

**A pedagogy of weaving Nigerian Tiv a'nger into life writing, mobility and place: my
travelling encounters as an international student retold**

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Abstract

This pedagogy of weaving the Nigerian Tiv a'nger into life writing, mobility and place blends in my experiences, cultures, geographical locations and stories. As I travel through and within countries as an international student, I draw from postcolonial and feminist scholars such as Anzaldua (1987), Bhabba (1994), Rushdie (2011) and Trinh (1994) in negotiating a hybrid space where my sense of belonging and home is continuously unsettled and negotiated. In this thesis, I use the a'nger as a metaphor for blending, merging and blurring text, identities, and questioning the conditions which produce stories, memories and events. In this auto/ethno/graphic pedagogy of weaving the Tiv a'nger into my encounters as a traveller, sojourner and mother, I am seeking to link my cultural background with my scholarship in the faculty of education and the faculty of law as a literary metissage that allows me to situate my narrative within broader sociopolitical discourses that query gender race and class issues (hooks, 2003; Fanon, 2008). I am guided by a desire to show that stories are research and that stories influence our movements as Africans in diaspora (Achebe, 1973; Wa Thiong'o, 1986). In drawing from the stories of my Tiv ancestors through African indigenous a'nger, I am guided by a quest to decolonize a space in academia to include other ways of knowing and being in the world. In retelling my stories, I open up conversations about the experiences of international students from Africa who relocate to other countries in the quest for continuous education. I use qualitative research methodologies such as auto/ethno/graphy (Douglas & Carless, 2013), bricolage (Kincheloe, 2005), metissage (Lionnet, 1991), multimodality (Morawski *et al.*, 2016); and life writing (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo, 2009) to linger, tarry and trouble the sites between history and culture, home and abroad, us and them.

Acknowledgement

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.

Naomi Shihab Nye, 1952

Where do I begin in saying thank you?

When I arrived in Ottawa I knew I was on a journey, but I did not know where the journey was leading me. I arrived at the Faculty of Education, seeking to find a space to reinvent and recreate something new, and then I met my supervisor, Prof. Patricia Palulis. I cannot begin to speak to what two years of knowing her, sitting with her, listening to her, and being mentored by her has done for me. I am grateful that she introduced me to life writing and encouraged me to write about my stories, she has inspired me to question, to tarry and linger in the tension. I hope that I can live up to the belief she has in me.

To my committee members, Prof. Cynthia Morawski and Prof. Raymond LeBlanc, I am indebted to you for giving the pedagogy of weaving the Tiv a'nger the opportunity to emerge from the corners of my mind and on to the page. Thank you for being a supportive committee. I thank all the wonderful professors I have met in the past two years at the University of Ottawa and the University of Carleton, who have become great friends and mentors: Professor Linda Radford, Professor Nicolas Ng-A-Fook, Professor Ruth Kane, Professor Penelope Simons, Professor Jennie Abell, Professor Donatille Mujawamariya, Professor Doris Buss, Professor Peter Milley, Professor Diana Watt for all their support, and encouragement. I would also like to thank the administrative

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I thank my family for the immeasurable support they have given me during this period of me being a student. To my mother and father, I owe the pedagogy of the a'nger to you for giving me stories to retell. Thank you for believing in my education and enabling me to experience travel. Thank you for your support and enthusiasm to be the best I can be. I cannot imagine this would be possible without you. Thank you for your visits to Ottawa to be with us. Both of you are my unwavering champions and greatest supporters. To my sisters, thank you for the laughter, and joy and for all the stories we share. To Jeffrey, thank you for your friendship, and support. To my two adorable and amazing, incredible children, Kamto and Lotachi, thank you for being my greatest loves and leading supporters. You two have made the ultimate sacrifice during the time that I was a student when I was not able to give you all the time and attention you deserved, but you have always understood. You two have been there with me every step of the way, sharing in all the struggles and joys. To you two, I owe this.

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Dedication

To my children, Lotachi and Kamto, with love.

To my parents, Mercy Torkwase and Philip Zegetar Iyortyer, with love.

Chapter One: Prelude

To find and follow the path with heart requires courage and heart

Chambers, 2004, p.6.



Figure 1

Hembadoon Iyortyer Oguanobi

...only the story...can continue beyond the war and the warrior.

It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story...that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it, we are blind.

*Does the blind man own his escort? No, neither do we the story;
rather it is the story that owns us and directs us.*

Achebe, 1988, p. 124

My auto/ethno/graphical inquiry emerges from my encounters as a female international student



Figure 2

Me - as a split self, not belonging to one or the other

and my desire to find the meaning of home in new geographical spaces. As I voyage from country to country, I linger in the “zone of between” (Aoki, 1987/1991, p.164). A space that Chinua Achebe calls a “crossroads” a “no man’s land”, a space for lingering,

a place where “one can get lost, not being one or the other”.

I have become what Trinh calls a “hyphenated, spilt self”, a

“shameless hybrid” (1991, p.16). As a Nigerian and British

citizen living in Canada, I sometimes feel like I live in a

“double exile” far from native land, and far from my mother

tongue, (Trinh, 1991, p.10) where I am constantly trying to

navigate the changing and uncertain spaces of belonging.

These uncertain spaces of belonging become entangled

and begin to take up a life of their own. In navigating this

uncertain terrain and slippery space, I am weaving and braiding

together my stories and the stories of my ancestors. I am weaving

together my African culture and my adopted western cultures. I am weaving together my legal

training and the pristine call to seek wisdom in the practice of education and academia (Smith,

2014). In my auto/ethno/graphical recollections, stories from my past and present collide, as I use

Sometimes, in order to discern the present, you have to be able to see both the future and the past. Time has to be compressed into a single dimension, akin to folding a strip of indistinct photographic film into an accordion so that you can see many exposures layered on top of each other all at once and thus get a clear picture. If you lose the past, the present and the future cannot really be understood.

Mitchell, 2009, p.122

the Tiv a'nger with its patent stripes of black and white yarn as a metaphor and symbol for “braiding autobiographical texts” (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo, 2009, p. 32) into auto/ethno/graphy (Morawski and Palulis, 2009), I stride into the horizon. Waapela (2014) writes that:

Traditional cloth types, with their excellent production and vibrant colours often have their hidden symbolism and interpretation. They constitute the hallmark of culture and communication bearing emblems to the owners.

(p. 208)

I imagine the a'nger cloth represents a new pedagogical space for me to practice my new-found love for curriculum inquiry; it allows me to draw from Aoki in the midst of modernist imaginaries as he offers me his narratives of East and West (1987/1999), I am mesmerized and captivated at Aoki's (1996) call for a bridge to be built as a site where “a binary of two separate pre-existing entities”, can be “brought together to conjoin in an ‘and’” (p. 314). I return Aoki's call with a call for a bridge to be built between North and South as a place of lingering; with this bridge perhaps they may be a passage, a journey, a symbol, a story...

In the 2015/2016 US general election campaign, there was a promise to build a wall. I remember listening, watching the news in amazement, until my amazement turned to despair as the candidate said, "I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great great wall on our southern border."

(Times, 2015). I return the call for a wall to be built with a call that we work together to bring down walls that divide... when we do, perhaps we can move away from static categories, whether these categories are based on gender, race, sexuality, economic status, health, or religion. I imagine that working together will bring hope, healing, social justice, and peace. Whatever the case, I hope they will be some moving, some working together, some coming together.

Mujeres, a no dejar que el e peligro del viaje y la inmensidad del territorio nos asuste – a mirar hacia Adelante y a abrir paso en el monte (Women, let's not let the danger of the journey and the vastness of the territory scare us – let's look forward and open paths in these woods) Caminante, no hay puentes, se hacen puentes al andar. Voyager, there are no bridges, One builds them as one walks.

Anzaldua in Anzaldua & Keating, 2009, p. 73

Voyaging Tiv Woman

I, a native traveller on the road called, Exile Avenue.

*Home behind, abroad in view, children in hand, dreams in pockets full of flowers,
in transit,*

the snow at the airport lets us know the journey is far from over.

We walk, alone we walk.

The three of us.

The cold rips through our brown melanin skin,

ripped from the fear of what lolls ahead.
Our dreams are plentiful,
but the bubbling visions of what lies on the other side of the course distorts the journey,
as the dazzling eyes of travelling children look up
at me for reassurance that this time, the journey will be different.
Reassurance that this time disorder and chaos
will be displaced by stability and sanctity.
The taxi rack beckons us,
boxes, overload,
dislocation,
an overloading of expectations,
the burden of exile overshadowed by visions of home.

Arriving at the entrance of auto/ethno/graphic inscription

When I began my MA Ed degree, writing an auto/ethno/graphic thesis was not a journey that I imagined I would embark on. Douglas & Carless (2013) writes that “for those who come to autoethnography from an artistic or creative background, or from performance or communication studies..., it seems that there is greater opportunity and possibility to be mentored, educated, and supported at an early stage” (p. 97). Coming from a legal background, and nested in the faculty of education, I had to ask myself a few questions before arriving at the entrance of auto/ethno/graphical writing:

What has auto/ethno/graphy got to do with me?
At law school, one of the first courses I took was Tort law.
I ask myself what has the duty of care, breach of duty, causation and remoteness got to do with
disrupting norms of research, working from insider knowledge, breaking silences,

claiming voice and making work accessible?

In this auto/ethno/graphic thesis, I use photographs to tell a story.

I ask myself, what has photography got to do with intellectual property law?

After many years of sleepless nights at the law library, cramming case laws, sifting through ratio decidendi and obiter dicta, I ask myself what has supreme court decisions got to do with life writing?

In two of my law theses, I write about international law.

In one law thesis, intellectual property law meets health law.

In the other thesis, I write about foreign direct investments (FDI) in Nigeria.

Sitting here, pondering, I ask myself, what has patents and access to medicines got to do with weaving a pedagogy of a'nger into life writing?

In my legal academic research in international intellectual property law,

I trail the scholarship of Ellen T. Hoen, Carlos M. Correa, Daniel J. Gervais, James Love, Graham Dutfield, and others as they rethink international intellectual property law, disrupting the density and complexities of plurilateral, bilateral, regional and international agreements. They reflect, rethink, conceptualize and deliberate.

In my curriculum inquiry scholarship, I am inspired by the works of Cynthia Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Trinh Minh-ha, Patricia Palulis, and bell hooks, women who draw from their own lived experiences to share stories. Women who believe that storytelling is research. Trailing female scholars in education who continue to disrupt, women who refuse to be silenced.

I am finding answers to questions.

Q: *What has auto/ethno/graphy got to do with me?*

A: #metoo#

Resist!

Disrupt!

Before I came to the faculty of education, I was accustomed to traditional ways of conducting research. During my time in education, I began to feel like there would be something missing if I continued to follow a strict path of traditional ways of researching and seeing the world. Legal rules dictate how people should behave but “they make no attempt either to explain, predict, or even to understand human behavior” (Chynoweth, 2008, p.30). I want to be able to connect to people, places and events. Research that provides opportunities to connect to others, whether physically, emotionally or through story telling can be deeply rewarding.

However, traditional legal research “can usually be done without leaving the hallowed precincts of our libraries and offices” (Schuck, 1989, p. 331). My stint in the faculty of education was eye opening. I was beginning to question everything to find truths, to break silences and retell stories that allow me to connect with others on a deeper level. I wanted to know why certain general principles of law and concepts exist, are they a product of colonization? How can we decolonize education and law? How can we educate students to be less rigid, inflexible, formalistic and



Figure 3

Hembadoon Iyortyer Oguanobi, after her call to the Nigerian Bar by Chief Justice of Nigeria, CJN, Justice Mariam Aloma Muhktar on 28, November 2013.

close-minded? How can we move away from the unhealthy preoccupation with technicalities? How can we move with Vick (2004) away from impoverishing the questioning spirit of students and teachers? Writing an auto/ethno/graphical thesis has offered me a “vision of independence of mind and spirit highly flattering to the average academic’s self-conception” (Balkin, 1996, p. 957). Balkin speaks about those who can escape the disciplinary boundaries as “romantic rebels” and “champions in the service of a greater truth that transcends scholastic categories” (p. 957). I am beginning to imagine myself as a romantic rebel. Writing an auto/ethno/graphical thesis comes with its risk. I am reminded of the need to publish law articles in traditional ways, “to avoid the career stagnation, employment difficulties and lack of tenure” (Etherington, as cited in Douglas & Carless, 2013, p. 85) that hunt women like me. How will the faculty of law react to the woman who has gone from seeking objectivity and distancing herself from self to the woman who dances freely with subjectivity and other auto/ethno/graphers who use their personal experience as primary material for research. Yet, I find myself yet again in search of a space, a location, a place. Always searching, looking, the wandering self finds the self in-between locations and events.

My Lord

What makes good and bad legal writing?

*I hear you asking,
I see you pondering.*

*Surely, what does an auto/ethno/graphy have to do with the serious business of
interpreting the law?
Apply the law my friend!*

*My lord,
surely, only humans can apply the law.
The text is the self.
the body,
the blood,
that runs through
my lawyerly veins.*

*My lord,
surely, you must know that.*

To write an auto/ethno/graphy is to make a mark, to make a note, to compose and dedicate such writing to oneself and one's readers. I draw from Palulis (2012b) in undertaking auto/ethno/graphy as drift-work, as she reminds me that research is a textual practice, and "textual practice becomes drift-work" (p. 192). I want to know how the textual practice can become a part of the self, I want to know how the drift-work can become hominid. As I leave my host faculty in Education, journeying back to the faculty of law, I use the a'nger as a metaphor to reconcile traditional ways of doing research with feminist ways of doing research; in making this link, I use the Tiv a'nger to navigate the Tiv culture and my acquired western values. I am conscious of the need for compromises in the in-between spaces between arrivals and departures.

To find answers, I begin at beginnings and turn to Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers and Leggo (2009) who write that an “autobiographic work invites a recognition from others, not of who we are, and who we have always been, but who we are becoming in the encounter with the other (p.33).

As an autoethnographer, I am both the author and focus of the story, the one who tells and the one who experiences, the observer and the observed...

Ellis, 2009, p.13

Nonetheless, it is important to note that “‘autobiography becomes autoethnographic’, at the point where personal history becomes ‘implicated in larger social formations and historical process’” (Russel, 1999 as cited in Palulis, 2012b, p. 192). In locating my personal history, I turn to the a’nger as a symbol for culture and tribe, I turn to the faculty of law and the faculty of education as my official travel guide, I turn to stories as road maps and markings for a journey. Palulis (2012b) writes that “a story happens as a geographical event” (p.192). Location is a place for troubling the sites between history and culture; in this site are complicated journeys. I join Palulis in being reminded that “geography is one of the several topographies” through which one must “connect with environmental learning” (p. 195). Faculties are topographical locations, each with its own culture of learning. I am questioning with Palulis (2009), how does a “geographer read, write, and map the *so strange* land of Academia?” (p. 1). How can I navigate the land of Academia as

Whether we like it or not, and whether we recognize it, not only are we part of a cultural tradition in terms of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, but the type of department we are affiliated with, our subject areas, and our choice of scientific ways of valuing and “doing” research.

Douglas & Carless, 2013, p.97

driftwork? Is it possible to transpose one topographical location for another? Can the travel guide of one location be useful in another geographical location? In other words, can what I am learning in education be useful when teaching law students in the faculty of law?

Follow the light

Inscription as a form of life writing “provides valuable confirmation and amplification of our often meagre and selective literary sources” (Kepple, 2002, p.9). For me, there was always a fear of writing about my experiences from a personal space. I was mindful that it would leave me open to criticism, or even worse mockery. Having been supervised and mentored by

female mentors at the University of Ottawa and the University of Carleton, trailing fellow women, I began to see the wisdom of writing an auto/ethno/graphic narrative that would trace my journey into my travelling experiences as a student, mother, traveller, sojourner. I attend to Palulis (2012a)’s call to attend to re-vision “generative possibilities from the cultural, economic and political conscriptions that constrain us” (p. 296). In trying to pull back the “constraints” that have held me back, I am reminded of the call by Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers and Leggo (2009) to engage in the “pedagogical dynamics involved in life writing, and their invitation for us all to do our own life writing and to cultivate a heart of wisdom” (p. 233). In cultivating this wisdom,

The narratives of lived experiences allows us to engage in “meaning making,” it also allows us to conceive of our lives as a journey, “in terms of process and possibilities, in terms of experiences which gradually clarifies itself, rectifies itself, and proceeds with itself and with others”.

