ARRIVAL

I arrived in the United States with two suitcases full of clothes and stories. While my clothes represented the European street fashion of the time, my stories embodied the aspects of my in-betweenness, global movements, and hope. Growing up in Cyprus, the divided Mediterranean island between the Turks and the Greeks and a former British colony but now a European Union country, I learned to constantly negotiate my cultural identity in relation to local, national, and international politics. I was living as a hybrid subject, belonging to multiple places, histories, and stories yet simultaneously belonging nowhere. Before I was introduced to Homi Bhabha’s (1994, 1995) theorization of hybridity and postcolonial theory and in-betweenness, which was then embodied by Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira’s (2018) idea of “betweener autoethnography,” I was embodying this in-betweenness, living in the margins of international politics.

I grew up on a divided island with a wall composed of cement, barbwire, barricades, and stop signs. I only looked at the mountains of the south from afar while others looked at the mountain range of the north from the south, each of us feeling differently about our border. I learned to live by the border and with the border, first physically, then linguistically, and later on, sexually. I grew up with stories of the past—castles, ruins, the monuments of the Roman Empire and the Venetians, the Republic of Genoa, the Ottomans, and the British. First, I inhaled the past and then embodied its languages, cultural practices, and lifestyles, thereby creating a hybrid, multidimensional, layered, and linguistically complex collage. The stories I tell are accented, hybrid, and circular, and I tell them in the shadows of colonization, globalization, and isolation. My stories are queer, crooked, accented, and translated, told to make sense of my past, present, and future. I tell hybrid stories about in-betweenness, power, politics, and cultural identity to decolonize. Therefore, in this chapter, I simultaneously enact and embody autoethnographic writing to theorize the experiences of postcolonial bodies and decolonize autoethnography to insert the stories of the margins written by a postcolonial queer marginal. Hence, in this circular and shapeshifting autoethnography, I aim to embody and theorize the decolonization of academic methods, spaces, and scholarly writing.

I often think of my life as an airport, composed of many arrivals and departures, hellos and goodbyes, joys and tears, and often, of in-between experiences. Here, the arrival is the key operating concept. Just as I arrived in the United States, I arrived at autoethnography, carrying different theoretical, methodological, and interdisciplinary perspectives and interests, multiple academic suitcases full of fears, questions, and a little bit of hope. Mine was an accidental arrival. After falling in love with media and cultural studies as a master’s student, I was introduced to autoethnography in my Qualitative Research Methods class. This accidental arrival, however, offered the alternative possibilities of exploring issues relating to cultural identity, in-between experiences, and queer sexualities.

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After a long journey, I arrived at Chicago’s O’Hare Airport and walked through its long concourses. I often have anxieties about border crossings (physical, ideological, emotional, and identity ones). As transnational scholars and students, or transnational subjects, we cross numerous borders; some are visible and others invisible. The act of “crossing” is personal, emotional,
and contested because in each crossing, we leave something behind. We often negotiate between the home cultures and homeplaces that we occupy. We transform as hybrid beings. Borders are liminal spaces where we negotiate our sense of belonging. At each crossing, we are searched, questioned, and surveilled. Arriving is also an epistemological and ontological position, where we not only navigate borders but also negotiate cultures. Arriving is the opposite of departing; hence, arriving means to re/locate and (dis)identify simultaneously in order to belong. For those of us who are transnational, accented, diasporic, or queer, we repeatedly depart and arrive.

After a long journey, I arrived at O'Hare again. When one re/arrives at a location, the location often feels different, perhaps because we hardly ever arrive at the same physical location. Our emotions are different, the people with whom we arrive are different, and most importantly, our experiences that facilitate such arrivals are different. On that summer afternoon, I arrived once again, carrying different kinds of suitcases full of different items. I arrived more conflicted, emotionally confused, and displaced than before.

I arrived at autoethnography to make sense of my own lived experiences, particularly to understand queer friendships, same-sex attractions, and my own sense of belonging. Like bell hooks (1994, 1996, 2001), I was looking for a homeplace. Back then, autoethnography provided that home “space,” the sense of academic belonging that I yearned for. The first arrival was magical. The writings of Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (2000) invited me onto an academic path that gradually transformed my research and my academic trajectory. Their invitation led me to apply to a graduate program where autoethnography was offered as a course and where performative writing and performance methodologies were highly valued.

