that remains intact below the obligatory screed of pluralism that the right calls 'political correctness'. But if we can't reject this sensual site of nationalist meaning, if it's just not possible to demand that a white English subject stops feeling the sense of belonging they palpably feel because we disprove of the racial politics that gets caught up with it, that doesn't mean that we just have to leave it alone. While we can't contest the affective experience, we can think about alternative practices involving alternative discursive frameworks that might give different meaning to that experience.

This is in certain respects just what Blake does in the verse from which I have just quoted. The preface to 'Milton' (better known in Hubert Parry's arrangement as the song 'Jerusalem') cultivates a sensuously embodied engagement with landscape, foregrounding a possessive relationship to it ('our clouded hills'). Yet it does this at the same time as elaborating a reading of Christian history that radically reworks the practice of nationalist

identification in a way that resonates closely with the example of Tolia-Kelly's diasporic subjects. In Blake's poem, the temporalities of past, present and future are collapsed together. While the fact of Jesus's embodied presence remains an apocryphal speculation ('And did those feet in ancient time / Walk upon England's mountains green?'), the future promise of radical social transformation is manifested through the actions of the poem's speaking subject and her commitments to following those footsteps and building 'Jerusalem, / In England's green & pleasant Land' (Blake 1958). Just as British Asian Englishness was made through the imaginative conjunction of different landscapes as conjured by a multivalent affect, so does a qualitatively new sense of the nation come about by bringing together England and Jerusalem in the embodied experience of the rural landscape. Whether we interpret Blake's words as a nationalistic reinforcement of the idea of 'God's own country' or as a harnessing of religious feeling to the projects of socialism (for both are of course possible, and common), affects have a significant role in evoking encounters with rural landscape that open that landscape up to other landscapes beyond the nation-state.⁵ Blake is by no means the only poet who does this; indeed, it is worth recognizing how frequently otherwise canonically 'English' literary engagements with landscape have this geographical doubleness that is produced through an embodied engagement with rural landscape. When the young Wordsworth of *The Prelude* is terrified by a cliff in the lake district that appears to come to life and follow him as he rows away from it (Wordsworth n.d., lines 357-400), this is a sensibility that has been filtered through a romantic attachment to central-European landscape.⁶ The landscape that makes Auden 'homesick' in 'In praise of limestone' is likewise both Southern Europe and Northern England (Auden 1979). In the poetic imagination, landscapes frequently evoke other landscapes, gesturing always beyond themselves.

What is modelled in all these examples, then, is the sense in which the affects of specific material landscapes fuel an imaginative connection to other places. The sensual, embodied experience of landscape does not necessarily

⁵ This interpretation of Blake's poem does not mitigate problems that remain with its claiming as part of a left-political imaginary (most obviously, the sense in which it describes an attachment to a Christian heritage), but it does give us a way of thinking about experiential attachments to the idea of the English rural landscape that do not necessarily need to be understood as a capitulation to a narrow and conservative version of nationalism. Indeed, it might give us a different way of thinking through the complex and ambivalent relationship between nationalism and the left (cf. Gilroy 1993: 14-15), and perhaps too the role that nostalgia for the nation-state may have to play in this (Bonnett 2010).

⁶ The Romantic sublime is itself of course a theory of affect. Contemplating 'that cluster of Mountains at the Head of Windermere', Wordsworth describes landscape affects that are external to, and yet which leave their mark on, a discursive register: 'Power awakens the sublime [...] when it rouses us to a sympathetic energy & calls upon the mind to grasp at something towards which it can make approaches but which it is incapable of attaining—yet to that it participates force which is acting upon it' (Wordsworth 2004: 83-4).