Merleau-Ponty, as cited in Greene, 1995, p.21

perhaps our hearts will shine through (Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Leggo & Sinner, 2012, p. xxv).

Shine through to reveal a heart that is warm, creative and loving. For a heart to be prepared to shine through, the heart should be willing to:

Follow the light

Follow the flowing river

Follow the trail

Follow the truth

Unlearn fear

On speaking the unspeakable,

Mazzei writes “Speaking without speaking is not a new phenomenon...what are the silences about...that are not spoken with words, but are spoken between words? This speech between words is prevalent in research that probes these uncomfortable spaces because often for the participants their thoughts are unspeakable....

What do research participants consider unspeakable because of what they may reveal about themselves, their prejudices, their ignorance, or their tolerances that they as being unacceptable to others? Rather than assume that these unarticulated words are secondary to those spoken, should we not probe them for the unspeakable, the unspoken, the silent threads woven into our participant’s tapestry of speech?

2007, p. 38-39

In unlearning fear, I have had to

ponder what life writing is and why

I have this boundless passion that is

leading me in a new direction. Like

hooks (2000), I have become

immersed in the act of thinking and

writing. I am enchanted,

transformed, the feeling is magical.

Life writing for me has become like

a flowing river that cannot be

confined. I am in love. Where has she been all this time? Life writing for a black African woman like myself is an intangible asset, yet at the same time it is indispensable because it allows a self-

expression that has been denied to many of us in different fields and practices. Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers and Leggo (2009) have warned against the futility of trying to capture autobiographic and life writing into a static definition. In Canada, the term life writing has had more popularity than autobiography (Warley, 2005). Life writing is attractive because it widens the field, and makes it more inclusive, particularly for minorities including women, black people and the LGBTQ2 community. I came into life writing almost by accident. Looking back, I have always been interested in writing poetically, deeply, and finding meaning in and from literary texts. Auto/ethno/graphy has been linked to gender empowerment, a site for shifting more power to women, no matter how little the shift, a space for speaking through the silence.

I am reminded that if one partakes in the unnatural for long enough, it initiates a profound power to encircle and consume the partaker. For a long time, I felt that I had lost my voice, literally, I would sometimes have the desire to speak, to contribute to a class discussion, share my thoughts in a gathering, but the words would be stuck in my throat, trapped, unable to make their way out. The silence was stifling. How can we unlearn the voice of silence, when our backgrounds, culture, and social and societal norms have silenced women in the classrooms, in the courtrooms, and in homes? I am encouraged that some have called for curriculum and feminist theorists to “study what has been and what is, in order to risk speaking what might be” (Miller, 2004, p.63). Writing, speaking, but not just speaking and writing, but writing and speaking our truths is a calling that all of humanity should attend to.

The silence that grew.

“Hush”, she was told.

Women don’t speak when men are speaking.

“Quiet”, don’t ask questions, just do as you’re told.

Lay still.

Don’t move a muscle.

That’s a good girl.

That’s how to show respect.

Act shy in their midst.

Cover your teeth when you laugh.

*You mustn’t appear too bold,
otherwise, you will become a stain,
marked for ridicule.*

Men don’t like loud women.

*Don’t laugh too loud,
or burp too loud.*

*Cross your legs when you are seated,
so, the silence began to grow.*

It followed her around.

It filled the cupboards.

It filled the drawers.

It filled the fridge.

It filled the pots.

It cooked.

*It continued to grow until it became a
zombie.*

It grew legs, hands, and eyes.

*It said 'hi' to the neighbours in the morning,
 and goodnight to the neighbors at night.
 It became her companion, her lover ...
 One day she woke, tired of her companion,
 she put a breadknife into his back.
 He woke up, there was no blood, no knife, no her,
 Only silence filled the room.*

Research scope and methodology

In this research, I retrace my journey as an international student in various geographical spaces. Through this research, I want to share the stories of my ancestors as a way of deconstructing the discourses around culture, gender, race and religion; I want to use stories as a research methodology that decolonizes curriculum and acknowledges other people's ways of being and knowing. In this thesis, I tell the stories of my father's humble beginnings in a village called Vandeikya, and how his father experienced feelings of being uprooted; these feelings led him to move to another town which eventually led to his demise. My parents also experienced travel as international students as they moved to different locations in the world. As an international student, I have also moved through various countries, and I am presently living in Ottawa. Our stories are important for opening conversations about international travel and how to understand newcomers in our midst and into our classrooms. In this thesis, I draw from African indigenous ways of knowing in situating my research into life writing. I use multiple sources such as memories, conversations, lived experiences, photographs, family stories, newspapers, journals, books, etc. to shape the conversations around the pedagogy of weaving the

Tiv a'nger. I use the a'nger as a metaphor for merging and weaving together different genres and identities. I draw from a pedagogical framework that questions the conditions that give rise to our experiences and encounters and allows us to tell our stories. In engaging with the pedagogy of a'nger, my research will be guided by the question: what are my experiences as an international student, and how has being a female, African, Tiv woman shaped my identity and sense of belonging? In this thesis, I acknowledge that the stories of my mother are limited. While I was writing this thesis, my mother was very busy as the president of the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS). She asked me to leave her stories out of my thesis.



Figure 4

My mother – Mercy Torkwase Iyortyer while she was the president of the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (2015-2017)

Narrative Inquiry

To understand African ways of thinking it is necessary to suspend for a while linearity and to consider the entire world, even the universe or universes, as one large system where everything is connected and interconnected. This is the principle African view of reality...Africa is a multi-plex of cultures.

(Asante, 1999, p. 1-2)

Drawing on African Indigenous investigative methodology (Wane, 2002, 2005; Some, 1994; Arewa, 1998), I want to present this research as a’nger, a metaphor for weaving together personal stories, events, facts, landscapes, and experiences. In the same way that women of colour weave their afro-textured hair into different patterns and styles, I am weaving myself into the movement of recognising that stories are research. By weaving in African indigenous investigative methodology, I/we are beginning/ continuing a movement in the hope that we are moving toward dialogue, acceptance, and freedom. As a woman who bestrides two cultures, I hope to use my stories to sieve through the tensions of my lived-in experiences.

Rushdie (1991) writes that “Art is a passion of mind, and the imagination works best when it is most free, Western writers have always felt free to be eclectic in the selection of theme, setting, form...I am sure that we must grant ourselves an equal freedom” (p.20). As an African woman, to be able to freely weave in African indigenous investigative methodologies (in the form of the Tiv a’nger) into my research is an important aspect of my identity. It gives me a place of belonging, a space to write, to think, even think in my own language and in ways that open spaces for conversation and contribute to the decolonization of a Eurocentric curriculum.

Growing up one of my favourite books was Maya Angelou's (1997), *I know why the caged bird sings*. The title captivated me even at a young age; I wanted to know why the caged bird sings. I often tell my children that one day I will fly away, my son being the sweet little boy that he is asks me, "fly away, without me?", then I tell him "of course not. We will fly away together, I would not dare fly if you and your sister did not have wings".

Rushdie (1991) tells us about the central character, Dean, in Saul Bellow's novel, *The Dean's December*. He imagines that the dog barking is a way of protesting the limits of the dog's experience. Rushdie concurs with Dean's imagination that the dog is saying "for God's sake open up the universe a little more!" (p. 21). I agree with Dean and Rushdie, only I add "for God's sake, open up the academy a little more!", let us share our stories, our cultures, and our ways of being and becoming.

Erasmus (1989) says narrative can play a role in "providing humans with a way of personally responding to social situations, narrative as a metaphorical means of drawing one's personal experience to bear on a situation, a way of making sense of the reality in which we find ourselves, and of the events which continually fill our lives" (p. 268). In my story are other people's stories. For example, my father's stories are woven into the fabric of this research, his father's stories are also located in this research. This is a story about my life, but it also represents the stories of people who live on the margins and borders of the mainstream.

In this thesis, I write about my experiences as an international student on migratory paths. Ahmed (1999) writes that "migration is about generational acts of storytelling about prior histories of movement and dislocation" (p. 342). My father tells me that when he was a child, he

dreamt about escaping the circumstances that came with his birth. He wanted to be free of the limiting landscape that came with living in the village where he was born. I am told that his father also dreamt of leaving his village, Vandeikya, in search of a better life. My grandfather named his first son Ityozena, which means, "my people want me gone" in Tiv language. His second son, my father was named Zegetar, which translates to "the world is a bigger place than this". My father named my son, Tardoo. in Tiv, this translates to "the world is good", perhaps in the hope that the world will be good to our children; the world can sometimes be a cruel place. My daughter was named Torkwase, after my mother, this means "queen", in the Tiv language. It is within this narrative that I situate my thesis as a story about weaving the a'nger into life writing, mobility and place. In weaving African Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge, I am cautious of the advice of some scholars who have warned against blending/ weaving Western and Indigenous knowledge (Hermes, 2000; Simpson, 2004), at the same time others have called for some blending/interweaving "as a bridge for people to find points of resonance and find places where they can get on the same page and form some relationships and have some conversations" (Lowan-Trudeau, 2014, p.361). Weaving together experiences and cultures is an important aspect of my identity because I believe it opens up conversations that would otherwise not be feasible. Hatcher *et al.*, (2009) writes that "in weaving back and forth between knowledges, Two Eyed Seeing avoids a clash or 'domination and assimilation' of knowledges" (p.5). In this thesis, I attempt to use the a'nger as a metaphor for connecting cultural experiences, and embracing a narrative inquiry that is rooted in creating something new – a third space approach to seeing and doing (Bhabha, 1998).

Imagination

sets the tone for the journey.

Weaving and braiding,

dreams intertwine to

reveal a pattern

for storytelling.

The stories are

evolving,

changing,

blending,

in the hope

that they will

reveal

something new.

Bricolage

Lived experiences and personal history as sources of research methodology provide spaces for connecting people who bestraddle two locations, home and abroad, here and there; this site for connection produces a hybridized state of being in the world. In theoretical discourse, the term hybridity includes vocabularies like diaspora, metissage, creolization and transculturation (Prabhu, 2012).

Metissage is the way to “think otherwise” [italics in original], and is “a concept and a practice: it is the site of indecidability and indeterminacy, where solidarity becomes the fundamental principle of political action against hegemonic languages.

Prabhu, 2012, p. 8

Bricolage allows people in the diaspora, such as migrant students to invent a recipe for existing in the world where their loyalty to home is in two places. The connection between

history and location is critical in preserving stories. Kincheloe (2005) writes about the “relationship between a researcher’s ways of seeing and the social location of his or her personal history” (p.324). It is this connection that bricolage enjoins. I draw from Lionnet (1991) in situating the a’nger as praxis and bricolage. Lionnet writes:

Métissage is a praxis... Metissage is a form of *bricolage* ...it brings together biology and history, anthropology and philosophy, linguistics and literature. Above all it is a reading practice that allows me to bring out the interreferential nature of a particular set of texts, which I believe to be of fundamental importance for the understanding of many postcolonial cultures.

(p. 8)

In writing about a pedagogy of weaving the Tiv a’nger into life writing, it is my intention to use the a’nger as a form of *métissage* and as a site where I weave through ancestral stories as a praxis for African indigenous knowledge. Wane (2005) writes that “in indigenous ways of knowing, the self exists within a world subject to flux. ...In African systems of thought, the ontological position emphasizes that to understand reality is to weave a holistic view of society, that is, to accept the need for harmonious co-existence between nature, culture and society” (p.27- 28). Writing the a’nger allows me to remember not to forget the tradition of the Tiv tribe, and kinswomen/men

The task of the bricoleur is to argue that indigenous culture should not be constrained and limited by theory. Kincheloe (2005) writes that “theory is a cultural and linguistic artefact, its

interpretation of the object of its observation is inseparable from the historical dynamics that have shaped it” (p. 324).

In using the a’nger as a metaphor for weaving my stories into this research, I am drawn to Hatton (1987) who writes that bricoleurs are proficient at improvising, performing, adopting, and persevering, “first, they do not consider a project and then ask what tools and materials are required for its completion. Rather, they review the materials they have at hand and ask how they might be used to complete, or approximately complete, the project” (p. 75). The idea for this thesis is to complete this monograph using what information I have and the limited materials I have access to (being so far away from my native land), and these are, among other things, stories about my movements between spaces, mixed with my encounters with “others”.

Hatton (1989) writes that the “bricoleur means are determined on the basis of past experiences and are heterogeneous and finite” (p. 75). This research is situated in past and present experiences and memories. Bachelard (1969) writes that “each one of us, then, should speak of his roads, his crossroads, his roadside benches” (p.9). Kincheloe (2005) writes that bricolage “serves to promote understanding and communication and create structures that allow for better informed, more rigorous mode of knowledge production” (p. 332). This bricolage will enrich my knowledge of the Tiv culture, the a’nger as a site of being and my understanding of belonging in two different cultures.

Multimodality

Lived experiences and personal histories as sources of research methodology provide spaces of connecting people from different geographical locations using multimodality. Vasudean

(2014) describes multiple modes (e.g. visual, gestural, aural) and modalities (e.g. a pen for writing, the body for gesturing, video editing software for making movies) that make communicating experiences and histories possible. In this thesis, I use photography, music sources and art as a part of my research.

Morawski, *et al.*, (2016) encourage the use of multimodal learning by asking educators to use a variety of different perspectives and genres including clothing, illustrations, journals, waxworks and yarn in their teaching. In my thesis, I use the a'nger yarn as a metaphor for weaving in stories. I draw on artefacts that I brought with me from Nigeria such as the a'nger cloth, Tiv beads, and music as a source of inspiration in writing this auto/ethno/graphical thesis.

Conceptual Framework

This research is situated in an African indigenous knowledge framework that is attached to a worldview that shapes relationships with surrounding circumstances (Wane, 2005). In writing this qualitative research, I draw from my experiences as an international student, traveller and researcher. The stories in this thesis emanate from the Tiv culture, juxtaposed with Western ways of knowing. Indigenous knowledge is generally transmitted orally and experientially (Capp, 1997). In conceptualizing the framework of this thesis, I connect African indigenous ways of knowing to my lived-in experiences through storytelling.

Young and Saver (2001) write that “to be without stories means ...to be without memories, which means something like being without a self” (p. 24). Stories are what we live for, our lives are all stories. Otherwise, they would be no life, no earth, just an empty void. Lewis (2011) poses a profound question when he writes, “if story is central to human

meaning why, in the research world, is there not more storytelling?” (p.505). The conceptual framework of this thesis draws from the stories of the Tiv tribe as a way of contributing to the discourse around Indigenous ways of knowing. Carvarero (2000) writes:

each of us knows that who we meet always has a unique story. And this is true even if we meet them for the first time without knowing their story at all, we are all familiar with the narrative work of memory, which, in a totally involuntary way, continues to tell us our personal story.

(p. 33)

Storytelling helps indigenous people including Tiv people to reposition themselves in history and relation to the world. Storytelling is central to education research, and some of the greatest scholars have used stories as a methodological vehicle to convey critical theories (Arendt, 1977; Benhabib, 1990). Gallagher (2011) observes that “even abstract theories began as particular experiences” (p.50). Hannah Arendt’s work questions the idea that the only assurance of “objective science” is that it is free from subjectivity. I am inspired by Disch (1994) in adopting a conceptual framework that disrupts and challenges. Disch writes that “if one should not tell stories to fellow scholars it is not because stories are beneath them, rather it is because to do so is to make one’s argument vulnerable to challenge” (p. 3). In drawing from the stories of my Tiv ancestors through African indigenous a’nger as a framework, I am inspired by Cixous who says:

I write in order to go further, further than what I say, and that is not impossible. I can go further than myself because there is further-than-myself in myself - as there is in all beings. This further-than myself in myself can be a mixture of others and myself.

(as cited in Cixous and Calle-Gruber, 2012, p. 5)

Using the a'nger as the heart of my research, this life writing will allow me to engage in issues and conversation that are important in classrooms such as race, class, gender, and culture. Such conversations are crucial in fostering environments that are enriching and encourage tolerance of each other's differences.