Arrival means crossing and negotiation. As I read autoethnographic essays and appreciated the stories deeply rooted in theory, and as I understood the theories that were eloquently narrated in the form of stories to explain lived experiences or offer insights about culturally significant issues, I quickly realized that most of the authors were white and almost all were US-Americans writing about the issues that reflected their experiences or cultural critiques. The lack of international voices and voices of people of color in the field produced new anxieties for me. I still carry these anxieties. I still try to make sense of them. In a way, this chapter grapples with these anxieties.

As I read these essays, I underlined the important passages with my pencil and ruler. I formed several straight lines on the paper, creating borders and academic crossings between myself and the essay. After finishing, I quickly realized that I had underlined the passages that spoke to me directly and touched my heart. Once I put down the pencil and the ruler, I glanced over my straight lines, which reminded me of the lines of people I had stood with in at the airport, before I got to the immigration officer's desk. On that Saturday afternoon at the airport, the officer looked at my face and then at the photo in my passport. Our eyes met. I was nervous. Crossing borders always makes me nervous. He put my passport down. On this Saturday afternoon in my living room, I put the essays down. I felt a similar nervousness. The difference was that on this Saturday, I was alone. I was only passing academic borders. On that day at the airport, the immigration officer stamped my passport and gave me permission to pass. I exhaled. On this Saturday afternoon, I held my breath. Deep and long. It hurt. I exhaled. Though I had arrived at autoethnography, would I be able to pass the border? Would I produce evocative autoethnographies that would combine rich enough theoretical frameworks and compelling enough stories on issues that mattered to me? Once I began wondering about access, I also began wondering about acceptance. Would my voice matter?

**VOICE**

Autoethnography as a method aims to empower scholars by allowing them to narrate their stories and experiences within a culture as they experience it. Hence, autoethnography aspires to empower voices and highlight the self and its transformation as the author experiences, embodies, and narrates the story. However, scholars of color and international scholars have been asking important questions: Whose voice is being featured and empowered? Whose experiences have been recognized or published? Whose experiences are being policed, corrected, altered, or pushed to the margins? Hence, scholars such as Devika Chawla (2014), Kakali Bhattacharya (2018), Gloria Pindi (2018), Shinsuke Eguchi (2015, 2020), Satoshi Toyosaki (2018), and myself (Atay, 2018) use autoethnography to talk about the axis of self, voice, and power, and it aims to decolonize Euro-American perspectives when it comes to writing about and narrating self. While we all engage with these crucial questions, we voice them differently; we embody different decolonizing methods to let our voices be heard.

I came to autoethnography because I was looking for an academic home. I was in between spaces, moving from college town to college town, between nation-states and continents, and between subdisciplines
within the field of communication and media studies. I was between here and there, wherever “there” was at the time. I was also trying to make sense of my queer, transnational, and diasporic experiences since I speak in accents. I was learning to belong to multiple places, belong to ideas (Rushdie, 1988), and belong nowhere and everywhere simultaneously (Iyer, 2004). Then, I came to autoethnography to find solace, a shelter from which to reflect and transform, and a home. After all, academic disciplines either produce scholars heavily rooted in certain segments of the discipline or subdiscipline and in their methods, or they produce interdisciplinary scholars who are often homeless or able to belong to multiple places at the same time. I became the latter.

Though I gravitated toward autoethnography as a method, I had very little in common with the people whose work I was reading. They were mainly U.S.-American scholars, and I was not. Most identified as “straight” or “heterosexual,” and I did not. Luckily this particular lack of identification was changed with the work of scholars such as Tony Adams (2011), Keith Berry (2007), and Adams and Stacy Holman Jones (2008). The large majority of the scholars, despite having experienced a variety of intersections and cultural oppressions, were linguistically privileged, working with their mother tongue, and I was not. I was international, queer, and accented. Let’s call this transnational queer confusion. Within any confusion, there is hope and room for transformation. Although I was discouraged due to the lack of representation, I was motivated to produce compelling autoethnographies that would allow me to write about the margins since I occupied the margins of the discipline I belonged to, as well as the method I embodied and my desire for transformation. Let’s call this transnational queer hope.

Why should my voice matter? Why should I voice the issues I experience with a voice that is accented? This particular question inspired the structure of this chapter as well as its content. My voice matters not necessarily because my experiences matter but because I aim to decolonize autoethnography to invite scholars of color (Boylorn, 2016; Calafell, 2012), queer scholars (Adams, 2011; Berry, 2007), and transnational scholars to narrate their stories without apologizing, without being surveilled, and without being judged because of our positionalities, how we articulate our voice, how we write, and also how we resist to power structures around us. I also realize that my voice is only one among the many who are fighting similar battles. Regardless of who we are and where we stand, we should be able to voice our story the way we know how, so we can invite our readers to adapt and to understand our stories with our accented and queer voices.

