Carnival of the self: an autoethnographic poetics of a doctoral researcher poet's identity articulations within diasporic Caribbean spaces.

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to develop an original method of autoethnographic poetry to explore diasporic Caribbean identity, its intersections and constructs. I will critically analyse my lived experience to understand my place in the world as a diasporic woman. The research examines the ways my poetry, as a form of qualitative research, interrogates and reimagines diasporic Caribbean identities and spaces. I will demonstrate how poetry and my process of crafting poems can be used as a reflexive tool to explore researcher positionality. I identify autoethnographic poetry as a method that can interrogate entanglements of language as a result of the colonial encounter, and also show how those legacies shape everyday lived experience of diasporic Caribbean identities.

To inform my poetry, I conducted nine interviews with nine different people retelling their experiences in relation to the Santiago de Cuba carnival (SdCC). Poetry offers a creative and critical way to present my research, whilst also challenging conventional ways of producing academic knowledge. My way of working seeks to evolve autoethnography as a methodology. I have developed an original method that draws on lived and imagined experiences (mine, my grandfather's and my interviewees') to inform my own autoethnographic poetry, which is critical, creative, personal. My autoethnographic poetry seeks to provide insight into diasporic identity, and challenge conventional academic writing. The significance of this study is that my approach informs our understanding of spaces configured as Caribbean and lived and imaginary diasporic lives.

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Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed: Yvonne Canham-Spence

22 October 2024

Overview of the thesis

Chapter one: Introduction.

This introductory chapter offers an overview of the research aims, background contexts and the methods of my poetic autoethnographic doctoral research.

Chapter two: Making from the mess; reflexivity and how I became a poet and a researcher.

using poetry as a tool of reflexivity
in my research
I explore my positionality
how it impacts
on those involved
including me

In this chapter I discuss how my identity as a poet evolved and how poetry became central to my way of being and seeing in the world. I interrogate my reflexive practice and how I use my autoethnographic poetry as research method to ensure I have applied the necessary ethical considerations to my research process (Pillow, 2003; Tracy, 2010). I will discuss my decolonising practice as a way to create an alternative way to produce and represent knowledge.

I reflect on how I write myself and others into the text and how I address the possible vulnerabilities, exposures and implicating the lives of others that I have involved in my research. I examine my responsibilities not just to the research process and to the research participants, but also to myself as a doctoral researcher trying to carry out research during the global Covid-19 pandemic and trying to keep well. I also discuss how the Covid-19 pandemic has shaped my responses with and to my research (Burns, Dagnall and Holt, 2020)

Chapter three: Poetry as method, autoethnography as methodology.

In the first part of this chapter, I discuss my autoethnographic poetry as my method of thinking and writing my thesis. I give an insight into the specific process of developing my autoethnographic poetry as a method of inquiry (Brady, 2004; Carroll, Dew and Howden-Chapman, 2011; Cutts, 2019; Faulkner, 2005; Faulkner, 2007; Faulkner, 2016; Faulkner, 2019; Lahman *et al.*, 2011; Prendergast, 2009; van Rooyen and Abdon, 2020; Weems, 2009; Weems, 2013b; Weems, 2016). My autoethnographic poetry is informed by, and in relation to spaces I configure as diasporic Caribbean, such as my childhood family home, the Santiago de Cuba carnival (SdCC) and my imaginings of my paternal grandfather's life in Santiago de Cuba. These are the spaces in which my diasporic poet identity is explored.

I demonstrate how the development of my autoethnographic poetry has been inspired by other poets, and autoethnographers who use poetry in their work. I analyse their work, identifying the methods and techniques that have influenced my own craft. I then explore the benefits and challenges of using autoethnographic poetry as a research method and discuss why I have chosen it as my research method.

I engage with Sandra Faulkner's work on poetic inquiry as a method of presenting research (Faulkner, 2007; Faulkner, 2016; Faulkner, 2017a; Faulkner, 2019), and Mary E Weems's autoethnographic poetry (Weems, 2000; Weems *et al.*, 2009; Weems, 2009; Weems, 2012; Weems, 2013a; Weems, 2013b; Weems, 2016) to develop my own poetry. I discuss how and why I have adapted Faulkner's praxis of *ars criteria* framework (Faulkner, 2016, 2019) as a guide to how I create and develop my autoethnographic poetry as a method of inquiry. I also discuss my conflicted feelings about using a such a framework.

I engage with key poets whose works explore diaspora, Caribbeanness and language to develop my autoethnographic poetry to interrogate my own identity articulation. Poetry by Cuban and Santiaguero Jesús Cos Causse (Cos Causse,

1987; James, 2022; Ramsay, 2001) explores an aspect of diasporic Caribbeanness and identity formation in the context of his Santiaguero family. I then discuss UK based Jamaican poet Jean 'Binta' Breeze's poems (2000, 2011). Breeze's poetry examines UK based Caribbean diasporic experiences and how the use of the Jamaican language in her poetry illustrates a significant aspect of diasporic identity. Alongside Breeze's use of English and Jamaican languages in her poetry, I reference the work of Tobago-Canadian poet M NourbeSe Philip (NourbeSe Philip, 2015) whose poetry deconstructs, plays with and reshapes the English language. I demonstrate how all three poets' work inspires me to write some of my autoethnographic poems, and why I use English, Jamaican and Spanish languages spoken in the diaspora, to illustrate how I experience the vectors of similarity and difference that play out simultaneously (Hall, 1990) as part of process of coming into my diasporic Caribbean identity.

I also discuss how and why I used interviews to enable me to connect to a broader picture of Caribbean diaspora, using interviewees' stories of the SdCC as a muse to inspire and inform my autoethnographic poetry. I show how I use the interviews to underpin the 'ethno' of my autoethnographic poetry, informed by experiences of other people's stories who share similar cultural phenomena (Allen-Collinson, 2013; Denzin, 2014; Ellis et al., 2010; Holman Jones et al., 2013). I explain my decision to use semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018) and discuss my specific method of interviewing, and the barriers and motivators I faced when engaging with my interviewees. I detail how this engagement and the analysis of the interviewees' original poems inspired and informed the autoethnographic poems I devised in response. Drawing on common themes of diasporic identity, Caribbeanness and belonging elicited from the interviews, I demonstrate how I crafted my autoethnographic poetry as a method to (re)contextualise my diasporic Caribbean identity in another Caribbean space of the material and imagined carnival (SdCC). Christian Campbell states that writing poetry is an embodied, physical act[1] and my autoethnographic poetry performs as embodied enquiry and a way to represent and express embodied and experiential knowledge (Faulkner, 2019, p. 19).

[1] Christian Campbell delivered a seminar entitled "The Penn Relays Carnival" at the Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies, Warwick University, November 13th, 2020.

I then review autoethnography as a methodology, investigating its challenges and advantages, including its ethical conundrums and possibilities (Lapadat, 2017; Winkler, 2017) and why I chose it as the methodology appropriate for my research. I discuss how I follow on from Denzin's definition of interpretive autoethnography, as a critical performative practice of a writer's biographical life that moves back and forth in time, towards a broader history, culture and discourse (Denzin, 2014, p. x).

I adapt Denzin's interpretive autoethnography as my approach, to story a series of epiphanic episodes in my biographical life – my childhood obsession with a book on the Caribbean, *The West Indies - World Library,* the scantly detailed and enigmatic story of my grandfather's migratory life in Cuba, and my experience of the SdCC to investigate and make meaning of my diasporic identity. I connect with and work in community with the other researchers who use autoethnography as a methodology (Weems, 2013; Boylorn, 2014, 2021) to develop my own writing.

Chapter four: Caribbean spaces: Mr Spence, the Santiago de Cuba carnival, my muse

I discuss how I use the SdCC as a muse to inspire and inform my original autoethnographic poetry. I give a brief overview of the origins of carnival, from its pre-Christian, pagan origins in Europe in the Middle Ages, its evolution tied to the Christian calendar and as a space of resistance and challenge, upending (albeit temporarily) social norms (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984). I explore carnival's transportation to and transformation in the Caribbean, with a specific focus on the Santiago de Cuba carnival (SdCC), which I configure as a diasporic Caribbean space in which to articulate Caribbean identities. I demonstrate how I adapt the idea of carnival, as a resistive site of storytelling and knowledge creation, as iterative and unfinalisable (Bakhtin and Holquist, 1981; Bakhtin, 1984; Vice, 1997) and demonstrate how this approach informs my autoethnographic poetry. My autoethnographic poetry reflects the rhythm and movement of the SdCC, as a migratory experience that facilitates my understanding of my diasporic identity in different Caribbean contexts. I discuss how I am using my poetry to situate my English-speaking diasporic identity into another space, which is a Spanish speaking one, reflecting the diversity of the Caribbean diaspora, to make sense of my identity.

I use the story of my grandfather's time in Santiago de Cuba, locating him at the site of the carnival to connect my diasporic Caribbean identity through him. Denzin (2014) posits that autoethnographic productions often start with the (taken for granted and assumptive) site of family history and trauma or crisis (2014, p.7). My autoethnographic thesis locates my childhood family home as a primary Caribbean space in which to explore my identity. I do not start from a place of immediate trauma or crisis, but critically I acknowledge the historical trauma, enslavement, colonisation and migrations that configure the Caribbean and the diaspora and is why I am here.

My autoethnographic poetry, informed by a series of revelatory experiences (epiphanies, as defined by Denzin (Denzin, 2014, p. 52), is outlined in chapter three (poetry as method, autoethnography as methodology), grounded in celebration of diasporic identity. Alongside the carnival and my grandfather's story, I construct my childhood family home as Caribbean space in which to situate my awareness of my links to the Caribbean and my diasporic identity formation in relation in that family context. Critically, I deploy the symbolism of the SdCC as muse for my poetry as method, and argue that autoethnographic poetry, like carnival, can cohere and bind through storytelling, the disparate, the scatterings and the entanglements of diaspora, as I experience it.

In exploring my paternal grandfather's membership of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) led by Marcus Garvey in the early part of the 20th century (Cronon, 1969), I investigate the historical trajectories of diasporic processes and identities, and how they lead to my own processes of diasporic identity formation.

Chapter five: Caribbean spaces: my autoethnographic poetry

Research aim

to explore in poetry

coming into

diasporic Caribbean identity

configured

in Caribbean spaces

In this chapter, I respond to the research question: how can an original method of autoethnographic poetry be used to explore diasporic Caribbean identities and Caribbean spaces?

My autoethnographic poetry, informed by a series of revelatory experiences (epiphanies, as defined by Denzin (Denzin, 2014, p. 52), is outlined in chapter three (poetry as method, autoethnography as methodology), grounded in celebration of diasporic identity. Alongside the carnival and my grandfather's story, I construct my childhood family home as Caribbean space in which to situate my awareness of my links to the Caribbean and my diasporic identity formation in relation in that family context. Critically, I deploy the symbolism of the SdCC as muse for my poetry as method, and argue that autoethnographic poetry, like carnival, can cohere and bind through storytelling, the disparate, the scatterings and the entanglements of diaspora, as I experience it. My autoethnographic poetry is presented.

Chapter six: Conclusion. To be continued

In this concluding chapter I reflect on my coming into identity as a researcher, a poet and as a diasporic Caribbean woman. I summarise my arguments, main findings and the contribution made by the study. This chapter also looks at the relationship with previous research on diasporic Caribbean life from a UK perspective, and poetry and poems that explore diasporic Caribbean life. I reflect on problems that arose during the research, the limitations of the study and recommendations for action, research and change. My observations and self-reflections as a western European researcher in making sense of my own Caribbean identity, and as an insider/outsider in relation to the people I have worked with in the project, are also explored.

I am positioning my specific diasporic, experience, locating it, through autoethnographic poetry, in the Spence family home, a carnival in Santiago de Cuba and my grandfather's story as a Jamaican in Cuba – my constructs of Caribbean space(s). Autoethnographic poetry as a research method has the power to not only demonstrate the physicality and emotionality of doing research (Faulkner, 2019, p. 25), but offers an accessible and inclusive way to present knowledge. It is a method that aspires to engage others inside and outside the academy, especially those who

may want to create and produce research that comes from their passion and creativity. My autoethnographic poetry as a method of inquiry makes a contribution to diasporic aesthetics and representation (Hall, 1990), by creating poetry as data, as theory and as knowledge creation. It contributes to the long tradition of storytelling and play as survival strategies from the violent scenes of the plantocracy to the emancipatory storytelling site of carnival scene as a Caribbean space of affirmation. as a way of knowing ourselves as diasporic Caribbean people. people. The carnival, as metaphor becomes the poem, and the poem is the carnival space, telling the story of my diasporic life. I speak, write, act from a position of knowing myself as a poet, and make a contribution to diasporic literacies (McKittrick, 2020) with this thesis.

My contribution demonstrates knowing, seeing and being in the world in a way that departs from Eurocentric, conventional, positivist ways of creating knowledge; it is about coming into knowing differently (McKittrick, 2020, p. 7).

My thesis informs and contributes to our understanding of spaces configured as Caribbean and my and others' lived experiences of diaspora by introducing poetry as a method for evocative, interpretive autoethnography. Using autoethnographic poetry as a method of inquiry enables scholarship that is less prescriptive and more inclusive.

Introduction

This is a thesis about me, a poet and my poetry; as my way to understand the world and myself. It is about developing and using autoethnographic poetry as a method of inquiry into the lived experience of coming into diasporic identity and my coming into identity as a researcher poet.

> "Poetry is not only dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives…The Black mother within each of us – the poet - whispers in our dreams: I feel therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary demand, the implementation of that freedom."
>
> (Lorde, 2007, p. 27)

I didn't fully recognise the freedom in poetry that Lorde asserts in the above quote, until I came to write this thesis and found that poetry "coins the language" for me to write autoethnographically, and to fully express and represent my research. This thesis offers insights into the development of my craft and presents autoethnographic poetry as my research method that enables me to explore my diasporic Caribbean identity, its intersections and constructs, and the positionality of myself as researcher in relation to my research.

Because memory and facts are unstable (Bochner, 2013, p. 54), I use a process of reimagining a series of epiphanies or turning points (Denzin, 2014) that I experience as Caribbean spaces: my childhood family home, the Santiago de Cuba carnival (SdCC) and my imagining of my Jamaican grandfather's life in Cuba as a migrant worker. I use my grandfather's story and my interviewees' stories in relation to the SdCC, as muses for crafting my autoethnographic poetry.

I identify this research as a contribution to broader debates, explorations and representations of Caribbean diasporic experiences. Stuart Hall in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (Hall, 1990) declared "a new cinema of the Caribbean emerging …related to, but different from…the other forms of visual representation of Afro-Caribbean (and Asian) 'blacks' of the diasporas of the West…" (p. 2). My contribution is to the continuing aesthetic, artistic representations of UK based

Caribbean diasporic life. My contribution to knowledge is to offer a poet's individual lived experience of diasporic identity, using autoethnographic poetry, from a UK perspective. To frame my exploration into identity, diaspora and Caribbeanness, I ask the following questions:

1. How can an original method of autoethnographic poetry be used to explore diasporic Caribbean identities and Caribbean spaces?

2. How can autoethnographic poetry be employed as a reflexive tool to explore researcher positionality and challenge conventional academic research?

Why an autoethnographic approach?

Different people travel different roads to create and make (sense of) knowledge. My thesis is a celebration of diaspora, of poetry and of poets that have influenced my way of seeing and being in the world as a poet. I am writing this thesis from my position as poet, as UK born diasporic Caribbean woman, because that is that is what I know. Taking an autoethnographic approach, I examine the particularly of my lived experience, interrogating my diasporic Caribbean, poet and researcher identities to explore Caribbean diasporic identities without being reduced to fixed undialectical notions of Blackness. For the purposes of my research my focus is on identity formation. Here, my Blackness is negotiated through my Caribbean identity, as a diasporic identity informed partly by 'people from elsewhere' (Hall, 1990, p. 235). As a poet, I am creating my own Caribbean spaces, in which, to quote a wise family friend, to 'write easy', about the people, processes and contexts that connect me to the diaspora, to the world. 'Writing easy,' for me means writing in a way that does not cause me stress, pain and grief that is potentially harmful; poetry offers me that space.

Referencing Hall's conceptualisation of diaspora and identity (Hall 1990, 1997, 2019) and the concept of Caribbean space (Boyce Davies, 2013), I investigate what and

how processes of diaspora articulate, with a specific focus on African/Caribbean discursive cultural practices, such as carnival. I explore specifically the Santiago de Cuba Carnival (SdCC) as a space of identity articulation for me, as a UK born woman and western educated doctoral researcher of Caribbean heritage; a problematised belonging and hyphenated identity: being of the Caribbean, but not from the Caribbean (Hall, 1997, p 28). My experiences of my UK based, Caribbean family home infer a doubleness, a simultaneity of similarity and difference (Hall, 1990, p 226). This inferred doubleness emerges in my parents' conversations of 'home' as UK and 'home' as Jamaica, in constant negotiation and through which I try to make sense of my identity; an 'of, but not from' duality. It is the blurring of memories of texts and books on African and Caribbean histories, politics and literature such as: *Beautiful Jamaica* – Evon Blake*, Anansi the Spider man* – Philip M Sherlock*, The Cuba Project* – Fabian Escalante*, A History of Negro Revolt* – CLR James*, Garvey: His Work and Impact* – Rupert Lewis and Patrick E Bryan, Eds*; The West Indies* – Carter Harman. These blurred memories were also about the music on the shelves in my parents' study, and the Jamaican language spoken at home that constituted this doubleness that I experienced, then and still do now. These are the contexts and spaces of meaning making that configure my coming into identity as a UK born, African /Caribbean woman, doctoral researcher and poet.