Chapter Two - A'nger as a literary praxis for connecting and interrogating self

One can be “welcomed” into another culture if they handle themselves with deep respect and humility, challenging the boundary between philosophy and personal identity.

Lowan-Trudeau, 2014, p. 360

Educating is always a vocation rooted in hopefulness. As teachers we believe that learning is possible, that nothing can keep an open mind from seeking after knowledge and finding a way to know.

hooks, 2003, p. xiv

Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers and Leggo (2009) tell us that “as life writers we are always writing ourselves, our stories, our desires” (p. 97). I want to use the a'nger as a metaphor for writing my stories, and blending my Western and African knowledge into a pedagogical praxis as a form of auto/ethno/graphical *métissage*. Dolmage (2009) writes that the concept of:

métissage . . . locates and interrogates the ways that certain forms of knowledge have been relegated to the margins . . . a critical lens through which one might observe issues of identity, resistance, exclusion, and intersectionality.

(p. 24-25)

In this thesis, I attempt to represent the cultural knowledge that is grounded in my personal lived experiences as an African woman with rural roots; I use these experiences to learn about my community's history through cultural and family stories.

Scholars have encouraged life writers to use their memory, community history and stories to create an aesthetic artefact (Lionnnet, 1989; Pinar, 2004, Donald, 2009, 2012; Ng-A-Fook & Milne, 2014). In heeding this call, I use the a'nger as a metaphor to retrace my roots through family stories, and the community history of the Tiv people, their language, religion, art, body art, mythical symbols, music and clothes to interpret my unique experiences as a contact point where dialogue and insights occur. The idea of the Tiv a'nger as a literary praxis is anchored in the knowledge that it is appropriate to use stories as pedagogical materials for teaching and learning. The Tiv people have over fifty types of traditional clothes; however, the most commonly used cloth is the a'nger. The a'nger is a symbol of the Tiv people, it is anchored in the history of the Tiv people of Benue state, Nigeria. Waapela (2014) writes that the a'nger is a:

serene and simple cloth that is designed with fairly broad stripes of black and white which finished product is entirely dyed with cam wood. The cloth has two vertical black and white lines which are later stitched together to form a large piece of cloth

(p. 211)

I imagine the cloth, bold, alive with its vibrant colours, full of the energies and dynamism of nature. The Tiv people are the predominate ethnic group in Benue State. The population of the Tiv people is over 5.6 million (Berry, 2015). Historians have mused with the idea that the Tiv people may have originated from the Bantu tribe in East Africa (Amase, 2013, p.1). There are 23 local Government areas in Benue state, and the Tiv people own fourteen of them, namely Buruku, Gboko, Gwer-East, Gwer West, Katsina-Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Logo,

Kakurdi, Tarka, Ukum, Ushongo and Vandiekya. My ancestral links are in Vandiekya which is in the southern eastern part of Benue. It shares a boundary with Obudu mountains in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Figure 5

Right - An Ariel photograph of Obudu Cattle Ranch. Taken from: CGSK Partnership & Development Ltd. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.cgstravels.com/tour-packages/nigerian-tours/94-tour-obudu-cattle-ranch.html>





Picture taken in Vandeikya
Local government
secretariat, Benue State,
Nigeria.

Vandeikya means Mountain
of Monkeys in the Tiv
language. This artwork
symbolises that there are
monkeys in the mountains of
the town.

the town.

Figure 6

In weaving the a'nger cloth into life writing as a praxis for connecting and interrogating, I use the a'nger as a metaphor for including my voice and experiences in the discourse for education to be decolonized. Through the a'nger, I recognize that there are many ways of knowing, some of which are embedded in the customs, rituals, practices and landscape of communities. Scholars have written about the need for people, societies and nations to consciously take on the task of decolonization in order to recognize traditional indigenous pedagogies and knowledge (Battiste, 2013; Wilson, 2013).

Wilson (2004) writes that

The recovery of Indigenous knowledge is deeply intertwined with the process of decolonization because for many of us it is only through a consciously critical assessment of how the historical process of colonization has systematically devalued our Indigenous ways that we can begin to reverse the damage wrought from those assaults.

(p. 72)

Decolonization of education is a task that needs to be undertaken by societies that have been weighted down by Eurocentric education. Smith (1999) states that “decolonization ... is about centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (p.39). In an attempt at

decolonizing education and theorizing the Tiv a’nger as a way of being, I use the a’nger as praxis for validating my cultural knowledge of Tiv names, language and heritage. In situating the a’nger as the heart of this thesis, I use the sharp contrast between

Metissage is a concept and practice, textual, material, and performative, that is particularly applicable to the experience of exile, physical, emotional, or political, and the plight of immigrant populations.

Zuss, 1997, p. 166

black and white colours on the a’nger as a site for probing differences. I use the black and white stripes on the a’nger as a site for overcoming synthetic differences. How can we share the same space, living peacefully together in the same way that the black and white stripes on the a’nger blend themselves together? Is it possible that like the black and white on the a’nger, we may co-exist side by side, together?

Weeks (1990) writes that “each of us live with a variety of potentially contradictory identities, which battles within us for allegiances” (p.88). I am constantly reminded of being black in a white world, of being a migrant raising two children. In writing about “the value of

differences”, Weeks speaks to the transformations of identities that affect migrants who leave the homelands, only to discover that they are marked by their experiences, and a sense of being “dislocated and disoriented” (p.94).

In a state of flux, of trying to understand the human relationality of living with contradictory identities, I am constantly reminded of my “difference”, as they stare at me, always fingering me out as one marked with a seal. At the same time, I see difference as unavoidable; we are all different, and we are “more than whatever race we represent or embody and more than whatever gender category we fall into” (Weeks, 1990, p. 109).

To assert an individual and collective identity as black women has been a necessary historical process which was both empowering and strengthening. To organise self-consciously as black women was and continues to be important, that form of organisation is not arbitrary...

Parmar, 1990, p. 106

The a’nger is unique because of the juxtaposition of colours on the cloth, it represents a site for acknowledging the historical, cultural and social contexts that have created alternative paradigms of education. In this thesis, I want to interrogate linguistic, gender, racial, sexual and ethnic class differences that are based on societal inequalities, I want to use my personal experiences through the a’nger as a metaphor to make sense of a complex and complicated world. Weeks (1990) writes that “the freedom to live your own life in the way you choose must imply an acceptance of other ways of life” (p. 98). Weaving a pedagogy of Tiv a’nger into life writing allows me to engage in African Indigenous ways of being while appreciating the western knowledge I have acquired as an international student. My goal is to show that each culture has something valuable to learn from the other, weaving together differences, acceptance, embracing

the tensions that emerge from differences and turning those spaces of tension into opportunities for understanding self and others.

Black and white on naked bodies.

*The cloth – it has its way of wrapping itself around me.
That black and white cloth on
black and white stripped bodies.
The “B” before the “W”.
When I was younger,
I wore the cloth.
It disguised my nakedness.*

*It covered
my naked female body,
my naked teenage body,
my naked 20-something year old body,
my naked 30-something year old body,
my naked ...countingold body.*

*It seems
the black and white cloth is always near,
encircling me, twisting its scented spider web around me.*

*Until now,
I have never thought about what the cloth meant to me,
what it did for me.*

*The a'nger's blueprint was
consume, ingest, guzzle up the word product.
Forget the process.
Drink up the letters.
Eat up the digits.*

In an education classroom, I am experiencing the

*freedom to use the a'nger to
question....*

*The questions are here, now,
naked, lingering, walking, waiting...*

*Even now, questions about black and white stripes lie naked,
on my sheets,
waiting to be clothed.*

~~*INTERMEZZO*~~

Aha!
It all makes sense now,
It's slowly adding up.
1 + 1 is gradually becoming 2.
It's all beginning to make sense
why the a'nger is black and white.

Below - Weaving of the Tiv a'nger in progress



Figure 7



Figure 8

Below left- Different traditional Tiv cloths for sale
Below right – Woman selling Tiv a'nger material in an open market



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13

My father wrapping himself in the Tiv a'nger

Pedagogy of the a'nger

When I first started thinking about this thesis title, I began to ponder on what pedagogy meant to me, and what if anything did it have to do with a piece of cloth. I was anxious that the a'nger would not be a word many people outside the Tiv tribe would relate to.

After some research, I discovered that the etymology of the word pedagogy comes from the Greek word "pedagogue", which means a slave who escorted a child to school (McLaren, 2015). Using a pedagogical frame,

McLaren asks us to ponder the nature of pedagogy when he writes "one might ask, what does it mean to walk, to stand, to stand tall, to stand up to, to stand for or to stand with?" (p. xv). It means constructing ways of teaching or imparting knowledge, with this knowledge,

I began to realize that theorizing about the a'nger would allow me to share my stories about my background and culture, after all that is what pedagogy encourages us to do (Deniston-Trochta, 2003). Ladson-Billing (1995) makes a critical point when she writes about the importance of linking schooling and culture. She calls for a strategy where schools implement culturally relevant pedagogy for students. In her study, she shows how the failure of the school systems to integrate culture in the curriculum for indigenous and African American students has led to limited academic success. Ladson-Billing argues that educators can improve pedagogy by allowing students to use their home language in doing assignments. Students should be encouraged to speak and write in languages that they are knowledgeable and comfortable using. The

If pedagogy is understood as "leading" children into the world of their community and culture, then the question becomes: who will lead them where and why? If pedagogy is understood as "preparing" children for tomorrow, which tomorrow?

Van Manen, 2015, p. 43

In the classroom of culturally relevant teachers, students are expected to engage the world and others critically.

Ladson-Billing, 1995, p, 162

pedagogy of weaving the Tiv a'nger into my narrative allows me to create a space of my own, where I am at ease to write and speak. This pedagogy gives me a site to link my cultural background with scholarship. A pedagogy of weaving the a'nger allows me to situate my narrative into broader sociopolitical discourses that query gender, race and class issues.

Van Manen (2016) writes that pedagogy is “about doubting, questioning, and reflecting on our actions and practices” (p. 33). I am reflecting on my own lived in experiences and how I see myself in the world. I am thinking about all the things I was taught as a child, about culture, family life, marriage, religion, and how to be in the world. The pedagogy of the a'nger allows me to pause, reflect, and meditate on my choices as a traveller, sojourner, woman, mother and feminist.

The Tiv people have their unique ways of being and practices that dated back before the colonization of the land. The Tiv people practiced body decoration including colouring of feet, palms, nails and skin with henna, and chalks. Traditionally people had tattoos and scarifications all over their bodies, some of the types of popular Tiv tattoos and scarifications include ikpur, ivev, kusa, shondo, tema adzongo and gufulu (Waapela, 2014, p.166). The Tiv people have a rich history of architecture where the houses, pots and calabashes are decorated to symbolize meanings. Music and dancing are also a part of Tiv culture.

Music in Tiv language is pronounced *ityoolugh*; this means a combination of musical instruments, melodic and rhythmic sounds. The musical instruments are divided into idiophones, aerophones, membranophones, cordophones and electrophones. The Swange, spirited dance is one of the most popular dances. In swange music, different instruments are used, they include gbande (drums), Gida (trumpet) and Kwen (gong) (Tsevende, Agber, Iorngurum & Ugbagir, 2013). In Figure 10 below, is a collage of CDs showing different types of Tiv folk music. Kwagh hii is a popular theatrical event of the Tiv people; it dramatizes folklore and stories through puppets and masquerades.



Figure 14



Figure 15

A group of Tiv musicians in Tiv traditional clothes at a wedding ceremony in Tiv land



Figure 16

A popular Swange musician in a'nger cloth at a wedding ceremony in Tiv land
Picture taken by my father



Figure 17

A group of Tiv musicians dressed in a'nger clothing.
Picture taken by my father



Figure 18

A group of female Tiv dancers in Tiv traditional clothing at a church in Vandeikya local government.

Picture taken by my father

Electrophones -These are instruments in which an electrical current aid is used to amplify the sound of an instruments.

Membranophones

-Skin sounders – mostly drums, they include gbande, genga, ajo, akerangu, kunkun, indyer, akerangu, kunkun and tsorugh.

Aerophones – Gida (trumpet), ajev, akya (flute), Korugh (horn), bagpie, (azongu).

Idiophones – are known as self-sounders, they combine the properties of a vibrator and resonator. These include the Kwen (gong), indyer, gbagede, ilyu, clappers, silt drums, asav (sticks), tubes, rattles, jingles, shells, amen (bells), gbange (xylophones) and metallophones.

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Figure 19

Musical instruments of the Tiv NKST Church "Mzough-U-Kase" Meeting of Women.



Figure 20

My grandmother, Alukpam Iyortyer with Tiv tribal facial "ukari" marks. These were permanent beauty marks that were in vogue before the advent of the European colonization of Tiv land. Today tribal marks are not widely used.



Figure 21

Right – Philip Zegetar
and Mercy Torkwase
Iyortyer - My mother



Figure 22

Left - my mother and father in a'nger clothing at a wedding ceremony

Figure 23

Right – My father and mother in Tiv Traditional cloth





Figure 24

Left - My mother and father in Tiv traditional clothing.



Figure 27

Left - My father and mother, Torkwase and Philip Zegetar Iyortyer dressed in Nigerian traditional clothes standing next to a local Tiv chief at a wedding reception

Figure 28

Right - My father, Shagbaor Philip Zegetar Iyortyer in full Tiv a'nger regalia. He is holding two spears and on his left shoulder he is carry the native Tiv bag made of leather.



Figure 23

Left - My grandmother, Alupkam Iyortyer wearing one of the popular Tiv clothes known as Iviav-ityo.



Figure 24

Right - My father, mother, sisters and brother standing in front of our house in Abuja, Nigeria. I am standing on the far left.



Figure 25

Right – at my traditional wedding dressed in Tiv traditional Iviav-ityo cloth





Figure 26

Left – at my
traditional wedding
dressed in Tiv
traditional cloth in my
village, Vandiekya.

Figure 27

Right – My sister's
wedding, dressed in Tiv
A'nger



The Tiv culture is part of who I am. I grew up appreciating, admiring and loving the people and land. At the same time, I am able to reject some of the practices and beliefs of the Tiv culture that I disagree with, particularly those customs and traditions that continue to oppress and

discriminate against women and girls. For example, some Tiv scholars have argued that women are subservient to men. Makar (1994) writes that:

house wives abandon domestic chores and their husbands and children to attend Christian meetings or religious rituals. Their not returning home promptly has apparently brought about the breakdown of marriage and juvenile delinquency.

(p. 195)

I am mindful of some the beliefs of the land that continue to repress women. Van Manan (2016) writes that “it is clear that not all knowledge inherent in the various cultures can be passed on to young people without selecting, shaping, organizing, and structuring that knowledge for teaching and learning” (p. 43). Weaving the Tiv a’nger into life writing, is a process of embracing, rejecting and carving out paths where we are able to hold ourselves accountable, this is where the a’nger comes in as a site for questioning. In weaving in the a’nger I am constantly asking myself, how am I representing myself to the world. How do my children see me? Am I showing my children how to be able to ask themselves, “Is this good for me? Is this good for the people around me? Is this right or wrong? Is this the way I should act and speak?”. Am I allowing my son and daughter to be themselves and ask as many questions as they would like? In querying Tiv cultural norms and traditions, I am mindful of Achebe’s warnings that:

This is where the writer's integrity comes in. Will he be strong enough to overcome the temptation to select only those facts which flatter him? If he succumbs he will have

branded himself as an un- trustworthy witness. But it is not only his personal integrity as an artist which is involved. The credibility of the world he is attempting to re-create will be called to question and he will defeat his own purpose if he is suspected of glossing over inconvenient facts. We cannot pretend that our past was one long, technicolour idyll. We have to admit that like other people's pasts ours had its good as well as its bad sides.

(1973, p. 9)

A pedagogy of the a'nger is about living, teaching and learning, resistance, encouragement, tensions, hope and transforming challenges into opportunities and possibilities. Drawing from Achebe (1973), I continue to be responsible for my personal integrity as a writer.

Chapter Three: Weaving One

Road trip to Vandiekya.

Travelling to Vandiekya is always a spectacular event.

The journey begins when mum announces the news of the impending journey.

