Critical Fabulation for Survival: Knowledge of Pre-colonial Gender in Igbo Culture to Sustain Queer Imaginings of Care

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Introduction

Through legislation and social code, modern-day Nigeria has become a hostile and dangerous country for queer people. As a queer person of the Nigerian diaspora, I struggle to hold both my “queer” and “Nigerian” identities because they seem contradictory. In this paper, I detail my journey reckoning with these two seemingly dissonant parts of my identity. In my endeavor to find communal belonging in Nigeria and its diaspora, I turn to the archive of pre-colonial Nigeria to discover if the nation of my ancestry was always hostile towards queer people. In particular, I try to uncover the violence British colonialism introduced to Nigeria. In this paper, I draw on the work of Saidiya Hartman to contextualize and guide my research and archivally-driven quest for belonging.

As I have matured into myself, I have grappled with the intersections of my Nigerian-American and queer identities. Recently, I learned how Saidiya Hartman's "critical fabulation," a method for being attuned to and coping with archival gaps, can be a tool for survival when multiple realities conflict (Hartman, 2008). I practice critical fabulation in my venture to grapple with my “contradicting” identities by researching and drawing on the history of gender in Nigeria to imagine a more inclusive nation. Further, in this essay, I co-opt W. E. B. Du Bois’ framework of double consciousness to describe the internal conflict I feel regarding the friction between my Nigerian heritage and my queer identity because of the violence modern-day Nigeria inflicts upon queer people (Du Bois, 2007). Throughout this auto-ethnography, I discuss my double consciousness that stems from the intersectional oppressive structures in my life, such

as patriarchy, transphobia, and homophobia. Additionally, in this paper, I demonstrate how the act of critical fabulation allows me to reconnect with myself and my (pre-colonial) Nigerian heritage to imagine and create spaces where queer Nigerians and I can belong (Hartman, 2008, p. 11).[1]

Background to my Decolonization of Nigerian Identity through Critical Fabulation

To fully understand my relationship to my Nigerian heritage, I must clarify my positionality and acknowledge the people in my lineage who have played instrumental roles in my development and my connection to my Nigerian heritage. As far as I can trace back, my maternal side of the family's history has roots in what is now known as Southern Nigeria in the Delta State.[2] Ethnically, I am from the Igbo and Urhobo tribes, but Igbo culture and traditions have eclipsed other Nigerian identity markers in my family. One of the notable people supporting and shaping me is my maternal grandmother, Veronica Onwuachi. My grandmother was born in Nigeria and married off at the age of 13 to a much older man who came from a more privileged background. Their marriage fostered uneven power dynamics that led to domestic violence and manipulation. Soon after marriage, my grandparents started to have children. When the Nigerian Civil War (also known as the Biafran War) started, my grandparents fled to the United States, where they worked tirelessly to build a better life for their children. While my grandparents worked to start a life in the "land of opportunity," they had to leave their children behind in

[1] This research to uncover information about my heritage and Nigerian history is an ongoing process. While researching and writing this piece, I had to reckon with the fact that I will learn more after this paper is published; and the information provided in this paper and the reality that I critically fabulated may seem outdated or no longer accurate to a version of me in a few years. Still, this project is imperative because it chronicles the experience and pursuit of finding research-driven belonging.

[2] I specify "what is now known as Nigeria" to remind readers that Nigeria is a product of colonialism. Nigeria is a conglomerate of ethnic and tribal cultures who are forced to associate with each other under the construct of a nation. Before British colonialism, many tribal groups that are now recognized as Nigerian would have not identified with each other.

Nigeria; and after two years, they were all reunited in the U. S. Following the end of the war, my family returned to Nigeria. But upon returning home, my grandfather's domestic violence—condoned by colonial, patriarchal structures—proved to be too dangerous for my grandmother and her kids, so my grandmother fled, kids in tow, to the United States, leaving behind her violent husband.

There is a lot of tension in my family's complicated backstory and the way Nigerian culture permitted patriarchal violence to exist in the home. I am disturbed by the patriarchal and socioeconomic violence in Nigeria that allowed for my maternal grandfather to marry a 13-year-old girl, my grandmother, who was devalued and stripped of her autonomy due to her gender and class identity.[3] Patriarchal legal and social code enabled these oppressive structures that shaped my grandmother's life. Further, despite my grandmother's Urhobo heritage, her life became oriented around Igbo language and customs because she married an Igbo man. Many aspects of this patriarchal violence can be tied back to the influence of British colonialism and not to pre-colonial Igboland[4] and its culture. Nevertheless, I am acutely aware that even if patriarchal violence did not initially stem from Igbo culture, modern-day Nigeria is still condoning and cultivating this violence. In this essay, I explore my relationship to pre-colonial conceptions of gender in Igboland, and I explore how colonialism corrupted these Igbo ideologies to become more violent.