The Spence Family home

The Spence family home performs and displays totems of Caribbean life, with paintings of Jamaica and maps of the Caribbean on the walls, and photos of family still living on the island adorning the living room. The family space is infused with the aromas of Caribbean – Saturday soup with dasheen, dumplings, pumpkin and yellow yam; rice and peas and chicken, on Sundays after church, washed down with Guinness punch, and carrot juice.

Our home was full of books on Pan-Africanism, socialism, and the Caribbean.[2] It was often filled with the noise and animated contributions of family friends passionately discussing internationalist and local politics with my parents. I was their captivated audience, in awe of all these big people living life and talking revolution, while Ahmad Jamal or John Holt played on the radiogram in the background. All the while my 10-years-old self would be desperately trying to link these conversations to what my brother Eddie and I had learned at our Saturday Caribbean history lessons taught by our parents' friends Thelma Lewis and Jeff Crawford. I have held these memories close, carrying them around like a precious jewellery box throughout my life, occasionally taking them out to examine the treasures, knowing that they were important and special, but not fully knowing why.

My Grandfather, Mr Spence

My grandfather's story is the link between my lived experience, and those collected during the research, as a means of understanding coming into a Caribbean diasporic identity in what I conceive of as the SdCC performing as a Caribbean space. My childhood imaginings of my grandfather's life in Santiago de Cuba are motivators of my doctoral work and inspires some of the autoethnographic poems in the thesis. Multiple utterances about my grandfather, Mr Spence, his time in Cuba, and the island itself, have become a fragmented, enigmatic story, that, as a child I would ask about from time to time to satisfy my small girl curiosity, eliciting different versions from my father at each retelling. As a teenager, Mr Spence went off to fight in Flanders in the First World War, before going to live and work in Cuba soon after. He remained in Cuba for around fifteen years, before returning to Jamaica to build his life as a smallholder and raise a family. He was one of approximately 140,000 migrant workers from Jamaica, working in the sugar industry in Eastern Cuba (Howard, 2015; Whitney and Laffita, 2013) between the two world wars.

[2] My poem "bookmarked memories or revisiting my parents' record collection and books: stories of a (UK based) Caribbean diasporic family (shelf), presented in chapter six, details some of the books that hold significance

Books and pamphlets about Cuba, Castro and the Revolution have a permanent home on one of the bookshelves, next to speeches and pamphlets by Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, Marcus Garvey and Lenin. For me, as a child and young teenager, the idea of the Caribbean, of Cuba and my grandfather living there was exotic, ethereal. This was another world, but one, that somehow reached into mine, not only through family relation, but something beyond that, that signalled for me a sense of connectedness, a link to that imagined space. Situating Mr Spence's lived experience in relation to the SdCC enables me to unpack complexities of diaspora, as a process through which to understand coming into identity in what I conceive of as a Caribbean diasporic space. Marking Mr Spence as a signifier of identity formation in the context of Caribbean space and diaspora (Boyce Davies, 2013; Hall, 1990), his lived experience acts as a muse for my autoethnographic poetry as a method of enquiry into my own identity articulations.

By imagining my grandfather's lived experience, I am challenging archival limits and paying attention to counter histories (Hartman, 2008) to make community with my Caribbean diasporic inheritance. I take my cue from McKittrick's exhortation that "we live with what cannot be explained and live with the unexplained cues and diasporic literacies rather than reams of positivist evidence" (McKittrick, 2021, p. 7).

Santiago de Cuba Carnival

I am positioning the SdCC as a site of storytelling and knowledge creation, of dialogic engagement between texts (Bakhtin and Holquist, 1981; Bakhtin, 1984; Renfrew, 201; Vice, 1997). That engagement between the people, the music and food, the streets and the conga processions - enables me to make sense of my own diasporic identity in another Caribbean context. This includes Santiagueros' stories in relation to the carnival.

The SdCC is a significant cultural and historic event that takes place in Santiago de Cuba city, in eastern Cuba in the last two weeks of July each year (Bettelheim, 1991; Wirtz, 2017). I interrogate the space of the SdCC as both an imaginary (through the stories told in relation to it), and as a material performance (the routes of the official

parade, the congas, the food stalls and side street parties), that represents and produces knowledges that configure Caribbean diasporic identity formation. I argue that what happens in relation to the SdCC are a series of encounters, where people meet with each other, in and through their many communities (as musicians and dancers, neighbours, and comparsas, spectators, food vendors and more) performing imagined histories and creating ways of knowing. I use Santiagueros' stories, as a way to speak to those encounters and thoughts to craft the poems about a collective diasporic experience.

Although Santiago de Cuba is the second-largest city in Cuba, it is challenging to find an updated and more detailed census. The 2012 census states that 74% Santiagueros are 'non white' – the term that the Cuban state uses to describe the Santiaguero population (Dominguez, 2021, p. 91). The census information does not delineate further, so there is no way of knowing how this breaks down, other than crude terms of black, mulatto or white and what these terms constitute, which feeds into the narrative of a singular Cuban identity that positions whiteness as central (Garth, 2021). The population was significantly reduced through the ravages of the War of independence (1895 to 1898). There was a desperate need for labour to service the burgeoning sugar industry in the eastern provinces, consequently recruiting of migrant workers from the nearby islands (Queeley, 2013, pp. 43-44) took place. The rubric 'most Caribbean (read Black) city' in Cuba, speaks to Santiago de Cuba city's history as a port from the 1600s the 1500s receiving shipments of enslaved Africans (Bettelheim, 1993). It is also the entry point for Haitian planters and their slaves fleeing the Haitian revolution of 1789-1804. This is when I started thinking about the SdCC as Caribbean space. Not just a collection of bodies swaying to infectious rhythms, but a collection of motivations, and a site of knowledge production, imaginings, connections and encounters that celebrate 'something' – family, belonging, community, culture (Bastian, 2003). It is the break from the daily struggles- '*la lucha'* of living with the precarity of food insecurity and accessing meagre resources that Cubans have to negotiate. There is too, in the current economic climate in Cuba (Hansing, 2020), the persistent issue of shortages where many Santiagueros now rationalise the scarcity as a sign of their own resilience and part of their identity (Garth, 2013). The SdCC offers a temporary illusion of plenty, and it is a dialectical relationship with the SdCC that brings about the rationalising of

‘la lucha’. The SdCC offers the possibility for Santiagueros to transform the mundanity of those daily struggles, into moments of spectacle and play, which they do through the mass movement of the conga, savouring carnival food and free beer, and dancing with family and friends in the street parties. It is in this context of spectacle and play that I invite Santiagueros to share their stories of the SdCC and how their stories inform their identity articulations, and sense of belonging. It is in the context of this carnival space that I use my autoethnographic poetry to explore my identity articulations and interrogate my sense of belonging in the diasporic space and in the academy.

While there is scholarly focus on carnivals in the Caribbean (Bethel, 2014; Farrah, 2019; Nurse) and Caribbean carnivals in the diaspora (Jackson, 2022; Tompsett, 2005; Trotman, 2005), they are framed as cultural spectacle and sites of resistance, where the emphasis is on the collective, rather than individual experiences as a way to understand broader truths about diasporic processes, and cultural practices as ways of being in the world. The focus of my thesis is not on a carnival as cultural performance per se, but as a space offering context and meaning to stories of identity negotiation as part of diasporic processes.

My autoethnographic poetry.

This thesis identifies an original method of autoethnographic poetry to explore the lived experience of coming into Caribbean diasporic identity; what it means to be of the Caribbean but not from it, and the idea of Caribbean space, like diaspora as a ‘travelling term’ (Clifford, 1994, p. 3). When I started thinking about the thesis proposal and what I wanted to research and to write about, my ancestors were knocking at the door, making it known that they were integral to the research, that their experiences should be written into the world. So, I am compelled to write-in and write in their presence. I do this through the poems and by imagining my paternal grandfather’s life as a Jamaican migrant worker in Cuba, occupying a liminal, always migratory space of diasporic subjectivity. It was my paternal grandfather’s story then, and specifically my imaginings of storying his of life in Cuba, that kept writing itself into the lines of the many versions of the proposal that I drafted. I knew I wanted,

needed to write about my imaginings of Cuba, the SdCC and the Caribbean, and to interrogate this sense of connectedness to this idea of this space and my family home as a version of the Caribbean; my Caribbean space (Boyce Davies, 2013, p. 6).

I demonstrate how my autoethnographic poetry evolves the methodology and can support self-understanding. The significance of this study is that it informs our understanding of spaces configured as Caribbean and my and others' lived experience of diaspora by introducing poetry as a method for evocative autoethnography (Denzin, 2014). My autoethnographic poetry is inspired by the stories gathered from interviews of the SdCC to produce knowledge from the site of my lived experience in relation to the SdCC. It also offers insights into my lived experience as a PhD student during the Covid-19 pandemic, and how this enforced me to draw further on the imaginary to put me in closer connection with SdCC.

Using and crafting poetry offers a path towards belonging and connectedness that enables me to make sense of my lived and imagined experiences in diaspora. As a method in my research, poetry helps me to integrate my own experience, while drawing on the stories of interviewees in an evocative and an ethical way (Denzin, 2014; Faulkner, 2019). I do this by acknowledging the interviewees' authorship of their own stories, and by inviting them to craft their own poems relating to their experience of the SdCC. I also draw on themes, such as Caribbeanness, family and embodiment, or through dance, as inspirations to craft my poems. This process enables me to capture the essence of the interviewees' stories whilst still being able to tell my own story. I discuss this in more detail in the section on Interviews. I use a combination of English, Spanish and Jamaican to convey the linguistic complexities and legacies of diaspora.

In some instances, I use footnotes as integral to a poem's composition and should be read as such. I do this, with a couple of exceptions, to avoid using citations or references in the body of the poem. If citations or references are used in the body of the poem, that is a crafting decision that I have made. The processes and methods that I use to craft poetry, and the poems themselves, as spaces of engagement for mine and others' meaning making and imaginings (Bachelard and Jolas, 2014). The

poems become spaces that hold our affective and sensory responses in relation to the experience of the SdCC as a signifier of diaspora. Crafting poetry as a method of enquiry is an enabling, embodied and emotional act of reflexivity, where I question my own practice and its impacts on myself, my co-participants and readers.

My positionality and the labour of reflexivity in my research

Questioning my positionality is another way for me to examine my research process, my ethical responsibilities through my reflexive practice, addressing my relationships in the research and the effects of those connections and intersections. Writing my autoethnographic poems is also a way for me to pay attention to my own internal ethical barometer (Leavy, 2015). I was a poet before I started my PhD, but I didn't realise that I could use my poetry as a method of enquiry. Using poetry in this way now allows me to integrate my roles as poet and researcher to offer autoethnographic poetry that "...often evokes identification and empathetic responses…an invitation to take another's perspective" (Pelias, 2005, p.419). Using poetry as a method of autoethnographic writing enables me to negotiate my relationship with the blank page, to write in a way that emancipates me from the tyranny of my relationship with conventional academic writing (Moriarty, 2015; Patrick, 2016) and offers a way for me to create and present knowledge. Poetry has a richness and a complex simplicity (hooks, 1999) that can get right to the matter, to the heart of things in a few words. It is in this spirit that I present this thesis and in the chapter two I discuss how I became a poet and how my reflexive practice is mediated through my autoethnographic poetry.

Chapter two: Making from the mess; how I became a poet and my reflexive practice through poetry.

The aim of this chapter is to explore my positionality and my reflexive practice by asking myself the question: how do I use my autoethnographic poetry as a tool of reflexivity in my research and challenge conventional academic research?

To answer that I discuss how and why I became a poet, why it is important that I have developed an original method of autoethnographic writing to present knowledge as poetry that humanises and democratises scholarly work. I also explore, through my poem on my reflexive practice ‘how am I doing this? why am I doing this?’ how I challenge institutionally racist structures in academia that continue to maintain traditional discourse privileging and centring Eurocentric modes of knowledge production. These hegemonic modes of knowledge production remain as exclusionary, that still marginalise and racialise diasporic voices and other ways of creating and knowing that are critical to understanding the world (Boyce Davies, 1994; Boyce Davies, 2013; McKittrick, 2021). I then discuss how and why my poetry is integral to my well-being, especially when facing the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and my cancer diagnosis and treatment during my research (Burns, Dagnall and Holt, 2020).

Using a mixture of poetry, prose and extracts from my research diary, I discuss how I use my autoethnographic poetry as a tool of reflexivity in my research, enabling me to contribute to knowledge that celebrates diasporic livingness as a way to be in the world. I give an insight into how I use my autoethnographic poetry to help me navigate my positionality as a researcher (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013a; Pillow, 2003; Soyini Madison, 2011), to maintain rigour and transparency rendering an authenticity and trustworthiness to my work (Le Roux, 2017).

I start the chapter by presenting my poem, ‘kitchen table poet’ to introduce how I became a poet and why it is important for me to write autoethnographic poetry as way to create and present diasporic knowledge to contribute to diasporic ways of being and seeing and to counter. I then discuss how and why my variable educational experiences - the racism of the school curriculum that absented histories of people who looked like me (Gerrard, 2013); and how an adult education class helped me to find my voice in poetry (Wright *et al.*, 2010) as an emancipatory space of diasporic knowledge creation.

The kitchen table: or how I became a poet

I write this chapter as part of my reflexive practice because by I am making myself consciously present in the text, looking at my early life and experiences that lead me to writing this thesis. I am able therefore, to “tell of the storied landscapes that weave in and out of [my] life and [is] part of my embodied knowledge (Dubnewick *et al.*, 2017, p. 414).

I consider myself a kitchen table poet, a creative writing evening class attender, with no formal training in the craft until attending MA poetry seminars at the start of this research project. I recognise, as Carole Boyce Davies (Boyce Davies, 2013) and Paule Marshall (Marshall, 2001) do, the significance of the kitchen table as a site of knowledge creation and exchange through the sounds and rhythms of diasporic Caribbean voices in conversations of differing hues, pace and tones in and around my childhood home. Like Marshall I often sat at the kitchen table, doing my homework, but eavesdropping on the adults’ animated conversations about work, the various discriminations and microaggressions they had faced that the week and the latest news in the community (Marshall, 2001).

The poem ‘kitchen table poet’ presented below, locates me at the family kitchen table, that I configure as a Caribbean space. I situate the table’s centrality as an epiphanic (Denzin, 2014, p. 13; 52) and formative moment in learning about myself through inheriting my diasporic identity. By absorbing rhythms, wisdoms and stories

from the diasporic Caribbean voices around me, I am learning the importance of my poetic voice as a way to create knowledge.

kitchen table poet

I see hear smell taste the spicy talk
crumbly morsels of bulla bread, laughter and politics chat
feeding my relationship with my poetry as story of my research
memory in a cloud
of “eeh hees” and “sou sous” and “how you means?”
peeling bells
of big people talk, loud
whispering not for my ears
my rubber tipped kings and queens pencil absorbing
the everyday quotidian,
recording the poetry in waves between the lines
of my school exercise book
sighs and yelps from the hot comb and hot gossip on island beauty scalps
punctuate my locating of those rhythms and tones
with pauses, spaces
and line breaks

my family kitchen table
Caribbean space carved out
of pine, pimento and permission
to be diasporic
without translation
I become a poet amongst poets

the kitchen table, my Caribbean space of knowledge creation

like the archipelago
in the Caribbean Sea
is a site
of transformation
of resistance and possibility (Boyce Davies, 2013, p. 3)

we don't have to do the journey all the way.
poetry allows and is the diasporic I and we of me – Oonoo!
no translation needed
don't have to know everything
some things are worth learning.

around this table sit the ancestors, the poets the writers
holding my hand guiding my pen
willing me to write and breathe easy in creating knowledge
ancestors linking arms with mine
we are islands joined together, gathering
no translation needed
spaces

of transformation resistance and possibility
ancestors sit around that table
linking arms to help me hold the histories that we come with.

my poetry ancestors
my writing ancestors
my family kitchen table Caribbean

spaces

outside Eurocentric systems of knowledge

the not quite understandings

translations needed

of my Blackness

through my Caribbeanness

in constant negotiation,

confronted through a racialised lens

the Presence Africaine inscribed on my skin.

Sitting at that kitchen table listening to the adults was an immersive experience in the rhythms and cadences in the various Caribbean 'Englishes' (Mahlis, 2005, p. 166) in the adults' conversations. In my autoethnographic poems I want to reflect "appreciation for ordinary speech" (Marshall, 2001, p. 630) as a way to create knowledge of the Caribbean spaces that configure my lived experience of diaspora. Sitting at the kitchen table was my early education as a poet and a researcher. I was hearing stories, experiences and histories that I did not hear or see at school.