*I go into my mother's library where the boxes for the journey are kept,
boxes we have brought from Europe.*

*On the wall of the library hangs a tray I gave to my mother when I was 10 years old,
It reads "lord, help me to accept the things,
I cannot change, change the things that I can change,
And wisdom to know the difference".*

*I take the boxes to the room I share with my sisters.
I begin to pack, - toothpaste, toothbrush, body cream, soap,
milk, milo, sugar, cornflakes, clothes, pajamas, pants, shoes,
I pack everything I will need for four weeks.*

*In the morning, the journey will begin.
Morning comes, I look outside.
There are three cars packed outside, washed, fueled, ready to roll.
Everyone in the house is travelling to Vandiekya.*

*Heavy traffic at AYA junction.
It will take seven hours to travel from Abuja to Vandiekya.
The drivers speed through the potholed infested roads.
Lafia, Akwanga, Makurdi, Gboko.*

We arrive in Vandiekya local government.

In the middle of the town, there is a super market on the left.

Huts, brick houses, a church on the right that my grandmother attends.

Once I saw a dead man on the road.

As we drive along, there is a primary health care facility on the left.

The car passes a weak bridge.

There is a corn field on the left.

We turn to the right.

What could be more memorable than a road trip to Vandiekya?.

Mama will be waiting, anxiously, excitedly...

My cousins, the neighbours and locals will all be there to welcome us...

Jumping, and clapping as the convoy of cars pulls up.

They love it when we come around.

I, too, am excited to see them, I love to hear their stories.

I love them and their stories.

I guess one cannot separate the two.

The journey ends when we leave Vandiekya.

The visit to my mama's house is always full of memories.

I pack up the memories into small wicker baskets.

I embed the memories in my mind.

Figure 28

Right - The road leading to my
father's country home in
Vandiekya.



Figure 29

Left - A supermarket in
Vandiekya.



Figure 30

Left - The primary health clinic in Vandiekya local government.

Figure 31

Right - Traditional dancing troupe entertaining the villagers at a Wedding Reception at St Simeon Catholics Church, Bebe, Vandiekya



Figure 32

Right - My father plucking a mango from one of the trees in his country home.



Figure 33

Left - View of the surrounding farmlands from the first floor patio of my father's country home in Vandiekya.





Figure 34

Above - My father's country home in Vandiekya

My first memories of going to Vandiekya were to visit my grandmother. I was 7 or 8 years old and it was the summer holidays. I would return to the city, Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria where I lived with my parents and siblings and go back to Vandiekya summer after summer to visit my grandmother until I left for England. I was 16 years old. Some of the fondest memories I have of visiting my grandmother were planting rice in the shallow river behind my grandmother's house. Early in the morning, I would wake up, fetch some cold water from the bore hole that my father had dug up for my grandmother's house and her neighbors. I would take the water into the bathroom. The bathroom shower located in the house, but there was hardly any water ever coming out of the shower. My cousins who lived with my grandmother would sometimes boil a pot of water for me to mix with the cold water from the borehole. This style of bathing was very different from what I was used to in the city. In the city, we had running tap water. However, the experience of having a bath without running tap water made me realize that

even though I was so young the things I took for granted were not available to everyone. Simple things like water, food, clothes and shoes were a luxury to the villagers, but the children were always so happy, laughing, chasing chickens, climbing mango trees, planting rice and yams in their farms, harvesting and telling each other stories. Nature was everywhere.

My grandmother had goats that were very precious to her. I remember counting at least 16 goats one summer. During one of the summers that I spent with my grandmother, one of the goats was bitten by a snake. It died. My grandmother was very sad, it was as if a relative had died. I remember praying that the goat would go to heaven and always remember that while he was with us, we loved him.

My grandmother's goats

Sixteen goats, that's how many goats Mama had.

The goats had a home made out of wooden planks and barbed wires

*They were the happiest goats in Vandiekya,
at least that's what I thought from my child eyes.*

*The goats had a set men,
breakfast at 10.00 am every morning, and
more food on top of yesterday's unfinished food.*

*Mama would feed her goats with a choice of
leaves from the mango tree,
the peels from the back of yams,
the peels from the back of cassava.*

*Daddy goats,
mummy goats,
baby goats,
pregnant goats,*

*Black goats,
black goats with a splash of white,
like the splash of white paint on black,
like a picture from a child's painting,
brown goats, dark brown goats.*

*Goats that smelt like goats,
with their slender necks and short legs.
I can still hear them blah blahing away,
seeking for attention from mama.*

Naughty goats, they were.

Breaking through the front of the not so secured door

*You would sometimes run along into mama's farm and trample upon her
corn plants.*

Naughty goats, you would sometimes eat mama's washing.

*Naughty goats, you sometimes got up to no good, but whatever you did, you
always got away with it, because you were loved.*

The Tiv culture is centered on the tribes' beliefs and understanding about the origins and evolution of the universe and what they believe is natural and what is not. Literacy métissage offers ways for writing and telling creation stories auto/ethno/graphically. In the same way, I use

the a'nger as a metaphor for telling auto/ethno/graphical creation stories of the Tiv ancestors; how do the stories I have heard from my father fit into this great narrative of culture and nationhood? The Tiv people believe that *Aondo* is *gba aondo* (nature), and that Aondo is also a supreme being that created *tar* (land, earth/world). In naming children, the Tiv people use Aondo as a syllabus in the names. Some Tiv names beginning with “aondo” are:

Aondogu – There is a god

Aondofa- God knows

Aondona- God gave

Aondohemba- God is greater

AondoGhayange- God created the sun

Aondo Ikerator - God's Testicle

Aondo Abaverijuwa- God's giant penis

It is not uncommon for African names to have a link, relationship to god, nature or ancestral links. Names are cultural, symbolic, and forms the identity of the named (Ofovwe & Awariefe, 2009; Sue & Teller, 2007; Okpalaoka, 2014).

But what is in a name?

Everything!

In many African cultures, names have meanings, they are connected to ancestral links, tribes and families. There is a local saying in Tiv language “*iti kolun o*”, meaning “*you are what*

your name means". The naming of infants in many African countries is considered a significant act. Okpalaoka (2014) writes that "given to us at birth, our names carry within them the history, culture and identity of our family heritage" (p. 101). A name is usually the first exposure to who one is as a person, it has geographical links to the place one comes from, but it also a place for naming and shaming, not just in "foreign lands", but nationally because of issues of tribalism that define the fabric of many African nations where colonization, mapping and remapping have created feelings of mistrust among the various tribes. When I am in Nigeria, and people ask me what my name is, I respond "*Hembadoon Iyortyer*", and sometimes this is a foretell of the way I will be received. It tells the receiver of the evidence that I am a Tiv woman by tribe. All the stereotypes and suspicions about the Tiv people enter into the conversation. Sometimes the conversation goes, "*who is your father?*", "*which local government are you from?*". Depending on whether the person asking is non-judgmental, or Tiv, you may be received warmly, or you may be received half-heartedly.

Abroad, as an international student, the sound of my name has sometimes been a place for naming and shaming, "*hemer..ba...don... what?*". Recently, at a bank, here in Ottawa, a cashier said to me, "*I wouldn't even try to pronounce that, do you have a simpler name?*". Initially, and shamefully, to make my name "simpler", I resorted to calling myself "*hemba*", I had even gone so far as to rename myself the biblical name "Rachel", to make it simpler for the pronouncer, my shamer to pronounce. In the novel *Shame*, Rushdie writes that "shame is like everything else; live with it for long enough and it becomes part of the furniture" (Rushdie cited in Towers, 1983), but even with furniture, a time comes when it becomes old and rusty, the wear and tear of that old

couch from years of overuse, or the mold on the shower curtains calls for the replacing of old furniture. On my official documents, my name is *Hembadoon*, but I have become “*hemba*”, not from a site of shaming, or inferiority or the “self-deprecation” that Freire (1992) writes about in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; not from internalizing the ideology of the dominant that Freire (2000) describes in the *Pedagogy of Hope*. I am “*hemba*” because this is my story, my retaking.

The site of the a’nger is a site for storytelling, it is also a site for tension. Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers and Leggo (2009) write that “always, we are caught in a place of tension between telling the truth and fearing the truth” (p. 177). It is this tension as a site for blending and weaving that my thesis is centered on.



Figure 35

Left - Neighborhood children using manual hand pump to fetch water from my father's compound in the village.



Figure 36

Right -Typical Fadama rice farm in Vandiekya.
Pictures taken by
my father

Figure 37

Right - Rice harvesting by local farmers at spring rice Fadama farm behind my father's house in Vandiekya (1)



Figure 38

Right - Rice harvesting by local farmers at spring rice Fadama farm behind my father's house in Vandiekya (2)



Enter the a'nger

*A'nger is weaving her stories from home,
stories conjoined,
mixed from different culture,
from here and there,
creating fertility
and new life.*

*A'nger not anger guides her path,
travelling, shifting, the seeds are planted as
tales to be retold
from the heart, the depth as deep as the well
behind her father's house.*

A'nger is watching over her little children.

*TO HER she whispers, do not be afraid,
you will overcome the silence.
Your voice is on its way back to you,
you will sing, dance, feel the wind on the mountain top,
find yourself, glorious, blessed child.*

*TO HIM, she says, be brave
this journey will make your stronger.
You will soar like an eagle, see the world, ride the waves,
sit by the ocean, feel the earth, and the secrets of the mysteries,
your courage and passion will
take you places I have never been.*

*A'nger is guiding HER out of the storm,
 shaking the shackles of the past aside,
 she reassures me with a stern yet loving voice,
 you will love and be loved
 again.*

Stewing hybridity (1)

Hybridity is the mixture produced when two or more elements are fused together. It is a process or the moment of homogenization when dissimilar entities are combined and exist in complement with each other...hybridity involves the melange of an incongruous array of genders, classes, nationalities, religions and ethnicities.

(Sanga, 2001, p. 75)

Berry (2017) writes that as a Black, American-born woman with Bajan, Bahamian, Irish and Cherokee links, her voice as a scholar of curriculum studies has been developed through her experiences, education, school and society. As a Black, African woman schooling abroad and traversing back and forth between African culture and Western culture, I too am developing my scholarship and finding my voice, as I navigate the intersections between the Tiv culture and Western ways of life, between the old home and the new home. Wang (2004) writes about the tangled interconnections that comes with traversing two cultures, yet this state of being was a reality for me and all my siblings who left Nigeria as young adults.

Sherborne school for girls

Two of my sisters came to England where they began on the path of international studies in independent schools. My older sister arrived in Sherborne School for Girls in the summer of 1995. I remember because I escorted her to England with my father. I was still in a boarding school in Nigeria. We arrived a day before school resumed and we stayed over in a bed and breakfast with my father. I remember it being quite a funny night,

because we went down to have dinner, and we were served food that was quite alien to my sister and I. We ate the bread, picked at the rice, and abandoned the rest of the healthy meal. My father was quite upset at us, he scolded us and insisted that we finish our food. I

If it's hard to be a stranger, it is even more so to stop being one.
(Trinh, 1991, p. 13)

remember him saying “look at me, I finished my food, now I expect that you do the same”, but we were having none of it. We sat there amused and giggling at my father's exasperated expression, as he huffed and puffed in between insisting we finish our food. He looked like he wished he could stuff the rest of the un-liked food down our throats. This made us giggle more. Finally, we were sent off to our rooms, giggling like the two teenage girls that we were.



Figure - 39

Left - My sisters in a lift in an apartment in Barcelona where my younger sister lives.



Figure 40

Left - Left to right - Friends, my sister and I in Newcastle upon Tyne.



Figure 41 – Above - My younger sister and I in Swindon, United Kingdom.

Stewing hybridity (2)

I really began to get immersed in the meaning and significance of hybridity and third space when I began my MA Ed program at the University of Ottawa. It was a topic that fascinated me. I wanted to understand why all those years as an international student and a naturalized British citizen, I felt like I belonged to England, other times I felt like I did not quite completely belong to England. Doing my A'levels in Oxforshire; at university, in the law classrooms, having pursued three degrees at three different universities in England, I sometimes felt like an outsider, an imposter, an “other”. Issues of hybridity, language, ethnicity, and decolonization were not part of the curriculum, and even if they were, we as international law students were certainly not aware of it. Now, having been exposed to these issues in the Faculty of Education Concentration: Societies, Cultures and Languages, I have begun to wonder

how law schools can decolonize their curriculum and make law classrooms more welcoming for international students.

Throughout the entire time I studied in the United Kingdom, I have never been taught by a black professor. Indeed, at the time I was in higher education institutions, I did not imagine that black professors existed or that they existed to teach law in British universities. How can we as Black African migrants see ourselves in academia, when we cannot see ourselves? How can academia be more inclusive of the “others”? Figures published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency in 2017 showed that “no black academics have worked in senior management positions in any British university for the past three years” (Adams, 2017). The same report showed that universities employ more black staff as cleaners, receptionists or porters than as lecturers or professors. A year after I finished my Ph.D in 2010, the Higher Education Statistics Agency revealed that of the 14,000 British professors in the UK, only 50 were black (Shepherd, 2011). Black professors made up just 0.4 percent of all British professors, even though 2.8 percent of the population in England and Wales are Black African or Black Caribbean. Of the 50 Black professors in the UK, only 10 of them were Black women. I had dreams of becoming a professor; however, the reality for me at that time was with such damning statistics, I had a very slim chance of being let through the heavy bolted doors of academia. With such realities, I continued to wander across geographical spaces, bent on acquiring more knowledge. I imagined that this would eventually enable me to achieve my dream of acquiring a tenure track position.



Figure 42

Collage of my degree ceremonies - on the far left - LL.B, first degree from the University of Cardiff, Centre, LL.M degree, second degree from the University of Hull.
Far right, Ph.D, third degree from Durham University

In his introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1952) writes, “I honestly think, however, its time some things were said. Things I’m going to say, not shout. I’ve given up shouting. A long time ago” (p.xi). International schooling for some international students abroad can be a space for reflection about who one is becoming and has to become in order to be. Fanon sadly describes a situation where for black people:

there is only one way out, and it leads to the white world. Hence his constant preoccupation with attracting the white world, his concern with being as powerful as the white man, and his determination to acquire the properties of a coating...the black man will endeavour to seek admittance to the white sanctuary from within.

(p. 33-34)

Surely, this should not be the only way out; a space can be made for minorities to enter the privileged gates of academia. I see the a’nger as a site for occupying a third space in which

minorities including indigenous people gradually rising from centuries of hiddenness can emerge. A space can also be made for the immigrant population to emerge; this is where the pedagogical potential of the a'nger comes into play. The a'nger can be a site where a person can have origins from a place, yet belong to another place.

Writing about third space, Bhabha (1994) states that “these in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation.” (p.2). Third space for international students offers a place of performance in the fields of mobility, life writing and place, where historical understandings of culture and issues of race, gender and class can be a base for knowledge production (Brunsma & Delgado, 2008).

Being able to dwell in a third space, a place of “doubling”, a place of a'nger-ing requires that one is able to easily look in the mirror and be contented with what one sees. Mirrors are objects that replicate light in ways that are proportionate to their original objects.



Figure 43

The mirror is an object of confirmation. It shows us how others see us. However, it also reminds us of the menacing history of uprootedness and dislocation that accompanied the Arab and Transatlantic slave trade beginning in Africa from 8th century AD to the end of the 19th century.

For centuries, Black people in Africa had been captured in raids or kidnapped from their land, taken to trading ports by slave traders where they were traded for objects, such as mirrors.

The mirror allows us to see the difference that people see, the person looking in the mirror can either see self-loathing or difference and beauty. The broken mirror is as valuable to as an unbroken mirror. Rushdie (1991) writes, “The broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one which is supposedly unflawed” (p. 11).

Climb upon the mountain, too, but it's the valley that I find you,
and I see what is true
In the mirror is this me? Am I all that I could be?
They tell you follow a distant star, a journey that will take you far
from all, that you might be.
In the mirror is this me? Am I all that I might be?
Just imagine how I might be, if only we could see

(Douglas & Carless, 2013, p. 96)

At a conference on Migrating Words and Worlds, Pan Africanism Updated, Saadawi (1999) delivered a paper entitled, “why keep asking me about my identity?”. Saadawi writes:

I wasted many years of my life before I would feel comfortable with a brown skin, before I gained sufficient self-confidence and understanding to see that brown skin could be different and yet beautiful, and before I could wash the coating of white powder off and live in the world with my real face, my real identity.

