

Storytelling then, in and of itself, or recounting— one of the two basic operations of the intelligence according to Jacotot— emerges as one of the concrete acts or practices that verifies equality.

(Ross, K 2007 p.xxii)

Introduction

This essay explores ideas of inherited memories, transnationality and identity¹ and how these might come together to enable a more equitable learning environment. I will use post-colonialist, critical race and new materialist theories to explore my reasons for and expectations of the delivery of a series of participatory workshops with three Ugandan families in my local area of Tottenham, London.

This research is grounded in autoethnographic exploration as I continue to try to make sense of myself as an immigrant of mixed Ugandan, Tanzanian and Scottish heritage, having arrived in the UK from East Africa as a child, receiving my British citizenship at the age of 17. My decision to work with other families of Ugandan heritage belies a personal need to connect more with this community which I have always been in the margins of in the UK.

Having acknowledged these aspects, I also assert activist and constructivist² reasons for this work, centring critical race theory as a point of departure. I recognise the structural and systemic racism that pervades

¹ I refer here to Charles Taylor's ideas of identity formation as: "...we define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others acknowledge in us...self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged." (Taylor, 1994)

² My aims are activist in the sense of attempting to counter the racist institution and following the constructivist approach to teaching and learning, I am seeking bring the experiences of the individuals learned history more to the fore at an early age.

the education system and wider society³ and understand this at a personal, familial and professional level. It is a constant, difficult influence on my thinking.

The research in this essay forms the theory that supports my investigations in advance of the workshops taking place. I take an emancipatory approach to the work, as explored by Jacques Ranci re and Paolo Freire, not predicting or expecting to know the outcomes of the workshops. Instead, I speculate here on the potential for them and explore the reasons behind them in reflection of my own experience.

My aim is that the workshops might provide the means to:

- Explore a tool for more inclusive schooling
- Bring, retain, incorporate existing and external familial / transnational knowledge that children have learnt (and continue to learn) into the classroom in order to provide a foundation of self, enabling a rhizomatic underpinning of learning
- Explore other intergenerational post-colonial Ugandan experiences of diasporic living across place in comparison to my own
- Using artmaking, enable a non-hierarchical sharing of memory, story, perception and sense of self across generations (first born and immigrant).

Inclusive Education

‘Education is the single most emphatic success story of the British ethnic minority experience.’ (The Sewall Report March 2021 p.55)

³ See Gilborn 2008, Ladson - Billings 1999, Runnymede Trust Open Statement 2021.

‘UK universities are institutionally racist, says leading vice-chancellor.’

(Mohdin, 28 April 2021)

There is a great deal of evidence that counters the key themes taken from the recent report from the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparities (or Sewall Report, 2021). The assertion that the UK should be used as a model example for other ‘white majority’ countries is a far cry from the lived experience of many UK citizens. As usefully compiled in the Runnymede Trust response to the Sewall Report, there are large gaps in achieving base levels of equality across health, employment and education. In addition, the report failed to fully recognise the disparities in the lived experience of people from minoritised communities, citing experiences of outright racism as ‘individual’ and therefore not a marker of a wider problem. However, reported incidents of racist experiences have increased year on year⁴ impacting not just the person who experiences the incident, but their families and wider communities. These incidents are only a part of the story, and do not include the everyday racism (Essed 1993) of inappropriate references, misconceptions, expectations that fall so naturally from the speaker. This widespread issue cannot fail to filter and spread, impacting, influencing or affecting all children in the UK in one way or another.

Additionally, we are more aware now of the larger problem as Kehinde Andrews (2021) reasserts that ‘capitalism is racism’, (see also Cedric Robinson, 1983) and we are well aware of the damage to people and planet as this system continues to be safeguarded. Whilst we wait for it to topple, we work towards embedding greater understanding of inclusion and

⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/624093/racist-incidents-in-england-and-wales-2009-2018/>

difference within the younger generations. Through this, we hope that they will not grow up to feel that they don't belong, have to work twice as hard and that wherever they are, they will be assured of the fundamentals that their own, their parents and grandparents heritage is of equal value to everyone else's.

