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## **Making oneself at home: a dialogue on women, culture, belonging and denizenship**

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## **Making Oneself at Home: a dialogue on women, culture, belonging and denizenship**

Marion Arnold and Marsha Meskimmon

*The following text is derived from a presentation given as a dialogue to the annual conference of the Association of Art Historians in London 2014, where our presentation was used to open the session. Our decision to perform an interactive, scripted dialogue against a background of images, was an intentional attempt to explore 'art history' in ways that do not conform to the accepted academic conference conventions of a formal paper, subsequently revised, extended and embellished with references and footnotes to locate the writing as serious 'research' designed for possible publication.*

*Research is generated not only by planned research processes but by informal interactions such as conversation and correspondence. In these processes dialogue is generative: ideas are sketched out, emerge spontaneously in response to questions, or are snatched from insights stimulated by unexpected collisions of spoken or written words.<sup>1</sup> Art history offers many examples of fruitful correspondence between thinkers and practitioners. E.H.*

*Gombrich and Quentin Bell explored canons and values in 1979; John Berger corresponded with Leon Kossoff (1996) and with James Elkins (2003-4) about drawing.<sup>2</sup> As academics engaged in teaching and research, we talk about our shared interests in feminist histories and theories and our experiences as women now based in Britain, but who lived lives*

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<sup>1</sup> There is now a substantial literature that explores and supports the use of a variety of writing strategies to develop feminist thinking in the arts, humanities and social sciences. See, for example: Nina Lykke, *Feminist studies: A guide to intersectional theory, methodology and writing* (NY and London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> E.H. Gombrich and Quentin Bell, 'Canons and Values in the Visual Arts: A Correspondence', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 2, no. 3, Spring 1976, pp. 396-410.

John Berger, 'Drawing: Correspondence with Leon Kossoff' in *The Shape of a Pocket*, London: Bloomsbury, 2001.

John Berger, 'Distance and Drawings. Four Letters from a Correspondence between James Elkins and John Berger' in *Berger on Drawing* (ed. by Jim Savage), Aghabullogue, Co. Cork, 2005.

*elsewhere - in the United States (Marsha) and southern Africa (Marion). For us the personal has been political; there are commonalities and differences in our experiences of 'home' and re-location. In doing light editing (added footnotes) of our performed dialogue for publication, we maintained the dialogic framework to indicate that the two voices speak from their particular perspectives while also finding a shared space.*

**MM: 'So, Marion, where are you from?'**

**MA:** King's Lynn, Norfolk, via Cape Town and Pretoria in South Africa, Salisbury in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), aka Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, once Southern Rhodesia, formerly part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland; and London, where I was born of English-speaking South Africans, whose parents were from Australia, Scotland, England and South African 1820 settler stock. Colonial histories describe the British Empire; my family and I have gone full circle through various migrations from north to south and back again to the motherland.

Do concepts of home, homeland, or citizenship define where one is from? I began thinking about these issues from the perspective of domicile and cultural heritage twenty years ago, when researching two modernist South African women artists – Irma Stern (1896-1966) and Bertha Everard (1873-1965). They travelled back and forth between South Africa and Europe (Germany in Stern's case; England in Everard's), redefining 'home' depending on where they were located. About to return to South Africa after four years in England, Everard writes, 'England is not for me. I must go home wherever that may be', but back in Africa, lonely and isolated on her remote farm, she comments, 'I hate this country for art. If art only is being done, it must be done in Europe'.<sup>3</sup> 'At home' in elemental African space,

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<sup>3</sup> Marion Arnold, 'European Modernism and African Domicile: Women Painters and the Search for Identity' in Marion Arnold and Brenda Schmähmann, eds, *Between Union and Liberation. Women Artists in South Africa 1901-1994*. Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005, p 58