While researching my heritage, I grappled with the archival gaps in Igbo and Nigerian history. On a large scale, the Biafran War created a massive archival gap when the country tried to erase legal evidence of Igbo culture and the war[5] (Daly, 2020). On a more personal level, my

[3] My grandmother's ethnic identity contributed to the stripping of her autonomy because she is from a small tribe that is not a part of any of the three major Nigerian ethnic groups: Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa.
[4] Igboland refers to what is now known as Southeastern Nigeria, where Igbo people originate from.
[5] The Biafran War was a war that erupted in 1967 due to ethnic tensions in Nigeria. Igbo people attempted to secede from Nigeria as the "Republic of Biafra" to escape the marginalization they experienced. However in response, Nigeria tried to assimilate and/or annihilate Igbo people, including their culture (Daly, 2020).

family has archival gaps from the voices that went silent, either from lives lost in the war or from the trauma response to living in a war-torn country that tried to commit genocide against our ethnic group (or the ethnic group inherited by way of marriage). Additionally, there are gaps in knowledge because my family was forcibly displaced from their home and culture. Notably, my grandmother was separated from her Urhobo culture at a young age (due to child marriage) and was uprooted from her nation at the age of 20 years old (because of the Biafran War). Due to these factors, I had to actively seek out information on Igbo and Urhobo culture from my family and through my own research. In the exploration of my Nigerian; Igbo; and Urhobo identities, I had to write my own script. To cope with these archival gaps, I employ Saidiya Hartman's "critical fabulation" to fully envision a pre-colonial Igboland, a place I fabulated to cultivate a caring culture and community where I would be accepted in my entire humanity, including my queer identity.

Critical Fabulation and Archival Resistance

In her piece "Venus in Two Acts," Saidiya Hartman details the failure of the archive to document the horrors of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the lives of enslaved African girls and women. Specifically, Hartman grapples with the silence in the archive that effaces the life of Venus. Venus was a name used to refer to an enslaved African girl who was brutally murdered on a slave ship. The brutality Venus faced represents the violence experienced by countless other African women and girls. In her piece, Hartman reckons with the archival gaps that dismiss Venus in her individual and collective identity. The intimacies of Venus's life and the lives of women she represents are impossible stories to tell because of a purposeful lack of documentation by institutions that primarily center and document white human life. Omission in

the archive is violent because it erases the life and humanity of a person or people. To cope with the voices (and people) lost in the archive, Hartman practices "critical fabulation" to create a counter-archive. The archive has many gaps. However, critical fabulation is the act of speculative storytelling that addresses those gaps. Additionally, critical fabulation utilizes existing components of the archive and rearranges them to reveal new perspectives and conceptions of history. The speculations of Hartman act as critiques of the archive that "...tell an impossible story and…amplify the impossibility of its telling" (Hartman, 2008, p. 11). In my practice of critical fabulation, I research and rearrange information about Igbo society while aiming "...to respect the limits of what cannot be known" (Hartman, 2008, p. 4). For instance, I rearranged cultural practices that reinforce the notion that queer life can be loved and cherished to the forefront of my archive of Igbo society, like practices regarding gender roles and marriage. (This discussion will start on page 7.)

In my pursuit of critically fabulating a pre-colonial and post-colonial Nigeria (yet to come) that embraces queer people in their wholeness, I grapple with the same issues Hartman did in her work creating a counter archive. Firstly, I continuously face issues in the archive relating to accessibility and erasure. Nigerian and Igbo culture has been documented in the conventional archive to some degree.[6] However, as a Nigerian-American living in the United States, the archival sources I have access to regarding Nigerian history are limited. One barrier I face is language. I am not fluent in Igbo or any Nigerian tongue. (Although this is becoming less and less of a concern as English or pidgin dominates Nigerian communication.) Further, the institutions—like universities and libraries—that I have access to do not have many journal articles, books, or other media on pre-colonial or post-colonial "Nigeria" that is produced by