Education

I studied poetry at school as part of the compulsory English curriculum, and I did enjoy discovering poems, reading Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky' and Ogden Nash's humorous rhymes 'celery' and 'flea', big stories in a few lines; stories that made me laugh. In the early 1970's in the UK, the school curriculum did not include works that reflected the Black experience in the UK or British empire (Gerrard, 2013, p. 33) and as a young child, I wasn't aware of the absence, because at home I had access to lots of books that did. A book of poetry by Louise Bennet the national poet of Jamaica, was one of the books I enjoyed. The book was *Jamaica Labrish,* (Bennett, 1966) and I would spend hours trying to perform and decipher the written Jamaican text to my four year old brother, as my sole audience member, in the living room, attempting to match the words that I heard my parents speak sometimes. I had my own context. I was performing coming into my own identity. Below is the first verse of 'Colonisation in reverse' a witty critiquing of British colonialism and its impacts on Jamaica.

Wat a joyful news, Miss Mattie,
I feel like me heart gwine burs'
Jamaica people colonizin
England in reverse

(Bennett, 1966, p. 179)

Bennet's *Jamaica Labrish* was one of the many books on the shelf that was part of the fabric of my family home; one of my Caribbean spaces contextualising to my coming into identity as a doctoral researcher and informing my autoethnographic poetry.

Crafting poetry as I explain in chapter three is my method making in which I feel more fully expressed in my ideas and in writing my research. My parents, like many Caribbean migrants in the UK, organised for supplementary education, teaching Black history, English and maths for their children to counter the racism in the teaching and curriculum in schools in the 1970s (Gerrard, 2013, p. 34). My poem 'indigo ink white paper reality blues' speaks to that experience, where I was invisible in the textbooks, and rendered voiceless in the class, despite wanting to be heard. This is critical in informing the way that I have approached my research and in wanting the other research participants' contribution to creating knowledge to be heard too:

indigo ink white paper reality blues

can't I stand
at the top of the class
in my best school blazer
to tell you? I asked
holding down tight the shout
in my throat
can you hear me?
Teacher said "No"
so, I write it up, not down.
record, set, read!
I'm finding my voice only counts

in the reams of virginal white
paper
stained with my own indigo ink
to show my story exists
for real.

writing up.

talked down.
subaltern(ative)
some alternative!
turn to page xvii, the introduction
The Empire in pink
Shakespeare, Hardy, Conrad
what a choice, take your pick!
I create my own knowledge
in liberating splodges of indigo ink
stories flourish
text, no longer vanished
in objective truths
that once made my hand feel tense in the fight
for imagination as knowing.

Why poetry matters to me and how it got me here

My poetry as performance text opens up spaces for transformation for myself and for the reader in how to see and engage in the world (Leggo, 2012; Prince, 2021).

I started writing poetry by accident. I was in a highly pressured corporate environment. It was demanding work, materially, and sometimes psychologically rewarding. I was able to travel internationally and enjoyed that for a while. But it left me feeling soulless. I needed an outlet, so when I was back in the country from a recent trip, I enrolled in a creative writing course at a local adult education college in central London. I enjoyed writing short stories, and I kept journals of my daily observations, and wanted to develop my writing skills. I really did appreciate the convivial atmosphere of our small class of about eight people form very different backgrounds and in different life stages. The course was over a term (12 weeks), and I was a keen attendee, happy to share work, ideas and feedback with the other students. Our tutor, Stephanie was skilled in drawing out the best from us and meeting us individually at what aver stage we were at. Things were proceeding nicely in class, until week eight - poetry week. We were invited to each write a poem about an item of clothing. I rolled my eyes. Along with ecclesiastical dance and golf,

poetry was not a priority in my life. But I was open to it as a way of thinking and writing, open to developing my critical thinking through my engagement with poetry. As Wright (Wright *et al.*, 2010) posits, the teaching of poetry in adult education, with its use of imagery and metaphor can blend critical thinking with creativity to bring about transformative learning about ourselves and how we see the world (p. 120). I had only read poetry, but not written any. Reflecting back on those evening class sessions, I soon recognised that crafting poetry was a way of my being in the world, was a way for me to see myself in the world as a poet (Weems, 2016, p. 273), but not yet knowing of the possibility of writing poetry as research, and seeing myself as a poet who carries out research. In retrospect It was a transformative moment. I was able to tell a story in few words, freeing up my "heart-mind to allow thoughts and ideas from a more creative and passionate place" (Weems *et al.*, 2009, p. 855).

Poetry is/as academic writing

Weems (2013) conveys how in the early stages of her doctorate, she was concerned with traditional academic writing about her identity as a poet, and she asked herself,"when I write in traditional scholarship, do I stop being a poet?" (2013 p. 1). My initial experience of working on my doctoral thesis resonated with the experience that Weems's quote considers. It was my struggle with traditional academic writing, as an objective, detached positivist way of writng that focused on facts and data and not people, emotion and the mess of life of being a PhD stuent (Fitzpatrick, 2012; Moriarty, 2008; Papen and Thériault, 2018). Developing my poetry as the basis and space for exploration of my diasporic Caribbean identity was a way to address this tension that I was expereriencing, once I had recognised that my using poetry as a method of inquiry is scholarship (Heaton, 2002; Leavy, 2018). I had to say out loud, to give myself permission that my researcher identity is a poet who develops her own autoethnographic poetry as a tool of analysis for her research. Weem's question ultimately led me to the approach to writing my research from my own imagination-intellect, my empathy by using my autoethnoraphic poetry a space of engagement and exploration with others in exploring and investigating diasporic identity. As Maxine Green asserts, quoted in Weems, "our ability to empathise is linked to our capacity to imagine and to envision alternative realities." (Weems, 2013b, p. 2).

Placing my own experience of being Caribbean – unique like every life story - within spaces in which other Caribbean identities are also evolving, allowed me to re-connect with my own diasporic self while also empathising with other diasporic communities. Crafting poetry enables me to examine and articulate my positionality in my doctoral research in relation to others – the other research participants, my family, my poetry friends/researchers and dealing with ill health midway through it (Stubb, Pyhältö and Lonka, 2011; Wisker, Robinson and Shacham, 2007).

"Poetry does not have to resolve tensions; it can render them in multiple hues, shades, and nuances. Poetry is the language of emotion and possibility. Poetry is the language or rage and joy. Listening to and writing poetry offers new ways of understanding, demonstrations of our limitations and limitless imaginations, and it can be an embodied experience."

(Faulkner, 2023: n.p)

My aim was to resolve the tensions that Faulkner refers to in the above quote, precisely by accepting and presenting my poetry as academic writing and to address those tensions I experience in wrestling with traditional prose writing as part of my process.

Who am I being in my research?

In my family's kitchen were the foundational building blocks that I am bringing to my research table; how I relate to the intersectional, foundational social constructs of race, class and gender (Ohito, 2021b, p. 4). And how through my Blackness, my middle classness and my womanness which constitute this diasporic Caribbeanness that I live and celebrate every day, I make sense and meaning that contextualises and drives my research.

June 3rd, 2020

Reflexive practice, through my poetry keeps me 'present' and attuned in my research, checking my positionality and my motivation for doing the research and

how 'I' perform (Spry, 2006). I have an ethical responsibility as to how my research can make a contribution, remain transparent and work towards 'embodied knowledge' as shared knowledge through working with others (Soyini Madison 2012, p.136).

My reflexive practice

In my poem, 'how am I doing this? why am I doing this?' presented below, I continue my thinking and working towards an emancipatory knowledge. That emancipatory knowledge comes through my poetry as research, from my lived experience of diaspora, from me telling my story to connect with others and to show others that we can write ourselves into the text. I reflect on how I write myself and others into the text and how I have addressed the possible vulnerabilities, exposures and implicating the lives of others that I have involved in my research. I interrogate my reflexive practice and how I use my autoethnographic poetry as research method to ensure I have applied the necessary ethical considerations to the process (Pillow, 2003; Tracy, 2010).

I draw on two journal articles on the role of reflexivity in qualitative research. *Confession, catharsis or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as a methodological power in qualitative research* by Wanda Pillow (Pillow, 2003), explores varying definitions and uses of reflexive practice in research. I frame the poem by using and responding to questions that Pillow poses in her article. *Qualitative Quality – Eight Big-Tent Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research* by Sarah J. Tracy (Tracy, 2010), offers an evaluative approach by benchmarking a number of criteria to ensure that reflexive practice is conducted effectively in qualitative research. I respond to Tracy's criteria with my own understanding and interpretation of those criteria.

how am I doing this? why am I doing this?

being reflexive,

contributes to knowledge

but how that knowledge

is created

Tracy (2010)

I am (in) the context reflexivity defines

embodied in the category

sincerity

*I have to scrutinise being honest

my identity being vulnerable

to question my transparency

interpretation data auditing

*showing my process

I am cognisant of the research participants' possible vulnerability

but I'm also writing vulnerable myself into the text

reflexivity

⇓

dialogic engagement – the 'I' and the 'We'

(Holman Jones, Ellis and Adams, 2013, p. 24)

why am I doing this?

adding to those conversations and debates that interrogate dominant, traditional discursive academic practice,

that centres itself,

displaces or silences other knowledges,

still speaks for/about/over others' experiences

“So, your own life story led you to the research topic?” (Ellis, 2004, p. 70)

Pillow asks:

“did you need to hear

the author’s confessional

[…] to read the data? (Pillow, 2003, p. 183) My lived experience is context

I am standing in my biases

telling/showing my story positions

how? myself in the research

vulnerability and exposure context I am aware of my biases. I use them in relation to my Blackness, Caribbeanness, academic work. Challenging convention.

why? theory (Boyce Davies, 2013; Hall, 1990; Hall, 1997)

to make sense of my Caribbeanness I need the interviewees’ stories to discuss the vectors of similarity/difference and Caribbean spaces

to interrogate my diasporic, western, UK birth and education.

how am I doing this? I’m doing research with, not on (Pillow, 2003, p.179)

If there is any extracting to do, I use autoethnography as methodology, I am my data and site of theorising (Fournier, 2021). Embodying both researcher and researched mitigates and minimises extraction form other lives

I’m doing research with, not on (Pillow, 2003, p. 179)

checking in with the interviewees (they read and approve their story transcripts)
part of the process of creating the poems is also about rigour and my transparency
in the poems as spaces of dialogic engagement

my poetry disrupts the linear.
how? I use disrupting the linear as metaphor

how?
by the way that I design the poems on the page
contributing to the disruption
of academic conventions

blank spaces on the page

as spaces

silence can be power
I resist being spoken for
in the blank space

decolonising the space that speaks for – tells – answers for…
I answer for and to myself

why? to remind myself that my process is to disrupt
challenge and resist dominant discursive practice
in academia: white male and female (master/mistress)

that still silences, speaks for and dehumanises (Boyce Davies, 1994, 2013; McKittrick, 2021)

Reworking the masters' and mistresses' tools

limitations and challenges

my health issues

compounded by

the Covid -19 pandemic

cancer diagnosis (the second one)

occupying a big space

of isolation

my ability to process

information slowed

using IT very difficult

how did I address?

this issue was about needing help

(am I buying into the Strong Black Woman trope?)

was I buying into that? Yes

I had to negotiate discourses on disabilities

the shock

my refusing to frame myself

a wounded storyteller

and coupling wound with disability

I had to audit

my values around embodiment

cultural intuition (Pillow, 2003, p. 182), how I position myself in to myself as object/subject of the research

impacts and shapes the research

how?

I am transparent in positioning myself as a Black

British born diasporic woman Caribbean, researching

my diasporic Caribbean identity

I am exploring the person who is all those things. Me

I detach/split/regroup/circle /look at myself from outside/within/through a diasporic lens

the poetry space is a space of engagement

I dialogue with myself

I self-interview (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013a, p. 69) to check I am present

how do I resist a colonialist relationship of one person with power? (Pillow, 2003, p. 185)

I am part of that space of power

I am acknowledging

I am a product of the neo liberal academy (Moriarty and Adamson, 2020)

because I am born in Britain

because of my education (Western Higher Education)

because of my class (Middle class privilege)

speaking the dominant colonial English language

because I am Black (DEI?)

gives me the power

data

it is how I use that power that matters

by using autoethnography as a method of inquiry

myself as subject/object

how I use the power as a researcher

because I am born in Britain

because of my education (Western Higher Education)

because of my class (Middle class privilege)

speaking the dominant colonial English language

because I am Black (DEI?)

researcher? (Pillow, 2003, p. 185)

I am still implicated in the dominant discourse

but I claim the tools, refashion them

to use against it and with and for myself

autoethnography is part of that dominant discursive colonising frame (Chawla and Atay, 2017)

I use my autoethnography in relation to other experiences

(a diasporic Caribbean woman's experiences in relation to other diasporic Caribbean experiences)

I evolve my own method of autoethnographic poetry

to do my bit, play my part

to decentre and decolonise autoethnography (Chawla and Atay, 2017)

The Academy

and ways of method making and knowledge production.

Covid-19, Community and my poetry as sanctuary

Community – of doctoral peers, other poets, and my family and friends helped me to stay engaged and manage a concurrent period of ill health during the Covid-19 pandemic, which offered up large amounts of time for me to reflect on what I was doing, and what I was not able to do. I reflected again on the headline question asked a that conference on engagement and research. My reflections reminded me again about the value of community as a space of expression, agency and sense of self, particularly in moments of precarity, such as the pandemic. During the pandemic I recognised the centrality of poetry - reading it, writing it and talking about it with friends and research peers - as my method of self-care, connection and community with other researchers and poets (Moore, 2017).

I tried to work, but the discomfort was at times overwhelming, and I found it difficult to stay focused, but it was important for me to stay engaged, to continue to work through and articulate this evolving researcher identity; for me to remain plugged in to the researcher community by attending online symposia, workshops and writing retreats as did many of my peers, challenging and disorienting as it was initially. These activities, as well as my reading and writing poetry at the centre of all of this gave me solace and helped with my mental health and well-being[3]. During one such workshop, an online creative methods group meeting for practice based doctoral researchers at my university, we were playfully challenged to write a poem in five minutes about the senses. My poem 'blue velvet sofa and a little patience', was my embodied response to that provocation, that as a doctoral researcher my coming into identity, is always unfinished, incomplete. The prospect of embarking on fieldwork is imagined through the poem. The recitation of the poem, reading and thinking about it differently each time renders the fieldwork journey anew, anticipated, possibly about to begin – remaining unfinalized.

My poem "chronicle of a covid carnival" is one of the poems that I crafted in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns we experienced in the UK. It is a response to the pandemic and poetry to reflect/navigate the challenging circumstances of the pandemic and my unrelated period of ill health. My poem was also a way to connect and empathise with Santiagueros, imagining their feelings and responses to the pandemic and its effects on the carnival.

chronicle of a covid carnival

in breezy stealth
you came, uninvited
abuser.

dressed in showstopping confidence
you danced, too intimately
stalker.

disguised in jumping joy
your kisses stole breath

[3] Fancourt D, Finn S. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2019 (Health Evidence Network (HEN) synthesis report 67).

thief.
you stamped down lives
and silenced the air
oppressor.

you magicked conga's invasion
into mass contagion
trickster.

I am weaving the poems as the text of the research, as a means of countering the challenges of the dominating discourses in western centric modes of knowledge production (Boyce Davies 1994). The master's tools might not bring down the master's house (Lorde, 2007), but crafting my autoethnographic poetry from a position of resilience is also about dealing with the vicissitudes of lived experience, particularly those out of my control, like the government sanctioned lockdowns of the Covid-19 pandemic.[4] With the onslaught of the pandemic England was under lockdown and all overseas travel was banned by universities so teaching, research work and learning moved online. This engendered a heightened sense of isolation, and the frustration of not being able to carry out fieldwork that many doctoral researchers, including myself experienced, was acute (MacLean et al. 2020). Thinking about, reading and writing poetry in and for my research preserved my sanity and offered me a healing space (Xiang, 2020) to think about ways to revise my research methods, so that I could continue my research.

The research process, isolation and a blue sofa

Critically, the research process for me is a thrilling, anxiety inducing and often daunting experience of knowledge creation. Knowing there are some gaps that I cannot fill in, my research diary becomes a space of creativity, of discussion, reflection and self-interview (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013a, p. 69), and the

[4] McKenna-Plumley PE, Graham-Wisener L, Berry E, Groarke JM (2021) Connection, constraint, and coping: A qualitative study of experiences of loneliness during the COVID-19 lockdown in the UK. PLoS ONE 16(10): e0258344. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0258344

interrogation of ideas such as tracing the history of my family as far back as I would like to, but can't.

Blue velvet sofa and a little patience.

cedarwood oil scents the mint green headscarf
coiled around my patchworked scalp
silkiness concealing loss
my periwinkle dress complements the cloudless, silent sky

I'm off to Santiago de Cuba in my head. I roar
the engines of the plane I cannot board,
spinning fresh imaginings for now
it's OK; the seating is plush, soft blue velvet

I look out on to a hot, bright window facing the sun
rays chasing away lingering, indolent morning mist
and in warming, new possibilities take shape in my mind
no need for me to pack anything

except
my questions
my hunger
my patience.

