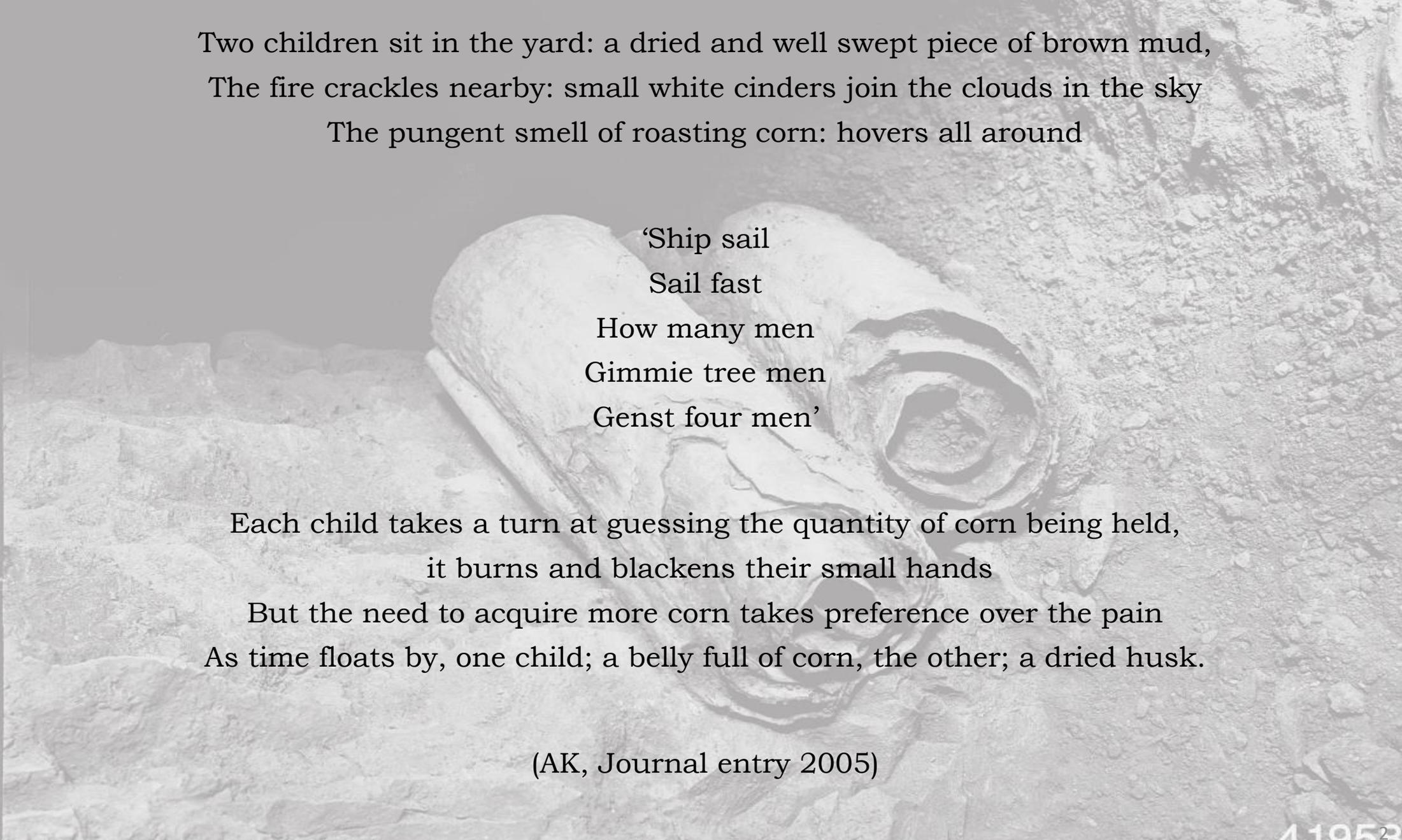


Women Leading Education conference

Fish Tales



Dr. Annette Kappert



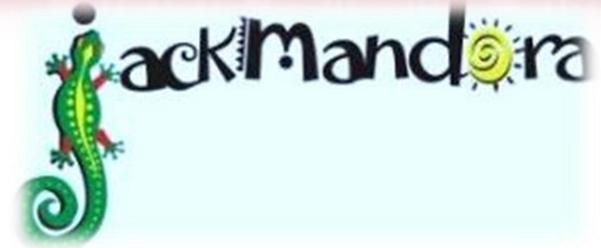
Two children sit in the yard: a dried and well swept piece of brown mud,
The fire crackles nearby: small white cinders join the clouds in the sky
The pungent smell of roasting corn: hovers all around

‘Ship sail
Sail fast
How many men
Gimmie tree men
Genst four men’

Each child takes a turn at guessing the quantity of corn being held,
it burns and blackens their small hands
But the need to acquire more corn takes preference over the pain
As time floats by, one child; a belly full of corn, the other; a dried husk.