Stern and Everard yearned for European culture; immersed in the European cultural scene they longed for African terrain and sun. The domicile-culture tension they experienced was also explored by Doris Lessing (1919- 2013) in her novels, short stories and memoirs. In *Martha Quest*, the quasi-biographical novel of Lessing's early years in Rhodesia, Martha reflects, 'But why was she condemning herself to live on this farm, which more than anything in the world she wanted to leave? ... The farm lay about her like a loved country which refused her citizenship'.<sup>4</sup>

Lessing, a conflicted soul, was formed by English literature. 'What was my own, where I belonged, was the world of books,'<sup>5</sup> she comments but she wrote with sensuous perspicacity about the Rhodesian bush farm where she grew up. Recalling her youth, she notes, 'What impresses me now is not how much effect our occupancy had on the landscape of the farm, but how little'.<sup>6</sup> The land lives a different temporal rhythm to humankind which claims ownership over it, generating recurrent conflict, dispersal, transnational movement, and dreams of return from exile.

Like New Zealand writer, Katherine Mansfield (1881- 1923), Lessing made London her home and attempted to understand being British, or English, from the perspective of domicile, not culture.<sup>7</sup> In her early texts, Lessing - like Mansfield - returned through memory and imagination to her first homeland. She described the landscape affectionately, reserving her bitterness for the claustrophobic colonial society she rejected emphatically as 'that

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<sup>4</sup> Doris Lessing, *Martha Quest*, Granada, London, 1977, p 36

<sup>5</sup> Doris Lessing, *Under My Skin. Volume One of My Autobiography, to 1949*, HarperCollins, London, 1994, p 95

<sup>6</sup> Doris Lessing, *Under My Skin. Volume One of My Autobiography, to 1949*, HarperCollins, London, 1994, p 55

<sup>7</sup> Lessing wrote *In Pursuit of the English: A Documentary* in 1960. She calls this a novel but the hybridised form fuses memoir, travel writing, satire and ethnography. In *From the Margins of the Empire*, Cornell University Press, 1998, pp 57-8, Louise Yelin states that Lessing 'investigates the meaning of the term "English" scrutinizing binary oppositions such as those between home and exile, Englishness and foreignness, in which English identity is constructed'

dreadful provincial country Southern Rhodesia'.<sup>8</sup> Initially she found it difficult to be 'at home' in London; the culture offered by books was not the lived experience of domicile, or the imagined community.

Women leave home for many reasons including poverty, war, violence against women, and to escape restrictions imposed by conservative societies. We may also – as I did – claim citizenship rights in the land of our birth. At the end of the journey, having relocated from there to here, is the desire for a *place* to call home.

In *Evocative Objects. Things we Think With*, Sherry Turkle observes astutely, 'We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with'.<sup>9</sup> If we migrate by choice, we choose what to take to the new home and the objects that journeyed inhabit the new space as survivors from a past life; their physicality and presence are evocative and they embody memories. When Lessing left Africa she had 'a couple of trunkfuls of books, for I would not be parted from them'.<sup>10</sup> The South African-born writer, Deborah Levy, also remembered her family's possessions leaving Africa. Her father had been imprisoned as a member of the ANC and a departure for England in 1968 was expedient. In *Things I Don't Want to Know* she recalls her nine-year old self and writes, 'I would like to forget the image of the ship's crane at Southampton docks when it lifted into the sky the three wooden trunks which held all that my family owned' and she adds, 'When I arrived in the UK, what I wanted were new memories'.<sup>11</sup> When I arrived in the UK in 2000, as a visual artist and writer, I had dozens of

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<sup>8</sup> Doris Lessing, *Walking in the Shade. Volume Two of My Autobiography, 1949-1962*, HarperCollins, London, 1997, p 3

<sup>9</sup> Sherry Turkle, ed, *Evocative Objects. Things We Think With*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2007, p 5

<sup>10</sup> Doris Lessing, *Walking in the Shade. Volume Two of My Autobiography, 1949-1962*, HarperCollins, London, 1997, p 3

<sup>11</sup> Deborah Levy, *Things I Don't Want to Know: A Response to George Orwell's Why I Write*. Nottinghill Editions, London, 2013, e-version unpaginated

boxes of books, my paintings, artworks I had collected, and personal objects I valued. I did not want to forget my African past or decades of memories.