In this chapter I have reflected on the contexts and spaces that facilitated my coming into my identity as a poet. my reflexivity and positionality in my research, highlighting the processes that apply and sustain my practice. I have shown the trajectory of my formative experience as a poet and researcher started in the Caribbean space of my family's kitchen and how that informed my early explorations that eventually led me to conduct this research and in chapter three, I discuss and demonstrate how I have developed my autoethnographic poetry as and for my research.

Chapter Three: Methodology and method

This chapter begins by discussing the influence of other poets on my writing practice. I use my analysis of their texts to identify specific methods and techniques that I have then applied to my own autoethnographic poetry. This will be followed by a discussion of autoethnography as a methodology and my how my interviews with people connected to the SdCC have informed this method. I discuss autoethnographic poetry as my method of inquiry, interviews as a method of evoking the Santiago de Cuba carnival as inspiration and to inform my poetry. I do this by offering an overview of autoethnography from key practitioners (Denzin, 2014, p. 608; Ellis, 1999; Ellis, 2007; Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010; Weems, 2013a; Boylorn, 2013),who have influenced my use of this methodology. I examine some of the critiques of autoethnography and discuss what it offers me and my research in terms of challenging dominant academic discourse and enabling me to do and also, present research that is poetic.

The methods that I employ to tell the story of the research, and my process demonstrate my creative practice as an overlap of the aesthetic/artistic and the analytical/discursive (Skains, 2018, p. 4). It is also about using poetry as culturally relevant practice (Bhattacharya, 2013, p. 608) in the context of my inherited diasporic Caribbean upbringing. Carnival and poetry have been central as sense making practices and finding my way in the world as a diasporic Caribbean woman, a poet and academic I use the term inherited to indicate the ‘of, but not from’ duality of my diasporic identity (Hall, 1997; Reynolds, 2006). My parents’ migrations, as part of the Windrush generation, were part of a significant diasporic route to the UK after the second world war and I was born in the UK. It is from this position of my lived experience as a second generation diasporic Caribbean woman that I explore diasporic processes and Caribbean spaces (Boyce Davies, 2013).

Poetry affords me a flexibility, openness and dimensionality to my analyses and observations (Bhattacharya, ibid). By offering autoethnographic poetry as method, I can mimic and reflect the SdCC space as a joyous expression of collective and individual identity affirmation. I am making this as inclusive and engaging as

possible, by performing my poetry at conferences, workshops and plan to record the poems, reflecting more clearly the way that I see and understand the world. Because life is nuanced, relational, contradictory, difficult and joyous, my poetry enables me to capture the physicality and the emotionality of it (Faulkner, 2019, p. 19); not just the telling of my lived experience in relation to conducting this research but embodying it - the physical, emotional and spiritual acts of crafting poetry (Cutts, 2019; Weems, 2013b; Lorde, 2007), and of writing this thesis.

> "When something happens in my life, community and/or the world-at-large, my first way of interpreting or making meaning out of the experience is to write a poem."
>
> (Weems, 2016, p. 273)

As with Mary Weems's quote, my poetry offers me a way to negotiate my life and work out ideas and experiences I have. As I have stated in the introduction, my poetry is inspired by my imaginings of my grandfather's life in Santiago de Cuba and his imagined participation in the Santiago de Cuba carnival (SdCC). I also draw on my visit to the Santiago de Cuba carnival in 2018, and my interviews with some of its local participants. More generally my own poetry has been influenced by other poets, and researchers who use poetry and autoethnography in their work.

Poetic influences

The work of researchers such as Sandra Faulkner (2005; 2007; 2016; 2019); Mary E. Weems (2000; 2009; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2016), poets Jesus Cos Causse (Cos Causse, 1987; James, 2022; Ramsay, 2001), and Jean 'Binta' Breeze (2000; 2011). are central to the development of my autoethnographic poetry. Sandra Faulkner refers to her own lived experience in exploring her sexuality, her feminist methodology, and her activism (2017a; 2018), and relationships (2021; 2023) and focuses on the developing and evaluating poetry as a research method (2007; 2016; 2019). In my autoethnographic poetry I demonstrate how I craft them by adapting Faulkner's framework to help me to embody and give, meaning and structure to my

poems Mary E. Weems uses her lived experience to explore mother-daughter relationships, human rights, empathy and social justice (2009; 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2021); and through her poetry makes a “spiritual connection to people of African descent everywhere” (Weems, 2013a, p. 313). Where Faulkner offers a framework to craft and evaluate poetry as a research method, Weems has developed her theory of imagination-intellect to encourage writing that demonstrates a ”conscious effort to become more empathetic through the language arts […] ”as a way to empathise more closely with the experiences of others (2009, p. 274; 2013b, p. 2). I want to create autoethnographic poems that demonstrate empathy, through invoking the senses and emotions to encourage the reader to engage their own feelings as a way to have an awareness of lives and experiences that are not their own.

Jesús Cos Causse’s poetry reflects how on his Santiaguero family is central to his Black Cuban identity, and the coherence of the Black family. His poems, such as ‘Balada de un tambor’ (‘Drum Ballad’), and ‘Family Legend’ (Cos Causse, 1987) explore African Caribbean identities, situating identity formation in the family. I have constructed my childhood family home as one of the Caribbean spaces in which to situate my diasporic identity formation. By doing so I create poems that convey my family space as central to my identity formation and understanding myself as a diasporic Caribbean woman. Jean ‘Binta’ Breeze’s poetry (Breeze, 2000; Breeze, 2011) explores diasporic Caribbean experiences in the UK, and by using both English and Jamaican language she interrogates the entanglements and influences of both languages on each other as a result of the colonial encounter. Following on From Breeze, I demonstrate in my poetry how I convey this entanglement of languages Jamaican, Spanish and English, and how that is part of my lived experience as a diasporic Caribbean woman.

My autoethnographic poetry is my story of my lived experience of coming into identity as a diasporic Caribbean woman and a poet. Key to developing my method of autoethnographic poetry is how I structure and create my poems. Firstly I discuss Sandra Faulkner’s *ars criteria* framework (Faulkner, 2019) as a guide. Using empathy is critical in the poems as a way for me to engage and connect with others, and how I convey my experience of coming into identity through the space of my home and my imaginings of my grandfather’s life in Cuba and his participation in the

SdCC is central to that development. I show how I draw on each individual poet and researcher's work to develop my own autoethnographic poetry as my research method.

Sandra Faulkner

I adapt Faulkner's praxis of *ars criteria* framework (Faulkner, 2007; Faulkner, 2016; Faulkner, 2019) to inform how I create and develop my autoethnographic poetry as a method of inquiry. I also discuss my conflicted feelings about using a such a framework in developing poetry that conveys the emotional, the sensory and the spiritual of lived experience of my coming into my identity as a diasporic woman and doctoral researcher. Faulkner's position is that there needs to be continuous dialogue, and "flexible criteria" used to create good poetry (Faulkner, 2019, p. 19), despite continuing debates about what 'good poetry' is. (Faulkner, 2007; Lahman *et al.*, 2011; Leggo, 2012).

Faulkner outlines six criteria in the crafting of poetry as a method of inquiry. The first criterion is *artistic concentration*, which she defines as a way of focusing on the history and crafting of poetry (p. 143); the next, *embodied experience,* is employed to encourage affective, feelings-led engagement of an audience with a poem (p. 144). Thirdly, with the criterion of *discovery/surprise*, Faulkner sees the intention in a poem as facilitating a new way of viewing something familiar, or of learning something new. With the criterion of *conditionality* Faulkner focuses on offering what she calls a "*narrative or poetic truth*", so that a poem needs to convey a "ring of truth" even if some aspects of the story did not happen. Lastly the criterion of *transformation* seeks to leave the reader with new insight, specified through a new perspective. It should ask, "What will I know at the end of the poem I did not know before?" (p.152).

Poetic inquiry and fashioning my own power tools

While Faulkner identifies six criteria, I have adapted three of them to guide the crafting of my autoethnographic poetry. These are *embodied experience, transformation,* and *narrative truth*. I have responded to Faulkner's claim that the criteria are flexible and whilst I do acknowledge all six that she outlines, I focus on *embodied experience, transformation* and *narrative truth* as the most appropriate for developing my autoethnographic method. My autoethnography situates my experience of identity formation in a series of Caribbean spaces that I have constructed. Coming into identity is not fixed and is an always happening process (Hall, 1990, p. 222), in constant flux and change and I want to convey that movement in my poems. I am also situating the Santiago de Cuba carnival (SdCC) as a muse to inspire my poetry. I use the carnival as a space of movement of bodies, dancing, talking, laughing, singing etc., as part of my experience of identity formation and affirmation in different contexts, such as the SdCC. Therefore, I am using words that convey embodiment of those experiences. Whilst crafting my poems, I centre feeling in and on the body and movement of the body in relation to the spatial particularity of the carnival space. For example, I consider the wave like motion of the conga processions rolling through the streets of Santiago de Cuba (Milstein, 2013; Montoya Gonzalez, 2014; Wirtz, 2017), the aromas and flavours of food being consumed and people's affective responses. My use of the sensory words and phrases and the evocative as a way of connecting with the reader; to facilitate space for the reader to engage their own feelings to get an insight into a way of being they may not have experienced. For example, these extracts from my poem 'spicy pork and the spider women' conveys my experiencing a sense of belonging and a transformative moment of recognition (the Annancy headdresses worn by the performers) in the SdCC during my visit to Santiago de Cuba in 2018. The full poem is presented in chapter five:

mountain peaks of hot, spicy pork shrouded
in fluffy cloaks of white rice

deftly negotiated with gymnastic and sticky fingers, slicked and freed on the lips with peppery oil,
looser tongues swimming and sploshing in liberating cerveza
***
party-time dressed bodies shimmying and shaking off the struggles of that day
with salsa swirls and well-timed timba steps
dancing out shapeshifting identities
***
sharp as fresh lime on cut skin, their hot red Annancy! Anansi! Anansy! crowns sparkle, those queens! sweet chaos of a luminous dream.

I draw on embodied experiences and the senses to convey an experience of the SdCC for the reader to have an insight to how I experienced the carnival and more generally to have an insight to an experience thy may never have had before. The poem is inspired by my embodied experiences of the SdCC; by using words and phrases that convey the senses: “liberating cerveza sploshing on even looser tongues and busy movement: party-time dressed bodies shaking off the struggles of that day” the poem becomes he carnival. I want to convey my experience of a Caribbean carnival to someone who has never participated in one. I want the reader to be immersed in that carnival by my using words that invoke the senses: describing the aromas of the hot spicy pork, the sweaty, frantic turns of bodies twisting to salsa in time to the slick beats of the timbales. I do this so that I can draw the reader’ s attention to my negotiating my diasporic identity through meaning from making meaning through participating in cultural practices that are familiar to me, but in a Caribbean space that is in a different context -Spanish speaking, and can be perceived as culturally Latin American (Hernandez-Reguant, 2005) to my family as Caribbean space in the UK

I am using the carnival as a metaphor of my own diasporic processes. I see these as dynamic and embodied expressions of my coming into my Caribbean identity, which is always in process (Hall, 1990, p. 226). I bring into my poetry my embodiment of Caribbean space as cultural practice, through my performing of these cultural practices, such as preparing and eating Caribbean food with my family and speaking Jamaican patois with my parents at home. At the SdCC, it was through my being part

the mass of bodies in the conga; being part of a collective claiming visibility and belonging (Wirtz, 2017) that enabled me to experience how my diasporic identity was evolving through participating in a collective practice where my body's presence and inscribed Blackness was not contested. This was all experienced through the (my) diasporic body and its senses (Bakare-Yusuf, 2008, p.147) which is something I have tried to evoke through the visceral details in my poems. Faulkner asserts that writing is an embodied experience (Faulkner, 2019) and taking my cue from Faulkner's embodied experience in her haiku 'Woman, Runner' (a woman who runs or is she a woman runner?) where she questions: "how do I make running interesting to non-runners?" to bring attention to running as a feminist embodied act which" becomes embodied experience when audiences feel with, rather than about the poem" (p. 22). I asked myself a similar question about how to make my experience of coming into my diasporic identity interesting for those who do not have that experience through my own poetry. With Faulkner her running, becomes an embodied, feminist act challenging cultural discourse about women's bodies and what is deemed appropriate (ibid.). As a source of inspiration, my imagining and experiencing of the SdCC becomes an embodied act of identity negotiation and belonging in diasporic spaces. My poetry becomes my space for working out my writing; an embodied act, as this extract from Faulkner's poem "Poetry is a Theoretical Practice" demonstrates:

pull up a stool and start your dremel,
begin by smashing your art,
there will be no waitress wearing a dirndl,
or a girl with a smile to please your date'[5]
(from 'Poetry is Theoretical Practice', Faulkner, 2017)

The extract from her poem is illustrative of Faulkner's view that "[Another] strength of poetry rests in the kinds of truths that can be presented" (Faulkner, 2019, p. 7). For example, Faulkner's line in the poem "pull up a stool and start your own dremel", I

[5] Faulkner, S. L. 2017. Poetry Is Politics
An Autoethnographic Poetry Manifesto. *International Review of Qualitative Research,* 10**,** 89-96.

read as a call to action, to develop my own crafting of poetry to create those “kinds of truth that can be presented”. The kinds of truth that I am presenting in my poems are communicated through the sensory, the embodied and the evocative, to give a depth of meaning that I am not able to achieve in conventional prose, because I can say much more with depth and feeling, line breath and emotion, with fewer words in a poem (Faulkner, 2019, p. 20). I also want to feel connected, embodying my writing about my lived experience and not distanced as if I am writing about someone else (Weems *et al.*, 2009, p. 856). I agree with Faulkner’s assertion in the poem’s title that “Poetry is Theoretical practice”. The space that my poetry creates is a space of engagement with and from my own lived experience as my data (Fournier, 2021, p. 35). This epistemological standpoint that I take is a position of knowing to be analysed to connect to broader truths about identity diaspora and belonging. As I have said in the introduction, it is the marrying of the aesthetic, with the analytical (Skains, 2018, p. 4), as a way for me to create and present knowledge. Poetry, as Brady argues can present the world and our experiences of it in a multisensory, polyvocal and self-reflexive way (Brady, 2004, p. 628).

Transformation, as one of the criteria defined by Faulkner to craft effective poetry, is about using blank spaces as invitation for the reader to look at the world in a different way (Faulkner, 2019). In my poems, I place line breaks and spaces to provide moments for the reader to pause, to think and consider the experiences in my story. This is a means for them to reflect on their own identity and how they negotiate it. An example of how I adapt this criterion is in my poem ‘making from the mess’ (presented in chapter two) where I interrogate my identity as a new PhD researcher. I invite the reader to travel with me in the poem by engaging in the pauses I have created in a three-line break:

I watch the leaves
conferring with ghosts,
punctuating evolving sentences.

I wait.

The break after the third line of the verse and the space it creates before the line 'I wait' is intended to bring the reader to empathise with my apprehension of performing into a new identity I experienced in that moment. I encourage the reader's engagement and immersion to enable them to come away with new knowledge about assumptions (and self-imposed expectations) of being in the academy (Brabazon, Gribbin and Sharp, 2023).

Narrative truth is another criterion I have adapted in my poems from Faulkner's *ars criteria* framework. For Faulker, narrative truth is about fictive truth or 'a ring of truth' (Faulkner, 2019, p. 153) to convey an underlying message or idea on something that may or may not have happened. It is not about objective truth. For example, in the crafting of my autoethnographic poetry, I am imagining other people's experiences of a sense of belonging in the context of a different diasporic space. My poem, "Mr Spence leans in to hear President General Marcus Mosiah Garvey speak at El Teatro Heredia", is a fictionalized account of my grandfather's attendance at a United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) meeting. The poem's use of imaginings of Mr. Spence's and his comrades' inner thoughts is a way to understand his and my own insider /outsider status and our sense of belonging in different Caribbean spaces. It is a way to understand the intersectional nature of diasporic Caribbean identity, through what Hall calls the vectors of similarity and continuity, and difference and rupture, both operating at the same time (Hall, 1990; Hall, 1997; Hall and Morley, 2019). I am the same, but I am different in the SdCC Caribbean space.

I also read Sandra Faulkner's method of writing poetry as powerfully personal and political[6]. She puts herself and her lived experience of being a white, feminist, parent (Faulkner, 2017b) and daughter (Faulkner, 2021) on the page, negotiating the doubleness of both her privilege and her marginality (Faulkner, 2017a). As with Faulkner, placing my own positionality is central to my understanding my dual identity as a poet and diasporic Caribbean woman. The duality of my identity, being UK born of Jamaican heritage, and a poet pursuing a PhD in a UK university, positions, me as a privileged scholar in regard to my insider/outsider status

[6] Faulkner, S. L. 2017. *Poetry Is Politics.* An Autoethnographic Poetry Manifesto. *International Review of Qualitative Research,* 10**,** pp. 89-96.