One area in which we could look to draw more support is by bringing diasporic identity (through inherited memories, knowledge, stories), further into the classroom. Those identities that both reassert the individual's attachment to places and people beyond their immediate reach and enable new connections with others. This in effect aims to provide a broader understanding of the wider world and each individual's position in it. It follows that which Gert Biesta (2019) claims, 'If education takes its existential orientation seriously, it has to centre on the world – rather than on the curriculum or the child – because it is only there, in the world, with others, that we can actually live our lives.'

By creating a shift in primary education that sees an embedded and embodied affirmation of difference, can we create a more solid ground for living well both with ourselves and each other? There are many difficulties with this idea, both from an ethical and ethnographic viewpoint. The last thing we need is additional cause for Othering. I acknowledge also that many cared for children may not have access to direct contact with their parents or their familial heritage. This exercise, whilst focusing on inherited, shared and reconstituted familial memories does not negate or mean to devalue the lived experiences of the child alone. An attempt to explore the memories of the 'now' for the child along with itinerant or more difficult experiences, provides an additional site of opportunity to embed understandings of difference though this is not covered here. Relying only

on a single point of reference (i.e. the child themselves) would bring a substantial additional level of ethical consideration to the fore, which would require rigorous methods of care and external support.

Hypothesis

My hypothesis that notions of identity, formed through inherited, appropriated and translated links to an/other place (material, immaterial and in between), comparative culture, ideas of the authentic self and the understanding of / manifestations of the colonial and post-colonial, have to travel through (if they do not remain in) unsettled and infirm ground. I consider whether this instability is always negative or destructive and whether there are means by which this journey/position can be made more secure and safe.

The ability for the individual learner to hold this 'multiplicity' to positive ends depends on a complexity of factors including: how place has been constructed for and by them; the moral codes within any inherited knowledge / secondary memories passed on; the provider of the knowledge / stories / memories; how well the other 'place' is independently known or knowable; the experience of the individual within their (and not their parents) current home /place of birth; and, any experienced recognition or dismissal by those outside their immediate contexts. It is understandable that this ability will fluctuate over time, the instability will remain.

Can this 'instability' provide a more informed, nuanced foundation for learning that can underpin a more emancipatory education for the individual? Can the instability be allowed to exist or remain within current school systems or rather, how can we as educators enable the retention of

a transnational, quasi-mythical⁵ foundation that can both position and sustain learners as they progress?

Educators understand certain things in the meaning of the words *unstable* and *instability* when applied to learners. The education and social system are profoundly affected (forced) by governmental policy to 'assimilate' learners rather than accommodate individual cultural backgrounds. The learner learns to repress their differences (cultural or otherwise), save for (within your average London schools at least) permitted celebrations at key points in the year such as Diwali, Eid al Fitr / Eid al Adha, Chinese New Year (yet to stem, in widespread fashion, to include Jewish, Sikh, Hindu or Buddhist festivals). These permitted and included celebrations form a puncture within 'Englishness' in which for a short moment these 'Other' ways of being are allowed to exist.

Much has been written on engaging student voice in the classroom, and I acknowledge the familiar tool of teachers asking children to bring in items from home such as photos that chart growth timelines, family trees, stories particular to certain topics such as World War 2. Engagement of students is recognised as being markedly more successful when they can bring in something of themselves⁶ to the classroom⁷ but the confines of current curricula in the UK prevent a more pervasive, sustained place for voice.

⁵ I suggest that it is more often than not mythical by the time it is removed from the source, translated and interpreted. We already look to the Greek myths within our primary curriculum as a source of information and learning, again instilling hierarchies of mythology within the learner - that the Greek myths are 'universal' whereas in reference to Glissant the individual and atavistic mythology is relational. Can we move the relational to the universal?