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I was still working on the fourth draft of the paper, half panicked and half scared. I knew it was only a conference paper, but it mattered to me. It mattered because I wanted to make the point that my voice matters. It mattered because I was in the job market, and I wanted to make a good impression. It mattered because there would be known autoethnographers and performance studies scholars on this panel. It mattered because my story was worth telling. It was 11pm, and I was tired. I was still looking at the computer screen, trying to organize my thoughts and reflect them in my story. This was hard, hard because I was scared. I was scared of being harshly judged because I am an international queer scholar trying to find a space, trying to articulate my voice. I was scared. There was much at stake.

Finally, the day arrived. I walked into the conference room with hesitation, excitement, and nervousness. I chose the last seat at a long table. Sitting uncomfortably and leaning on the table, I glanced around the semi-filled room. Today, I was a performer, carrying my voice, articulating my thoughts, making a case to exist within the harsh academic and disciplinary structures. I leaned on the table even harder for the affirmation that I could do this. I was the last speaker. It is never easy to speak first or go last because so much happens in the middle. I narrated my international queer story and talked about borders, hybridity, in-betweenness, and transnational queer experiences. Time flew by, and my leg stopped shaking at one point, then I caught a glimpse of the note card reminding me that I had two minutes left to wrap up my presentation. My voice cracked as I got to my last sentence: “In order to tackle hegemonic structures, we need to embody postcolonial and queer autoethnographic approaches and strategies,” and I stopped.

Surprisingly, no one asked me any questions about my paper. I had been glossed over. On the way to my hotel room, I reflected on the experiences as I passed through the long, empty, and lonely hallways. I, too, felt lonely and empty. My voice had gotten lost in the mix. I had not carried my voice far enough. It was lost in the words, in the story that I had told. My experience had been invalidated, and I had been silenced by the silence of the audience.

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I learned a great deal from that experience. I learned to be patient. I learned to not give up and not let the
temporary setbacks silence my voice and my commitments to autoethnography and to decentering the power structures through the stories I narrate.

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I was told to be bolder and more evocative. As I wrote the article that I submitted for a journal, I decided to take charge, break some conventions, and be intrepid. I was told that failure and rejections are part of the academic culture, that if I wanted to give up, I should do it sooner rather than later. I learned not to give up despite so many setbacks.

It was a rainy November afternoon when the email arrived. The essay that I had submitted was rejected. The reviewers did not like my postcolonial, decolonizing, and queer approach. They also did not appreciate my use of “I” or the inclusion of autoethnographic writing in the essay. In order to publish, I was told, I needed to change. I needed to tone it down a notch. I needed to mold into the mainstream and accept the dominant paradigms in the field. I read and reread the email. It hurt to read that my essay and my story were not good enough. My voice had gotten lost once again. This time, it disintegrated in cyber space, silenced by the reviewers who saw no merit in postcolonial theorizing through narratives.

I know many (Bhattacharya, 2018; Calafell, 2012; Chawla, 2007) before me fought similar battles. Some were won and some were lost. However, individually and collectively, we propose that stories are told differently because as queer, transnational, person of color or diasporic individuals, we experience the world differently. We tell our stories differently. These stories should not be judged by the mainstream standards or should be altered to fit in to the mainstream. If the intention of these stories is to queer, decolonize, and transnationalize the way we write, the way we story and the way we perform, then we must allow these narratives to decolonize and queer the structures that govern our lives and stories. We should be read differently. The traditional U.S.-American ways of organizing scholarly papers or narratives cannot and should be criteria for writing that aims to queer and decolonize structures.

I learned to fail and then stand up. Every time I failed, I looked for ways to lift myself up and redo, revise, rethink, and rearticulate. Each time I felt that my voice was being silenced, I stood up and stood still. Standing up and standing still are part of decolonizing strategies. I learned to push back. I learned that even though my voice might crack or be silenced, or my stories might not be included in the most important journals or edited books, I needed to stand still and keep narrating my stories. My voice matters as do the voices of the other scholars who experience rejection, academic homelessness, and lack of temporary direction. We matter. We may exist on the margins of the field, but we have learned that individually or collectively, our voices matter. Despite the fact that I speak with an accent, write accented stories, and translate, I learned that my story matters.