(p. 9)

Difference is a reality for many international students like myself. Hardt and Negri (2000) write that” hybridity itself is a realized politics of difference, setting difference to play across

boundaries” (p. 145). Writing about the difficulty of turning abstract theories such as Bhabha’s abstract discourse of hybridity, Cuninghame (2008) asks us to consider situations where people feel that they belong in a third space that is both and neither. In my case neither Nigerian/Tiv nor Western/English. I think of people that see themselves as neither here nor there as fence people. Sometimes the best place to sit is the fence; there you get a better view of things.

In the *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie (2006) uses the metaphor “chutnification” to signify hybridity and the way in which the protagonist, Saleem Sinai begins to see his life, as similar to the process of marinating to produce pickles. To produce pickles different ingredients including raw materials, fruits, spices, vegetables, vinegar, fish, garlic, guram, masala, cinnamon, cucumber, cumin, fenugreek, aubergines, coriander are mixed together to produce pickles.

As a Nigerian born migrant/international student who still cooks Nigerian food for my children, I prefer to liken my idea of hybridity to the process of making Nigerian stew. When I was growing up, my mother rarely cooked; she only cooked at the weekend and at special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, birthdays and when we had special guest. My mother was a professional woman, and oversaw buying food for the house and stocking up the fridge with all sorts of goodies that my siblings and all the other multitude of relatives who lived with us liked. But, when my mother did go into the kitchen to cook, you could expect the most delicious meal that you could ever dream of. To make stew, my mother blends tomatoes, onions, habanero pepper and fries it in vegetable oil, she boils different type of meat such as diced beef, chicken, cow tail and fish. She pours in curry, thyme, pepper, knorr cubes, onga cubes, chicken seasoning, maggi, and salt. I envisage stewing hybridity as marinating, mixing and churning together my

lived experiences, travels, schooling, dreams, beliefs, memories, and ideas to produce a hyphenated identity.

Stewing together identities as a metaphor for a'nger can be a place of tension, because it allows a space where two differing worldviews convene. Rushdie writes that “sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools” (1991, p. 15). Such are the tensions that emerge from balancing two cultures, two lives, two personalities in one body. Achebe (1975) decries the fate of African intellectuals, many of whom live in diaspora when he writes:

Africa has had such a fate in the world that the very adjective African can call up hideous fears of rejection. Better then to cut all the links with this homeland, this liability, and become in one giant leap the universal man.

(p. 27)

Nayar (2014) writes about his preference for using the term transnational to diasporic, he explains:

diasporic “suggest an individual’s linkage to both the former home and the present one, to a culture left behind and a culture now adopted”. In a sense, “diasporic suggest two sites. “Transnational,” on the other hand suggest multiplicity of sites, and more than two affiliations. If diaspora suggest notions of former home and present one, transnational suggest homes. Diaspora seems to make a linearity - from former to a present. The transnational suggest, in contrast, a floating condition of borderlessness – an “across rather than “from-to” situation”.

(p.18)

In locating my lived in experiences in a multiplicity of sites, I turn to stories as a source of inspiration in which to locate my a'nger. Angus (1995) writes that the “Elders told us stories. They did not tell us what to do or how to do it or figure out the world for us” (p.11). In remembering stories, I am remembering the journeys I have embarked on as student, traveller, sojourner.

Chapter Four: Weaving two: Stories are gifts

To tell a story is to pass on the wisdom of one's ancestors. To whom the gift of story is given, she must pass on that gift to the new generation for safe keeping. Stories are not just material gifts to be stored on shelves for decoration. Stories are told at borderlands and frontiers, on migration journeys. The female travelling writer unaware that she has a story to tell creates ways of sharing her stories in the hope that, perhaps the light will flow through the twilight of uncertainty and judgment. Stories fluctuate and shift, they are reproduced and replicated time and time again as travellers move across borders and boundaries, moving frenziedly, seeking adventure, searching for sprouting plains, fleeing homes that have become dwellings of ghosts, only to discover that once you walk through the mysterious doors of leaving home, you can never go back, never look back, never return.

A word of caution

In your silent movements, be still.

When the words are gone, listen carefully,

you are experiencing the text,

the text is preparing you to

reclaim.

You will feel, hear and see

again.

Follow the silence.

Experience the tension.

Stories possess a spiritual ingredient that connects the receiver to the land/lands that she inhabits. Indigenous storytellers remind us that, “stories are what we use to fight off illness and death, they make medicines and are a healing art” (Trinh, 2011, p. 17). Healing, not just from illness and the inevitability of the ever-present threatening graveyard, looming and growing, but healing from adverse elements of being denied entrance into wholeness. My mother often reminds me about the importance of good health; she says, “a person may never appreciate good health, until they are sick”. In other words, if you are healthy enough to see the words you read, you tell your eyes, “thank you”, if your voice is strong enough to speak your story, you tell your tongue “thank you”. If your ears can hear the "other", you tell your ears “thank you”. Still, we linger halfway in, halfway out, somewhere in the middle. How many of us have ever left a story halfway? A story is a sacred offering, a gift wrapped in roses and twine, an artefact of beauty, an object of love, follow the gift. Unfinished and unsettled, on this halfway journey are halfway corridors of halfway encounters, assembled yet shifting. How then shall I tell this story? Somewhere in the middle, I tell myself, if “you are prepared to tell your story, then forget yourself, you are the instrument; the story is the thing” (Rollins, 1957, p. 166).

Kwagh hii hegen

Unongun u hiden a shagba u ior mba tumen ikondu i a'nger

Mbamaren am vea se shin tar u mbakpenev

U fan er ior mba a'nyer mbanyeren itakerada mba umbur

man eren akaa atse man wasen mbayev usoon u lun onov Tiv.

Translation

*The story has begun,
 the struggle to reclaim the hopes of a'nger weavers.
 My ancestors will be pleased,
 they smile from the other world,
 knowing that a'nger writers are reclaiming, recreating...
 decolonizing the children.*

In weaving a pedagogy of Tiv a'nger into life writing, I am drawn to Trinh (1992), as she writes that “stories, songs, music, proverbs, as well as people’s daily interactions, certainly constitutes for me the most moving sources of inspiration” (p.148).

I grew up visiting the village during the holidays. Christmas was the highlight of the year where all my cousins would converge in Benue state in Nigeria to celebrate, share stories, and dance under the midnight moon; in the day time, we would jump into the convoy of cars heading out to picnics by the beach in my mother’s village, Kastina Ala.

In Abuja, my maternal great grandmother, Mama Lydia, lived with us; her presence in my life was how I learnt to speak the Tiv language. My grandmother had an army of proverbs, cocked, ready to haul out at us when we were being naughty:

De de ka chi, no ro to to ka ko...

If you were out playing with the neighborhood kids and were not back before 6:00 pm, you knew you were in big trouble. Mama would be waiting by the gate with a broom, ready to smack you when you came in through the gates.

During the holidays, when we went to the village, mama went with us, she had grown up in the village and had loads of friends. Mama would make the rounds calling on her friends, and I would go with her, listening to her and her friends speaking the Tiv language. Mama did not speak English, so we learnt Tiv from being her presence. Mama had many stories to tell me about how life was back when she was a child. She was married into a polygamous marriage when she was a child. That was the tradition in those days. Men married many wives, so that the wives could join them in farming. It was akin to a business, I was told my great grandfather had as many as twelve wives. Living with so many other wives was hard, especially if you were a young bride. The other wives who were older made life unbearable for the younger wives. One day mama ran away with her daughter. These stories my mama told me were in the Tiv language, and I understood her.

The Tiv language, symbolized by the a'nger holds a special place in my story because it was the only language I spoke with my paternal grandmother, maternal grandmother and maternal great grandmother when I was a child. There were no grandfathers, they had all died. So, when I think about the a'nger, the Tiv language, it beckons me not to forget to remember the language and the people that taught me the language. In a speech by Achebe (1975), he asks a philosophical question, when he says:

Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it.

(p. 62)

I have always agreed with Achebe that I have been given the (Tiv) language, and therefore I have a duty to use it. However the trouble with using my language is I am speaking, but you do not recognise my speech. I am writing, but you cannot read the phrases. I am singing, but my children do not understand my a'nger songs. I am humming:

abaka wam tundu vor, tim kpam,

kwase ka abaka tundu vea

tim kpam

A sweet melody meddles the air, as a symphony of blackbirds chirp away at the tip of dawn. The language is becoming my tormentor as my fading tongue slips away from me for lack of speaking. Achebe says he chooses to write in "African English" to express:

...a new voice coming out of Africa, speaking of African experience in a world-wide language. So, my answer to the question, can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing? Is certainly yes. If on the other hand you ask: Can he ever learn to use it like a native speaker? I should say, I hope not. It is neither necessary nor desirable for him to be able to do so. The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience. I have in mind here the writer who has something new, something different to say. The nondescript writer has little to tell us, anyway, so he might as well yell it in conventional language and get it over with.

(1975, p. 61)

In embarking on writing a pedagogy of weaving Tiv a'nger into life writing, I too have chosen to write about my experiences of travel as an African international student through the Tiv a'nger in a world-wide language. Through this project, I hope to share my stories, and by doing so open generative possibilities for other international students to share stories of their cultures, experiences with international travel and schooling abroad. Berry (2017) writes that “my curriculum voice, one that articulates what is deemed worth knowing, is one I inherited from my ancestors... These undocumented truths carry as much as the essays, research, literatures of African scholars of days, years and centuries past” (p. 54). I too have found my curriculum voice through the knowledge passed on to me by my ancestors. I hope to contribute to curriculum and pedagogy by sharing my experiences and memories of my lived in experiences. Indeed, as an international student, I am convinced that the Tiv a'nger carries much weight and holds much truth for me. In using the a'nger to share my accounts of walking, wandering, wavering and living in different geographical locations, and at the intersections of different cultures, I hope to open dialogues about my lived experiences to provoke conversations around African cultures in the classroom.

It is my intention to trace and write about events in my life in a bid to locate new spaces for conversations around curriculum. Through this project, I hope to call for talk around how our classrooms can invite stories to be shared. How can stories open new possibilities in curriculum and pedagogy? How can we create engaging and inclusive spaces for different experiences to be

shared in our classrooms? In weaving together my stories, language, history and culture, I want to contribute to a curriculum that invites and embraces diversity.

Stories

In writing this thesis, I have had to look back at my journey to the place that I am now, today, at this moment. I am reminded by Achebe (1990) that indeed stories are not innocent. With the news of killings, violence, slave trade, kidnappings, sexual assaults on our daily screens every day, there is a

tendency to want to shield our children from the news to preserve their innocence. This has been the case for me especially with having children that are extremely curious and inquisitive. My son wants to know everything. He asks me, “mum, how can God be so loving, if he allows the children of Syria to be killed?”, “mum, what is racism?”. Sometimes, I don’t know what to tell him. Should I continue to shield him in the hope that when he finds out the answers to the very complex questions he asks me, he will be old enough not to be a child, not to be so innocent? To understand, that there are inequalities and injustices in this world. Yet, I am reminded that all stories are transient and all stories have an end. In the *Inheritance of Loss*, the narrator writes that “there were other parts of the tale that none of them would be able to piece together, of course, for some of the narrative had been lost” (Desai, 2006, p.24).

I read lots of English books ... I did not see myself as an African to begin with. I took sides with the white men against the savages... But a time came when I realised ... I was not on Marlowe’s boat steaming up the Congo in *Heart of Darkness*. I was one of those strange beings jumping up and down on the river bank making horrid faces... That is when I realised that Stories are not innocent.

Achebe, 1990, p. 7.

Rosenwald (1992) writes that “the stories people tell about their lives are themselves compromises undergone on demand, arbitrary stopping places in a ceaseless groping toward fulfilment and completion – like photographs that seem to freeze a continuous motion” (p. 266). Stories of home and estrangement are the encounters that come with being a stranger on a journey. “A story is told to invite talk around it... one can receive it as a profound gift from teller to teller, handed down from generation to generation...and yet never depleted in its ability to instruct, to delight and to move” (Trinh, 2011, p.15). Stories are told in languages dancing around the fireplace of ancient traditions that shape the lives of those that encounter them. Stories emerge from the cultures that tell the stories. Indeed culture is the firewood that burns the stories as charcoal, keeping them alive for the future generations to stay warm.

Trinh (1996) writes:

The text here is built on traces left by many other narratives. It sets in motion a process of multiple hybridities. From ear to eye, eye to hand, or hand to heart and mind; from the spoken to the written word and vice versa.

cited in Bourdier & Trinh, 1996, p.131

Where would I be without my father’s stories? He tells me his stories so that I can, in turn, tell my son and daughter. He has told me how he came to be in the land of Mbakaange and how his father and the Mbasharagba kindred came to be in the land of Vandiekya ward in Benue State, Nigeria. He tells me these stories so that I can turn his words to text, and use them as beautiful descriptions and musical words of wisdom to guide my children and me as we walk, we wander across the great expanse of unsettling journeys. My father tells me about the power of geographical events, of the farming and harvest that take place in our village every year before the rainy season. The land must be tilled; the farmer must put his back into the labour for the harvest to be full. In a dry land, the

woman must make the long walk to the flowing stream to fetch water for the household. The story must go on and on, repeating traditions and rituals.

When I was growing up, I loved listening to stories that my paternal uncle told me about how his ancestors migrated to the land that they now call home. Late in the night under the mango tree, beneath the soothing drapes of the breezy night air, I would sit eagerly waiting to catch the words as if they were butterflies flying out of his mouth. My son loves to listen to my father, an architect, tell him stories of his journeys, the places he has been, his experiences, and how these have shaped his designs and the homes he has built. My son tells me he too like his grandfather wants to be an architect; he spends much of his time building fire stations, hospitals and churches with his lego. He uses his lego to create and tell stories through a child's eyes.

Listening to my father's stories, I am transported to a time long ago before he was born. Rollins (1957) writes "as far back as one may remember, people told stories to each other; and as far back as memory goes, people listened to the stories" (p. 161). As I write about these stories, I draw from a pedagogy of weaving the Tiv a'nger, always aware that:

one writes, and one moves in one's text more as a guest than as a host...(creating) an endless process of oscillation between the self and the other within a performance of language, that is also to say within a world of complex intersubjective relationships.

(Trinh cited in Bourdier and Trinh, 1996, p. 131)

On storytelling, Achebe (1988) records in his book that “story-telling enables us to encounter in safe, manageable dimensions of make believe the very same threats to integrity that may assail the psyche in real life” (p. 117). Before the colonisation of Africa, many African tribes used storytelling as a means of educating and passing on the histories, rituals, taboos, religion and trade secrets of their ancestors.

Figure 44

Right - Local gathering organized by my father for the children in the village, where my father tells the children his stories and how he was once like them. In events like these, my father provides food and drinks for the local children, and tells them stories that encourage s them.



Figure 45

Right - Event organised by my father to feed the women and children in his local community.



Figure 46

Above - Event organized by my father where the children gather together, to have fun and play games.

An invitation to enter more stories

Enter

Enter the a'nger

Enter tsobur of Zegetar Iyortyer Ikir Jua Agbechi Sharagba Kaange.

*Enter the sule with the local farmers, let Akombo create a pathway
for you to connect with us who live in between the depth and surface of the land.*

Let us sail through Zege Mgerem ma river Benue .

Our stories are honeyed tubes of bagpipes.

The skin sounders are playing gbande, genga and korugh by the river bank,

The mermaids and spirits dance with us.

Enter the seductive swange dance.

*The dancers move their hips seductively, inviting, flirting, with their enticing movements,
the kwen playing the kweng kweng sound.*

Enter the hut with the Tiv woman,

Transcending time, place, cultures and difference.