engender 'affective economies of citizenship' (Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010: 2316) that serve to reinforce narrow discourses of cultural nationalism, even for those who are deemed to be the 'appropriate' subjects of those discourses. This is why I am suggesting that the strategy of resisting or denying the affects of belonging that experiences of landscape deliver is a mistaken one. Rather, I am suggesting that it might be possible to train those affects of belonging in alternative directions: away from the consolidation of racially exclusionary forms of cultural citizenship and towards the production of alternative modes of belonging. Rather than reject nationalist forms of identity and belonging out of hand, and in doing so leaving untouched precisely what is so compelling about them, it might instead be possible to tap their affective power. Rather than deny the appealing and self-affirming pull of cultural nationalism, of feeling at home within a landscape, might we alternatively go with these feelings? Rather than refuse the beauty of these feelings of ownership of and entitlement to landscape, could we instead steal and repurpose that beauty, and in doing so make it do something qualitatively different? A significant problem with antiracist and cosmopolitan contestations of nationalist belonging is their tendency to speak down to the nationalist subject – 'you're wrong; we know better than you'. In so doing, they have a tendency to reinforce a frequently classed divide that often has the counterproductive effect of reinforcing stubborn commitments to a nationalist worldview, commitments that are born of a sense of feeling judged and rejected, a retreat into the forbidden (see, for example, Hage 2008). In their desire to condemn the unacceptable, antiracisms have been rather less good at elaborating alternative affirmative imaginaries, tending to hold to 'thin' legal-political versions of citizenship uncontaminated by 'thicker' culturally nationalist terms of belonging (history, tradition, blood; all of them variously rooted in landscape). The alternative strategy I am suggesting here calls for the elaboration of more, not less belonging.

In Tolia-Kelly's reading of the landscapes of British Asian citizenship, cultural nationalism is the principal mode of belonging to landscape. In her account of diasporic belonging, this is plural and transnational in character, but it remains a collaging together of multiple forms of national belonging (Englishness + Indianness). She gives room to more regional forms of identity (such as East Africanness), but this is, like the national designations, shaped by the experience of having lived in Kenya, Uganda or Malawi. This is because her account depends on an idea of the remembering subject who has inhabited different landscapes. Yet I want to suggest that what is most significant here is *not* that the remembering subject has travelled and lived elsewhere, but rather that she or he can draw on a stock of memories of other landscapes that are evoked by the affective resonances of the rural English landscape. What matters here is that Tolia-Kelly's diasporic subjects call on relations of identity and belonging to landscape that have been imbued with an affective charge. Without wishing to play down the usefulness of the trope of memory in Tolia-Kelly's writing, the perspective I want to explore here is one that places less emphasis on 'memory' as involving the lived experience of any particular time and place, and more on the sense in which what Tolia-Kelly calls 'memory' might describe any site of meaning where the affects of belonging are lodged.

This matters because it opens up possibilities for subjects who have not lived their lives in different places. It does not condemn the non-diasporic white subject to the continual and inescapable reinforcement of their own status as a 'proper' and 'appropriate' English subject. Nor, just as significantly, does it condemn the non-diasporic non-white subject, without any other landscape memories to call on as their own, to feeling a permanent estrangement from belonging to the English landscape per se. If affects can channel, index, and articulate a multiplicity of discourses of identity and belonging, then it becomes theoretically possible for them to do so without needing to be predicated on some 'authentic' experience of life in a different landscape.⁷ Indeed, it becomes possible for a single landscape to provide the affective trigger that prompts the subject to understand it in entirely different terms. What is required here is that we find ways of thinking about belonging to rural landscape that do not reference – and indeed work against – national belonging. This is a critical trajectory that has been usefully elaborated in work exploring the relationship between nature and nationhood.

Nature and nation

An important reason why relations to the rural landscape are so commonly understood through a culturally nationalist lens is because of a conflation of the natural and the national (see Neal 2009: chapter 7). This conflation is more significant than a simple proprietorial claim where the nature found within the boundaries of the nation-state is considered to be a possession of it, as if it were (as it is so often treated) a raw material to be owned and exploited. This is because the nation that is considered to own its nature is also defined by it. Thus the particular qualities of a natural landscape become simultaneously the qualities of the nation: the white cliffs of Dover are a synecdoche for England/Britain⁸; the 'English' Oak lends characteristics of nature to national institutions like the National Trust and the Tory Party; the pages of British passports describe the union by juxtaposing images of the geology of Antrim's Giant's Causeway and Dorset's Durdle Door. Nations are legal-political entities that serve as containers, and, alongside entities as diverse as human populations, languages, and sovereign debts, nature is an important way of imagining what is contained within them. Because English nature is contained within English territory, nature and nation become synonymous. There is thus an 'apparent unity created by the identification of a