[6] I would be remiss to not acknowledge that Nigeria because of its size, population, cultural exports, and influence is documented in the archive (even if it is in harmful ways) more than other African nations.

native Nigerians. Instead, I primarily find ethnographic accounts of Nigeria and its culture by foreigners who approach “African gender topics with non-African centered perspectives" (Mendy & Sarr, 2017, p. 109). So, there is an inaccuracy in the Western archive regarding Nigerian culture and life because of the emphasis on non-native voices and post-colonial Nigeria. Moreover, the patriarchal and homophobic nature of white supremacy discourages the documentation and sharing of societies that do not produce the same gendered violence. As stated above, there is information missing from the archive, and this absence demands speculation.

Further, as I research to imagine queer Nigerian belonging, I confront the violences of the archive and interrogate why I approach the archive as a site of healing; and I ask the question, “How does one revisit the scene of subjection [the archive] without replicating the grammar of violence?” (Hartman, 2008, p. 4). In particular, I am greatly aware of the dangers of critical fabulation (speculation and rearranging the archive) because it may create false narratives. In her writing, Hartman expresses her fears in critically fabulating an archive of Venus’s life, stating, “Instead I feared what I might invent, and it would have been a romance” (Hartman, 2008, p. 8). Similarly, I worry that I am conceptualizing a Nigeria that can never exist again in practice on the nation's soil or in the diaspora. Also, I worry that I am decontextualizing Igbo culture because of missing information and my own biases. Perhaps, it is true that there were more expansive conceptions of gender and gendered language in Igbo society before British colonization, but are there other types of violence that I am ignoring to lift up those narratives? Additionally, I understand that words written on paper do not easily translate into an understood reality. For instance, Hartman reminds us that no information or writing can accurately tell Venus's story and materialize her lived experiences (or the lived experiences of all the women

and girls she represents). In my turning to the archive for refuge and belonging, I must unpack my complicity in the violence of the archive. Likewise, I must question if I am just walking towards the mirage of "closure" and question if I am justifying my complicity by saying "...the future of abolition [must] be first performed on the page" (Hartman, 2008, p. 10). Still, I feel critical fabulation is an important tool; and in my fabulation, I attempt to be a conscientious contributor to the counter-archive.

Igbo Gender Constructs and Critical Fabulations to Protect Queerness

Nowadays, the legislation in Nigeria has created a country that is dangerous for the queer people who reside in the nation. In 2014, gay marriage and same-sex relationships were made criminal, and openly queer Nigerians can face time in prison (Onuah, 2016). Further, any person regardless of sexual orientation can face punishment up to 10 years in prison "for [hosting] a meeting of gays or…[advocating]...human rights for gays" (Faul, 2014). In the Northern states of Nigeria that practice sharia law "...sexual activities between persons of the same sex…" are prohibited "...with the maximum penalty for men being death by stoning, and for women, whipping and/or imprisonment" (Isaack, 2016). This violence of legislation also translates into interpersonal interactions not facilitated by the law, where people are socially ostracized and feared for their queerness. This fear often manifests into blackmailing and battery, which sometimes can result in death (Akinwotu, 2018).[7] These atrocious realities are horrifying to queer Nigerians and members of the nation's nation's diaspora. As an queer Igbo-American, these cruel facts clash with my need for communal love and acceptance as a queer person and as

[7] It is important to note that anti-LGBT legislation impacts people differently depending on positionality. Gay men are met with violence for their queer identity in ways other queer people are not. And the stigma of HIV is associated with gay men, which can result in dangerous attacks that are supposed to keep the community clean (Nossiter, 2014).

an Igbo person.[8] In many ways, Black and Nigerian communities in the United States have been safe spaces for me. I have trusted members of these communities who are most able to see me for my full humanity because race is less likely to obstruct their view of my humanhood. Having a loving community is necessary for human survival and thrival.[9] However, knowing the pervasiveness of homophobia and transphobia in Nigeria, culturally and legislatively, I worry about the ways my humanity may be negated in Nigeria and its diasporic spaces—places of communion I rely on to receive love and care. The brutal realities of homophobia and transphobia coupled with my need for a loving community create a multiplex Nigerian and queer double consciousness where I have to negotiate these identities. To reckon with my culture and the violence of my people (Nigerian and Igbo people), I combine documented knowledge of pre-colonial Igbo ideologies on gender and critical fabulation to create a decolonized Nigerian space that has the capacity to hold both my Nigerianness and my queerness with care. I turn to history because documentation that queer people have existed and thrived in the past suggests that there can be a future where queer Nigerians can be embraced again.