(Bhattacharya, 2013) vis-a-vis the interviewees, who are all either Cuban or Jamaican. In chapter two, I will further explore the duality of my positionality. The following poem '(do) the peso doble' and an extract from 'making from the mess' (presented in chapter six) also explore this duality:

(do) the peso doble

(Following Little Eva – " The Locomotion)"

we do a dance surviving
almost every day now
vamos, vamos
do the peso doble

to tussle with la lucha
in inventive ways now
vamos, vamos
do the peso doble

I magic up some pastries
in the middle of the night
to fatten meagre pesos
feeding dreams of flight

vamos, vamos
do the peso doble with me

we do not have the dollars to eat candy bars
I get only 30 pesos to look at the stars
month on, month on
do the peso doble

we have a lot of trouble with the CUC
we need a little FOREX just to set us free
so vamos, vamos
do the peso doble with me
(do) the peso doble

I crafted this poem to articulate the balancing of my duality in relation to the difficulties of negotiating daily life in Santiago that my hosts, Cuban academics

experienced, as do most Cubans throughout Cuba.[7] I reflect the simultaneous, unsettling experience, trivial in comparison with their daily struggles of trying to live with very constrained budgets, food scarcity and meagre resources (Bastian and Berry, 2022; Garth, 2013) that I had in trying to negotiate the complicated dual currency system of the CUC (the Cuban Convertible Peso) and the CUP (the Cuban peso). I was irritated that I had to wait in a long queue, arrogantly expecting to be served quickly, because I was a tourist with (valuable) foreign currency. The title of the poem is a play on words. I transpose the "e" for "a" in the word "paso doble", as in the dance step, to suggest the determination to manage the challenges of daily life in Cuba, and the complications of coping with the double currency (the CUC and the peso), that had to be negotiated as part of that daily struggle.

The extract below from my poem 'making from the mess' examines the duality of my insider/outsider status in relation to the academy as a poet negotiating writing conventions in the academy.

making from the mess

dust plumes betraying the urgency
drift, haloed by the sunlight,
becoming balm steadying a worried hand
and rushing mind, playing tag
with frantic words, scattering
waving and drowning
in the big, white space.

In adapting Faulkner's *ars criteria* for crafting my poetry, I am aware of the possible irony, applying a set of criteria to poetry in constraining an art form that is by its nature expressive and expansive, offering freedom and possibility, as indeed Faulkner concedes that (Faulkner, 2019, p. 145; Faulkner, 2007, p. 231). I initially

[7] Hansing, K. & Hoffmann, B. 2020. When Racial Inequalities Return: Assessing the Restratification of Cuban Society 60 Years After Revolution. *Latin American Politics and Society,* 62**,** 29-52.

saw these criteria as a positivist, conventional ways of evaluating and measuring processes of knowledge production. However, since writing my autoethnographic poetry, I understand that certain criteria have to be applied in order for to demonstrate embodied experience, transformation and narrative truth in my poems (Faulkner, 2019, p. 144). Although I no longer perceive these criteria as fixed or prescriptive, I do believe some guidelines enable me for me to craft poetry that is engaging (embodied experience), transformational (giving insight that offers another perspective that can enlighten a reader), and narrative truth (conveys a fictive story that offers a subjective 'truth' that produces new knowledge). I am also aware of the subjective nature of such criteria, flexible or not. The way that I address this problem is to adapt Faulkner's *ars criteria* (2019a) to my poetry as method. I do this by giving as much detail as possible, not only about the reasons behind the poem, but in relation to the specific social, historical and geographical context in which the data were obtained. As an autoethnographic poet, what I am attempting is to meld the aesthetic aspects of poetry, which Faulkner defines as the more "artsy" form of poetry, focuses on form, structure and line (Faulkner, 2007) with research poetry that is crafted by using the words spoken by research participants to compose the poems as a true representation of their perspectives (Patrick, 2016; Prendergast, 2006; Prendergast, 2009). I also see poetry as an underpinning of lived experience as a knowledge source (Lorde, 2007) and site of theorisation (Fournier, 2021). It is what Quiana Cutts (Cutts, 2019) in counterpoint to Faulkner's position on craft, asserts is the "Ars spirituality" of Black women's poetry. As with Cutts, my approach to spirituality, comes from a non-religious standpoint. Cutts claims "writing (and reading) poetry as a spiritual experience – no matter whether the poetry is 'traditional', song lyrics, or the words of research participants" (p. 911).

Mary E. Weems, "imagination-intellect" and empathy in my poetry

Adapting Faulkner's ars criteria framework enables me to give rigour and vigour and an aesthetic quality shape and structure to my poems (Faulkner, 2016, p. 663). Weems builds an empathetic and spiritual dimension to that shaping and structuring of my poems with her coupling of imagination and intellect (Weems, 2013b).

Mary E. Weems's philosophy of "imagination-intellect" (Weems, 2009; Weems, 2013b; Weems, 2016) eschews the mind-body dialectic. This conceptualisation seeks to encourage writing from and with the heart, as a way to create empathy and to connect with humanity (Weems, 2013b, pp. 2-20). This way of writing has underpinned my own process of crafting poems. Feeling the freedom to use emotions such as joy, bewilderment, and surprise means bringing all of myself, raw, imperfect and nuanced, to my poetry as a mode of academic writing (Moriarty, 2015) and as a way to connect with others. For example, in my poem 'blue velvet sofa' (presented in chapter two), I seek to invoke the feelings of wistfulness, frustration and hope that I experienced during a period of imposed isolation during Covid-19, whilst in the middle of chemotherapy treatment and also trying to continue my research. At home, sitting on my blue velvet sofa, crafting this poem was my embodied realisation of Weems's "imagination-intellect", which I see as bringing my heart as well as my mind to my autoethnographic poems, as illustrated by the opening verse:

I'm off to Santiago de Cuba in my head. I roar
the engines of the plane I cannot board,
spinning fresh imaginings for now.

Mary E. Weems's use of language, and the rhythmic patterns of jazz and blues music enables an immediacy in her poetry that encourages empathic engagement in the reader (Weems, 2009; Weems, 2012). In her poem "Sadie Stories" (2012) Weems's use of vernacular language, a reflective, conversational style, has me, her reader sitting in the story next to the main protagonist. Weems's words bring depth and insight, facilitating a space for reflection and affective engagement. The poem captures what Furman (Furman, 2006) calls the 'livedness' of experience more effectively than the cool, detached data of academic prose writing (Furman, 2006, p.

565). In ‘Sadie Stories’, Weems adopts a first-person point of view so that the Brookie speaks directly to the reader. An extract from the poem is presented below:

every few days I’d try to call mama

figurin’ what usually worked would you know

work, but them old lies just fell on the floor

soon as I said them, like mama had a bullshit

alarm on the phone and before I could hang

up first like usual – I was listenin’ to

a dial tone.

‘Sadie Stories’ (Weems, 2012)

The poem also influenced how I wrote ‘Mr Spence leans in to hear President General Marcus Mosiah Garvey speak at El Teatro Heredia’. In the poem Mr Spence’s thoughts are vocalised in his Jamaican language. By writing the poem, using Mr. Spence’s localised, vernacular Jamaican speech, I am deliberately moving away from formal or standard (colonial) English. I do this by crafting lines in Jamaican vernacular (“wok it tough, like rock stone”) to emphasise the richness, pluralities and transcultural nature of languages spoken in the Caribbean diaspora (Neumann, 2020).

I use vernacular language to engage the reader while exploring the complexities of diasporic identities. By using Jamaican language, I’m engaging with a broader audience in order to engage the reader with the protagonist’s experience as if they are hearing their voice directly. I am also highlighting the doubleness of his identity; we are both negotiating our identities in a different Caribbean space; a Spanish speaking one. Nevertheless, we occupy and are identified in a space that has come about through shared historical experience, but not origin (Hall, 1990). He is speaking to his experience of community and belonging:

“Cuba hard

backra boss dem teif like Jancro

and work you till you don’t know

ah no so it go?”

The line breaks in the poem are crafted to emphasise the significance of his experience at that moment. The space between the penultimate line and the final line in that verse creates a space for the reader to reflect on what Mr Spence is saying. After the space, the final line is written in standard (colonial) English, to emphasise Mr Spence’s formal anglicised, protestant religiosity. This is to indicate that he is a Jamaican, a British subject, therefore different to other migrant workers from English speaking islands and Haiti (Queeley, 2015, pp. 146-149).

As with Faulkner’s *ars criteria* framework, specifically the criterion of embodiment and experience, Monica Prendergast’s use of the sensory is central to the ways in which I crafted my poetry. My poem “making from the mess” was crafted as my immediate response to attending my very first Techne Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) conference, welcoming newly registered PhD students. I was preoccupied with trying to find my feet and my academic head. In the poem I am negotiating how I think I should be performing as a doctoral researcher (Owler, 2010); how I am coming into that identity. I remember sitting at the table, trying to make sense of what was being said in the presentations, and frantically making notes, which were illegible because of my distractedness and my nervousness. As a poet, I am trying to make sense of my relationship to, and perceptions of, academic writing for a PhD (Papen and Thériault, 2018). How I convey my feelings in this relationship is to focus on the sensory. I am inspired by Prendergast’s use of bodily sensation in the poem “Vox Poetica: A Surrender and Catch Found Poem”:

How do you embrace a question

as if it were flesh and warmth?

How do you hold a question

when it is slippery

and leaves before you awake?

(Prendergast, 2015, p. 678)

In this extract from her poem, Prendergast uses the senses of touch (“warmth”; “slippery”) to convey what I call the livingness of the question she asks, as if it were a sometimes capricious and challenging human that is difficult to connect with. This experience of connectedness as a person was central to how I used the sensory to look for a sense of belonging in the academy. In my poem ‘making from the mess’, sight, imaginary touch and taste are the senses that more effectively convey this embodied experience for me. And as I have mentioned previously, this is also the physicality and emotionality of crafting poetry (Faulkner, 2019 p. 25):

I watch the leaves
conferring with ghosts,
punctuating evolving sentences.

I pluck off seeds, savouring their sweetness.

A feast.
A famine.
A feast.

In this extract from the poem, I use the senses of sight (“I watch the leaves”) because I want to convey the energy of trying to stay focused on the presentations, but being distracted, while present in the room. I also used the senses of touch and of taste (“I pluck off the seeds/savour their sweetness”) because I want to convey my relief and satisfaction in being able to contribute to the round table discussions, receiving nods of agreement from my peers. By using words that refer to the satisfaction of eating and savouring food, I am alluding to resolution, a sense of being sated. That satiety is a metaphor for eventually realising a sense belonging in that new space. As a poet, I was trying to make sense of my relationship with

academia and more specifically, my perception of academic writing. In that unfamiliar space, I was trying to come to terms with my identity as an autoethnographic poet, negotiating my space of belonging with other scholars.

Trying to write those affective responses down as prose, I found challenging. I would spend many a painful hour, just trying to convey what I had experienced upon re-entering academia, but finding conventional academic language or "academese" (Weems, 2013b, p. 3) convoluted that left me feeling disconnected from what I was attempting to write. I couldn't see myself in the writing, I couldn't hear my voice, because I was trying to write in a way that was conventional. I was frustrated, but saw that it was possible to leave the blood in and write with emotion, feeling (Moriarty, 2008) and to write in a way that coveys the flow between what I think and how I feel (Weems, 2000, p. 167). 'making from the mess' is a companion to my other poem, 'love and stoicism in One Act on the no.13 bus'. Both poems reimagine a period of time on the same day of my attending a Techne conference for new PhD students. 'making from mess' focuses on my disorientation and distractedness in trying to perform into my new identity, leaving me unable to concentrate or write. 'love and stoicism in One Act on the no.13 bus ' reflects on my feelings and affective responses after leaving the conference later that day and is a recording of what was happening during my bus ride home. Both poems capture the sense of uncertainty, bewilderment and excited curiosity I was feeling about becoming a doctoral student. Monica Prendergast's 'Vox Poetica: A Surrender and Catch Found Poem' also concerns itself with the question of "being or becoming a creative writer in the academy" (Prendergast, 2015, p. 678). The process of crafting the poem and populating the blank page with the verses and lines itself became the space to work out and reflect on the negotiation of my affective responses to coming into my new identity as a doctoral student.

Jesús Cos Causse

Santiaguero poet Jesús Cos Causse's poetry celebrates African centred cultural practices of resistance in Caribbean history challenging the wrongs inflicted in that history (James, 2022, p. 77). Cos Causse sees the potential of the poetic text as a vehicle for writing the autobiographical self "through remembering individual subjects

(grandmother, grandfather, mother, father, aunt) whose personal profiles (physical and emotional) contribute to grounding the speaking subject in [their] heritage." (ibid. p.78). Cos Causse's Santiaguero identity is central to his poetry, situating, as I do in my poetry, his family as a space for identity formation and the location of a diasporic Caribbeanness. I examine the parallels in both of our lived experiences of identity formation through looking at examples of our respective poems - Cos Causse's 'Jonathan Jones' and my poem 'folding and gliding (Abuelo)' (my poem is presented in chapter four). Each of my poems has its own historical, geographical and social context and focus. For example, with my poem '(do) the peso doble' (presented in chapter five), I choose to explain why I chose the title, referencing the Cuban currency, how the economic situation operates in Cuba, and my insider/ outsider status vis à vis my hosts, amongst other details.

The four poets I have chosen to analyse were central to the way I crafted my poetry, because they helped me to find ways to structure my poetry. Faulkner's work added a set of criteria that I can adapt and work with to shape and structure my autoethnographic poems. Mary E. Weems's theory of imagination- intellect provided the spiritual and soulful ballast of empathy, that I used to write my poetry, not only from my head, but from my heart. As I stated earlier, Monica Prendergast's use of the sensory has also enabled me to use words and phrases that convey my embodied experience in response to coming into identity as a researcher. Jesús Cos Causse's approach of framing his identity formation and sense of Caribbeanness in his family space, parallels my own experience, and helps me to craft my poetry to reflect that positioning.

Criteria I use to craft my research poems:

what is it I want the reader to know?
how can I get the reader to engage
with the themes of diaspora, identity and belonging?

aesthetic engagement: colour, rhythm, cadence, evocation
embodiment: sensory, affect, feelings-led
narrative /poetic truth: integrity in reflecting the data evocatively
subject first, title, maybe later

my poems are the data
and inspiration comes from my sources: such as -

Santiago stories (participant interviews)
Mr Spence's fabulated story of his time in Cuba
my childhood home
carnival, my muse

ideas captured
on a digital recorder
post it notes and mobile phone
themes and phrases
in notebooks in strategic places
desk drawer, coat pocket and the back of my hand
as soon as I can
on colour coded flip charts
to make sure I get that killer line

it's important I get words that are core
to a particular analysis or theme
go back to the sources

I leave the draft for a while
a few hours, days or weeks,
even a year or more

Taking time with a poem to sit right

when the criteria are “met”:
embodied experience, narrative truth and transformation
colour, rhythm, cadence, evocation
sensory, words led by feelings
integrity, reflecting the data evocatively
I pluck and adapt criteria from Faulkner’s frame
give shape and structure over time
and I leave the poem alone.

for a while

My autoethnographic poetry: a creative space of engagement with other poets.

The poems are also my way of working in community with other poets/poems, and for me to make meaning from my own lived experience in diaspora. For example:

I engage with the way
Breeze frames diaspora
in ‘The Arrival of Brighteye’
playing with the discordant coupling
of a joyous nursery rhyme
sung by children left behind
in Jamaica
while parents seek jobs
in the (M)other Country

Cos Causse's poem, 'Jonathan Jones' (Ramsay, 2001)
helps me think about
the: emotional impacts
of inter- island migration
in the Caribbean
on Mr Spence
his diasporic identity
and the historical impacts
on me

Crafting my research poems: Knowing myself and my world

craft/process/method
inquiry/engagement/praxis
what question am I asking?
what is the /idea/challenge/challenging idea?
an intuitive itch or tick in response to something heard/read/spoken
record it as soon as I can, on paper, sticky note or my phone
go back, re-read the abstract, article, chapter/conference presentation or paper (if possible)
to check my understanding, and check the citation
highlight words/phrases/key point(s) that resonate
highlighter of choice – yellow, of course to capture key words, the core idea

go back and listen/re-read transcript/the recording for that particular point raised in the supervision meeting/conversation/discussion/interview
take more notes, magic up some words/pictures/images/metaphors.
think about the line breaks, what do they say or not say?
write up the first draft. what does the title say?

repeat process of capturing words/phrases/key points that resonate
that make me sit up and listen/piss me off/make me think
of another angle
(e.g. am I a poet who does research, a researcher who writes poems?)
I develop my skills and confidence in using poetic inquiry (Faulkner 2019), by
attending MA Poetry class, online workshops,

take notes, discuss and with peers/supervisors and friends – get feedback, use feedback
don't take it personally – this is my method.

I present my research poems at seminars, conferences,

I review once more, maybe several times/add to notes already recorded
Using a flip chart to see the connections and gaps
I reorder, remove, revise as necessary

I refer to my criteria throughout:
aesthetic engagement: colour, rhythm, cadence, evocation
embodiment: sensory: affect, feelings led
narrative /poetic truth: integrity in reflecting the data evocatively

to present the data in poetic form
an overheard phrase
the distilling of a recent experience,
a word jotted down on post it notes
graduating to flip charted, colour coded themes
(blue for methodology, green for diaspora, red for Carnival)

a phrase that just doesn't sit right,
lingers (for a while) waiting for its exit/ replacement/companion.

rewriting, rethinking rehearsing

reflecting back, imagining forward
sounds of my experience

verse and line recited to peers, in trepidation
working through the feedback
searching in footnotes

a process(ion)
collecting, filling
spaces in between.

rinse and repeat.