⁷ While I am interested in thinking about the embodied and sensual experience of landscape, I am skeptical of accounts that privilege indigeneity, longevity and continuity of habitation. I follow the likes of Jean-Luc Nancy and WJT Mitchell here in rejecting the idea that relations to landscape describe experiences of belonging uninflected by the distancing dynamics of modernity and urbanity. The perception of landscape already involves an unsettling and estrangement (Nancy 2005: chapter 4), and also a 'kind of wilful unknowing' (Mitchell 1994: 265).

⁸ The slippage between Englishness and Britishness in this discussion of nature and nation is indicative of the tendency for Englishness (as an 'ethnic' category) to serve as the cultural content of Britishness (as a formal descriptor of citizenship).

political community with the physical bounds of a geographical body and its scenic surface' (Olwig 2002: xxiv). The implicit analogy here is that of a material object: the particular qualities (or 'nature') of an object (the hardness of a cup, the shininess of a key, the taste of a cheese) are understood to define what that object is like. Different qualities would give English nature a different character; they would make it a different object. This analogy is rarely challenged because it remains common to think about nature in bounded terms: nature is considered to be immanent to the nation. It is only by the political annexation of territory from without that a change in status could therefore occur. In lieu of invasion, there is nothing to disturb the continuity of nature and nation. Dominant ways of determining which plant and animal species are 'native' within a national territory tend to measure time in millennia: for example, while the political entity we call Great Britain can only ever be measured in hundreds of years, native British species are dated to the moment at the end of the last Ice age when –around 8000 years ago – Doggerland was submerged beneath the southern part of the North Sea (Pitcher 2014: 118-19). The great historical continuity described in this version of nature lends weight and substance to what would otherwise be a thinly political version of national belonging: nature puts flesh on the bones of the nation-state.

Because of the way in which nature comes to embody and describe the nation, distinctions between 'native' and 'non-native' species are not only a means of deciding on which nonhumans 'belong' to the nation, but are also a struggle over the qualities of the nation itself, informing racially homogeneous 'structures of feeling around national identity' (Tolia-Kelly 2008: 286). Nature is therefore a crucial component in the constitution of ecological citizenship. Although English rural landscapes invariably bear the mark of culture (they are rarely thought 'untouched'), the category of nature is largely concordant with that culture: images in that British passport describe mountains, woodland and moorland in continuity with fishing villages, canals and village greens. The anchoring of the nation in nature is what determines the apparent self-evidence of cultural nationalism as the primary mechanism of identity and belonging. It is what allows particular rural landscapes, in Tolia-Kelly's diasporic examples, to signify English, Kenyan or Indian identities. Even if they result in forms of transcultural pluralism, Tolia-Kelly's accounts of the affects of landscape privilege national modes of belonging because of the way that notions of rurality are considered artefacts of nature, and in turn because the perception of nature tends to be filtered through a national frame.

But debates about 'native' and 'non-native' species indicate there are other ways of thinking about the relationship between nature and nation. Dominant understandings of the domestic immobility of nature, of nature as 'inactive and at home' (Clark 2002: 107) are called into question by a substantial body of work that considers nature in more cosmopolitan terms. Thinking about nature outside of an 'econationalist' framework (Ginn 2008) draws attention, for example, to phenomena of plant and animal migrations, and the rather obvious sense in which the symbolic and material boundaries of nation states do not easily contain entities that grow, crawl, swim or fly between them, either as a result of seasonal migrations or over longer periods as a result of

other environmental factors. Once we start to recognize the arbitrariness of the claim that nationalism makes on nature, we begin to see how ill-suited a national frame is to understanding the natural world. Ecologists have developed ways of thinking about environmental dynamism that do not recognize a qualitative difference between 'native' and 'non-native': plant and animal species have always been mobile, hybridizing and territorially 'invasive' (Clark 2002: 114).