To confront the patriarchal violence that has pervaded my family's history, I researched pre-colonial conceptions of gender and the treatment of women. Traditionally, Igbo women were regarded as autonomous figures in their communities, often playing central roles in agriculture and trade. In her book *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, Ifi Amadiume reveals that in pre-colonial Igboland women "historically transgressed gender norms to acquire wealth and prestige…" (Semley, 2017, p. 188). In her review of Amadiume's text, Lorelle Semley contextualizes why this work is significant stating that the

[8] Of course, my American identity also complicates this situation. Because of my American status, I have privileges that would help me not be exposed to all the same violences other queer Nigerians face in Nigeria and abroad.
[9] "Thrival" is not a word found in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, but I feel like it captures the state of living a prosperous human life—beyond mere survival.

Amadiume "...demonstrates how social and cultural ideologies and practices had built-in possibilities for change" (Semley, 2017, p. 118). In indigenous Igbo myth and religion, there is a prominence of femininity in the divine.[10] For instance, in Nnobi ideology, femininity is tied to industriousness, and this association explains the influence and power women had in the agricultural and economic spheres (Amadiume, 1987, p. 27). In pre-colonial Igboland, wedded women were encouraged to be independent and thrifty in economic affairs (Amadiume, 1987, p. 97). In Amadiume's chapter "Women, Wealth, Titles, and Power," she discusses a particular polygynous family unit where the wives "As well as making money for their husband…also made money for themselves through the palm-kernel trade, buying kernels in bulk from neighbouring towns and retailing them" (Amadiume, 1987, p. 47). But as the effects of colonialism spread, women were forced away from the center into the margin of these communal responsibilities. For example, colonialism shifted agricultural practices regarding palm oil towards a new trading system that "...forced husbands to sell to mills and collect money," which took economic independence away from women (Amadiume 1987, p. 141).

Similarly, colonialism has impacted my family's economic and gendered practices. Economic independence was stripped away from my grandmother because of her status as a child bride. Despite the circumstances, my grandmother protected her family from her abusive husband and by tricking him into moving everyone in their family (but him) to the United States. In this act of protection and love, my grandmother demonstrated her strategic and industrious nature as a caretaker and leader in the family. Moreover, my grandmother intimately knew the reality that being married or "being the wife of a rich man, or the co-wife of a wealthy woman, was no guarantee of wealth for oneself" so "It was important for a woman herself to be

[10] These notions of femininity attached to the divine were challenged when indigenous religious practices were silenced to make way for Christianity (Amadiume 1987, 121 & 134).

industrious and self-sufficient" (Amadiume, 1987, p. 49). Now, my family is structured around the matriarch of my grandmother. And in my family, there is an unspoken familial understanding that my grandmother has performed so many visible and invisible acts of service as a single mother to provide for her five children; and her influence on my family cannot be adequately quantified. Although my family's practices are seemingly disconnected from pre-colonial Igbo culture, my grandmother's resistance inspired the Onwuachi family to continue to practice the Igbo tradition of having women play central roles in our family.

To further illustrate the expansive nature of gender categorization in Igbo society, the valuing of community members must be discussed. In pre-colonial Igboland, people were defined and valued by their contribution to their community. For instance:

> Certain roles might be performed more by men than women and vice versa, but the flexibility and dynamism of gender constructs ensured roles were not rigidly masculinized or feminized. Such roles were valued not because they were performed more by men than women but because of their significance in the sustenance, maintenance, and reproduction of Igbo institutions and society (Chuku, 2016, p. 46).

And due to the heavy involvement of women in the agricultural sphere, women were valued members of their communities. In 19th century Igboland, there were cultural practices that acknowledged the power and authority of women.[11] For example, there was a practice that Amadiume translates as "male daughters," which refers to women who inherited the status of a son, meaning the women assumed familial responsibility and ownership over family land[12] (Amadiume, 1987, pp. 31-32). Similarly, there is another cultural practice that translates to

[11] Although women's roles were acknowledged, by this point, the impacts of colonialism still had pushed women from center into margin.