(AK, Journal entry 2005)

The keeper of stories



Our stories are ‘subjective realities, which represent “theoretical interpretations” of our “reality” as the women “who live it” (Collins, 1990: 22).

*In a world running headlong to the future
Tis’ the keeper of stories
Who preserves the old traditions
Tis the keeper of stories
Who reminds us that we are nothing but
Minor players in an everlasting story (Doug Mills)*

As such, ‘we must tell our stories, or others will tell them for us... our stories must be told’ (Mirza 2017: 41).

Ship Sail 1: The Harbinger



Fish: Blub blub. Hey, you up there, what year are we in?

Child: 1977

Fish: Well I never, time has literally flown. You see, child, I have been down here a while – saw some terrible things and decided to lie low. What did you say? Who am I? Blub!

Well, I go by the name of Miss Arowana. I don't really belong here: I am originally from Africa. Well, let's just say I got caught up; as luck would have it, I escaped too and just decided to hang around here at the beach. I do miss home, though, but I don't really have the energy to go all the way back, plus they have probably killed off all my friends and family by now. I would feel like a fish out of water – get it? Blub blub!

I have made a few friends over the years. Well, first came those fish-eating monsters called the Taínos. I had many narrow escapes with them, but, eventually, when they found out that I could help them to catch the pesky rat-bats that were eating their maize, we developed a sort of understanding. I even nicknamed them after myself: Ara-wak – get it? Blub blub!

As they say, every fish has its day, and one morning whilst I was going about my own business, I saw something that sent chills up my gills. I wondered to myself what those crazy Arawak Indians were up to by putting cloth on poles and sticking them on their canoes. Now, I am not one to poke my nose where it's not wanted, so I bunkered down in the sand to keep an eye on things.

Then I heard such a racket, so I peeped up to see, and, Lord have mercy, it was pure chaos! The sand was stained red and my friends were being chased by a gang of hooligans. Starfish, who is very bright, later informed me that the ringleader was called *'the admiral'* or something just as fool. Child, you can imagine my fear when she happened to mention that they were from Spain, which is near enough to Africa. I thought that they had come to take me home – the African government had caught up with me and I would be deported!

Say, child, what do they call this place now?

Child: Puerto Seco

Fish: Puerto Seco! Blub, still like it here, though: the water is so clear and the sand... well, the same colour as me, I guess?

'Jacmandora mi nuh choose none!'



A Real Holiday!
Landudno (1976)



Autoethnography is a qualitative approach in which one uses one's own life story and lived experience to unpack, problematise or illustrate a social phenomenon. As such, self-stories as data, scaffolded within a framework of Black feminist methodologies, Caribbean colonial and postcolonial histories and conditions (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1994; Tong, 1989), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2008; Bhopal, 2018) and critical race theory, as defined by Yosso (2005), formed the basis of my thesis.

Difficulties with the methodology

- Despite them being entertaining and even edifying, they fail to qualify as useful knowledge because they are not logical or scientific (Stivers (1993).
- Other criticisms refer to their generalisability, reliability, validity, authenticity, exposure, indulgence, self as data, objectivity, data quality, legitimacy, ethics, memory and use of fiction (Holt, 2003; Atkinson, 1997; Coffey, 1999).
- The requirement to defend Autoethnography and the self as a data source
- Lack of literature on how to conduct Critical autoethnography
- The need to explain the stories

- *In defence of autoethnography's subjectivity:*
 - *'To understand the meaning of stories to those who use them, rather than some truth they tell us, we must study them in their contexts of use'* (Sutton-Smith, 1986: 68).
- *In defence of autoethnography's accuracy:*
 - By example, through the term *'generalisability'*, autoethnography shifts the focus from the researcher to the reader; the reader determines if a story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ellis & Ellingson, 2000; Pillemer, 2001).
- *In defence of autoethnography's vulnerability:*
 - Behar (1996) discussed the idea of vulnerability in her writing, she indicated that it did not mean that any or all information may or should be shared with the reader; rather, to her it meant *'opening Pandora's box'* (p. 19) to expose a deeper self so that transformation and growth could take place.
- *In defence of autoethnography's reliability:*
 - *'Could the researcher have had the experiences described, do they believe that this is actually what happened?'* (Bochner, 2002: 86).
- *In defence of autoethnography's validity:*
 - *'enables the reader to enter the subjective world of the teller to see the world from her or his point of view'* (Plummer, 2001: 401).