In making ourselves at home many women work creatively to generate a sense of belonging. Artist Vanessa Bell did this successfully in 1904 when she moved herself and her siblings from Kensington to 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. She created a new, modern home by rejecting red plush, black paint and Morris wallpapers, and designing light, white rooms devoid of Victorian ancestral presence. During World War 1 she settled at Charleston in Sussex and her *tour de force* was the creation of a home and garden as an art environment for living and working. To make oneself at home one needs space – the physical home to house possessions – and memory which, I suggest, is our most private ‘home’, an interior space, a repository of imagery which is accessed to make meaning of domicile, culture, past and present.

But now I must ask – *‘Marsha, where are you from?’*

**MM:** The short answer is that I was born on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1965 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Extending that answer slightly would include the fact that I was the third and youngest child in my family, by twenty years, and the only daughter. I was raised as the *family’s child*, both an only child (my brothers had left home by the time I arrived) and a very well-loved daughter and sister.

But the question ‘Where are you from?’ is a coded question that seeks to ascertain some truth(s) of identity guaranteed by a national, cultural or geopolitical *origin* point. In the Pittsburgh of my youth, it was commonplace to ask ‘Where are you (your parents/forebears) from?’ or, more usually, ‘What nationality are you?’ Pittsburgh is famous as an immigrant town; waves of European settlers came to the city during the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries as its heavy industry (mainly, but not exclusively, steel) flourished. During the latter half of

the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it remained an important centre for new immigrants, many of whom came from Asia, Central America or the Middle East.

Growing up in Pittsburgh, I was fascinated by the many different ethnic groups that were so clearly present (and represented) in the city, but I also began to feel that the question of ‘nationality’ was as uncomfortably loaded as it was coded. First, it was a question almost wholly put by white European-Americans to one another; ‘nationality’ did not seem to apply to African-Americans or Native Americans. Second, although I could not have articulated it then, there was a visceral ‘level’ being established by this question; a hierarchy built on assumed ethnic, religious and socio-economic distinctions (certainly ‘cultural capital’, if not financial) made between groups of immigrants. Some were better than others – better established as ‘Americans’, more ‘interesting’, more ‘beautiful’, more ‘smart/sharp’. What the question never derived was nationality or citizenship. It gradually dawned on me that so many Pittsburghers rehearsing their litanies ‘*I am Italian, I am Polish, I am Lithuanian, I am Croatian, I am Irish, I am English and a little bit German...*’ had neither been, nor likely ever would go, to any of the places they named.

I will not recite the litany of my ‘nationality’ here, but suffice to say that my origin point is at once universal and particular and there is no tension between those when ‘universality’ is understood as an embodied, located and materially-responsible position that is as much about finding ways to connect with others as to distinguish oneself from them. Where are you from? Somewhere absolutely specific and yet always in process, never complete; as the narrative of home becomes a practice of ‘homing’, of ‘uprooting/regrounding’<sup>12</sup> or of attaining the paradoxical balance implied by ‘achieved

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<sup>12</sup> Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda and Anne-Marie Fortier (eds), *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, Berg, Oxford, 2000

indigeneity'<sup>13</sup>, we produce multiple, mutable and transformative identifications – mobile, global homes.

In 1984, I came to the UK as an undergraduate student. To be more precise, I arrived in Leicester, another 'immigrant town', but with a very different pattern of immigration to my 'hometown', and I found ways to make myself at home. The next coded question I learned (that has never left my side, as my speech has retained its decisive American inflection for over 30 years living away) was 'How long are you staying?' This question has always been friendly when put to me – a sort of jovial way of saying that my tone is recognised, a chance to tell me about a trip made to the States, a nice-but-nosey query to find out if I am a tourist or resident. But, as a student registering annually with the police in Leicester, I heard this question put in very different timbre to scores of South Asian women who, with little English and less assistance, were completing their paperwork in the same waiting room.