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Academic scars are rather painful, and they have long memories. They remember the pain well, and they remind us of it. During one of those moments when my academic pain was raw, I received an unexpected email from a graduate student. Swimming in a sea of emails that I was trying to ignore, I noticed that one. The name, unrecognized. Opening emails that come from other universities with unknown senders often gives me brief anxiety, yet they trigger my curiosity. I secretly hoped that it was not another email asking me to be on a committee. Adding more into my “service” plate scared me.

After reading the greeting, I began carefully reading the email. Bit by bit, the student’s complex sentences revealed that they had recently read one of my articles on diversity and merit, and the essay had impacted them. They said they had cried. They said they had seen themselves in the essay. They said they had seen my pain and that they, too, live with that academic pain. They said my stories made them cry. I read the rest of the email as my own tears began to fall. I saw their pain as well.

After so many discouraging and dreadful experiences in academia, I was not sure what to do about this email. I was also not sure how to receive any compliments about my research or writing. Since I had often been ignored or even put down, any glimpse of praise or recognition paralyzed me.

I chose not to respond to this email immediately. I needed time to find the words to say thank you. I needed time to really mean it. I got lost in thought. How could I encourage another transnational scholar who was in academic pain? Words failed me. I sat in silence, looking at the blank computer screen. I wanted to tell this student that the pain would pass and that they could grow stronger. But does the pain ever really pass?

I know how to make sense of academic pain, but I am always at a loss when it comes to making sense of praise or recognition. I wonder if our academic pains can coexist, side by side, with hope and praise. Maybe the words won’t fail us next time.
TRANSLATION

I am not a translator; that is not my profession. I do, however, translate to live, but I never get paid for my work. I translate in order to exist, to carry on, to communicate, and to tell stories. Like so many transnational and queer scholars, I have learned to translate. Perhaps, we all translate to a degree, but the translation that transnational scholars do is constant, emotional, and difficult. Like others, I translate between cultures, between languages, between mainstream and queerness, between experiences, between the lines when I read or talk to people, and within myself as I try to make sense of my thoughts and experiences in more than one language. For example, sometimes I try to mirror images in my head with the correct words. Sometimes, I fail because I cannot mirror the exact word in English with that image. Sometimes, words in English are not enough to match how I feel about something in a particular moment. Sometimes I hear a song in Turkish, but I find it impossible to translate the emotions that it produces even though lyrics are easy to translate. I translate in order to write. This chapter is a translation that embodies my in-between experiences, hybridity, transnationality, and queerness. As a reader, it may not be an easy process for you to read this chapter, but you also have to learn to translate in order to make sense of my experiences and narrative. Let’s call this a strategy to decolonize. Throughout my academic career, I have often translated to make sense of your experiences and stories, and now I am asking you to meet me and learn to translate in order to see me and my marginality in my story. Translation is cultural work. You learn to occupy different cultural positions and to be fluid in all in order to mirror ideas. Translation is an emotional, queer work. It is queer because translation process can never really capture the essence of the original sentence or feeling in a second language. Some meanings are continuously stuck in the middle, in-between, hard to explain, hard to imagine, like the queer desires and queer lives.

Throughout my academic journey, I have read dozens and dozens of articles and book chapters that employ autoethnographic writing. When I read your work, I learned to translate between your experience and mine. When your white, or heterosexual or US-American experiences are way too foreign to me, so outside of my own experience, I try to find experiences, moments, feelings, and sometimes words (which might be lost in translation) to understand you, to get you. I labor to make sense of your experiences. As a transnational scholar, I have also learned to translate from English to Turkish, my native language, to make sense of your experience and find the words and images to mirror mine. Some of these words, however, get caught in the middle. When I write about my experiences and try to employ a U.S.-centric way of telling stories, I also translate such that you can connect with me. Typically, this process leaves little work for the reader who is conditioned not to translate. After all, the English language dominates our academic culture, and as transnational scholars, we are already acculturated to (and in most cases assimilated to) the U.S.-centric ways of writing and presenting research. I want to also note that in this process, our cultural identity and the complexities of our culturally infused stories are negotiated, edited, altered, policed, and often erased only to be molded into the mainstream narrative. We often give up, sometimes we negotiate, and once in a while, we decide to be bolder and push back on the structure that does not enable us to tell different stories differently or encourage you to learn to translate.