Critical autoethnography incorporates three aspects of critical theory:

‘to understand the lived experiences of real people in context, to examine social conditions and uncover oppressive power arrangements, and to fuse theory and action to challenge processes of domination’ (Boylorn and Orbe, 2014: 20).

Critical autoethnography

Critical Autoethnography is a qualitative research tool concerned with connecting the interpersonal experiences of race, gender, sexuality and ability to larger systems of power, social privilege and oppression (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013)

'offer an excellent opportunity for critical theorists to move beyond discussing the forces of power in the socio-political landscape—they give us the tools to dismantle the very system that has created the power structure' (Potter,2015: 1436).

Adams (2017: 79) further adds that all critical autoethnographies share a few key characteristics. Firstly, they ascertain vital and often unforeseen connections between personal experiences and cultural experiences. Secondly, in consensus with the proposition from Boylorn and Orbe (2017), they identify manifestations of power and privilege in everyday practices and discern social injustices and inequities. Finally, they describe the beliefs and practices that should – and should not – exist.

Museum of Ethnography in Budapest



The Autoethnographer

'possess the qualities of permanent self-identification with a group and full internal membership, as recognised both by themselves and the people of whom they are a part' (Hayano, 1979: 100), .



Little girl where are you from

Liverpool

No, I mean originally



Ship Sail 2: Retribution

- Emancipation Day: 1 August 1834 – official end of slavery in the British Empire
- Independence Day: 6 August 1962
- National Heroes Day: celebrated on the third Monday in October



Child: Miss Arowana, Miss Arowana?

Fish: What is it, child?

Child: Are you still there?

Fish: Well, where else would I be? Blub!

Child: What happened next?

Fish: Retribution.

Child: Retri- what?

Fish: What's wrong with you, child? All this patois affecting your English?

Anyway, as I said, I decided to lie low, but, here in the underworld, you hear things. Parrotfish told me that he remembers his grandfather telling him that more ships came, and they got bigger and bigger.

I am not sure his-story is true, though, as they didn't stop here. They sailed on past Ocho Rios and up the coast; I still think that's a silly name for a place that doesn't have eight rivers, but then the Spanish were not the brightest.

Anyway, parrotfish said that there were 38 in total, carrying some 9,000 men. Let's see, it must have been around 1655 that Pen and Vegetables were sent by Olive Crumb, well, to drive the Spanish out. Would have loved to have seen it – what a massacre, blub!

Child: Miss Arowana, don't you mean, Lord Oliver Cromwell, Admiral Penn, and General Venables?

Fish: Well, child, if you know so much, why are you asking me? What do you want with all these stories anyway?

Child: I need to write them down.

Fish: Write them down? Blub, whatever for?

Child: So that they don't get lost or forgotten.

Fish: Lost, forgotten? Blub blub; well I never! What are you saying? I'll be here to tell your grandchildren about your shenanigans. I will bathe in the cool crystal waters of the Caribbean Sea and frolic in the warm sunshine – watching, listening, and remembering. No, child, I will never leave Jamaica, and Jamaica will never leave me, blub blub blub!

'Autoethnography opened my eyes to see who I am.

Autoethnography opened my mind to realize who I am.

Autoethnography opened my soul to understand what I am doing and
what I need to do'

(Belbase and Luitel, 2008:9).

'we need to revisit and revise the image we have of ourselves as "strong Black women", admit that "Black does crack" and that there is nothing wrong with speaking as a survivor of and through racist hurt. To think through our feelings, to analyse and theorise racism through them rather than being immobilised by them because of fear that we are not strong enough, is already a show of strength. To admit that we need solidarity so as to survive the daily damage we experience at work already means that we are seeking to go beyond White originated shame to build communities that matter much more, to knowledge and understanding that sustain our world view, ways of being in which we find comfort and socialites /n which there is solace'
(Tate & Gabriel, 2017: 59).

What's Your Story?