From 1998 to 2012, my surname changed three times, including to the one in which this paper has been authored. In the same period, I was 'naturalised' in the UK and became a dual-citizen with two passports. Nothing is less natural than naturalisation and the word-play hides a wealth of documents, proofs of status and a greater emphasis than ever upon the difference between where one is from and where one resides; home and making-at-home, host and hospitality. I can hold these two passports because the place from which I come and the place in which I dwell are amicable participants in a 'special relationship'.

Meskimmon is my second surname and one that I have maintained (as the name in which I work) in tandem with two subsequent family names – my mother's matronym and the surname of my husband. I have held both passports in all four surnames and my son, born in 2006, also holds two passports in my mother's matronym through his link to me. In undertaking the processes needed to assure his dual nationality, his name and his right of

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<sup>13</sup> Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies*, Routledge London and NY, 2003

passage and abode in both countries, I have become aware that my citizenship, my name, my identity are not my own, but are intersubjective and contingent states-of-play produced between myself and others – through love, marriage and kinship, but also through the less romantic realities of work, taxation, suffrage, residence and freedom (or not) of movement.

So, for example, through cultural custom and practice, my son will be able to carry on my mother's maiden name, a name (and family) she loved and who were also loved and favoured by my father and brothers, none of whom carried the name. By the time my son was born, my mother, father and younger brother had died and my decision to take the matronym to pass to my son was understood instantly by my still-living relatives. It was not so simple to hold the varied names legally, however, and the efforts to clarify status (in which name will you work, pay tax, vote?) brought back the question of origins – where are you/this name from? And of course, standing in the US Embassy in London with my son in a pushchair while we waited to register his birth ensured that the inevitable partner-question for ex-pats was proffered: 'Will you be going back (home)?'

***'Marion, do you ever go back (home)?'***

**MA:** I do not go back. I go forward. I go to - to Australia, Africa, the States, Europe etc. I made a choice and England is home. I *make* myself at home in the present because personal history is replete with the things that survive time travel and my new home is colonised by books, and objects and artworks familiar to me, and strange to others. They facilitate the transition process, which never brings complete integration.

When I left my southern African homelands to be at home in my cultural heritage, I lost living contact with the land I knew, as did Doris Lessing. Like her I had to make myself at home in the unfamiliar: a country with four seasons, the northern climate, flora and fauna I knew only from book learning, green greenness, a plethora of accents, acronyms, slang. systems and behaviours. As a woman I learnt from daily encounters with the strange and it

became familiar but as artist I ask - can a European-African artist transform into a British artist with an African history, especially in a country which pays little attention to African art, particularly the art of Southern Africa? Is there trans-art? What carries across space to place?

Mieke Bal's travelling concepts theory<sup>14</sup> seeks commonalities in concepts that accommodate differences by travelling across disciplines to enrich interpretation of cultural practice. Art is a concept and a practice but cultural practice is situated in language. In 'traditional' African societies the concept of 'art' was so integrated with action, functionality, and ritual that it had no identification in language or independent status until the transcultural encounters imposed by 19<sup>th</sup>-century colonialism. Social Darwinism rendered western 'art' superior to African 'craft' or material culture, and then inflicted worse on African culture by introducing western consumerism and the commodification of craft, aka African art. To represent 'art' and handmade 'craft' as I do in my pictorial practice, is to enter the minefield of cultural interpretation and insider-outsider knowledge.