Lyric poetry

In the process of crafting my poetry for my research, I take the time to decide what type of poem I am writing and why; how I craft the poem to engage a reader. Whether as concrete or graphic poems (Draper, 1971; Meyer, 2017; Opoku-Agyemang, 2017) as with my poems throughout the thesis, or as lyric poems (Leavy, 2015, p. 80), such as 'folding and gliding (Abuelo)', or as a found poems (Patrick, 2016) – for example, 'palimpsest' (presented in chapter five). In all these forms my intention is to engage the reader and to invite their own reflection, in relation to aspects of my autoethnographic poetry. I also see writing poetry as an intuitive, creative space underpinned by what Quiana Cutts sees as a spiritual quality (Cutts, 2019). This is where I find it easier to address and think about the themes and issues of lived experiences in relation to diaspora, identity and belonging in poetic form first.

Lyric poetry is defined as poetry that combines the affect and lived experience of the poet researcher with that of the scene or protagonist (Leavy, 2015, p.80). I have

chosen my poems ‘folding and gliding (Abuelo)’ and ‘guarapo (cane juice)’ as examples of lyric poems. Both poems focus on feelings and emotions of the subject, enabling a proximity and immediacy for the reader, while my affective responses are also present in the poem. For example, in my poem “guarapo (cane juice)” (presented in chapter five), admiration, determination and optimism form part of the emotional landscape. I use the lyric technique to reinforce the notion of my poem as a space to perform an affective, embodied experience of diasporic identity. For example, as in ‘guarapo (cane juice)’ my lyric poem relates to an event, a moment, a scene from those of others’ lives that I re-imagine as intersecting with my own diasporic experience.

Often one poem will explore several themes or narrative. For example, ‘guarapo (cane juice)’ can be read as three narratives, using Spanish and English to explore diaspora, financial remittances in diaspora and insider/outsider identities. So, I am able to quote extracts of the poem in different parts of the thesis in order to highlight a particular theme or argument.

For example, one of my first diary entries, made just a couple of days after registering for my PhD, was concerned with the evolving crisis in Venezuela in late 2019 and how that would impact the already struggling Cuban economy with the looming threat of cutting off the oil supply. I was questioning how it might affect the carnival, but also my proposed fieldtrip to Cuba. My immediate response was to write a poem, ‘who will pull the fancy floats’ as a way to make sense of the situation. The poem is presented below:

who will pull the fancy floats?

for

they wait

garlands unfurl, expectant,
pulled tight, without purpose
suspended in petrified dullness, distracted
becoming bereavement’s playthings

grief's hollowed out army shuffles over places
stifling joyous community
leaving traces in the dust,
mounds gathering gently, undisturbed

drums, numbed
their malaise infects the air, painting its silence
with waxy tears, smeared on walls in the daytime

who will pull the fancy floats?
the grinning shine and oil are gone
feet, tapping in anxious idleness
skirt lino floors
polished with the fear of not knowing
when, if, how?

doors slam shut secret answers inside
keeping death waiting,
commanding it not to even try
a different masquerade

The first few lines or words of the poem are my initial response; a sense making exercise on hearing reading the information in the news [8] I used to space between lines and question marks as to suggest my apprehension, in response to the possibility of a crisis, but also imagining the sense of suspense and apprehension of not knowing whether there would be a carnival. I let the poem sit in my diary and did not look at it again until the Covid-19 pandemic, when it became apparent that there would be no international travel.

Concrete poetry

I also use the technique of concrete poetry or graphic poetry, a method that positions words, phrases and verses on the page to form specific shapes and spaces creating a graphic sense of a poem's theme (Draper, 1971; Meyer, 2017). I do this to invite affective engagement and immersion from the reader. For example, my poem 'diasporic mappings: trying to gain a foothold on theoretical rocks by the shores of

[8] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/09/un-rights-chief-decries-latest-us-sanctions-venezuela-michelle-bachelet

the Black Atlantic' (presented in chapter five), is designed to convey the constant movement of diasporic processes, and the constant, imagined movement of the SdCC as representational of those diasporic processes. The design of the poem re-imagines the cartographic patterns, positions and relationships of other Antillean islands with those of Cuba, and the movements of the Atlantic and the Caribbean seas. I am using big spaces to suggest history and time as expansive but also contracted between my grandfather's experience and mine as continual and linked. The small gaps are there to suggest carnival as a series of enactments and imaginings as a way to fill in the gaps of missing histories. The line breaks suggest diaspora as constant process and movement, as participating in the SdCC, with all its activities, stops and pauses.

Some of my poems offer an illustration of this concrete technique. As a whole it is a concrete or graphic poem which arranges space and text to give a visual, pictorial meaning and representation of a subject (Draper, 1971, Meyer, 2017) Meyer asserts that "concrete poems provide the reader with a visual object to be perceived, as well as a text to read. By creating a shape that serves as a container for the text, the poet pre-empts the linear, logical, sequential means by which humans typically process written communication word-by-word, line-by-line" (Meyer, 2017, p. 34).
Below is an example of a concrete poem taken from Marcy Meyer's article *Concrete Research Poetry: A Visual Representation of Metaphor* [9]

[9] Meyer, M. (2017). Concrete Research Poetry: A Visual Representation of Metaphor (Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal, Volume 2 Issue 1, p43

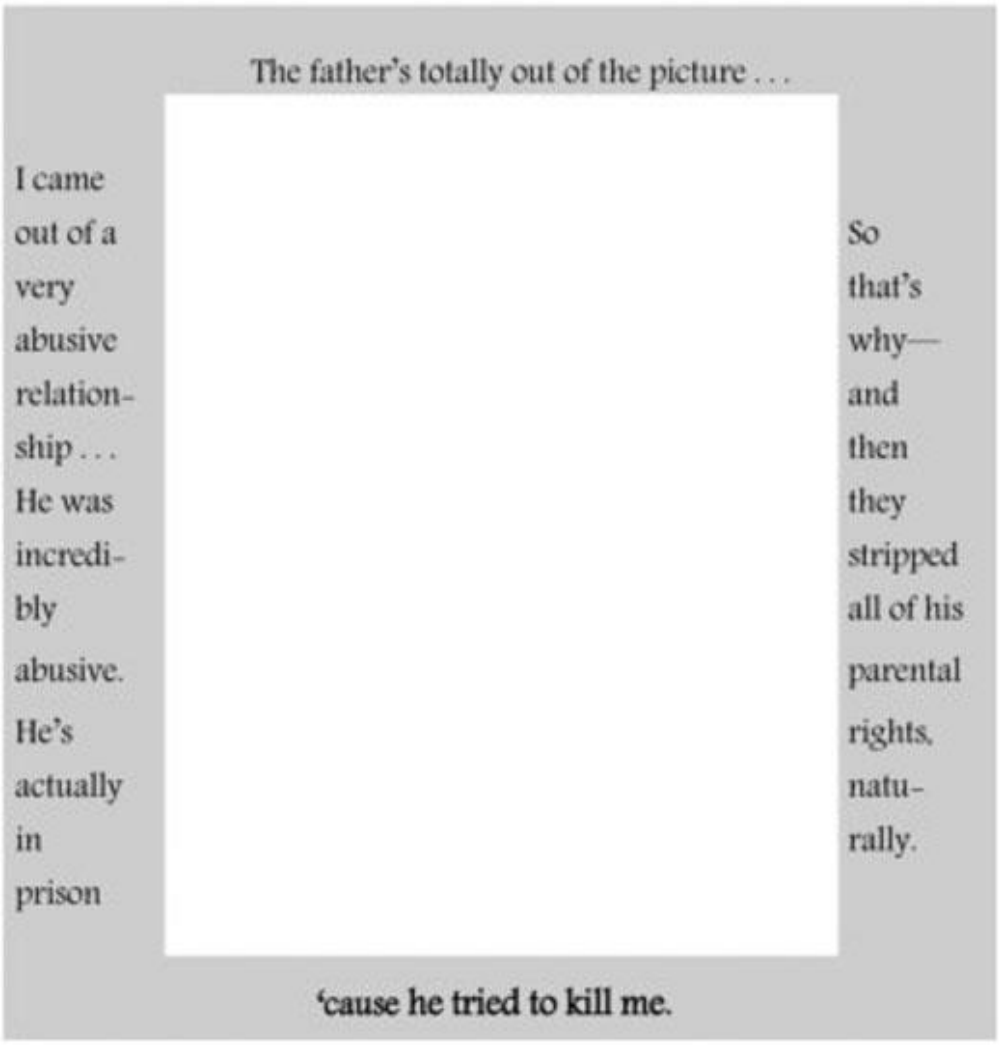


Figure 2. Out of the picture.

Benefits and challenges of using poetry as method in my research.

Using poetry as method is beneficial in opening up new ways of presenting research in terms of accessibility and representation(Lahman *et al.*, 2011), " as a tool of discovery" (Brady, 2009, p. xiii)(and as an innovative way to produce knowledge

(van Rooyen and Abdon, 2020). The benefit for me of using my poetry as my research is its power to compress and synthesise (Prendergast, 2009, p. 541). Poetry helps me to narrow what I experience as the gap between creative and traditional, critical writing in qualitative research (Patrick, 2015).

Is it a bird? It's my Poetry-as- method!

poetry as method, wearing a multi-voiced cape,
flies
flies
flies
in the face of traditional ways of knowing
knocks down colonies built on the power
of
the
single

All Knowing Voice

written in straight line, after straight line after straight line after straight line after

but is it scholarship? yes, in poetic form
accessible, inclusive, transformative

with reflexive muscles
it rescues me a researcher from using a loud hailer from my remote office perch,
encouraging me to look within, not just outwards from flashing laptop screen

Poetry-as-method humanises my humanities

infuses with the quality of vulnerability in my qualitative research

centres me and integrates me with
the reality and voices of other African/Caribbean lives
connection in collection of data - with meaning(ful) connection-with-academics
participants - in-community with writers and readers in connection-
in community of voices - surfacing-in-different-ways.

but is it still poetry? Yes, with a scholarly content
Poetry-as-method
a superpower that gets to the point
and plays with ambiguity
of zig zag lines
and vivid spaces full of meaning
the science of subjectivity, emotion and empathy
in research with rigour and integrity of process

Poetry-as-method
allows me to find new ways of being and seeing in the world (Leggo, 2012)
more human ways to (re)present research (Faulkner, 2019).

Some Challenges for my Poetry-as-method

It doesn't make sense without context
I don't want to explain it away
there are so many meanings and questions
whose voice is coming through anyway?
how do I make sense of the data
not leaving any behind
to make the research accessible
so an audience gains some insight
I negotiate as poet/researcher

that my two identities don't separate or fight.

Interviews as method

Why I chose interviews as a method

In this section I discuss why I used interviews as a method to inform my autoethnographic poems; how I engaged in and with the interviews and the interviewees' stories in relation to the SdCC to inform my autoethnographic poetry. I used the interviews as a research method to provide me with a broader sense of Caribbean diaspora. My autoethnographic research is about my lived experience and collective diasporic experiences drawn from the interview data.

Interviews in autoethnographic research are unusual (Chang, 2008, p. 106), because autoethnography is about understanding the world from the self, as such, my diasporic identity and drawing on my lived experiences is my own personal data (Chang, ibid). Indeed, the idea of autoethnographic interviews may appear to be a contradiction in terms, but as Anderson speculates, "what possibly can I tell myself that I do not already know?" autoethnography, by its very process is about self-interviewing (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013a, p. 69). I am exploring my own lived experience, and I discuss this further in my reflexivity chapter. However, I am using interviews to underpin the 'ethno' of my autoethnographic research, by drawing on the experiences of other people's lives who share similar cultural phenomena (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010; Holman Jones, Ellis and Adams, 2013; Muncey, 2005).

Researchers who have used interviews in their autoethnographic work, include Andrew Bagnall's (2023) study on the experiences of both researcher and bereaved family members of patients cared for within an acute stroke ward (Bagnall, 2023); Cronin's (2018) autoethnographic study uses interviews, alongside other data

collection methods to explore the experiences of a basketball coach who enters a youth club for disabled participants for the first time (Cronin *et al.*, 2018). Kudzayi SaviousTarisayi's (2023) study of the experiences of Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa made autoethnographic reflections on an interpretivist study that generated data using semi-structured interviews (Tarisayi, 2023).

Researchers using an autoethnographic approach have used interview data to craft poetry as a method to present research. Sandra Faulkner (2005) has crafted found poems from interviews for her narrative study on Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer (LGBTQ) Jewish identity (Faulkner, 2005). Penelope Caroll (2011) conducted interviews to represent and present experiences of the informally housed in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Carroll, Dew and Howden-Chapman, 2011).

It is unusual to use interviews for autoethnography because the primary data source or subject is the researcher's lived experience (Chang, 2008, p. 106). However, as Chang suggests interviews can be used "to stimulate your memory, to fill in gaps in information […] to gain others' perspectives on [on my lived experience]" (Chang, ibid.)

Methodological decisions.

In this section I discuss how I recruited for and organised the interviews, how I had to rethink how I was going to conduct them considering the Covid-19 pandemic; how my plans were derailed due to the pandemic and my acute health issues at the same time. I discuss what I did to adapt the interview methods so that I could conduct them in those extremely challenging circumstances. I reflect too on the consequences of having to adapt my interview methods, leading to an examination and a rethinking of the ethics of doing so for the interviews and the implications for my research - from face-to-face interviews to written questions and responses via email. Using my research diary blog, and notes I took in preparation for my ethics application, I discuss the sense of community that was forged with Santiagueros during the research process and in the interviews. I consider too, how poetic transcription of the interviews facilitated a space of creativity, reflection and feeling that mere reporting of data would not be able to capture.

Why interview?

to underpin my ‘auto’ – my lived experience of diaspora
hearing and understanding the ‘ethno’ – others’ similar experiences
through interviews that inspire and resonate
to inform my ‘graphy’ – writing my poems
to engender a conversational style
to hear stories that capture rhythms of carnival
the dancing
rhythms of carnival
as a way to link with the rhythms
of my diasporic exploration
to tell the story of my autoethnography

Where to interview?

Santiago de Cuba because…
links, diasporic and generational
situating my grandfather’s story
through translation, the performance
of colonialism on the diasporic tongue
but covid stopped me in my tracks…

I situated the SdCC as my muse and I identify people who are connected to the SdCC as part of my method to elicit stories about the carnival, to inform my autoethnographic poetry, inspire my imaginings my grandfather’s life in Santiago de

Cuba, and to negotiate my own diasporic Caribbean identity. When I started to plan, the intention was to conduct the fieldwork period from March 2020 to September 2020 in Santiago de Cuba, to include the observations of rehearsals for the carnival, attending the carnival and to interview participants after the conclusion of the event at the end of July. I wanted a research methodology that would accommodate a diversity of experiences in relation to the SdCC, such as generational, cultural, migratory, linguistic and familial; and how I, as researcher built and managed relationships with the participants, the Santiagueros. I started the recruiting process for interviewees very early on in the research, immediately after I had gained ethical approval from the university (appendix 1) not knowing that in just a few weeks, in March 2020, the UK would be in lockdown due to the Covid–19 global pandemic (Burns, Dagnall and Holt, 2020).

I was very excited when the Santiagueros who agreed to be part of the research started sharing their stories with me, through face to face and email interviews, about their experiences in relation to the carnival and what it meant to them. I would go back to the scripts and the recordings, reading and literature and finding resonance in their stories that spoke of being brought up in strict Caribbean homes, and how participating in carnival was both an act of celebration and affirmation.
I sent out participant information sheets and participant consent forms (see appendix 3) in both Spanish and English, via email, outlining the objectives of the research project and who I was looking for to take part. In Cuba, I had the help of two gatekeepers who were well known in Santiago de Cuba, both having access to wide social and professional networks; Norma, who also consented to taking part and being interviewed, and Marta, who helped to recruit interviewees, but did not take part in the research. This proved to be a very protracted process, taking several months to recruit the interviewees in Cuba.

During the interview process I invited the research participants to craft their own poetry as a creative reflection of their experience of the SdCC. I used their poems as data about Caribbean space through the carnival and engaged with the poems to inform my own autoethnographic poetry. Most of the research participants responded with their own original pieces of poetry, and some quoted extracts from other poets' work or sayings that they said resonated with their experiences and their

memories in relation to the SdCC. The intention was for me to create a space of engagement, between me as a researcher and the research participants to reflect, with a poetic voice on our shared lived experiences in relation to the SdCC as a Caribbean space.