⁶ By 'themselves' here I create a distinction between who children present themselves as in school and who they are in context of their families / carers / origins.

⁷ See Hadaway and Mundy's (1992) Family Folklore project at University of Texas based on Kotkin and Cutting Baker (1977) Family Folklore Interviewing Guide and Questionnaire. Baltimore: Maryland Arts Council Folklife Programme

Instead, only temporary blips are offered, where students are permitted to exist as their wider, rooted/ routed⁸ selves within school.

An exploration of hermeneutics is useful here as theories of interpretation are central across these workshops. Using Sayers 2014, referencing Gallagher and informed by Gadamer's writing we can apply ideas of conservative, moderate and critical hermeneutics to help expand a model of the 'unstable' alongside what I hope to achieve through this project. Currently school structures require that, in the main, teachers retain a conservative hermeneutical approach whereby they must assimilate both themselves and their learners into a pre-prescribed understanding of certain universalised terms that construct order and allow assessment within the classroom. If we are to work towards a more equal society, a moderate hermeneutical approach is needed which would enable the recognition that learners, however young, enter the classroom with pre-existing knowledge, and that this should be integrated and retained. Galloway (2012 p.171) refers to Rancière's theory on 'explication', how this process of teaching 'obscures' (Ibid) existing knowledge, undermining children's pre-school ways of learning (that served them well in learning to walk, talk etc). This rocks the foundations that each child has built thus far. Making space for the child's deeper understandings of their existing knowledge (gained for example, through personal and interpersonal experience alongside inherited memories, references, songs, language), to be explored and appreciated more widely (though recognising that not all will be free from harm) offers a key opportunity to assert a confidence that might well be retained throughout the student's career. This engagement makes room for a broad range of personal, historical, cultural opinions⁹ to

⁸ See Gilroy, P *The Black Atlantic* p.19

⁹ See Galloway for exploration into Rancière's use of the opinion to enable emancipatory education.

be shared and discussed as equal (requiring also that the teacher share their history¹⁰ enabling a sense of reciprocal learning, in a Freirean space of shared vulnerability). If this can be retained through schooling, it reflects for me something between the model of the hermeneutic circle and the rhizome, as new understandings enable new interpretations of existing knowledge which lead to further rhizometrically appearing knowledge.

However, what I have described is an ideal and just forms one part of the research. A key aspect is the interaction, sharing and affect of the familial workshop itself, which itself can be seen in the hermeneutic circle model. I am interested in how the familial dialogue might bring new, balanced, levels of understanding and appreciation of fragmented bodies within and to the family hierarchy, across generations. Whilst memories, stories and references of back home are passed on adhoc throughout our family lives, what does it mean to sit and focus together across generations, to discuss a topic that is multi-layered? What affect does an exploration into the varying centralities of the ideas of back home have on each member of the family? And what does this look like in physical form?

As each family member works with the air-drying clay in the workshop, a realisation of thought will appear – telling, in either its relation to what is discussed or in its ambiguity.

Outline of Workshops

For Freire, dialogue is essential to the dialectic between reflection and

¹⁰ I appreciate that elements of this appear over time within schooling, with teachers sharing personal information: my son's current Year 6 teacher cemented both a sense of respect and attachment by sharing that she had been hit by a car as a child. Whilst there is risk, this element of the more deeply personal can be extended to great benefit.

action that constitutes praxis. This makes dialogue the driver of the trajectory to emancipation. (Galloway, 2012 p.15)

I want to expand further on my reasons for this research, in particular my interest in exploring ideas of how place and displacement affect us as we grow. This emanates from my childhood experience. My father is an excellent storyteller and when I was younger I would listening to his stories of home. He managed to create, embellish and embed ideas of East Africa in vivid, funny, reverential and tragic ways. He narrated experiences shrouded in heat, sun and race, something that I had no idea how to access independently. I did not have a great time through school, due in part to racism and a sense of not belonging. I wonder now if the instability of my identity had been made more secure (as opposed to stable) somehow, whether I would have been better able to progress confidently through systems and societies that shut out or 'othered' difference. I am curious to explore how the duality¹¹ impacts others from comparative backgrounds.