Writing is a translation that we all do. However, when we use multiple languages to experience the world that translates those experiences to a cohesive story, then present the story to you so you can read and unpack it easily, we are negotiating with the experiences themselves and the stories we want to tell. We alter them, so you do not feel uncomfortable. We change the structure of the narrative, we adopt for the U.S.-American intellectual’s understanding of story, writing, or autoethnography. I am often punished when I use circular stories or organizational structures in my writing. I ease the pain for you. I edit my sentence. I change my word choices. I change my examples so they are not too “foreign for you.” So, you can feel the way I feel within your comfort zone. We feel uncomfortable for you.

My life and academic journey are a series of translated, stitched-together stories. I translate between languages and cultures. Sometimes, my English is corrected or altered to appear more U.S.-American. While others police my language, I also heavily police my English to leave no room for criticism. This is the burden that I carry as we translate because sometimes words do not mirror how I feel, my actions might not be fully translated between cultures, and sometimes, the translation might not fully capture the emotions that I express. There are always cultural slippages in translations. Mine is always a transnational and queer slippage.

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I always have a hard time translating the word “queer.” I think this is because Turkish does not have a word that mirrors its essence. Therefore, every time I write...
an essay about transnational queer experiences, I feel my experiences are lost in translation, and I feel I can only make sense of them in English. This means that I cannot fully understand my feelings, attractions, and experiences without translating them. Writing about oppression, marginalization, and constant cultural negotiations is difficult because I write about my life as I experience their facets and material effects on my body. However, writing about them in translation is even more difficult because I cannot fully translate words, or the words fail to mirror my experiences. And sometimes, I simply cannot find the correct way to capture my heartaches or tears. How many times I have failed to translate the tears in my eyes.

As I sit in front of my computer and stare at the blank computer screen, I try to find the right words to construct my perfect sentences so no one could smell my fear of making a grammatically incorrect sentence or glossing over a typo. The fear of not finding the right word or expression is part of my writing process. In a moment like this, as I continued to stare at the blank screen, words failed me. I have learned to be patient with words. I know that writing this chapter could have been easier had I been writing in two languages and incorporating images to reflect my thoughts and feelings. Sometimes, words fail me because when they are read or heard, my accented sentences lose the impact that I want them to have on you. In a moment like this, I worry that you will judge me.

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We know it takes two to tango, but perhaps we do not always make it clear that translation also requires t(w)o tango. When I move, I expect you to move with me. When I read your autoethnography, I allow you to lead our dance. I follow your footsteps regardless of how provocative you want me to be in this dance. When I invite you to tango, you often resist, saying that you do not dance. Until you are willing to translate as my reader, we cannot really tango. Our moves end up making no sense. While I move elegantly and refuse to translate the rhythm for you, you move awkwardly and blame me for your moves and lack of understanding. Once we fail to tango, once you decide not to translate to understand my experience, my autoethnography will fail. I will fail with it because my voice will disappear in your refusal.

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“For those of us who constantly translate, writing an autoethnographic article is work.” That was the first line of the essay I wanted to publish. Then, I started to ask myself questions as I soul-searched: Was I sounding cliché? Would they say, “Get over it!” or “Why do it, then?” I was lost in thought when I realized that it was 11 p.m., and I had not produced one single line. Is it possible that I was actually writing a story about not writing anything? Then I started to think again. Mine was not a fear of writing; it was the opposite. I feared saying too much and the words getting lost in translation. It was the fear of being glossed over when I was using a method that was supposed to empower me. It was the fear of writing long and accented sentences and circular stories, then seeing them get lost in translation. It was the fear of not telling my stories in an impactful way. It was about going in circles, like a dancer learning to tango.

CIRCULAR STORIES

My stories are complex and complicated, not because I narrate politically charged stories about my activism or reflect on my work that have changed the lives of thousands, but because I tell patched-together stories that have multiple beginnings and endings and long middles. Critical autoethnography and decolonizing autoethnography aim to do this work (Atay, 2018; Bhattacharya, 2018; Boylorn, 2016; Chawla, 2014; Calafell, 2012; Eguchi, 2020; Pindi, 2018). They criticize structures, aim to offer alternative ways of storytelling our experiences, and empower voices that are often in the margins or silenced. I am shy when it comes to introductions. It takes me a while to warm up and be myself around the people with whom I interact. I also hate goodbyes; they make me sad and feel alone. Maybe not knowing when I will see the people to whom I am saying goodbye makes me uneasy. Maybe just closing that door or waving one last time at the airport to friends and family hurts me so much that I try to escape saying goodbye. I think this is the reason why I do not like introductions in any story. I typically start telling stories from the middle and then, when I feel comfortable, I say, “Let me tell you this story from the beginning. Let’s rewind.” I like diverging from the main story. I like taking a stroll down an unexpected narrative path. Hence, I tell stories within the story. When the story becomes too convoluted to continue telling, instead of taking a shortcut to the end, I diverge. I take a break until it is time to get back to a lead story. Once one ends, I know that I need to fetch one of the threads to continue with that sub-story, turning it into the lead one. My stories are circular. They are patched together.
It is my first visit home, to Cyprus, after a long gap. I feel bad about not returning earlier. I know that instead of choosing to work and focus on my research, I need to get home more often. I also know that university breaks are the only time I can finish any research. The sacrifices that we make as transnational faculty, I say. It feels like nobody believes me. Arriving home means code switching and learning to translate again, this time, from English to Turkish. I try to mirror my experiences and in trying, I stumble. I talk more slowly when everybody is talking fast. Then, I end up listening more and saying less.