Tell me your stories

Braid one: My grandfather's story

I have always been curious about who my grandfather was, I never met him, he passed away before I was born. I have never seen a picture of him, I wonder what he looked like, who he was. My grandfather was a merchant. I think of him not as the merchant of Venice, but the merchant of Vandiekya. My father tells me his father had four wives. In those days polygamy was the norm. The colonial Christian influence had not yet penetrated the “hinterlands”, as it has today. Having more than one wife was part of the Tiv culture. Society accepted it; the women expected it. My grandfather was involved in the fish trade, that was his livelihood. Every so often, he

would trek to the River Benue, which was 179.0 kilometres away from his home in Vandeikya to purchase fish in large quantities to sell to the villagers. On the Benue river bank, he would smoke the fish on the fire to preserve it for the journey. My grandfather would use a cart made up of wheels and bamboo to load the fish, then he would begin the trek back home. The journey would take 5 days of walking. I imagine his wives and children, waiting anxiously for his return. I imagine, my grandfather would have always brought back treats for the children. To make such a long and tedious journey required hospitality along the road. The Tiv people were great at hospitality. I sometimes wonder if that was another world, another life, another existence, where people genuinely looked out for each other, invited the stranger to come into their homes without apprehension. Being a stranger did not presage danger. People were courteous and generous.

On the journey from Vandiekya to River Benue, my grandfather would stop at his friends' houses along the way to rest, sleep, eat and make merry with friends before continuing his journey. There were no cars then, no motorcycles. It was a plain simple life. The life was quite similar I imagine to what Chinua Achebe describes in "things fall apart", that is of course before things began to fall apart. Things began to fall apart when my grandfather began to feel driven out, pursued; he decided to move his family to Makurdi, the capital city of Benue where the river Benue is located. He wanted to move closer to the River bank where his trade was. He told his wives and children that he was going ahead to prepare a place, a home where they would come afterwards to join him. Before my grandfather left for Makurdi, he took my father and his brother to my grandmother's brother and asked him to take care of the boys. He said to him, "I will be

back soon, take care of my boys”. Soon was never to come. My father was only five years old. My grandfather was struck down with the yellow fever after one session of farming in Makurdi and died in the foreign land with no family member by his side. I imagine him with the fever, cold, headaches, muscle pains, jaundice, intoxication before giving up the ghost to join his ancestors beyond the grave. I imagine he must have been in anguish with the thought of what would happen to his wives and children when he was gone. I imagine, he must have tried everything he could to stay alive; stay alive, if not for himself then for them. There was no telephone back in those days to call and say goodbye. He must have hungered to hear a familiar voice, to tell him it was going to be okay. One thing he did manage to do before he died was send a messenger with a hat to my father. That was the only possession my grandfather passed on to my father, a hat. But what is in a hat? A hat full of love, regrets, apologies...

*Put on this hat, and feel my presence wherever you go, whoever you may be.
 Zegetar – the world is yours to see, to experience,
 do not be afraid,
 you will overcome.
 I am with you, always.*

My father has this hat until this very day.

Mosquitoes, the bearer of yellow fever

*Mosquito calls on us with a basket of yellow f*e*v*e*r on its back,
 an uninvited guest.
 I wonder why mosquito calls her offerings yellow?*

*Yellow makes me think of the sun, something nice...,
then I say to mosquito, "you should work on renaming,
but don't rename your offerings black fever because
black is beautiful,
and I am a shade of black.*

*Mosquito, may I make a suggestion,
why don't you call your offerings
Death Fever?
It would describe your offerings better,
don't you think?"*

*Still mosquito persists,
then I lash out at Mosquito - you come here buzzing arrogantly, with the melody of death,
pretending that your soothing sound will calm my nerves
after toiling all day at the farm, and under the scorching heat of the sun,
but you bring death and destruction,
tearing families apart,
leaving wives as widows, children as orphans,
leaving a deep void in my heart
that can never be filled; even from the soothing palm wine
that makes the locals forget their worries and sorrows.
You fly in with stories of horror,
snatching, stealing, you little atrocious executioner of joy,
and the promises that could have been.*

*The bite.
The bite of a thief.
The bite of the mosquito spreads the killing virus,*

*stolen from monkeys and other men to pass on to
other men,*

spreading impermanence.

Like a merciless plague, you take no pity on your victims.

You come in the night when they are unsuspecting and winding down to dream about tomorrow.

Buzzing around the room at night,

you bite.

Bitten.

You leave me no choice but to curse you,

banish you, you horrible concubine of heat, dank and dirty places.

Send in the doctor,

The pharmacist and the chemist to

fill my cup with chloroquine.

500mg, 1000mg. 5000mg.

Give me the dosage to save my grandfather.

The side effects may make my ears buzz,

send me chills and fever, seizures and mental hallucinations.

These are some of the side effects I am happy to have.

Drowsy as a drunk, I am electrified at the thought that my grandfather would be saved.

DIN (Drug Identification Number)

00000011180

Braid two: My father's stories

After my grandfather died, the family was thrown into poverty. My grandmother had no money to take care of her two children. She was forced to give up her children to relatives. I

imagine that this must have been a difficult decision for her and caused her a great deal of pain. My father and his brother were sent to live with their maternal uncle in Mpamasem in Mbera in Benue state, Nigeria. My father and his brother would sometimes spend their holidays in other relatives' homes; they did this to earn extra money to pay for tuition when the term began.

The two brothers became wanderers at the mercy of other people, moving from house to house, dispossessed, living with relatives, suffering untold hardships at the hands of some of their hosts. They worked on farms toiling the soil, sowing and harvesting. They cleaned other peoples houses. They worked as labourers, lifting heavy construction material. To live, they worked. Some people were kind to them, and some were brutally cruel. There are two stories that stood out to me about the experiences that my father had as a child.

My father tells me that when he was 11 years old, he was sent off to work for a couple during the holidays. The madam of the house fed him once a day and made sure he worked hard for his meal. The madam's husband was a builder who made bricks. At 6: 00 am in the morning, he would be woken up every day to work. One day, he fell very sick, he was malnourished, had pneumonia and had been overworked. He was afraid to tell the madam; he feared that she would punish him for falling sick. Eventually the fever became worse and he had no choice but to tell her he was sick. She responded by calling him a liar. She told him, he was pretending to be sick because he was lazy and did not want to work. One day, he ran away...

When my father was 12 years old, he began to sell kerosene with his brother at the side of the road. He saved up all the money he could to pay for his tuition that year. My father tells me that those were tough times. He tells me that many times he felt a deep feeling of uprootedness,

and destitution, of being stranded and, forsaken. Nixon (1994) reminds us that “uprootedness can be a deadening condition but it can be, equally a creative one, forcing people to achieve complex, often imaginatively provisional ways of being” (p.115).

My father tells me that his determination to succeed began at an early age, and this determination was preserved by imagination and vision. Million (2011) quotes Craig Womack, who states that "imaginative vision provides one of the best means for accessing and understanding this vast field we call imagination...It... is both a rational and a spiritual exercise" (p.315). I believe that imagination, vision, and dreaming were instrumental to my father's ability to escape the harsh realities of his early childhood. The ability to be positive in the most hopeless places is a profound responsibility for any person.

Million (2011) says "dreaming is a communicative sacred activity, (it) often allows us to creatively sidestep all the neat little boxes that obscure relations and syntheses of imagination...They form different ways of knowing" (p. 315). My father needed to hold on to hopes of things not yet seen, a future that would catapult him to a place where he would have the life he never had as a child.

In 1980, my father came to Montreal to undertake a Master's degree in Architecture (M. Arch) at McGill University. He was the first Tiv man to study architecture in Canada. Indeed, he is the first Architect in Tiv Land. I have often wondered how a boy with no opportunities, who at times sold kerosene at night with his brother, who had no clock but used the croaking of a rooster to tell the time, a boy who lived in a mud house with a thatched roof, who went hunting in the forest and farming in the day could attain what he attained in his life.

Many children during that era had similar experiences. When my father went to Government College, Keffi, (equivalent of high school in Canada) there were only three of such schools in the entire North of Nigeria. A student would usually have to pass an exam to go to high school. It was an incredibly competitive process, and the schools only admitted the brightest students. Children who did not make the grades were discarded to go to craft schools or provincial schools. My father made all the grades to attend Government College, Keffi, the University of Zaria, before he eventually moved to Montreal to attend McGill University. Moving to Canada was a migratory event in my father's life. He experienced the world that a Nigerian born international student would have experienced in the 80's.



Figure 47

Above – my father returns to the site where he and his brother hawked as children. He is sitting on a local motor cycle and reminiscing



Figure 48

Above: A local market setting in Gboko, Benue state where my father lived for some time



Figure 49

Above - Oldest Local Government Primary School in Vandeikya (Formerly called Tiv Native Authority Primary School before Nigeria got her Independence from Britain in 1960). There were only 6 primary schools in Tivland in the 60's.



Figure 50

Above - A view of the Tiv Native Authority Primary School
Pictures taken by my father



Figure 51

Above - The Iyortyer Church - A church building in the process of being constructed for
the local community as a gift.



Figure 52

Above - Iyortyer Church



Figure 53

Above - Grass, also known as Ihiri in Tiv language. The locals use Ihiri as a building material in the construction of their houses.



Figure 54

Above – A local settlement in my father's kindred.



Above 55

A typical Tiv Village settlement. The people that live in this settlement are relatives of my father. My father is standing in the middle of the picture wearing a blue shirt.



Figure 56

Above - A road leading up to a family settlement in my father's village.



Figure 57

Traditional Architecture in Tiv land. Here available natural materials of mud and ihiri are used to build this hut



Figure 58

Above -Tiv Vernacular Architecture – A house made of thatched roofs and mud walls constructed with local available natural building materials of mud (soil), bamboo, timber/sticks, ropes and grass(ihira). The rural buildings provide comfortable indoor spaces against inclement hot-humid tropical climate and physical security.



Figure 59

Above - Inner roof of a hut

Chapter Five: Weaving Three: Migrant bird prepares for the journey.

*I pack two boxes for a long distance journey,
London here I come!
I have always dreamed of flying away.
I am young and full of dreams.
Oxfordshire, here I come*

*I packed 3 boxes and a trunk,
Wales, here I come!
I have always wanted to be a Red Kite.
Soaring high in the skies,
travelling long distance.*

*I packed 2 boxes, a traveling bag, a carrier bag and a hand bag.
Hull, here I come!
I am a chaffinch,
singing quietly through the leafy trees,
I am a medium distant kind of chic.*

*It is early spring.
Hopes are high. Durham, here I come.
I pack 5 boxes, enough to make a house a home.
It rains all the time, I don't mind the rain,
I am a short distance kind of bird.*

Beware the migratory traps!

Migration- journeys

Migration is a process that involves the movement of individuals from one place to another. There is a myriad of reasons why people choose to migrate to other countries, including to study. International students go to school abroad for a better education, to have different experiences, and to learn how to think critically and intelligently (Mohan, 2014). International students are keen to go abroad to school because of global economic inequalities in income in their home countries, wealth inequalities, conflicts, demographic change and environmental factors (Geddes & Scholten, 2016, p. 4). Student migration is an important form of migration and provides skilled labour to the host countries where students reside. Roberston (2013) writes that “English-speaking Western nations in particular are in constant competition for their share of the lucrative international education market and for the ‘best and brightest’ skilled migrants” (p.13). Although, migrants bring many positive attributes to their host countries, many developed countries in the West have begun “to put up walls, and carve out small doors in those walls” (Zolberg, 1989, p. 406).

Talburt (2009) writes that “study abroad is not an innocent educational experience but a site of contact that produces and reproduces self, other and experience” (p.104). The experience of moving from a place that one has lived in for many years to settle in a new country can be transformative and traumatic. Writing about international students, Robertson (2013) writes there are “constant sometimes competing pulls of desires, plans and obligations that stretched their lives, past, present and future, across more than one place” (p.7). These pulls and desires

arise because migrant students abandon the things they are accustomed to in order to fit into their host countries. Living in host countries, international students must embed themselves into the culture of the nation state if they are to make the best of their educational experiences.

In considering the depth of the transformative effect that migration has on the migrant, one must consider the spatial reconfiguration of the embodied self on one's senses and imagination (Ahmed, 1999). The migrant learns a new language, culture, way of life, of being in the world and looking at the world through a different lens. For the migrant, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touch can be dislodged when they leave their home country. The travelling student switches off, pauses, reconfigures, resets and reboots for a new start.

When Trinh (2011) first migrated to the United States from Vietnam in 1970, her sensory reconfigurations were her eyes and her ears. She writes that for months, she would lie awake throughout the night, eyes wide open, waiting for dawn to fall asleep. She would listen in the night as the silence of the night enveloped her world. She would attend to the silence that told her she was different and a stranger living in a foreign land. When I moved to Canada with my children, I remember a similar kind of silence. The silence I encountered was not just in the night, but it followed me around like a blood stained skirt signifying me and pointing me out in the streets, shopping malls, playgrounds, schools, sneering at me, accusing me and questioning me - "why have you come here?", "You do not belong here, you outsider, imposter!".

I had rented a 3 ½ room duplex house in a quiet suburb in Ottawa. I had imagined that my reunion with Canada after decades of being away would be magnificent,

we would fall in love with each other again. It would be a match made in heaven. We would go dancing together; we would go walking in the woods, holding hands, reminiscing and planning our future together. All the other lovers I had lived in would be revealed as imposters, and she would be the one to treat the children and me like gold.

I imagined that my parents and sisters would visit often and that I needed the space in a duplex in the suburbs. However, the silence flowed in fast like a river bank bursting. The silence grew louder and louder, and the speech turned slower until it was lost, and the houses grew smaller and smaller, and the family members barely visited. I moved to a smaller apartment; then I began to imagine home as a different story, I began to think of rewriting the story that people in exile write when they create imaginary homelands and find homes in writing. However, who exactly am I writing to? Silence becomes a form of self-preservation. For much of my adult life, I felt like I have bottled up much of my emotions, feelings, fears, anguish and disappointments. Lately, I realized that I am beginning to speak my silence, well at least I hope I am. In a conversation with Yosso, Esperanza says she experienced feelings of being silenced as she proclaims that “a silent revolution was better than a

and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid.
So, it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive.

Lorde, 1998, p. 31-32

clamouring battle cry quickly stifled” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 482-483). Are we to stay silent forever with words welling up in our throats, begging to be released, to be free, to live again.

Braid three: my stories, unpacking for a journey

My experience of leaving home began when I was nine years old...

I hate that school! I exclaimed to my mother tears rolling down my eyes as we approached the boarding school. Sitting in the backseat of her red Honda civic, I thought about all the things I hated about this boarding school. At nine years, it was almost unchildlike to hate a place like I did this institution. I hated it because I missed home. I hated the hunger and thirst I felt nearly all the time. I hated the gruelling punishments that were levelled on us to instil discipline and respect. I hated the flogging by the senior students and teachers when I was late for supper. I hated the mosquitos that feasted on my flesh on many dark nights without electricity and running tap water. I hated the bumpy, potholed narrow road that led to the school. For once I arrived inside the belly of the iron fence that surrounded the school, I knew I was stuck there for three months. Like an oak tree stuck to the ground; I would be rooted to this place, unable to go home, unable to see home, or be fully fed. The holidays would never arrive on time, the days would be long, the nights would be longer, and I would constantly wake up in a school abroad, only to find out, it was only a dream. The reality would be some dried okro and eba every Friday afternoon, and a boiled piece of yam and palm oil every Saturday morning after my morning duties, for six years, this is how my

story stayed in the tension until one day I woke up and found that it was not a dream, the time had passed, and, I was abroad schooling...

It is the dream of many students growing up in so-called ‘third world countries’ to experience schooling abroad. It is equally the desire of some students in ‘first world countries’ to experience study abroad. However, the reality is that the backgrounds and points of departure of these two groups of people are quite different. Equally different are the stories that each individual returns with after schooling abroad. The difference lies in that many students from countries like the US may return to their country of origin, undaunted, perhaps satisfied, having augmented their world views and developing some level of cross-cultural awareness (Mahon, 2009; Talburt, 2009; Lowe, Dozier, Hunt-Hurst & Smith, 2008). On the other hand, many students from third world countries may never return home, some that do return home may find that they have become strangers to home and home has become a stranger to them. Trinh writes:

Writers of color, including anglophone and francophone Third World writers of the diaspora, are condemned to write only autobiographical works. Living in double exile – far from the native land and far from their mother tongue – they are thought to write by memory and to depend to a large extent on hearsay.