[12] I would like to mention that even though women could inherit land, there were problematic barriers that prevented them from land ownership. Additionally, this construct of landownership was and is problematic because of its violence. Igbo women did have ownership over some other aspects of material wealth like livestock, crops, and children (Amadiume, 1987, pp. 30-34).

"female husband,"[13] which notated a certain level of authority and power for a woman in the family (Amadiume, 1987, p. 141). A "female husband" referred to a woman who became a "husband" when she "…practised what was called *igbo ohu*, woman-to-woman marriage" (Amadiume, 1987, p. 42).[14] In pre-colonial Igboland, marriage was not inherently monogamous. Instead, men and women could have multiple partners; and having more than one partner was beneficial because it helped acquire wealth and status. Although these marriages may be critiqued because both men and women would pay to acquire (or essentially buy) a wife, "the woman who was bought had the status and customary rights of a wife" (Amadiume, 1987, p. 46). Further, polygynous marriages provided women with autonomy because women lived in spaces separate from their husband; and Amadiume explains, "The fact that a wife did not spend the night with her husband made it possible for her to use sexual refusal as a weapon of war without running the risk of marital rape" (Amadiume, 1987, p. 91). These flexible gender roles in marriage showcase how some practices consistent with a more expansive understanding of gender persisted in Igbo culture in spite of the ways colonization devalued Nigerian women in commerce, politics, and education.

Furthermore, Igbo linguistic practices allow for more flexible conceptions of gender and the social responsibilities of different genders. For example, in the Igbo language, there are no gendered pronouns (Amadiume, 1987, p. 89). This linguistic practice refuses the violence of gendered categorization (in terms of language and definitions).[15] Igbo creates a space of gendered flexibility because "The linguistic system of few gender distinctions makes it possible to conceptualize certain social roles as separate from sex and gender, hence the possibility for

[13] Roles such as "female husband" were impacted and erased by the spread of colonialism and Christianity into legislation (Amadiume, 1987, p. 130).
[14] "Ohu" roughly translates to servant.
[15] Note, there are different words for humans and animals when describing biological differences. For example, you can use the Igbo language to distinguish a male vs. a female dog (Amadiume, 1987).

either sex to fill the role" (Amadiume, 1987, p. 90). The word for wife in the Igbo language, "onye be," is genderless. Historically, the term denoted a "subordinate" role in the relationship; and "It was therefore possible for some men to be addressed by the term 'wife,' as they were in service or domestic relationship to a master [their partner]" (Amadiume, 1987, p. 90). These linguistic practices reject the concept of a gender binary. These linguistic practices reject the concept of a gender binary, which appeals to me because of my own genderqueer identity that cannot be categorized simply or reduced to language. This linguistic aspect of Igbo culture accepts and recognizes me beyond the Western violences of the gender binary.

Ultimately, in pre-colonial Igboland, gender and gender roles were less constricting; people were valued by the ways they contributed to their families and communities. However, "after" British colonial rule, gender and gender roles in Nigeria have become more prescribed. Still, there are parts of Igbo culture that fight against patriarchy to recognize the labor of women. In her book chapter "Historical Overview of the Igbo People and Igbo Women," Aham-Okoro states, "Women…continue to contribute to the development of their communities even if their abilities are not recognized, appreciated, and formally utilized," which attests to the ways Igbo cultural practices has evolved to resist colonialism to make room to acknowledge the work of women (Aham-Okoro, 2017, p. 12). Women and people of all genders can provide so much for their community, and knowing that we can detach value from gender and attach value to the love and contributions people share provides me hope that we can move forward from colonialism with this expansiveness of value in heart and in hand. With all this knowledge, I can critically fabulate a value for myself as a genderqueer person based on the love and resources I share with my community.

Knowing this information on gender in Igboland provides me a glimpse into what it might look like to construct a less patriarchal Igbo community. I hope this paper helps to educate my community on pre-colonial Igbo society to help us reconnect to a culture of love and care. On a personal level, this information helps me to confront the gendered dynamics in my family. This act of acquiring the scattered bits and documentation of pre-colonial Igbo culture feels like an act of critical fabulation because I feel disconnected from these non-modern Igbo/Nigerian practices; I am only connected to pre-colonial Igbo ideology by descent and lineage, not by culture.[16] For example, my little brother's middle name is "Eze,"[17] which roughly translates to king or chief, and the name is revered as powerful. The role of an eze stems from the masculinization of political representation that Christianity and Western, colonial ideologies manifested when they created legislation that necessitated maleness[18] (Amadiume, 1987, pp. 132, 136). Moreover, in the Igbo community "...like many other African societies, the origin of kingship and chieftaincy dates to colonial contact and the need for colonial administration to reach the grass roots of its subjects" (Ukpokolo, 2012, p. 448).[19] In knowing this origin of the term and the name, I had to question why this idea of the empire and this gendered role are put up on a pedestal in modern-day Igbo culture. And now, I am pushing myself to imagine a future where I forgive my

