CHAPTER 3

TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION – IN SEARCH OF BELONGING

The transition to higher education is a significant milestone in the life-cycle of students. It evokes a range of emotions from excitement to fear as they make a new intellectual and social home for themselves. Traditional-aged students who leave home often find themselves mingling with and learning from students with quite different backgrounds. How students adjust and the extent to which they are able to establish a feeling of belonging in new communities can set the stage for much of their university experience (Strayhorn, 2012). This chapter is particularly important in light of massification and increased internationalization of higher education, as more students find themselves navigating unfamiliar cultures in higher education.

REFERENCES

Hiraeth

My Mum couldn’t get the day off.

Dad drove me.
Boot of the car rammed with books
boots, shoes,
clothes, enough
for Milan’s Fashion Week,
an army supply of tea,
two pillows
and a blanket that would always smell of home even when it no longer did.

On the drive up we listened to old 30’s swing
and talked
and laughed
and sang that we were so happy in the Congo I refuse to go.

We arrived at my destination.
A shiny tower; silver
with purple at the top.
I was given a fob-key to one of the identical white rooms.

It took four trips up and down
Up and down
Up and down
Up in the boxy, metallic elevator.

It took a bit longer to ponder on how to turn a white, identical room into home when
nails and blue-tak were prohibited.

My Dad went to the car one final time and returned with Audrey
Hepburn, in a sleek black dress, huge hat, Cat around her shoulders and a cigarette
held between her pearly whites.

I recognised an optimism and hopefulness behind his gift.
In keeping with the rules we couldn’t hang it on the wall. Instead
he put it on the basic, uniform wooden desk, leaning against the new, unmarred
cork-board.

And we hugged.