(cited in Bourdier and Trinh, 1996, p.10)



Figure 60

Above: A classroom floor in the boarding school I attended.

I was sixteen years old when I left Nigeria for England to pursue my A'levels in St Mary's School, Wantage, Oxfordshire. I don't suppose I was ever truly prepared for what was to follow. I arrived at Heathrow airport with my father. I was captivated by the possibilities that laid before me, or so I imagined. With my father by my side, we got into a cab and made our way through the English countryside. I still remember the breathtaking scenery, it captivates me even today. My father excited as I was made it a point of duty to remind me of how lucky I was to be going to school to an independent private school in Britain. At St Mary's school, I studied E.M. Foster, T.S Elliot, Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, Oscar Wilde, Angela Carter, Margaret Artwood, and other Western authors who I would not have been exposed to had I not gone to England. It was not the schooling I found daunting, what I found alarming was the cultural shock. It was the way in which in a split second my world had changed. I did not know anybody at my new school, I had no one to talk to, I was not familiar with the food, the culture or the expectations.

Oberg (1960) writes that:

Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life...Now, these cues which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept.

p. 176

Is it possible to have more than one culture shock? Is it possible that the physiological reaction of a culture shock replicates itself time and time again as the international student moves from school to school, country to country? The international student begins to feel like one does

in exile, yet the international student is aware that this is indeed a privilege and one should clench it with both fists. Said (1988) writes that “the essential privilege of exile is to have not just one set of eyes but half a dozen, each of them corresponding to the places you have been... There is a kind of doubleness to that experience and the more places you have been the more displacement you’ve gone through” (p.48). As an International student, I have moved from place to place, country to country, always on the go.

Tension, shifting, transforming ...

Talburtt (2009) writes about her interviews with six American students on a six-week placement in Segovia, Spain. One of the participants in the interviews, Misheila tells Talburtt:

I came to get to know about things in the world. Things are different. I knew it would be different. Every experience helps you grow and helps you be more independent. It helps reinforce who you are. It makes you think about who you are and what you stand for, which is really important, to step back and look at that.

p. 114

International travel for some students comes with complex thoughts, emotions and behaviours, at the same time international travel demands for a physical and geographical adaptation to mobility. Teacher education institutions recognise the importance of international practice and sending students abroad (Mahon, 2009); in the same vein, parents in third world countries are recognising the benefits of sending their children abroad, that is of course if they can afford to. Study abroad opens a host of opportunities for “students to gain a wealth of unique personal and professional competencies otherwise unavailable to them” (Mahon, 2009, p. 68). For example, Fussell (1988) writes that travelling allows you to “deepen your sensitivity to ideas

and images and not least to sharpen your sense of humility as you come to realize that your country is not the standard for the rest of the world but is just as odd as all the others” (p. 164). International travel is a privilege for people in developing countries as well as those in developed countries; it allows for stories to emerge and, it is in those spaces that hybridity occurs.

Williams and Hall (2000) have called for a greater understanding of “the relationship between the life course and migration pathways of individuals” (p. 20). The migration journey for some students is a journey of difference and becoming. I had never felt so different in all my life, until I was in Lower and Upper sixth doing my A’level in St’Mary’s school. The difference was obvious in the gym, in the dining room, in the classrooms, in the corridors, on the buses, on the choir trips to France and Spain. The difference was black and white, just like the a’nger. It was plain and it was obvious, even a blind man could see the difference. Whenever I would go to have my dinner, I remember sitting down alone at the corner of the dining room, head bent, hurriedly eating my food, so I could leave. I would sometimes look up. I remember the stare of one of my classmates, she would hold her gaze at me, mouth aghast. It was then, that I began to realize that I was different. I was so different that all the American films that I had watched in Nigeria about difference began to make sense to me. Until then, it was just one of those films, and the stories did not resonate with me. Now sitting there in the dining room, everything made sense.

I noticed that whites who gazed upon me looked at me as something foreign and alien and my experiences was not unlike what I would read later as an older student from Franz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Mask*

Wilson, 2014, p. 23



Figure 61

Above – Collage of school picture at St’Mary’s school, Wantage where I did my A’levels. I am in the middle of the second row from the top.

Difference and blackness was a cloth that I wore. I could not shake it off no matter how hard I tried. I remember walking towards my room one Sunday evening after I had dinner, the pathway leading to my dormitory had a lamp post. As I approached the center of the court yard, the assistant matron appeared from the corners. Laughing, she said to me, “*I would never have seen you coming if weren’t for your eyes*”. That night, I thought about what she had said as I tossed and turned. Did she mean the light in my eyes was so bright that it had lit her path?

Before I began my A’levels in England, I was not aware of my blackness, I felt like my blackness was suddenly thrust upon me, when I looked around me and could not see any one

who looked or spoke like me. Back in Nigeria, the country, the world of my family and even the schools that I disliked so thoroughly protected me and provided a shelter for me. It was in stark contrast to the world I would later know where I was a small black dot in a sea of white faces (Wilson, 2014, p. 23).

This dual consciousness put me in a position of learning to have the ability to hybridize myself into a dual cultural space.

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others... One ever feels his twoness,- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

Du Bois, 1903, p. 16-17

Phone booth friendship

The phone booth became my best friend.

She lived just outside the principal's office.

She was the only place I could sit in at lunch hour on Friday and have a good cry.

She consoled me, as I waited for the long-distance call from mother.

She made me feel it was okay to completely break down inside her.

She provided a safe space where my classmates would not be able to hear me, hear my heart wrenching and churning.

I cried because I had stored up all the emotions from Monday to Friday, by Friday noon,

I needed a place to let the pressure out.

The students began to chatter that I was depressed.

I did not know if I was depressed, maybe I was.

When I arrived in St'Mary's School, I had come from a school culture where students were encouraged to be silent. A student did not dare ask the teachers too many questions. A good

student was quiet and reserved, doing her work resiliently but tranquilly. Wa Thiong'o (1986) writes that "culture is a product of the history of a people which it in turn reflects, the child was now being exposed exclusively to a culture that was a product of a world external to himself. He was being made to stand outside himself to look at himself" (p.17). In standing outside oneself and looking at oneself, do we travelling students have a choice on where to stand when looking at ourselves? Can we stand inside to look on the inside or outside to look on the inside? Whose products, are we? Have we become products of history or products of a world that has no empathy for us? Nevertheless, some of us have become "wandering peoples who will not be contained within the Heim of the national culture and its unisonant discourse" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 164).

As an international student, one is always careful not to give the appearance of being discontent in one's adopted country for fear of being labelled an ingrate. In doing so one becomes profusely sorry, excessively grateful, always careful to over- thank the native classmate and professor for taking the time to have one's time. Trinh (1994) writes "profound respect for others starts with respect for oneself" (p. 15). How can the international student achieve profound respect for oneself, without seeming somewhat desperate and ridiculous?

Travelling as an international student has allowed me to voyage to different lands, across unsealed oceans, towering mountains and through filtering skies. Destination is unbounded. In my travels, I am compelled to challenge, confront and consult with my identity as a Black African woman. On many occasions, I have found that I have become a stranger to myself as I dwell in strange lands. The strange has become the familiar, I convene and dine with the stranger

in mysterious locations, the stranger is me. Trinh (1994) writes that “travelling allows one to see things differently from what they are, differently from how one has seen them, and differently from what one is” (p.23). In my travels, I sometimes catch myself looking intently at the mirror with great suspicion. I am the night watch at the gates of my body. The night watch watches the body. Without prevarication, I gaze at my reflection in the mirror as I ask myself emphatically how to make sense of this metamorphosis that I am undergoing in this land, that sometimes seems strange to me.

A pedagogy of living in the moment

Because we don't know when we will die, we get to think of life as an inexhaustible well. Yet everything happens only a certain number of times, and a very small number really. How many more times will you remember a certain afternoon of your childhood, an afternoon that is so deeply a part of your being that you can't even conceive of your life without it? Perhaps four, five times more, perhaps not even that. How many more times will you watch the full moon rise? Perhaps 20. And yet it all seems limitless.

(Bowles, 1990, p. 248)

In my second year of doing my PhD at the University of Durham, I decided to move to Newcastle upon Tyne to live closer to my sister, Aver. We decided to rent a place together. At first, we rented a house which was a bit far from the town center. After two months we decided the house was not suitable for us; the area was not as vibrant as we wanted. We wanted to be where all the action was. I was particularly keen on living in the town center, so we found a beautiful newly refurbished flat near Gateshead and moved in.

Before I moved to Newcastle upon Tyne, I had just come out of a bad relationship. I had travelled to the Hague in Holland where I had attended a summer school on International law. The Hague was an amazing experience for me. I met people from over fifty countries who were in my class. The diversity in the summer school was contagious. It was enough to cure nearly anyone of a broken heart. After lectures every day, my clique of friends and I would head out to the beach where we would have lunch, and then walk along the beach, taking in the air from the ocean. By the time, I returned to England, I was ready to live, to really live and be alive. So, by the time I moved to Newcastle Upon Tyne, I was really a different kind of girl. Living in Newcastle was one of the most exciting and happiest times of my life. I made new friends, I began to play badminton again, I attended festivals in Edinburgh with my new friend, who I had met at the sports center. We explored restaurants, art galleries, bars, gardens, and travelled to neighboring towns together. We had a mission to explore different restaurants; then we would feel like we were in other countries even though we were still in beautiful Newcastle upon Tyne.

By the time I left Newcastle Upon Tyne, I felt like I was at the peak of my life. Unfortunately, I have never kept in touch with my friend, I often wonder how he is, but for some reason I have stayed largely away from contacting him. A part of me feels like I am no longer the person I used to be. Over the years, I have changed as I have had my two children and had to care for them. Now alone, I wonder about the stories I will tell when I look back at my experiences.

Rob-Tree_House

Rob tree house.

I always thought that was a funny name,

looking back now, it suited you well,

because you were a tree, grounded, rooted to the ground, solid, and reliable.

I don't know what I might say to you if I ever saw you again.

Indeed, I may never see you again.

But how can I ever forget

standing on a quarried mountain in Penmaenmawr?

Conwy

Llanfairfechan

Llandudno

Snowdonia

The galleries

The festivals

The week in Bangor.

Whiskey in Edinburgh.

*Lying on an abandoned train track in the middle of
nowhere.*

The abandoned house where you grew up in the forest.

The road trip that lasted for days.

We drifted to the end of the coast and back.

The ocean ...

Now, all that is left is my memories.

And the things that were left unsaid.

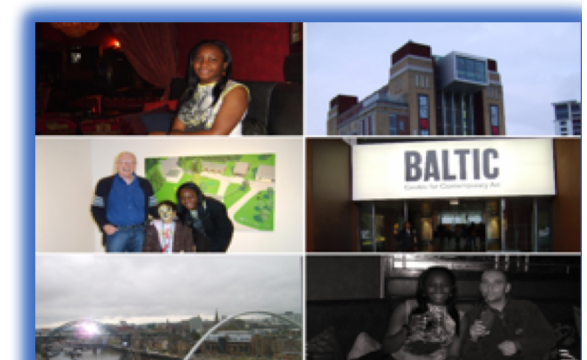


Figure 62

Above - A collage of pictures taken in

Newcastle upon Tyne

Chapter Six: Travelling

Whenever I travel back to England from Nigeria, I am always tempted to pack as much African food as I can.

The content of my box are my secrets;

Lord help me, for

I am so bad at keeping secrets.

In my excitement, I move closer to him

Energy in my hips,

swagger in my walk,

lips parted suggestively,

I whisper to him,

Tell no one I told you

What I have in my box as

I begin to list the items in my box

to the poor fellow

<i>indomie noodles,</i>	<i>goals,</i>	<i>habanero peppers,</i>	<i>puff puff,</i>
<i>moi moi,</i>	<i>palm oil</i>	<i>ogbono</i>	<i>survival,</i>
<i>thick skin,</i>	<i>tears,</i>	<i>heartache,</i>	<i>nostalgia</i>
<i>target,</i>	<i>ariwo,</i>	<i>hope,</i>	<i>egusi seeds,</i>
<i>desire,</i>	<i>smoked fish,</i>	<i>excitement,</i>	<i>maggi,</i>
<i>chin chin,</i>	<i>ambition,</i>	<i>kuli-kuli,</i>	
<i>defiance,</i>	<i>resistance,</i>	<i>dreams,</i>	<i>magic,</i>
<i>survival,</i>	<i>imagination</i>	<i>tension</i>	
	<i>determination</i>		

It is only when I arrive in my host country and live in the reality of my imagined country that I realized that once the fetus leaves the womb, it can never go back even if it is a stillborn child.

*Traveling back in time,
way back to the very beginning
as far back as memory permit,
to a place that existed before I stood on this bridge they call the hybrid
bridge.*

*Traveling back in time,
way back before I began the search for home,
to a time I dreamt of traveling into the future to be abroad.*

*Traveling back in time,
back to the eternal state of tension*

Travelling back to tarry with the others.

Travel and home

I sometimes wonder if the ability to constantly be in travel mode is as a result of my parents not letting me be born where I would have been born. I was two months when I arrived with my parents and sister at Montreal-Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport. My father was studying architecture at McGill University. My mother had stayed back home, in Nigeria purposefully so that she could have me in Nigeria before joining my father in Canada. My parents wanted to be sure that my passport read:

Sex /Sexe

Place of Birth /Lieu de Naissance

F

Markurdi

After my mother had me, my father travelled back to Nigeria and brought us to join him in Montreal.



Figure 63
Above left



Figure 64
Above right

My father at Mc Gill University studying Masters of Architecture My mother and me in Montreal. I was three months old.



Figure– 65

Above left - My parents and their friends, my sister and I in Montreal.



Figure 66

Above right - My father, mother, sister, and I in Montreal. My mother is carrying me.



Figure 67

Above left - My mother, sister, me and my father in the park in Montreal.



Figure 68

Above right - My parents on the balcony of their apartment in Montreal.

Morse (1999) writes that “home is not a real place, feeling at home is, in essence, a personal and cultural specific link to the imaginary” (p. 63). The concept of home is a phenomenon that exists privately for everyone; it means various things to different people. For some, it is “a fortuitous and fleeting smell, a spidery touch, a motion, a bitter taste – almost beyond our conscious ability to bid or concoct or recreate” (p. 63). For others, home is a place of origin and return, a place of safety and comfort, a space inhabited by the family, familiar objects and streets, a place to return, a place to find meaning. Home can also be a place of oppression, shouting, cursing, a place to run away from, yet the etymology of home is constantly evolving, churning and leaving cracks for the inhabitants.

Ahmed (2000) writes “Home is here, not a particular place that one inhabits, but more than one place: there are too many homes to allow place to secure the roots or routes of one’s destination” (p.331). With the high level of mobility today, it is possible to occupy more than one home. Naficy (1999) defines home as "a place that is temporary, moveable, can be built, and carried in memory and acts of imagination" (p. 6). If it were not for a doubling, is it not strange that one begins to feel alienated from the place that one was born? How is it that the home that one is supposed to feel safe becomes frightening?

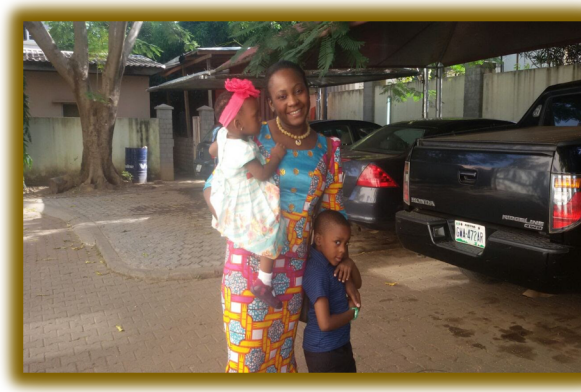


Figure 69

Above – Myself and my children outside the house where we were robbed.

Many scholars have navigated the doubling of home and adopted a “double vision” of insider/outsider in their attempts to find home. Trinh (1994) says “the true home is not to be found in houses but in writing” (p.16). To write is to find sanctuary amidst all the anxiety and noise. Cixous says “The principal enemy in life is fear. To write is to make fear retreat. As always it is double: we must be afraid and not afraid of writing for the sake of writing” (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997, p. 26).