Conducting the interviews

Part of my research plan was to conduct the interviews face to face in Cuba. I was taking Latin American Spanish lessons in preparation, with the intention of recruiting a research assistant to act also as translator, as my Spanish language proficiency was not sufficient. On the assumption that I would be conducting face to face interviews in the field, I wanted to them to be flexible, and identified open ended interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 2002), with semi structured questions to enable me to ask follow-up questions (Daigle, 2016) as the most appropriate way of building rapport and ensuring we had space to exchange ideas and experiences. I have designed semi structured interviews that are contextualised and focused (Santiagueros' experiences of the SdCC); interviews that are "seeking accounts of rich experience" (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019, pp. 3,19) unlike other interview methods that can be formal and structured. Structured interviews, where questions are asked in the same way and in the same order, would not work for my purposes of encouraging a narrative through a conversational style. I was able to achieve this with the three face to face interviews, but not with the email interviews for the research participants in Cuba.

There were four initial questions that I would ask (see appendix 4). But with the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic I had to rethink my research methods. Due to the government sanctioned lockdowns in March 2020, in the UK, researchers were expected to comply with university guidelines that banned all overseas travel. It was at this time too that I began to experience challenging health issues. This meant that I was no longer able to travel to Cuba to carry out the interviews face-to-face. Because of the difficulties and challenges I experienced trying to organise and conduct the interviews via WhatsApp with interviewees in Cuba, my only option was to conduct written interviews via email. I had to be cognisant of the logistics and

challenges of communicating with interviewees resident in Cuba and I had to be flexible and patient. I was confronted by the challenge of addressing the pros and cons of interviewing via email (McCoyd and Kerson, 2006) to consider the location and varying access to the internet (Fritz and Vandermause, 2017).

I was reading the interview transcripts, aware of my own subjective position, sitting with the interviewees' words, thinking about what they were saying (and not saying). I respect the interviewees sharing their stories, making themselves vulnerable, revealing significant aspects, moments of their lives. I was only using the themes that I interpreted as Caribbean spaces, such as the carnival and its food, music, and dancing, rather than extracting data about the participants' personal lives. In reviewing the interview transcripts, coding them thematically (identity, family, conga, belonging, Caribbeanness Santiago de Cuba), I could see patterns of shared meaning emerging (Braun and Clarke, 2021), underpinned by what I conceptualised as a core idea of the SdCC as Caribbean space, and also as a diasporic space. The interviews, as stories would be one of the ways that would inform my poetry. My poetry would enable a dialogue between my story and the other research participants, in my poems, to create interpretations in relation to the carnival scene as Caribbean space, as diasporic space of belonging. My research poems become the space to hold those Caribbean stories contained in the interviews.

Selection Criteria

I have been friends with Olga Saavedra Montes de Oca, a Cuban born UK based scholar[10] , since meeting her in 2016 at a Society for Caribbean Studies conference at the University of Newcastle, back when I was considering pursuing a doctorate. Through our friendship, Olga was able to put me in contact with her close friend, Norma, a native Santiaguera who is a well-known and well-connected figure in Santiago and in Havana, when I planned a stay in Cuba in 2018. Olga also

[10] Olga Lidia Montes de Oca. https://onca.org.uk/event/olga-saavedra-montes-de-oca-the-family-as-a-space-for-gender-transition/

introduced me to one of the participants, Jorge, who is resident in the UK and he in turn suggested other people as potential research participants.

All the participants residing in Cuba were in a range of professions, working as psychologists, epidemiologists, teachers and lecturers. The participants in the UK were in professions in the arts (musicians) and one was a retired telecoms engineering manager. Initially the selection criteria to recruit twenty people from the age of eighteen with no upper age limit as the project was to capture intergenerational experiences and memories. I invited people from a range of social, ethnic and economic backgrounds, to reflect a variety of experiences and perspectives. This would speak to different experiences of the Santiago de Cuba Carnival, whether they had taken part in any aspect of the carnival, from designing costumes, playing in a conga, watching the processions or attending the street parties. It was important for the research to hear a variety of voices and experiences of the carnival.

It took over a year, from March 2020 to May 2021 to conduct and gather all the interviews. All the interviewees, whether via email or face to face answered all the initial questions, no matter how short or detailed. The interviews were translated into English from Spanish by using professional software 'DeepL'. Though the nature of my research did not cover sensitive topics, I made sure that questions I posed were not sensitive or personal. For ethical reasons, to protect the interviewees and the data collected. I am using the data according to section 1 of the University of Brighton's ethics code (BREAM) on confidentiality, anonymity and privacy to ensure that the interviewees were protected (appendix 2).

The sample size of the group is small consisting of nine people with an age range of between 35 and 84. All interviewees are in a range of professions; a psychologist, an epidemiologist, and teachers living in Cuba. In the UK the interviewees were a retired telecoms engineering manager and trade union official, and two professional musicians.

I made a conscious decision about using semi structured interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 2002) in order to open up a space of sharing and exchange of experiences. The small interview sample allowed me a more immersive research experience, an intimate way, to explore other experiences of diasporic processes

and conditions from nuanced, individual stories (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018, pp. 48-49).

How to interview? A poem

12 potential interviewees recruited in Cuba and UK
9 in the final count:
6 individual email interviews
for participants in Santiago de Cuba
3 individual face to face and telephone interviews
for participants in the UK:
2 Santiagueros and 1 Jamaican
over 18 Months
face to face 45 minutes to 2 hours
four opening questions, then follow ups
using semi structured with open ended questions,
typed in Spanish, with English versions attached
sent by email
responses returned the same way
I travel with them through their stories
not mine their stories, as if in a quarry,
their worlds of meaning
to hear their stories of carnival, identity and belonging
our interview becomes a place of engagement,
mutually building.
the construction site
of new knowledge (Madison, 2002, p227)
minimising extraction
to fatten my story

I thought about how much or how far I could structure the interviews, so that they were meaningful for the research participants (Madison,2002 p. 231). The open-ended questions allowed for a conversation, with follow up questions for clarity or more detail on a specific topic or point that gave opportunity to talk about their personal experiences of Santiago de Cuba carnival.

Ethical considerations

‘Do no harm’

(Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018)

no payment, no tailored performance

my duty of care

informed consent

checking in with interviewees.

My ethical responsibility.

My research adheres to the guidelines of University of Brighton Ethics Committee and the ASA guidelines. I discussed issues of confidentiality in a participant information sheet (see Appendix 1) and gained participants’ consent based on the information, via email. Participants were all literate adults and were happy to use their real names and offered mini biographies at the start of their stories/interviews. However, I have chosen to use only their first names. The participants were fully aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time and did not need to give a reason (ASA 1- 4(a). I made sure through them signing the consent forms that they were fully aware of the use of the data. ASA guidelines 1-7(c); ASA 1- 4(a). It was important that I engaged with the university’s ethical regulations for me and for the research participants. However, the nature of the research, as contingent and

unpredictable, meant I had to be aware of and respond to changing and unforeseen issues occurring.

With the SdCC as muse and the Santiagueros' interviews as a source of data for my autoethnographic poetry, I was able to explore my diasporic Caribbean links, by identifying connections within the participants' stories in relation to experiences that I identify as Caribbean in the SdCC. I was using my analysis of their stories about the SdCC as Caribbean space as a way to make sense of my own diasporic identity formation. For example, by asking questions such as: "carnival is coming. how do you prepare for it? "and "what does the Santiago de Cuba Carnival mean to you and why?" The responses elicited from the research participants enabled me to make thematic interpretations (Braun and Clarke, 2021) to craft my autoethnographic poems that respected their consent, their confidentiality and their anonymity. During the interviews, I focused on aspects relevant to my own Caribbean experience. For example, consumption and enjoyment of the foods, like ajiaco, with its casava and pork - a similar dish can be found in Jamaica and in my family home; the music, from the bata drums in the conga, reminiscent of the drums played at my maternal grandmother's funeral, and dancing to reggaetón tunes as illustrated in the extracts from two of the interviewees' stories below:

> "We just liked looking at everything and being mesmerised – it was party, party, party in the streets! The food vendors would be out early in the morning singing "Ajaca, ajaca caliente. Delicious, and very Caribbean because of the Taino who used to cultivate corn" Adriana

> "Yes, and in the Santiago carnival, you see the presence of the African slaves and their descendants. They took their culture to the Caribbean, especially the drums." Jorge

It is important that I respect interviewees' stories and not reveal their identities or lives in the interviews, because as a researcher I need to and want to adhere to the ethical guidelines of my university. Also, I do not want to render the interviewees vulnerable and exposed through my work, because of Cuban ideology in which all experiences are negotiated (Dore, 2012; Dore, 2022).

This excerpt from my poem 'Ella Prepara' is an example of how I have engaged with participants' stories in relation to their experience of the SdCC, the sense of connection and history with the Caribbean diaspora:

her Kizomba moves will light fires on Maceo esta noche papi!

Mama tells her again "dance the tumba! hija, don't forget Haiti, now"

sure, but Marita's soul delights in the rolling waves of conga along the Marti Promenade

Ajiaco caliente! Ajiaco

"Quiero seguir bailando mi historia" she shouts in her sing-song way,

shuffling in time to the cuatro-cinco-seis of her story

on the path with the click clack of her made in China Cuban heels.

(The poem is presented in full in chapter four)

In reviewing the interview transcripts, coding them thematically (identity, family, conga, belonging, Caribbean/Africa, Santiago de Cuba), I could see patterns of shared meaning emerging (Braun and Clarke, 2021), underpinned by what I conceptualised as a core idea of the SdCC as Caribbean space as diasporic space. Conducting the interviews and going through the process of identifying the themes that would analytically inform my poems, were moments of connection and dialogic engagement for me, as researcher, and as a fellow human being trying to make sense of community and belonging through storytelling. In reading and re-reading

the interview transcripts I experienced resonance in stories of identity formation and articulation, in the context of the SdCC, and childhood memories of carnival. In the stories, the SdCC was configured as a site of belonging' and connection, which resonated of my own experience of the carnival when I participated in 2018. Taking part in conga, a powerful motif of mass mobilisation, and collective visibility was significant in most of the stories. Below is my poem 'connectedness' which I crafted from my experience of the interview process. This is a found poem (Faulkner, 2019, Patrick, 2016), where I have used some phrases memories and experiences from the participants as well as my own, to demonstrate that engagement. The connectedness of the interview process I experienced was especially through engaging with their words, sharing these experiences in the interviews in relation to the carnival space. The poem explores the interview process giving an insight into the physical, digital and emotional space of the interview:

connectedness

fragments coalescing in a rainbow of answers

over time, a month, a day, a gap, a year

emails back and forth

a truncated phone call over dodgy Wi-Fi connections

or face to face, over hot tea and laughter in the college canteen

and a windy day on a beachside café

interview questions, some between bites of pizza

appeal to the participants' playful memories in carnival time

moments so vivid they tickle on the back of my neck in the recall

I was aware of the way people carry themselves

made near, by stories shared

when I got to Santiago, and I saw it myself

Jamaica

through nods of recognition in pauses

weighted silences,

heavy Covid weary

suspension, holding, waiting

in the thickness of choosing words

it’s your soul

walking a high wire that can binds mouths

my curiosity coaxes, sweet work, feeling wise in the telling

or newer fresher memories, arrogant in their youthfulness.

call on the ancestors for guidance

translated in phrases, accents

more like people from Dominican Republic ...than Havana

between lines and imaginings

keeping intact the storied lives in original colours

of thoughts, transformed in stanzas

borders breached by interviews in the clouds

with care to maintain and not take away

hovering, tapping and scoring opening them

to new communities of knowing

that become with a moment

rich in revelation of worlds busy in meaning making

full bodied presence in the poetry space

moving and turning in inquiry and reflection

where some speak

others tap in silence

of the loud bang clatter and chat of carnival that

follow up questions as open as water for them to swim, float, wade through as they please

some unannounced absences

no response to the invitation to dive in again

then, later words

into poems thread the seams

of the interviews

of lives in carnival

Some of challenges arising during the interview process.

With the onslaught of the Covid- 19 pandemic England was under lockdown and all overseas travel was banned by universities so teaching, research work and learning moved online. This engendered a heightened sense of isolation, and the frustration

of not being able to carry out fieldwork that many doctoral researchers, including myself experienced was acute (MacLean et al., 2020). Thinking about, reading and writing poetry in and for my research preserved my sanity and offered me space to think about ways to revise my research methods. In this new environment of curtailed physical movement and travel my interviews with some of the research participants now had to be conducted via email. This approach had to be taken for two reasons: firstly, the pandemic had a devastating effect on the already fragile, government controlled and restricted internet infrastructure in Cuba (van Deursen and Anade, 2018), so interviews through social media platforms were not viable and some of my participants did not have ready access to mobile phones or PCs. Thus, the limited access that existed became more acute and even more unstable with the consequential shortages experienced by Cubans (Köhn and Siré, 2022) . Secondly, phone calls from the UK to Cuba are expensive and challenging to record, hence the need for me to conduct the interviews with written questions via email, and the participants writing their stories and sending them to me via email.

With the email interviews, there were challenges around the process of interviewing people I could not see, hear or respond to with follow up question in real time. Not being able to be in the same physical environment to conduct the interviews face to face meant I could not hear the interviewees' voices or laughter or access the physical cues that are available in the face to face interviews (Vogl, 2013). What was apparent when I came to thematically code the interviews, was that the email interviews focused on the significance of the conga and the materiality of the SdCC. In contrast, Jorge's and Adriana's interviews were more expansive because I was able to ask follow-up questions and they in turn situated their answers in the context of their families and upbringing and consequent recognition of their Caribbeanness. This reflected their responses directly to the initial guiding questions about their experiences in relation to the Santiago carnival. In contrast, the face-to-face interviews were conversational, organic in process. What was apparent underlying all of this, as I mentioned before, was the problem with the weak technological infrastructure in Cuba and the participants' ability to access technology, with power shortages making contact extremely challenging (van Deursen and Anade, 2018) . With the face-to-face interviews these were more interactive, more conversational and Rapport was easy to build beforehand, through brief telephone calls and

meetings in other social gatherings, with me meeting Jorge at a pizza restaurant and Adriana in the university café downstairs from my research desk.

Interviews are part of my method of autoethnographic poetry, and this method is also about celebrating, through valuing and cherishing stories, the lived and imaginary experiences of people connected to the SdCC. By using interviews as a method of engagement with the Santiagueros' stories of their experiences the SdCC as inspiration for my poems that in turn perform my autoethnography I am engaging with their stories, without making them my story or revealing their lives. The primary purpose of my thesis is to develop an autoethnographic poetry as a method to explore my diasporic Caribbean identity, its intersections and constructs. In the next section I critically analyse my lived experience to understand my place in the world as a diasporic woman. By situating the SdCC as my muse I was able to conduct interviews to elicit stories about the carnival, imagining my grandfather's life in Santiago de Cuba, and to negotiate my own diasporic Caribbean identity. This informed my poetic autoethnography.

My Autoethnography

In this section I discuss autoethnography as my methodology that is informed by my poetry as method of inquiry, interviews as a method of evoking the Santiago de Cuba carnival as inspiration for my autoethnographic writing. I do this by offering an overview of autoethnography from key practitioners who have influenced my use of this methodology. I examine some of the strengths and weaknesses of autoethnography and discuss why I have chosen it and how I use it to frame and contextualise my research.

Autoethnography as methodology

Autoethnography is defined as a qualitative research method that offers a detailed narrative of a researcher's lived experience of and in relation to social and cultural contexts and phenomena that they are investigating (Allen-Collinson, 2013; Chang, 2008; Cooper and Lilyea, 2022; Denzin, 2014; Ellis, 1999; Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010; Muncey, 2005; Pelias, 2013; Wall, 2006)). It values the use and analysis of personal experience as a means of understanding broader socio-cultural contexts (Holman Jones, Ellis and Adams, 2013). My particular personal experience of coming into a diasporic Caribbean identity resonates with others' cultural practices and social formations of diaspora that I am investigating by constructing Caribbean spaces, such as my childhood family home, the SdCC as a muse elicited from interviewees' stories in relation to it and my imaging of my grandfather's life in Santiago de Cuba.

Autoethnography and diaspora

Researchers have taken an autoethnographic approach to exploring African and Caribbean diasporic identities and processes, using their own experience as their key data source. For example, Beverley Bryan (2020) explores the formation and evolution of a Black community identity in the austerity phase of Britain in the 1970s, using her own lived experience as lens to examine this this socio historical moment (Bryan, 2020). Gloria Nziba Pindi's (2018) autoethnographic study, explores how hybridity illuminates her lived experience of identity performed across cultures, and more specifically in diasporic context, at the intersections of various facets of her selfhood: Black, female, postcolonial, African, bi-tribal, diasporic (Nziba Pindi, 2018).

As a poet researcher using an autoethnographic methodological approach, I use interviews as a method to inform and inspire my poems that tell the story of my coming into Caribbean diasporic identity. The interview is also a way of "balancing the auto with the "ethno" (Winkler, 2017) , so that I am writing (the "graphy") beyond myself with the intention of connecting the particularity of my lived experience with those of others' lived experiences in and through diasporic processes such as a Caribbean carnival.