Originally intending to work with groups of single adult Ugandans, I was prompted into thinking about who needed to be in the workshop and realised it is not just the person with the memories, but it is the children, the grandparents and anyone else who lives within this multiplicity of place. To that end, I have engaged with the mothers of three families already known to me: my neighbour (O), a friend's neighbour (J) and the mother of my daughters' classmate (A). I appreciate and don't feel that it is accidental that I am connecting with women in the first instance, particularly reflecting

¹¹ This is not simply a reference to Double Consciousness as premised by W.E. DuBois though I recognise these specific contexts create a setting for this terms use. It is an attempt to go beyond this, to reach an equality within the duality of place and not simply to reiterate and uphold existing oppressive structures that dictate national / transnational identity.

that my sense of place was largely set by the patriarchal voice within a patriarchal cultural setting. I hope to be able to unpack this further following the workshops.

Proposed and planned workshop phases:

Phase 1	Review Phase	Proposed Phase 2
1. Identify families. 2. Initial discussion with mother as key point of contact / workshop lead, initial conversations are valuable in setting an understanding of what might be present in the workshops. 3. Create format and questions. 4. Negotiate and discuss questions. 5. Support the families in identifying a date and time to sit down to focus on the workshop. 6. Provide materials: air drying clay for each member of the family to work with during their conversations. Provide sound recording equipment, with practical advice on achieving a good recording. 7. Interview participants, collect items made / images of items made, review sound recordings.	1. Analyse information as a whole from each workshop and consider how this might be taken forward. 2. Looking for stories that can be extracted. 3. Look for evidence to support an understanding of the positionalities of each member of the family in relation to the knowledge of home. 4. Extract Luganda, Acholi, Swahili language phrases 5. Review with the families to confirm which materials they are happy for me to move forward with.	1. Using the analysis, work with Earlsmead Primary school students and assistant head teacher to deliver a secondary workshop to test out the delivery of affirmed personal history of a group of children with the assistant head, again using a making / material focus to supplement conversation and sharing. Explore how this can be expanded to making whilst listening and making whilst speaking. 2. In keeping this to Ugandan families, this offers a means to compare and further explore specificities around familial and cultural narrative inheritance. 3. Review the value, process, successes, failures of this phase.

At time of writing, I have handed out the questions to each family, giving time for them to review these. My initial discussions with two of the mothers have provided me with opportunities to connect and to listen as they start to form ideas of what stories they have, welcoming the opportunity to think in this way. This has been an important process through which we have found common understanding and a sense of trust that will be paramount to enabling an honest, open interaction within the families. The workshops will take place during May. After that, I will work with any clay sculptures produced and the recorded outputs to create an artwork in response. I have used this model previously and found that it provides and holds space for those taking part to engage with each other through dialogue and making, it

also provides room for me as protagonist, spectator and respondent to work together with participants' ideas, words and material expression to explore my own positioning. This work builds on models used in my role as Curator of Learning at Iniva¹². I am interested to see how this method works within the very different dynamics of the closed family setting.

Exploring Place and Memory

'It is through transnational literacy that we can invent grounds for an interruptive praxis from within our hope in justice under capitalism' Spivak (2012, p.152)

When we understand ourselves as being of one place in which we do not exist, furthermore when we achieve understanding that the former place does not itself exist quite as we have been informed, a paradigm shift in the development of our identity and our knowing of the world must take place. This has been my experience - is this the experience of other immigrants, and second / third generation citizens?