As a painter-drawer my representational strategy has been to integrate place (landscape) and objects to signify domicile and culture as fragments of existence in temporary pictorial stasis. I utilise rhopography (from *rhopos*, trivial objects) but the personal is never trivial to the image-maker although it may be inconsequential to viewers. One way to engage viewers is to utilise the power of narrative, to present the elements of story-telling spatially within the pictorial format, and invite the telling of meaning from viewers. I have carried this *modus operandi* from Africa to England. Things are depicted as protagonists in or against landscape settings, suspended in time, in a moment of stasis when life is stilled to promote contemplation and reflection.

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<sup>14</sup> Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities. A Rough Guide*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2002

For me as artist, to make myself at home in the work of art, I access the past through the mental images of memory, consult visual records – drawings, images - and use my powers of perception in the present. I make art by looking at material objects and transforming them into representation. Forms become evocative components in narratives; they resemble, signify, and manifest the poetics of fragmentation. They demonstrate the creative capacity of the imagination to raid memory. Mary Warnock observes, ‘We could say that in recalling something, we are employing imagination and that in imagining something, exploring it imaginatively, we use memory’.<sup>15</sup>

Within many of my English works a small broken porcelain doll, possibly Victorian or late Edwardian, is depicted. Like me she originated in Britain, travelled to the Cape, and was lost in the landscape. Years later she was dug out of a molehill on Rondebosch Common by my Jack Russell terrier, and returned with me to England. Now my alter ego, Em is armless and disarmed; she seeks denizenship, desirous of being an inhabitant and adapting to a new place and condition of being.

Migration is a paradox. It brings people to new places but if we do not actively *make* ourselves at home in new places, rupture never heals. We have choices; we make decisions. To explain this I offer an elliptical story of transnational travel:

One day I went for a spring walk through bright, red-brown, msasa trees clustered among granite-grey rock domes, and I met an old man who greeted me politely. We looked at the shimmering leaves, lichen-mottled rocks, and the blue sky with small white clouds.

'This is our land', he said.

'Yes,' I answered.

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<sup>15</sup> Mary Warnock, *Memory*, Faber and Faber, London, 1987, pp 75-6

Some years later I went for a summer walk in the bushveld where the thorny acacia trees grow flat-topped out of bleached grass and I met the man again. We greeted one another and stood looking at trees in the heat haze.

He said, 'This is our land'.

And I answered, 'Perhaps'.

Time passed. I went for a winter walk up the Cape mountain, through broken rock and fine-leaved bushes, and I looked down at the ocean from a great height. While I gazed at the water, the man appeared once more.

He smiled and said, 'This is our land'.

I answered him, 'No, I think not. I have been a sojourner in a continent far from my forefathers' land and customs. They went on voyages that have taken several generations to complete and while their bones lie in foreign soil, my ashes will mingle with the soil in their place of origin. They went to the new unknown; I will return to the familiar unknown. The journey, the arrival and the return all matter'.

*'So Marsha, where do I, and you, and women, go from here?'*

**MM:** Perhaps it will suffice to start by saying 'we go from *here*'. You speak eloquently, Marion, of domicile and culture, of the interrelationships between making and imagining our homes beyond the limits of a singular origin point. Like your encounter with the work of Stern and Everard, I too first began to think about the relationship between domicile and culture, home, homeland and citizenship, in relation to the work of women artists who were moving transnationally and transculturally and using their art as a means by which to make and re-make themselves at home. Through the work of Yin Xiuzhen, Anne Graham and Shirin Neshat, for example, it is possible to explore, imaginatively, the notion of a 'plurilocal' home, a mobile/global home that is always being made anew, or even an alternative configuration of feminist citizenship, a claim to 'home/land' and the rights,

responsibilities and practices that accompany such a claim, that is not dependent upon the myth of origin, or the troubling certitude of the link between blood and soil.<sup>16</sup>

In our personal experiences as migrants and in our work, exploring other women's articulation of their experiences of transcultural movement, we have both come to discern and to emphasise the significance of *making* oneself at home. I do not find this coincidental in the light, anecdotal sense, but rather indicative of a key shift in the very notion of home. I would argue that this shift carries with it a number of important intellectual and practical consequences – consequences that converge for me in the question of rethinking the language of citizenship through the introduction of the figuration of the denizen<sup>17</sup>, to which I shall return shortly.