In her engagement with these debates, Tolia-Kelly's work has explored ways of reading culturally plural influences on the production of 'natural' landscapes. With Mike Crang she develops a reading of the landscape of the English Lake District as produced by the grazing of sheep that were introduced by the Vikings, and of the language of place (beck, dale, tarn, thwaite) as betraying Nordic roots (Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010: 2325). Here, racially exclusive narratives of natural landscape are displaced by the acknowledgment of hitherto 'foreign' influences, echoing heritage practices that seek not to augment racially homogeneous histories with a pluralistic supplement but instead attempt to reveal unacknowledged histories that are already there beneath their surface (Naidoo 2005: 47-8).⁹ This is a strategy that contends with historical traces of the literal presence of racialized others within the national space, and which draws attention to the ways in which 'natural' landscape and human culture have always given shape to one another. It describes an 'organic cosmopolitanism' that can 'bridge the mobility of human and non-human species' and provide the basis for new forms of ecological citizenship (Tolia-Kelly 2010: 3).

Though this strategy usefully foregrounds an understanding of human diversity in the production of natural landscapes, it remains a way of describing the characteristics of the nation. Certainly it allows for a pluralistic reimagining of the 'natural' elements that go to make it up, helping to displace racialized mythologies of England as a white nation, but it does not begin to displace the nation itself as the central category for the organization of landscape identity and belonging: consider the processes of nationalist incorporation that render the productions of unknown Neolithic peoples into artefacts of English Heritage like Stonehenge. Building on Tolia-Kelly's theoretical framework, but seeking to displace the centrality of the nation, I want to suggest in the last section of this article that there might be another strategy of relating to landscapes that could be deployed here that would facilitate a different focus. The disarticulation of nation and nature could provide an alternative means by which relations of identity and belonging might be constituted outside of cultural nationalism. Could practices of ecological citizenship then be fostered in contexts where nature no longer serves the nation state, but works in reference to a different kind of

⁹ Such as, for example, Tolia-Kelly's own practice in curating an exhibition of the archaeology of Hadrian's Wall to tell a 'postcolonial' geography, as the black history of the Roman empire is foregrounded to emphasise the culturally and racially diverse roots of contemporary Northumberland and Cumbria, where African designs were 'absorbed into the local culture' of the second century AD (Tolia-Kelly 2011: 84)

imaginary? Could we imagine embodied forms of identity and belonging to natural landscapes that subvert their political containment by the nation? Rather than understand the nation as if it were a material object and nature its essence, could the qualities of nature work to describe a different kind of entity, and a different kind of belonging to it? If, as Tolia-Kelly suggests, 'the process of becoming a citizen' is a process 'of becoming naturally *in place*' (Tolia-Kelly 2010: 2), could a reworking of what nature means allow a reconfiguration of what it means to belong? Instead of ceding natural landscapes to the 'powerfully naturalizing experiences which erase the prospect of political action even before it starts' (Thrift 2008: 19), the contestation of natural landscapes can reveal the latent ways they organize 'space, time and experience' (ibid.), and foreground the possibility that these can be organized differently. As I suggested above, one of the problems that has long been acknowledged for projects of cosmopolitan citizenship is that they have tended to be conceived in thinly legal-political terms. To facilitate a move across nation-state boundaries, it tends to be assumed that forms of belonging located in specific places (such as belonging to rural landscapes) would need to be cast aside. But rather than practices of attachment to landscapes describing a rooting in the particularity of nature/nation, could they allow instead for its disturbance and subversion? Could embodied engagements with landscape produce cosmopolitan 'structures of feeling' through 'affective atmospheres' (Anderson in Phillips 2014: 66) every bit as rich, immediate, and 'natural' as their nationalist equivalents?