[16] To further situate my positionality, I must explain that I grew up in a different state than all the members in my mom's family. Although I had exposure to Igbo culture by visiting family members, I was not immersed in Igbo culture on a day-to-day basis. And the Igbo culture my family practices is removed from pre-colonial practices.
[17] It should be noted the role of being king or "Eze" or "Obi" has been queered in the past. In her book, Amadiume explains the situation of a woman who came into power after her father who was an Obi passed away, leaving behind no healthy sons. Amadiume created the pseudonym for this woman: "Ada Eze." Ada Eze queered colonial and post-colonial governing systems by coming into power as a woman and by marrying a woman to secure a wife for one of her sons to inherit. In doing so, Eze assumed the role of a female-husband. But this "queer" relationship is muddled because Eze's marriage to a woman stemmed from her economic ability to pay for the rights of a young girl (Amadiume 1987, 123-130).
[18] For example, in the 20th century, political representation changed, "As a result of the ban of the *Ekwe* title, women lost a prescribed and guaranteed position at the centre of local government…" (Amadiume 1987, 148). "Ekwe" was another title that acknowledged the power of a woman (Amadiume 1987, 123).
[19] There was still a practice of Igbo cultural resistance against colonialism because, ""….in Igbo land…the traditional leaders…lack[ed] godlike power and influence over their people. Thus Chinua Acheve (1983) submits that 'most of them [Igbo traditional leaders] are traders in their stalls by day and monarchs at night'" (Ukpokolo, 2012, p. 450).

family for upholding this patriarchal ideology and where I can actively refuse to uphold these aftermaths of colonial violence.[20]

Curating Archives to Critically Fabulate the Future

To atone for archival gaps and modern violence against queer people in Nigeria, I practiced the methods of curation and imagination to create a counter archive that culturally maps pre-colonial Igbo practices and beliefs around gender to help me cope with the question "To what culture do I and all queer Nigerians belong, and does (or can) that culture care for us in all our humanity?" My ability to create this counter archive locates my proximity to power and privilege. As a Nigerian-American residing in the United States, I have spatial separation from Nigeria that keeps me physically safe. Moreover, I have the luxury of time to research and stitch together pieces of information to placate my own feelings of displacement from Nigeria, Igboland, and their diasporas.

In my counter archive, I constructed space for me and my kinship lines to embrace each other in our wholeness, where we connect to our pre-colonial sources of knowledge and care. Ultimately, this quest toward research-driven belonging has helped me explore why colonialism erases cultures that have expansive conceptions of gender and gender roles. Also, in this work, I confronted and speculated what is being hidden and why colonialism hides these practices of love. Additionally, during this reflection, I reckoned with the ways I almost exclusively place blame for patriarchal violences on British colonialism; this blame acts as a method and excuse for me to reconnect and prove loyalty to my Igbo heritage. Saidiya Hartman's tool of critical fabulation helped me envision Igbo communal life where my queer humanity is embraced with

[20] Further, I have to recognize that my family is complying with this colonial violence as a way to connect our Igbo roots; and I must understand that they are grasping at the information of Igbo tradition that is available to us through family.

tenderness and love, the same tenderness and love that has sustained my people[21] through hardship and brutality. Further, Hartman's practice aided me in reflecting on her questions: "...'what are the histories of struggle against these predatory state formations [of the archive], and do they shape and inform a diasporic imagination?'" (Adukwei Bulley, 2020). Even as I conclude this paper, I am still uncertain where I can be and whether I can be loved wholly as a queer Nigerian-American, but this research and critical fabulation helps me imagine a way towards finding a caring community.

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[21] When I say "my people" in this instance, I am referring to many groups of people simultaneously. More specifically, I am referring to Urhobo people, Igbo people, Nigerian people, and Black people on a global scale. Additionally, I am speaking to both the collective scale (race, nation, ethnicity)and the individual scale (my family).

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