Arguably, *making* oneself at home might be contrasted productively with *being* at home; both colloquialisms refer to a sense of belonging and the significance of 'home' to the processes of identity-formation, but one is far more active and, indeed, more precarious. *Being* at home suggests arrival, completion or even a 'natural', ontological status being granted to the subject in their 'proper' (named) place – 'home'. By emphasizing the aspect of *making*, however, the relationships between location and belonging are opened to agency, and not just the agency of human actors (consider, for instance, your porcelain doll *Em*). No longer is home guaranteed as the locus of subjectivity (or its guarantor), rather it requires maintenance and, importantly, an engagement with other subjects and objects in the world.

Even more strongly, I would argue that *making* oneself at home is a continual and open-ended process of making the world and the self in mutuality, with and through others' hospitality and generosity: 'please, make yourself at home'. One does not 'make oneself at

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<sup>16</sup> Marsha Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Routledge, London and NY, 2010

<sup>17</sup> An exploration of the notion of the denizen is at the heart of my argument in 'As a woman, my country is... : On imag(in)ed communities and the heresy of the becoming-denizen', in Marion Arnold and Marsha Meskimmon, *Home/Land: Women, Citizenship, Photographies*, Liverpool University Press, forthcoming 2016

home' by colonising another space, nor by brutally subjugating those presently inhabiting it; making oneself at home is premised upon reciprocity and intersubjectivity.<sup>18</sup> In that sense it is profoundly precarious, both in that it is risky and insecure, and also in that it acknowledges the subject's dependence upon others (the etymology of *precarious*, of course, connects it with *prayer* and the petition to the other).

Where do we go from here? As you say Marion, not (ever) *back* but *toward...* and to that sentiment I add the ellipses as a mark of the open-ended movement of *making (oneself at home)*. Significantly, positioning movement, process and becoming (rather than being) at the centre of the concept of 'home', suggests that making oneself at home in the world is never fixed or finished and also that the 'self' and 'home' are mutually emergent. This entails a shift in our thinking from the notion of an autonomous, transcendent individual who does the 'making', toward articulating the processes by which both the 'self' and the 'home' are materialised. Again, this emphasises intersubjectivity and connections with/in the world and reminds us that this is a material process, a making from *here*, from the residues and sedimented traces of the past through which the future unfolds.

For thinking about citizenship, about home and land and the exceptional power of art to operate as both a transitional object and a form of homing, the emphatic iteration of *making from here* is potentially empowering. I am left with little to say about the transitional objects, as you describe these so beautifully, Marion, that I can envisage you residing somewhere between the global North and South with your boxes of books and artworks as a compass, an imaginative, yet material instrument by which to re-locate, time and time again.

But as a form of homing, I would like to return to the concept of the *denizen* as an alternative figuration (as per Braidotti, Haraway) for an embodied, located, yet not

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<sup>18</sup> The idea of art as a form of world-making has been explored with great eloquence in the work of Caroline Turner and Michelle Antoinette. See M. Antoinette, *Reworlding Art History: Encounters with contemporary Southeast Asian art after 1990*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014 and C. Turner and M. Antoinette (eds), *Contemporary Asian Art and Exhibitions: Connectivities and World-making*, Canberra: ANU Press, 2014.

essentialised or completed *citizen*, a way of thinking through the kinds of citizenship (as processes and practices of belonging) that might better describe the experiences of women as they make themselves at home in a global world. Arguably, the arts provide a space through which to experiment with and articulate the potential of such a denizen-figuration, since they enable connections to be drawn out between the immediate and visceral levels of belonging and identification and the imaginative, sometimes as yet-realised, dimensions of transnational and transcultural exchange.