Beyond the national history of natural history

Though it is not an avenue her work has explored in great detail, we can once again begin to develop this approach from suggestions made by Tolia-Kelly. While her concern is usually with the temporalities of human history, Tolia-Kelly recognizes the significance of the contribution of environmental histories with 'timelines beyond "nation", "state" and "sovereignty"' (Tolia-Kelly 2010: 147). Her co-authored sketch of the English Lake District ecology (Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010: 2365) references Doreen Massey's startled appreciation of the 'mobile geography' of the 'immigrant rocks' that form the mountain Skiddaw and Massey's reflection on their journey in geological time from their sedimentary formation 'about 500 million years ago [...] about a third of the way south from the equator towards the south pole' (Massey 2005: 131-7). Geological time is clearly one way of thinking outside of the temporal boundaries of nation-states; indeed, it provides a way of thinking outside of the temporal boundaries of human society, culture and life itself. To feel a sense of embodied connection to rocks and stones set in place over the four-and-a-half billion years of the earth's history reveals the considerable modesty of the nation's claim over them. To find a sense of identity and belonging in the sheer bulk materiality of landscapes that rise and fall beneath the feet is to situate oneself within a rival framework of describing space and time, way beyond the national history of natural history. Such modes of belonging are far from uncommon: religious and other spiritual discourses, including forms of secular romanticism, frequently incorporate the experiences of human subjects stirred by landscape affects. It might accordingly be suggested that the problem of nationalism remains in the sense that these do not necessarily

challenge or contest nationalism's claims. Extra-national landscapes are absorbed into the national fold, and the scalar incommensurability of geological, metaphysical, or cosmic belonging with the nation means that they easily rub along together and are rarely in contestation.

Despite this, there are moments when the assumed passivity of nature is shaken, and its harmonious mapping onto the nation becomes unstitched. Nigel Clark offers a perspective on a disruptive nature, where 'geophysical upheaval seems to undermine a basic faith in the givenness of the earth' (Clark 2011: 70). Clark's version of nature is one that exceeds its description and containment as an artefact of culture; it is no longer a passive background to our interpretive practice, but comprises an array of forces that act upon and with us. In Clark's reading, natural disaster provides an 'affective jolt' that produces a 'sensuous receptivity to the plight of others' (149). He describes 'an ethics which is incited by events that are irreducible to a topology of existing social divisions, but also to a kind of receptiveness to the needs of others which does not await an accounting in order to go forth' (66). In a discussion exploring the entanglements of race and nature in post-Katrina New Orleans, Clark suggests that the 'challenges of an innately unstable nature may be one of the most basic and primordial incitements for coming together with others' (139). To depend on natural disaster as an 'incitement to new alliances, practices, repertoires' (156) might seem to imply an excessively high human cost in order to found forms of community and identity that disrupt nationalized nature.¹⁰ Yet insofar as global environmental challenges like climate change provide urgent political imperatives to understand the natural world beyond the conceptual parameters of the nation-state, we might acknowledge a growing appetite and rationale for developing ways of relating to nature along these lines.¹¹ Natural catastrophe may serve as a horizon of possibility without the need to experience it at full force and first hand.

It is a truism of our historical moment that there is developing a greater sense of the dependency of human life on non-human actors, from flora and fauna to inanimate matter like minerals, climates and ocean systems, and of the complex ways in which agency is distributed across this heterogeneous assemblage of actors (Bennett 2010: 23; Whatmore 2002). As Clark puts it, the point about the idea of the Anthropocene is not that we are acknowledging the end of nature, but rather the embeddedness of the human in the biological and geophysical (Clark 2011: 15). Our growing consciousness of this in environmental debate means that nature speaks to us differently. Nature can no longer be viewed an inert, dependable background to the human. Nature's essences are transformed into events (Latour in Massey 2005: 139). Elements that were once symbolic of nature's constancy are now markers of

¹⁰ Not to mention, of course, the extent to which the response to natural disaster can – in various permutations of 'Dunkirk spirit' – take nationalistic form.