It was a sunny and hot late July afternoon. We sat around the table on the patio at my aunt’s house, looking the Mediterranean Sea. Like we always do, we shared stories. Like Cypriots always do, they interrupted the stories with stories from their childhood days, from the long-gone Cyprus that we can never again have. Growing up through these stories, I got to know the southern part of the island, which I had not been to for a long time at that moment due to political conflict. Their stories painted a world that I could never live in and places that I could have never been permitted to visit. Therefore, I lived in their worlds through their stories. Food is part of storytelling for us in Cyprus. When we meet during my visits home, we often have large territories to cover, both geographical and story-wise. We always have a lot to tell, both current stories and those of the past.

I do not remember who started it, but the storytelling as a performative act to share parts of our lives with our family began very quickly. I felt rusty. I was out of shape. I wanted to jump in and steer the story in a different direction but after three years of absence, I noticed that I knew nothing about the people they were referring to. And while the characters were unknown, the setting and the context were even more confusing. Part of the problem with this kind of storytelling is that the teller assumes you know who and what they are talking about. That was the U.S.-American in me, complaining about the structure and rhythms of their stories. I quickly ignored and silenced these thoughts. I needed to do better in translating my listening experiences. Once I found an entry point, I began with a joke, taking us some years back into another period of time that we all fondly remembered. Moving forward, however, meant telling them stories about myself, but the problem was that they would not know any of my characters. So, I did not get that far with my attempt to tell stories. Instead of leaning toward the table, I chose to sit back and enjoy their collage of stories with some familiar characters and mostly unknown ones. I got lost in their stories, and half of my joy came from that. I also realized that once you step outside of a circular story, it is not easy to come back to it because life moves on to produce more middle stories and story arcs. They were strangers to my stories, and I was to theirs as well. At that moment, I felt anxious, as if I were passing through another border. This time, I was looking to gain access to the stories of now.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It was not easy to write this chapter. I paused a lot. I lost my thoughts, failed to translate, and finally chose not to give you a linear story with a clear beginning and end. I do not want this chapter to end because I believe that you and I have just started to understand one another. Our tango has just started. This is not a chess game, and I am not waiting for you to move. I will move with you. Hence, I chose to give you a patched-together collage of stories to offer insight into my way of constructing autoethnographies to decolonize how we write and tell our stories. Do not get angry because I asked you to engage in emotional and intellectual labor. That is part of the premise of autoethnography, asking us to engage with the personal, then connect to the cultural and stitch it back to the personal. Along the way, I hope you have changed your mind about reading autoethnographies written by us, “the others.” Our transnational autoethnographies aim to decenter mainstream U.S.-American approaches to autoethnography. We are critical because we know that now, our voices matter, and we can tell powerful stories with words that might need translations. After all, we all cross borders. Just as I did years ago, coming to the United States for the first time, perhaps today, you also crossed a border to understand that writing autoethnographies as multilingual people, we are engaging in a complex process.

Mine is a circular story. Therefore, I refuse to end our conversation. Truth be told, we have just started to decolonize. I still have work to do as a transnational queer autoethnographer. I am still stressing over my sentences. I want to make sure that this chapter is published, so you and I can carry on our tango. In this attempt to embody decolonizing tactics to employ autoethnographic writing, I want to emphasize that this is my story, and this is only one way of combating the power structures that govern our words, sentences, and stories. Others might offer their stories that also aim to decolonize by using different strategies. The beauty of this work is that we are intersecting our dialogues, where my story will be theirs and theirs will be mine as we continue to decolonize through storytelling. Let’s continue. This is our tango.
REFERENCES