In what is now a burgeoning literature on feminism and citizenship,<sup>19</sup> three key insights are posited consistently: that citizenship is never unidimensional or universal, but always specific and inclusive of other aspects of intersectional identification; that citizenship is both a status and a set of practices; that the term citizenship seems too narrowly focused to fully describe the experiences of contemporary women in relation to national and other forms of geopolitical belonging or community-formation.

My continuing interest in the denizen and denizenship is in part derived from these insights. Unlike the concept of the citizen, denizenship is not premised upon links to specific and defining origins. We cannot claim our denizenship by demonstrating our birthright; indeed, quite the opposite, the definition of ‘denizen’ incorporates ‘naturalisation’ or the acquisition of the rights of the ‘born citizens’ by those who have joined them from elsewhere, who have moved to a position ‘from within’. As I have noted elsewhere, there is nothing ‘natural’ about naturalisation and the status that is conferred through the process is most

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to recognise that the trajectories that we are taking in this dialogue are indebted to a developing literature that comes mainly from social scientists concerning the relationships between feminism and citizenship. One of the earliest texts is Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*. NYU Press, 1997 and more recent work includes

Line Nyhagen, Beatrice Halsaa and Cecilie Thun, ‘Citizenship is not a word I use’: how women’s movement activists understand citizenship’, in B. Halsaa, S. Roseneil and S. Sümer, eds, *Remaking Citizenship in Multicultural Europe: Women's Movements, Gender and Diversity*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2012 and Elzbieta H. Oleksy, Jeff Hearn and Dorota Golanska, *The Limits of Gendered Citizenship: contexts and complexities*, NY and London: Routledge, 2011. Another key thinker on the related area of belonging is Nira Yuval Davis (see: *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional contestations*, LA and London: SAGE, 2011).

commonly ‘earned’ or ‘achieved’ through the active participation of the denizen. In other words, denizens *make themselves at home* by active engagement with and participation in the culture to which they have come. And this should not be confused with colonization; denizenship is not a matter of forcing one’s will upon others, denizenship is a reciprocal relationship to a new place that invokes hospitality and generosity from *both* denizens and hosts.

Significantly for me, as I work through this concept as a figuration, such a trope of reciprocity also allows us to think more productively about the mutual, intersubjective engagement between denizens and hosts (i.e. that both are changed in the encounter) as a productive model for exploring transcultural meaning-formation. In addition, and also of significance to thinking through denizenship and the materialisation of meaning and identifications in and through processes of homing, the term ‘denizen’ has long carried a non-human dimension – for instance in the usage ‘denizens of the wood’. Thinking community and belonging as being more than a human-centred process is a direction in which I am critically interested since the agency of objects, images, *art* in the broadest sense, suggests that denizenship is not solely a matter of human individuals acting *upon* the world, but of humans engaging with and in the world as part of its ecology. The figuration of the denizen thus suggests that in making ourselves at home we might make ourselves and the world differently – more equitably, more generously.

In using the denizen as a becoming-figuration for thinking citizenship, the arts, feminism and global ethics/politics differently, I am not suggesting that we should forget the social science uses of the term or make it into a utopian symbol, but rather that we mobilise it in the here and now to help us move toward the there and then. As we make ourselves at home in the world through our art, our thought, our loves and daily lives, we seek rich tropes

as a way to materialise nascent, experimental, precarious forms that permit us to ever *go forward* from *here*.

**MA:** Yes Marsha, the moving forward, and the decisions and explanations and now I remember another story from the southern tip of Africa:

We went for a walk on the mountain and looked out on land falling away steeply to the settlement far below. Beyond the expensive houses was a pale beach, rimmed by white waves, and then a vast expanse of ocean.

I am leaving, I said. I am moving north, forward to the old land.

She said, You are going from here.

I said, No. I am going there. She never asked why. I talked, to myself, to her, to the distant ocean and the stones under my feet.

So, she said, a new beginning.

And I answered. A beginning is by definition new. Once upon a time is never twice upon a time. It is another time, in another place.