¹¹ For a discussion exploring issues of race and climate change in which 'biophysical difference within our species is affirmed and explored rather than disavowed', see Gunaratnam and Clark (2012).

its mutability, and of the precarity of human and non-human life in the face of this. There is a sense here that 'natural' landscapes are thus increasingly resisting national containment, shrugging off nationalism's claim over them. The actants that seem now to permanently threaten these landscapes are self-evidently operating outside of national jurisdictions that once seemed to define them. Rock, water, plant and animal life revolt and resist such containments. As a result of climate change the English weather, stalwart reference point of national self-consciousness, is becoming other than itself. Nature is revising itself before our eyes. To belong to nature requires a different set of reference points, different points of departure, for nature no longer describes a place of refuge for the nationalist imagination. It foregrounds temporalities that predate and postdate the nation-state. It describes an interconnectedness that cuts across nation-state borders as easily as it cuts across a human / nonhuman divide. Our concern for sustainable futures forces us 'to project ourselves into the long-term horizon of the geologic' (Bennett 2013: 246). Our increasing openness to recognizing the way in which we are tangled up in processes that dwarf human existence provides us a wide range of alternative reference points from which to assess our relationship to the material world we inhabit. National belonging can be plausibly displaced by a 'cosmic domesticity' (Zylinska 2014: 78) where the universe replaces the nation-state as a conceptual frame (see also Martin-Jones 2013).

Environmentally-inspired 'conversations' with landscape (see contributions to Benediktsson and Lund 2010) may, then, provide one space for the elaboration of important alternatives to forms of national belonging, involving 'the creation and establishment of more diverse emotional and political affinities and attachments to rural spaces' (Neal 2009: 142). Rather than being imposed from without, it is useful to think about these affinities and attachments as latent and habitual (Dewsbury 2015) – that they are in a sense 'there to be *discovered* in the landscape' and are produced through 'embodied practices of movement, awareness and response' (Ingold 1993: 172; 2011: 47). For 'country' can be thought of as an open place that make be shaped in 'localised practices of re-making' (Mules 2006: 6). This does not in any straightforward sense make the problem of racialized nationalism go away, but the ways in which forms of environmental consciousness begin to unpick the mutually reinforcing relationships between nature and nation certainly opens up opportunities for thinking identity and belonging in different ways, for rural landscape to become a more hospitable place (even as we become increasingly aware of our vulnerability to 'natural' forces).

It has been my suggestion in this article that this might take place in ways that do not deny and reject wholesale the terms of racially exclusive connections to landscape. In my reading of the work of Divya Praful Tolia-Kelly, I have tried to show how the affective resonances of landscape that animate cultural nationalism could instead be repurposed. Perceptions of the materialist substrate of nationalist imaginaries might be captured to other ends, in ways that refuse nationalism's mappings and containments. Rather than being challenged from without, 'national' landscapes might be unravelled from within. The affects of rural landscape constitute an asymbolic raw material

that might form the basis of different kinds of belonging, not only transnationally to designate belonging to different nations (as in Tolia-Kelly's account of diasporic citizenship), but also beyond the framework of nationalism itself. Non-nationalist attachments to rural landscape do not require embodied experiences of other landscapes for their cultivation; they require a politics that frames landscape affects in alternative directions. The foregrounding of environmental consciousness does not imply a flattening and homogenization of experience, but it does provide opportunities for a range of subjects – diasporic and non-diasporic, racialized as majorities or minorities – to experience a sense of belonging to rural landscape; to breathe the air of those landscapes as their own. These affective economies, and the radically new forms of citizenship they potentially express, are characterized by precisely the same richly sensual and embodied experience as the landscape affects of cultural nationalism. As Doreen Massey has suggested, we need to face up to, rather than simply deny, a human need for attachment to place (Massey 1994: 151). We give up too much to nationalism by simply rejecting it; indeed, by doing so we keep in place the conduits of identification that give it power and meaning. Rather than dismiss nationalism outright, we can instead steal from it that which makes it most compelling. Alternative affirmative imaginaries, comprised of a reworked relation between culture, nature and responsibility to ourselves and others, can be founded on the intense, embodied, sensual connection to landscape. This involves the cultivation of more belonging, not less belonging.

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