Tara Page provides a useful history of conceptions around place, beginning with Aristotle, through to Newton / Descartes. 'Aristotle's theory acknowledges the body and its prominent role in place particular to the void, where void is defined as 'place bereft of body'.' (Page, 2021, p.90)

I am interested here in body bereft of place, along with Aristotle's acknowledgement of the 'pervasiveness of place in our very being' (Ibid) which in turn provides an embodiment of place that remains after we have lost any physical connection with place. I would like to consider how this

¹² Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts)

pervasive sense can be conveyed and passed on as sense and new embodied memory to our children, 'a' place that expands rhizomatically.

We rarely returned to East Africa in my childhood, limited by politics in part. However, as mentioned, my father recounted tales of our grandparents, great grandparents, aunties and uncles there. In addition, my dad would often return 'home' alone, bringing back with him g-nuts, sukali ndizi and sugar cane. I had my own vague memories of home, namely eating breakfast at the table of my Grandfather's house, he, silhouetted by the bright sunlight from the window behind, trying to feed me porridge. But it was my father's tales of people, politics, animals and land that provided a defined sense of a place I was at once familiar with and completely alienated from.

When I returned to Kampala as an adult, however, and turned the corner at the back of the family house, I was physically moved by a profound wave of relief - someone asked me if I was ok, and I was - I was home. I had not expected such a visceral sense of mis(sed) placement¹³ and sudden security.

These stories of my dad's and other's stories that we pass on to our children,¹⁴ of experiences of school, shopping, weather, war, can be seen as entering into the realms of folklore.¹⁵ I recognise this term in relation to what I want the workshops to do, however I am also wary of it. Édouard

¹³ To borrow from Barad's habit of word splicing.

¹⁴ I have to include myself here as I have passed on a few of my father's tales and indeed my own to my children and will no doubt continue to do so particularly after my father's passing.

¹⁵ UNSECO **Definition of folklore:** Folklore (or traditional and popular culture) is the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts.

Glissant comments, 'Just as it debilitates, it (folklore) just as powerfully creates rhizomes.' (1997, p.199). The debilitation is seen in the 'atavistic energies', waiting in ambush to hold people (or cultures) back from a divergence, a chance to find 'relation,' and indeed there is a recognised dilemma for first generation children where they feel that they need to break away from the lore, rules and traditions of 'back home' as these don't always assimilate with their daily lives in the West. A useful exploration of this can be found in *Parents: Master of None*, Series 1 Episode 2 by Aziz Ansari and Alan Yang.

The pervasiveness of place as referred to by Page (2020 p.90) continues its journey, absorbed by others through the act of retelling. Place becomes imagined, felt, physical. It becomes embodied. I hear the heat, the party in the house in Moshi, I feel/hear the laughter, the music, the dogs. I feel/see the murrum dust between my toes. For the one recounting, place is again confirmed, affirmed though slightly altered when met with questions or responses from the listener: an entanglement of memory that is reshaped in the intra-action of telling, listening, responding, listening. For a moment place is in the air before it is reabsorbed.

But that means that not only do we make matter, meaning and ultimately place, it also makes us; we are entangled, co-implicated in the generation and formation of knowing, being and the making of place; placemaking. (Ibid p.94)

Page refers to Husserl, Baldwin and Merleau Ponty to support ideas of the 'lived/living body/bodies as entangled with place.' (Ibid p.95) Considering the idea of the lived body enables us to think more closely about how a sense of life is passed on with familial narratives. How the storyteller is

providing their child with a prehension of existence. This can be used to orient the child with a broader sense of the world and not only their place, but their potential place within place.

Memory alone

‘We have to connect ourselves to our memory - it is not a call to return to a specific state of being, it links yesterday, today and tomorrow.’ (Wa Thiong’o, 2008)

Wa Thiong’o places a heavy burden on memory, particularly that of the importance of using our native tongue to better orientate and preserve the memories of who we are.