After years of being away from my home country, Nigeria, I decided to try my hand at a bit of homecoming. I moved back to my country of birth and rented a house. In this house that was supposed to be my home, we were robbed in the middle of the night. This home that was supposed to be a place of safety had become the scene of a crime. Home had become an uncanny

site for interrogation. Interrogating my choices of leaving my adopted home in England, where I had become accustomed to life; to return to my country of birth in Nigeria. What was I trying to accomplish? I had stored up pictures, video recordings, documents, songs, and games on computers that the robbers took away. It was not the robbery, the looting of replaceable materials that scarred me and left invisible blemishes on my heart. It was the content of what they took away, the intangible and irreplaceable that devastates me even until today. How is it that home that is supposed to be a sanctuary would turn against its inhabitants? Peters (1999) writes “There is no home per se that is a safe place ... since home is the site of the uncanny” (p. 31) .

For how can you tarry with death when it comes calling or do the cha cha cha, 3-point cycle when the robbers take away your sanctuary? Will a swing dance appease the killers when they come knocking on your door or should we try the Obrom, kakaki playing in the background, sakara drums beating loudly? Fela Ransome Kuti playing “trouble sleep, yanga wake am” in the background. Hand in hand with the robbers, start with the embrace, stay with it. Slow, quick, quick, slow, feet married, moving left to right. That’s it. Replicate. Slow dancing with brokenness, the humiliation of being violated, homelessness envelops the house we once called home. My encounter with the robbery compels me to examine the map of the world with new eyes. The dice are rolled; a course is assigned.



Figure 70

Above – Picture of my parents at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria. My mother and father met each other at in 1975 where my father was studying Architecture and my mother was studying Quantity Surveying.



Figure 71

Above – Picture of the church wedding of my parents, Zegetar and Torkwase at NKST Church, Gboko, Benue State, December 31, 1977.

Mobility, borders and airports

*Roaming around the borders and boundaries of culture and race.
Is there another route that one might take, a short cut perhaps?
An alternate route to avoid the disputes that occur at border crossings?
A border is a place for naming,
it is a place where labour, pain, and delivery takes place. One is either born 'legitimate'
at the border or born "illegitimate".
One birth brings good news,
the other brings bad news.
A tremendous amount of energy and zeal is poured into childbirth, in the same way, a
person is anxious to cross a border.*

Strange things happen at borders, and "the prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants" (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 3). Whether it is a geographical boundaries of political entities, legal jurisdictions, or violent clashes between tribes disputing boundary, a border is a divide. Anzaldua (1987) writes that "a border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge" (p. 25). How natural it is that one may cross the border, perhaps in crossing one may find that one is on one's feet again, walking and wandering. Walking, but where is one walking to? Where is the walking taking the wanderer?

Recently, there has been renewed interest in understanding mobility around travel from different disciplines such as education, cultural studies, geography and sociology (Cohen, 2016; Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014; Urry, 2002). The interest in mobility has evolved from a static idealization of society into theories of displacement, movement, and estrangement (Adey, 2002). Adey writes mobility "means different things to different people, in different places and at

different times. Therefore, where a tourist may be welcomed into a country a migrant may not be” (p. 502). Airports are a key link in the chain of mobility, it allows the easy flow of people from country to country in an era of globalization where more countries are experiencing significant volumes of migration and emigration (Czaika & de Haas, 2014). International students fall into the category of migrants that may arrive and never return to their countries of birth. My feeling is that my father’s experiences of travelling and international education are different from my experiences of international travel and my experiences may also be different from my children’s experiences of international education.

Acts of terrorism at airports have changed the experience of airport travel for travellers. Airports are no longer innocent places of departure and arrival but a place for sorting and profiling who fits into a certain category and who does not. The determinants of the sorting and profiling are one’s passport, race, and baggage. These factors control the kinds of treatment a traveller experiences at the airport.

Castells (1996) describes airports as spaces of flow, at the same time, airports have become symbolic of our post-modern world. Airport space has become a place for “othering” the “other” as freaks, aliens, and rejects. Equally disturbing is the profiling of individuals at airports; information is gathered about someone and then stored and shared. Profiling focuses on the minority and that is situated in national origin, race, ethnicity, religious or gender characteristics (Adey, 2008). A person may then be selected to undergo personal checks, interviews and question for hours.

Other forms of disturbing and some might argue unavoidable performance at the airport is the use of biometric technologies that treat the body as text, identifying the eyes, fingers and face of individuals as they travel within the airport space (Ploeg, 1999). Details of passengers are stored on a central system to be compared with other information in airports central systems. Here, passengers are not proving their identity; on the contrary, airport authorities are identifying passengers based on features, characteristics, race and other traits that signify them as other. Airports are representative of “border zones to the vertical vectors of mobility that cross national and state boundaries” (Adey, 2004, p. 506). The terrible events of 9/11 have influenced travel. Pallitto and Heyman (2008) point out two ways in which 9/11 has affected international travel– firstly, there is increased border inspection at airports and secondly, there is increased traveller identity formation as people move within international travel space (p. 315).

The propitious walk through the airport terminal is a foretell of events to come. For some with the “right” passport from wealthy nations in developed countries, they are fewer restrictions. Some passport holders of powerful nations walk through airport security and customs with few questions asked. On the other hand, some passports from poor nations or predominantly Muslim countries may be detained, harassed, suspected, accused and rejected by the decision makers at airport terminals who determine who may enter and who may not.

Airport takeoff and landing sites have evolved from ports of grassy arrivals and departures to huge mile long terminal structures built to facilitate the mobility of millions of travelers in a globalized world where movement is inevitable. Yet, it is at the borderline of airports that clear spatial boundaries coincide – where the unwanted may be

named as different from the desirables. In a sense, airports are a halfway point between two worlds, a port of arrival and a port of departure for aliens.

When I began travelling abroad in the 1990's, travelling was much easier.

Akanu Ibiam International Airport
Asaba International Airport
Barcelona–El Prat Airport
Beijing Capital International Airport
Frankfurt Airport
Gatwick Airport
Geneva Airport
Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport
Hamburg Airport
Heathrow Airport
Istanbul Atatürk Airport
John F. Kennedy International Airport
Kaduna Airport
Kotoka International Airport
London City Airport
London Luton Airport
London Stansted Airport
Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport
Montréal–Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport
Murtala Muhammed International Airport
Newark Liberty International Airport
Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport
Ottawa Macdonald–Cartier International Airport
Port Harcourt International Airport
Rotterdam The Hague Airport
Schiphol airport, Amsterdam
Shanghai Pudong International Airport
Toronto Pearson International Airport
Vienna International Airport
Washington Dulles International Airport
Zürich Airport

AT SEA

<i>Destination</i>	<i>Arrive</i>	<i>Depart</i>
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Southampton, England		
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At Sea		
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Vigo, Spain		
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Lisbon, Portugal		
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At Sea		
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Gran Canaria, Canary Islands		
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Tenerife, Canary Islands		
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Funchal, Madeira		
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At Sea		
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La Coruna, Spain		
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At Sea		
--------	--	--

Southampton, England		
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Chapter Seven: The Tiv Woman

Critics have pointed out that the “Third World Woman” is often caught between “patriarchy and imperialism” and “tradition and modernization” (Spivak, 1988, p. 306). This dichotomy is the experience of many African women who live in transnational spaces/diaspora. Feminist scholars have encouraged women to use their stories and narratives as a site for pronouncing the continuous need for feminist discourse. In this section, I use the Tiv a’nger as an allegory for questioning, understanding, and resisting the social and political realities of African women who have been silenced by tradition and western ideologies. How can female African scholars living on the margins of first and third world countries lay claim to their own voices as women. Heilbrun (1988) quoting Gilbert and Guber, writes “women will starve in silence until new stories are created which confer on them the power of naming themselves” (p.34).



Figure 72

Above – Picture of myself preparing for my traditional wedding in my village, Vandiekya.

Okpalaoka (2014) writes that “it is important that researchers who seek to engage in participatory research with African ascendant women understand the hierarchical structure of authority in the contexts they study” (p.46). In understanding the hierarchical structures of the Tiv woman in Benue state, Torkula’s (2009) work is revealing. Alfred Akawe Torkula was the Tor Tiv (*the former ruler of the Tiv people*), and chairman of Benue State Council of Chiefs. He writes that in the pre-colonial times, the “culture generally frowned at women competing against men, or who excelled above men in any endeavor in the society” (p.12). However, Torkula (2009) went on to ponder who is the Tiv woman is in the postcolonial era, and who she must be!

This is an interwoven etude about life stories; it seeks to disrupt the usual narrative lines, the rules of patriarchal form. I wish to escape the culturally contoured modes of discourse. Yet I, too, am mired in convention. If I write in all the acceptable ways, I shall only recapitulate the patriarchal forms. Yet, if I violate expectations too grievously, my words will become nonsense. Still, the mermaids sing.

Gergen, 1992, p. 127

Torkula writes that:

From the *biblical point of view*...the woman was created to be the man’s companion or helper, which presupposes some measure of responsibility or obligation to the man. He is the head of the family.... Gender equality, however emphasizes the need for women to be given equal opportunities to excel in their endeavours like men, including the right to education... that a woman should take-over or replace men in mundane activities runs counter to the *biblical role of a helper* ... The Tiv woman today, like elsewhere, is always faced with the temptation of equating herself with the man... the Tiv woman must resist the tendency to non-responsibility.

(p.43)

It was the task of this generation more to dismantle the past than to imagine the future... Women have a mission to survive... and to be the whole people. I believe this can save the world, but I don't think that women have a mission to clean up after men's messes. I think we should save the world by doing it for ourselves.

Rich quoted in Heilburn, 1988, p. 72

The Tiv woman faces two oppressive cultures, where they are caught within the tension of danger in both cultures (tradition and Western culture). Cixous, & Kuhn (1981) write that "In woman, the history of all women blends together with her personal history. As a fighter, woman enlists in all liberation" (p. 252). Trinh (2011) also writes that "women are trapped within the frontiers of their bodies and their species,

and the general clichés by which they feel exiled here is the common consensus (in patriarchal societies) that streets and public places belong to men. Women are not supposed to circulate freely in these male domains" (p.15). In the same way that identity is formed in the Western world, the first mark of identity of the Tiv woman in pre-colonial times was defined from the moment a child was born. Is the child a "boy" or a "girl"; once this was determined the defining powers and structures of society defined the life course of the female body. The Tiv woman was seen as subservient to men; she was considered a no-body. If a woman had only female children, she was seen as a barren woman by the community. Torkula (2009) writes of an encounter:

Or vanya:

Or ngu hen ya ne kpa?

Kawse ya:

Ei, or ngu ga, ka se kasev tsegh.

Stranger:

Is there any person in this village?

Housewife: No, there is nobody except the women.

(p.13)

Torkula goes on to point out that this was a clear admission by women in Tiv culture that she was inferior to the man. Women were the personal properties of a man while he was alive. The idea that the essence of marriage is to procreate was customary, and women inherited nothing from their husbands. Feminist writers have questioned the assumptions that women, whether it be the women in the villages of Benue state, the villages of other African nations or anywhere else are satisfied with the narrative constructed by patriarchal authority which has controlled the narrative forms of women as inferior and the artificial representation that objectifies women.

When I was searching for the stories of the women in my family, I came across the story of my paternal great grandmother who left her first husband for another man while her first husband was still alive. In those days, this would have been taboo. I tried to find out who she was, why she left her first husband who was also my great grandfather, but no one knew very much about her.



Figure 73

Above -The only picture available of my great grandmother, Mama Mbaze Kenken

Shame

What is your name? Shame.

A sickler and a matrimonial burden.

*She who would risk a loveless marriage for love,
for a tender touch, a kind word.*

*She who would risk to love and be loved,
she who would risk eating from the plate of a lover.*

*She who would dare to hold hands with a lover,
to have him roll his fingers down her spine,
to laugh, giggle and smile with teeth exposed.*

*She who would dare to have her lover weave her kinky black hair,
to have her lover caress her silky, ivory, brown skin.*

A disgrace.

*The adulterous confession of a woman,
where is the man who will not be named?*

She who would risk to be called gluttonous.

The guilt manifested in dizziness and heartaches.

*Fidelity is everything, but only on her part,
let the husbands roam into other women's beds at night,
the climax heard from the nearby huts.*

*Woman, have you no fear of Tsav and akombo
for forbidden love is forbidden.
So, I'll see you in court.*



Figure 74

Above - Women Choir of "Nongu Kristu u Sudan hen Tiv" NKST Church, Gbem, Vandeikya

Boyd-Buggs (2000) writes that “the black woman has her own history, but she is above all a human being in search of her own space, a space defined and constructed by her” (p. 26). In both precolonial times and post-colonial times, at home and in the west, the Tiv woman is defined by the “other”, constructed by the male patriarchal society. In weaving a pedagogy of a’nger, I use the stories of my female ancestors as “sites of living pedagogy” (Aoki, 2003) where our collective histories as women are sites of “unequal power relations” that should, need to be questioned.

Adichie (2014) echoes the experiences of the African woman’s struggle:

We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls you can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful, but not too successful. Otherwise, you would threaten the man... We raise girls to see each other as competitors not for jobs or accomplishments, which I think can be a good thing, but for the attention of men. We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are.

(2014, p.27-28)

Society wants to tell women what to do with/for marriage. We are told you should change your name to signify that you belong. Trinh (1991) warns that:

The conceited giver gives with the understanding that he is in a position to take back what he gives whenever he feels like it and whenever the acceptor dares or happens to trespass on his preserves. The latter, however, sees no gift (can you imagine such a thing as the gift that takes?) but only debt that once given remains his property.

(p. 69)

The decision to keep or abandon the name you have known all your life is a traumatic experience for some women. Indeed some women never recover from name change. Society believes that they can decide for you, shape you, own you, control you, manipulate you, restrain and dominate you. The other day my son painted a picture with bright orange stars, when I asked him what the painting was called, he answered me, “the stars of hope”. How can we teach our children, regardless of gender, about the pedagogy of hope that includes women as human beings with feelings, yearnings, and a desire to belong? Unending destinations draw lines that begin at culture, they encircle humanity, giving each person a chance to walk and tell their stories. Some tragic, some happy, some simple, some complicated. What is it that makes a woman walk? Walk out on man, walk out on the home, walk out on the past?

In/conclusions

If you find yourself on a path, then you must stay on it only if it has heart, and it is only your heart that can tell if it so.

Chambers, 2004, p. 6

The pedagogy of the a'nger was conceived to tell a story, a story about my experiences as an international student, and how I am attempting to use the a'nger to reach across cultural, linguistic and racial differences to find a third space, a space for sharing the Tiv culture. My encounters as an international student have been filled with tensions and uncertainties; movements in and through places, it has also been filled with enormous kindness from strangers, classmates, colleagues and professors who have become friends.

In drawing from Naomi Shibab Nye (1952), I am relying on the power of kindness as a site for doubling; for to give kindness takes courage, but to receive it takes audacity, she writes:

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.
Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,

and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

Chambers writes that “part of the power of words – of telling and listening to stories – is that lives can be changed by what is told and heard, what is written and read” (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo, 2009, p. 78). Leaning on the kindness that Nye speaks about has carried me through the tough times in Ottawa; being so far away from familiar faces and the place I once knew as home. However, I am grateful for the stories that have emerged from my movements, experiences and encounters. Drawing from Chambers and Nye, I hope that through this auto/ethno/graphical thesis, I can share with you the idea that even in places of great tension stories can emerge. I hope that through this auto/ethno/graphical thesis, I can create a space in which to have conversations about the cultures and stories of international students and their experiences in our encounters with each other in the classrooms and beyond. How can we create welcoming spaces for newcomers/international students in our schools and institutions? How can we invite the ‘other’ to learn about our cultures, language and ways of being? How can we break the culture of silence that has prevented us from speaking our truths? How can we reach across the divide of race and difference to live side by side, interwoven like the a’nger’s black and white stripes? By using the a’nger as a site for writing, learning, memory and revisiting family histories about my ancestors and traditions, I want to open spaces for conversations about ways of decolonizing the experiences of international students in our classrooms. Through this auto/ethno/graphical thesis, I hope that I have been able to share my culture and the beauty of living and lingering in the a’nger.

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