The transference of memory across languages creates borders and hierarchies for the listener, even in translation. This aspect of language will be explored in the workshops with an invitation to speak in the language most comfortable or most apt for the memory. Here, where there may be no common understanding, the listener is only allowed to grasp, or enter the memory to a certain extent, always removed and excluded. Yet we are aware that somehow that memory, that language is ours and yet is not.

My dad signs a text message to me with a luganda word I do not understand and cannot locate on google. I can’t ask him what it means, it reaffirms the distance between us, it adds nothing to my memory.

Ricoeur (2004, p.22) suggests that ‘to memory is tied an ambition, a claim – that of being faithful to the past’. In passing on memories, we are also passing on that ambition, we are passing on a responsibility. We can look

here at the idea of responsibility as it has fluctuated over modernity, influenced by the capitalist sense of self and reflecting on more traditional ideas of the family where responsibilities are shared, inherent and extend far beyond the individual. There is much to be explored in what we have lost and what we have gained in ideas of putting ourselves first. This doesn't come easily and free from guilt and I have to acknowledge that inherited memories as well as potentially bolstering our foundations, might distract or influence too much, if other aspects of the self are not properly cared for. Particular areas of risk occur in the idea of responsibility, to which Karen Barad in their 2014 lecture, drawing on Derrida, refers:

To trace entanglements, to address the past, to speak with ghosts is not merely to entertain or reconstruct some narrative of the way it was but to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit...As Derrida makes clear, we have to learn to live with ghosts and be accountable to them. (Barad 2014)

For at what point can we if we need to, release ourselves from the subsumed memories of the past?

There are many difficulties around the understanding of memory, such as deception, forgetting, interpretation. Throughout all lies the intention of the narrator providing testimony. If their intention is to deceive, embellish, omit, then we may well need to release ourselves of that implied responsibility. Creating a more open and shared view of our memories and an understanding of how they impact and connect with us could lead to the empowerment needed to let go.

Place and the self in the diaspora and transnational

What gives a place its specificity is not some long-internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus.' (Massey, 1994, p.154)

Whilst I am yet to see how the post-colonial will appear within the family sharing of stories, I explore it here as it underpins my experience and understanding of my approach to the workshops. The post-colonial affect is acute within my own family, with my father experiencing a process like that of Stuart Hall¹⁶: as witness to the end of direct Colonial rule / governance. Each of the mothers of the families I am working with moved to the UK as adults or young adults. The memories of Uganda's independence from Britain in 1962 are still current and celebrated.

If kept in the margins of our lives, what effect does the embodied sense of another life have when it is retained into adulthood particularly if it is qualified or unqualified in a return to the other 'home'?

In the *Door of No Return* Dionne Brand speaks from a specific diasporic context as a descendent of those stolen from Africa as part of the slave trade. She talks of loss as her grandfather is not quite able to describe or name their past and her sense that 'to live in the Black Diaspora is I think to live as a fiction — a creation of empires, and also self-creation. It is to be a being living inside and outside of herself.' (Brand, 2000, p.6). Whilst Brand writes from a specific position, which directly relates to DuBois' theory of Double Consciousness, this sense can apply to all who came to the UK for opportunity, for a better life from former colonies. I cannot ignore that many of those arriving in the UK faced the same transnational confusions that I

¹⁶ A useful exploration into Stuart Hall's life that explores this aspect can be found in John Akomfrah's, *The Stuart Hall Project*, 2013

am exploring but in reverse. Children under colonial rule were taught that Britain was indeed an extension of their home, after all they 'belonged' to Great Britain. It is now well recognised of course, that on arrival 'home', there was no welcome, and 'opportunity' was seriously hard graft. Expected understandings just didn't tally. The newcomers knew more about Dickens and cricket than their English counterparts - even a mastery of the Queen's best English opened no doors. Brand continues: 'This existence in the Diaspora is like ... dreams from which one never wakes.' (Brand, 2000, p.11)

This underpins the divide and split of the home and the new place of residence. If the embodied place remains internal with only fragmentary material connections it becomes a dream state in which memories replay, are affected by new knowledge, and alter through telling and retelling within new spaces of context. Any return will wake the dreamer who must adjust.

Writing in 1963 about the return of the 'native intellectual' in the context of French controlled Algeria, Frantz Fanon regards a three-phase shift: exploring the path the intellectual takes as they readjust, attempt to return, to find their place within the 'native struggle'. As they understand it at first, they bring with them an idea of 'unqualified assimilation' to the colonial power:

In the second phase we find the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is...But since the native is not a part of his people, since he only has exterior relations with his people, he is content to recall their life only. Past happenings of the bygone days of his childhood will be brought up out of the depths of his memory; old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of a

borrowed aestheticism and of a conception of the world which was discovered under other skies. (Fanon 2001 p.178.)

I am particularly interested in this phase, in which the returning native searches desperately for their place, to find that it does not exist.

Accompanying this realisation is a humiliation, a final acceptance that they have been burgled from the inside out. Fanon describes in the third phase the natives move towards taking up the fight of and for his country, that this is where he finds place. I wonder how we can better prepare our children for their return, that they do not feel outsider, nor feel that they somehow should know more than they can ever know.

Contrary to Fanon's returning natives search to discover a true and fixed identity in which we can also hear echoes of the 'authentic self', in *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy suggests the notion of identities created and perpetuated in motion. This approach perhaps offers a more stable structure for our instability. This idea of identities in motion pointedly jars with the understanding of identity in nationalism.¹⁷ If one nationalist identity is fixed then surely so must they all be, and we must clamber to take root and not consistently to traverse routes.

Marked by its European origins, modern black political culture has always been more interested in the relationship between identity and to roots and rootedness than in seeing identity as a process of movement and mediation that is more appropriately approached via the homonym routes. (Gilroy, 1993 ,p.19)

¹⁷ Gilroy points out though, that even seemingly fixed national identities are not what they seem: the British identity having been shaped in large part by American writers (Carlyle, Swift, Scott and Eliot) who fixed in the minds of the British ideas of who or what they were (are). This echoes Edward Said's exploration in *Culture and Imperialism* 1994 of literature asserting and upholding the machinations of Empire.

Whilst the routes here are particular to the experience of the Black Atlantic, my suggestion to bring in the instabilities of all our pasts to bear as a valued tool for living well asks for a more universally acknowledged de-nationalisation, where we all acknowledge our routes. Clearly too far a request for the current state of rising nationalism and the life-limiting roll-out of Brexit.

Conclusion

Recounting the tales brings the past into the present as a transformative and interruptive force. This very action defines the efficacy of the (story) fairy-tale as post – mythic, something related to myth but beyond it, a narrative that extracts and liberates, disassembles and reassembles the substance and fragments of myth in order to create passageways between times and spaces. (Seremetakis, 1993 p.219)

In this essay, I have tried to pull together ideas that underpin my thinking as I work towards the delivery of a series of workshops on Memory, Transnationality and Identity, in particular by exploring ideas of place and memory. I have suggested a basis that might support the facilitation of emancipatory pedagogical approaches in the classroom, within the family setting and for myself.

I have found the use of new materialism helpful though it is impossible when considering an inclusive approach to education in conjunction with new materialism, to talk of the bodies 'pivotal' (Page, 2020, p.4) role within this school of thought without considering the nuances brought from the

black, brown (or beige¹⁸) body. This consideration becomes even more crucial when considering the intra-action of matter on those bodies and the asymmetrical meanings and understandings that will be generated by those intra-actions. I hope that post-workshops, I will be better able to explore this.

This essay will be used as a point of reflection and comparison throughout the delivery and evaluation of the workshops, as a basis upon which to draw further conclusions, finally framing the resulting artwork in July 2021.

¹⁸ I state myself as beige akin to a decent tea with milk.

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