Alignment

I'm aligned, yes, I am, with the view
that "there is no single,
'authentic'
Black identity or experience." [11]
approach my Blackness,
not just through
my dark hued skin,
but as the sum of combinations
an alchemy
of culture and politics in a bowl
of Saturday soup in a South London home rich in Caribbean tangs
of Saturday school with Thelma and Jeff teaching
Bogle, Nanny, Louverture and Angelou
books about Malcolm X, Nkrumah, Lenin
and the thoughts of CLR James and Tony Benn

the way mum says cucumber (koo-koombah)
fills the room in permanent summer in Siloh
sticky wickets and Windies cricket all day long on the BBC
of stew peas, dasheen and Harry Belafonte
sweet as cornmeal porridge

[11] In Dialogue: What is misunderstood about Blackness? https://press.princeton.edu/ideas/in-dialogue-what-is-misunderstood-about-blackness. 2023

dancing with my elders hot steppin' with teenage feet
the I Threes and Marica Griffith

my dad in his youth looking like Ahmad Jamal and Martin Luther King
and mum, Toni Morrison's spirit sister
walking in patois with speaky spokey aunts, bidding you a "good evening"
who make poise and 'coming correct' their business
twisting to Byron Lee and the Dragoneers
sighing while John Holt laments and hollerin'
winin' an' grinin' in carnival time, cheerin'
Miss Lou fomenting in comic disguise
as Miss Senior's Snake Woman charms me

My poem 'Alignment' is an ode to how I interpret my Blackness, which I negotiate through my sense of Caribbeanness, drawn from my childhood family home life. My parents, both born in Jamaica and coming to the UK, as British subjects (Jamaica still being a British colony until 1962), where they met in the 1950s. My Caribbeanness is constructed and negotiated through family friends, hailing from different Caribbean islands, who were regular guests in our family home. The music – ska, calypso, reggae, jazz regularly played on the weekends; the aromas and flavours of Caribbean food emanating from the kitchen – curry goat and rice, ackee and saltfish, stew peas, rundown and festival; the books on the shelves in the study– from histories of the Caribbean and Africa to Soviet and Cuban politics, Olive Senior's stories and Maya Angelou's biography. These memories, cultural practices and signs are constant in my reliving and reimagining of my Caribbeanness. The poem is my agreement with the position that there is no single, "authentic" Black identity or experience, just as there is not one singular authentic Caribbean carnival experience. The Caribbean is the diaspora of the diaspora – a migratory entity, where Africa is both present and deferred the Caribbean is diversity. (Hall, 1990). Taking an interpretive autoethnographic approach (Denzin, 2014), I examine the particularly of my lived experience, interrogating my diasporic Caribbean poet and researcher identities to explore Caribbean diasporic identities without being reduced to fixed undialectical notions of Blackness. For the purposes of my research my focus is on my identity formation. Here, my Blackness is negotiated through my Caribbean

identity, as a diasporic identity informed partly by ‘people from elsewhere’ (Hall, 1990, 1997, Hall and Morley, 2019).

Being of, but not from the Caribbean

I further use autoethnography to reflect on my lived experience of growing up in a UK based Caribbean home to tell my story in order to understand the things that shape and influence my sense of self, as a diasporic Caribbean woman and a researcher and poet in the world (Faulkner, 2019; Feracho, 2005; Leggo, 2012; Weems, 2013a). The notion of home is referenced by my parents, my aunts and uncles and family friends as being simultaneous locations here in the UK and there in the Caribbean (Boyce Davies, 2013; Bryan, 2020; Chamberlain, 2009; Goulbourne and Solomos, 2004; Hall, 1990; Murdoch, 2007; Reynolds, 2006). This home, as a doubling experience, is lived in, and at the same time is a material reality (UK) and also an imagining (of a Caribbean) through my parents’, aunts’ and uncles’ regular conversations about it which translated as an ongoing postponement of an eventual return for them.

As an older teenager, I experienced a growing sense of in-betweenness: between being from a Caribbean home and being not quite British; being of the Caribbean but not from it, of being born in the UK, a South London Black girl from a home that was Jamaican. Inside this UK based Caribbean family home, I had a strong sense of self as part of an emblematic and imagined Caribbean – the food we ate, the books I read, the alternating Jamaican patois and English my parents spoke, particularly when talking about home as Jamaica, as the Caribbean. Outside the family home, I experienced a precarity – a liminal space of in-between-ness and not quite one or the other, of feeling unframed, yet I knew I was part of a something, an ethereal community I couldn’t quite define.

I was sitting in the university café, as usual after a seminar with Shiela, the other woman of Caribbean heritage in my MA Gender, Society and Culture class. The café was our regular space to talk and share our feelings, often ones of exhaustion and indignation at, yet again, being the only Caribbean women on a university degree

programme (this was my experience in my undergraduate degree also). We discussed how we could make ourselves visible through our dissertation choices. I wanted to reflect my feelings of embodying a duality of belonging/not belonging as an UK born, African/Caribbean woman with a connection to the Caribbean through my family. Reflecting on that conversation with Sheila in the college canteen, I can see the seeds being sown of a growing awareness of contexts outside of my family home that contributed to this articulation of my identity.

Writing my MA dissertation was another way I made meaning and created a space to negotiate my burgeoning diasporic identity. My dissertation was a response to the novel *Unbelonging* written by Joan Riley, about the life of a Jamaican girl, recently arrived in South London to live with a father who she did not know. Even though the lives of the characters in the novel bore little resemblance to mine, the story, focusing on Jamaicans living in south London, opened up a way for me to engage in another diasporic experience framed as a work of literature, enabling me to continue to explore my identity. I am now applying autoethnography about Caribbean diasporic experiences as "an intervention for theorising… these particular but shared experiences" by foregrounding my experience and my writing (Mara and Katrina Daly, 2022).

Autoethnography is analytical, taking on more of the conventions of traditional ethnography, where the researcher is present and offers some autobiographical data to contextualise their work (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013). It is also evocative, and interpretive using the imaginings as well as the lived experience of the researcher to inform their work (Ellis, 1999, Denzin, 2014). And I choose an interpretive autoethnography as my approach, building on Denzin's (2014) definition of interpretive autoethnography, as a critical performative practice of a writer's biographical life that moves back and forth in time, towards a broader history, culture and discourse (Denzin, 2014, p. x). I adapt Denzin's interpretive autoethnography as my approach, to story a series of what Denzin defines as epiphanies or turning points in my biographical life (Denzin, 2014, pp. 12-13) – my childhood obsession with a book on the Caribbean (*'The West Indies'*), the fragmented and scantly detailed, but nevertheless revelatory story of my grandfather's migratory life in Cuba, and my experience of the SdCC to investigate and make meaning of my diasporic identity. My autoethnography does move back and forth in time, from my childhood

imaginings to the carnival scene in Santiago de Cuba and back to my imaginings of my grandfather's life in Santiago. It is these imaginings that I interpret and make sense of in the spaces of my autoethnographic poetry, for me to make sense and meaning of my diasporic identity and life.

As a methodology, autoethnography facilitates the use of a range of creative genres and methods such as poetry, a method that I use to facilitate the evocative quality of my autoethnographic research.

Autoethnography allows me different ways of knowing, seeing and investigating social worlds through personal, lived experience, positioning me, explicitly and transparently in the process in the data, in the text. This necessitates a reflecting in a deep and meaningful way on my own positionality and relationality; connecting and working in community with the other researchers who use autoethnography as a methodology (Weems, 2013; Boylorn, 2014, 2021), and poet researchers who craft autoethnographic poetry (Faulkner, 2018). I am able to reflect on how these connections and approaches can help me to engage with other constructions of the Caribbean and diaspora. As a methodology autoethnography facilitates the use of a range of creative genres and methods such as poetry, (Faulkner, 2009, Weems, 2012), ethnodrama (Weems, 2013, Moriarty, 2013), photography (McMorris, 2018) (These genres and methods facilitate storytelling and knowledge production that goes beyond formalised academic textual presentations.

My autoethnography is...

This poem reflects my initial encounter with autoethnography and its possibilities for me to explore and connect with the themes of my inquiry by drawing on my lived experience. In the poem I ponder how autoethnography as a methodology enables the navigation of my lived experience as a diasporic Caribbean woman, poet and doctoral researcher in a UK university – the identities I examine to understand my positionality. By drawing on my subjectivities that configure my lived experience, I

write myself into the text of the story to make sense and meaning and to create knowledge.[12]

my autoethnography is…

making **visible*** specifics
threading my lived experience
on a bias cut
of epiphanies, interpreted
from my particular to a general
my (a) way of knowing and being in the world.
geolocating my empathy, vulnerability and creativity[13]
liminal space, as knowing space
starting from me, searcher – researcher – self
connected, folding in, borderless, merged
imaginings and memories interweaving
making sense of culture, relations of power
in/by/through/as poetry

my (a) way to think, see, be about the world.
without holding it at well trained arms' length
like pickled brain fragments
bobbing round in a shiny specimen jar [14]

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[12] 'Poetic Inquiry and Its Lyrical Potential for Research', (2014) *In education*, N'Diaye, D. B. (2021) 'Telling Our Own Stories: Reciprocal Autoethnography at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender', *Journal of American Folklore,* 134(533), pp. 252-257,371-372.

[13] my life in diaspora
a set of social processes of identity
reconstituting ad reconstituted
in contextualised loops
in community, culture, practice
the way I try to understand and place myself
is to write a story.
'mystory' (Denzin, 2014)

[14] despite academe's conventions
I look outwards from a conscious within
And I move away from the impersonal (Behar, 1997),

where you “keep the blood in” [15]

refusing a detached unemotional unbiassed lens

creative ways of coming to know

accessible, inclusive, involving

my autoethnography might be…

decolonising[16]

decentring

narcissistic**[17]

self-indulgent

my autoethnography isn’t…

orthodoxy

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to situate my personal
with vulnerability attending

[15] Moriarty, J. & University of Brighton. School of, E. 2013. *Autobiographical and researched experiences with academic writing: an analytical autoethnodrama. /* Jess Moriarty*.*

[16] My evocative autoethnography
my resistance to reproducing the same
colonising structures of knowledge production
a space of engagement becomes
a place of/for my diasporic self-storying Chawla, D. & Atay, A. 2017. Introduction: Decolonizing Autoethnography. *Cultural studies, critical methodologies,* 18**,** 3-8.

my filter
my lens
I choose.
my story

[17] Autoethnography may be narcissistic. I am looking within from and for a site of knowing. Neilsen, L. 2008. Lyric Inquiry. *In:* Knowles, J. G. & Cole, A. L. (eds.) *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples and issues.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Inc.

dominant discourse in academia
detached
hidden***

*** I write myself into the text**
to give my life sound
**** I write myself into the text**
to perform my story
***** I write myself into the text**
to declare my visibility[18]

my autoethnography is…
writing into a language
of self, speaking into bigger stories

Poetic inquiry informs my autoethnography. Exploring through my poetry:

process(ion)
my insider/outsider
in-between
Caribbean diasporic woman
in-between
poet researcher
in-between
born in the UK
of, but not from

Caribbean spaces
in-between

[18]Denzin, N. K. 2014. *Interpretive autoethnography, Second edition,* London, SAGE.

western
in-between
academic spaces
positionality
rhythms and reflections
shaping the context
of my diasporic
Caribbean

Autoethnographic writing brings me back from my grandfather's experience as a Caribbean man, a Jamaican migrant worker, living in Cuba in the early part of the 20th century; his time in the Santiago de Cuba carnival, to my own experiences as a UK born Caribbean diasporic woman, using the SdCC as a muse in my research. My autoethnographic poetry is a method that interprets, evokes and coheres my imaginings and ideas, it is flexible and can move with different contexts, and fragmentations. It is that interpretive quality that informs my poetry as my autoethnographic performance, creating knowledge that goes beyond perceived notions of disciplined knowledge (Pelias, 2005, p. 417). I use the SdCC as a muse, because carnival also coheres and binds different aspects of diasporic, Caribbean histories. The carnival also acts as an epiphanic moment in my identity formation (Denzin, 2014).

As an autoethnographic researcher, I am embodying my research through my poetry/storytelling, and the articulation and negotiation of my diasporic identity. This is mediated through my imaginings of my grandfather's life in Santiago and my imagining of the SdCC as sites of enquiry. This embodied act of imagining then, becomes a valuable and vulnerable place of creativity, and reflection, of knowing (British/English language/Western culture/Caribbean, Jamaican in the family home) and not quite knowing (a Caribbean, imagined/Spanish Cuba/Spanish language); of border crossings, intersections and multiple subjectivities playing out in different contexts of my lived experience as a British, Caribbean diaspora woman, poet researcher and granddaughter. As I explain in my section on my autoethnographic

poetry, my poetry helps me to examine and make sense of these border crossings and multiple contexts

By using autoethnography I can control the narrative here. I get to tell my own story of identity formation in diaspora. This helps me to understand the ways in which I negotiate the world, to find ways to navigate the structures of my own social worlds, offering me a broader understanding of how identities are formed in diasporic spaces and processes, such as my family home and the carnival, and my identity formation in academic spaces. It affords me a closeness, a proximity to the imagined space of the SdCC where I can summon all the senses available in evocation of it. My autoethnographic poetry creates a space to engage my imagination in the senses of touch, smell, sight, sound of taste of the SdCC reimagining that are embedded in the poems. The space can be poetry (Bachelard and Jolas, 2014).

Autoethnography and poetry

By using autoethnography as a methodological approach to write my poetry, I am locating myself among other scholars who employ autoethnography as a liberating and enabling space of inquiry. They do this by writing their lived experiences through a diversity of creativity processes.

Sandra Faulkner uses autoethnographic poetry, developing poetry as a method to do that, as “a way to tap into universality and radical subjectivity” (Faulkner, 2017a, p. 210) poetry. Mary Weems uses autoethnography as a methodology, using poetry as a mode of writing about her life experience. For me the “auto” it is about me using my life experience to explore and interrogate broader understandings of Caribbean diasporic identity. The “ethno” is the participant stories of the SdCC as a Caribbean space to have a broader understanding of diasporic identity formation. And the “graphy” includes the interviews, my lived experience, the literature reviews – all informing my autoethnographic poetry which is the storytelling.

I am taking a similar approach to Weems who also uses autoethnography as methodology(Weems *et al.*, 2009; Weems, 2013a) Weems draws on the lived

experience of her Blackness to inform and represent her “spiritual connection to people of African descent everywhere” (Weems, 2013a, p. 313). I am also using my poetry as the method off autoethnographic storytelling to connect with broader truths about the Caribbean experience. I am situating my Blackness within my Caribbeanness to negotiate my identity and make connections with broader notions of diasporic Caribbeanness.

The poetry of Weems’s performance text is visceral, hard hitting and vulnerable, demonstrating a complexity and tenderness in its storytelling, as a way to help us build strategies for healing. I sat in my parents’ conservatory on a warm autumn day re-reading ‘Loss and Found’ (2020), the excerpts below demonstrate her skill in using autoethnographic poetry, sourced from her pain. This compassionate, vulnerable writing opened up a way for me to engage with my own sense of loss and grief and to remind myself of the strategies to deal with those affective responses to that lived experience, by writing poetry that is empathetic, demonstrating a willingness to become aware of other social worlds, to be human, to connect (Weems, 2009; Weems, 2013b) .

Baby shoes

‘she identifies part of me I identify
part of her but we’re no longer
floating at opposite ends of the
same cord.
All I have left of that are a pair of
baby shoes’
Weems, (2020, pp 488; 493)

feathery

the blood it runs in many colours
stained kaleidoscopic
butterfly wings snapped
on wind false feathery
in ungraceful unison moving, twisting
under headwinds spinning

catching desperate breath
on flight
together.

I engaged with Weems's poem, by responding with this short, instinctive autoethnographic poem 'feathery' which offered me a way to engage and work, in an empathetic and vulnerable way with the stories of the SdCC in this research. This helped me to think about how I connect with and work alongside the Santiagueros to create through our writing of poems, spaces of reflection and production and to reflect on my sense of place/and positioning in relation to them and their experiences of the SdCC.

I also draw from Sandra Faulkner's approach in relation to autoethnographic poetry (Faulkner, 2007, 2017, 2019, 2021). Faulkner identifies her poetry as a method of inquiry (2009, 2019) that can "evoke an emotional response in readers […] to produce some shared experience between researcher, audience and participants" (Faulkner, 2019, p. 104).I am adapting Faulkner's crafting of poetry as a method, so that I place my own story in relation to other experiences of diasporic Caribbeanness. Both Weems (2009, 2016,2017) and Faulkner (2009, 2016, 2018) use their autoethnographic work to resist traditional modes of knowledge production in the academy. By drawing on both Weems's and Faulkner's approaches, I am exploring a new way to create and present knowledge. I am developing and using my own autoethnographic poetry as a method, as my research.

I explore diasporic Caribbean identities and Caribbean spaces as other researchers have also done (Bryan, 2020, McMorris, 2018) from a position of knowing, which is my lived experience. Academia has historically and continuously extracted from marginalised groups (McKittrick, 2020), and by way of being phenotypically marked, through my Black skin, I have been assigned to that marginalised space, to still be spoken for and seen through a reductive, racialised lens (McKittrick, 2021). The power of using autoethnography as my methodology (being the object and subject of my research), I was able to produce knowledge from the position of this othered,

marginalised space. I created a space of critical analysis of Caribbean diaspora that is celebratory, valorising and emancipatory.

Robin Boylorn, a feminist scholar whose autoethnographic essay '"*Sit with your legs closed!" and other sayin's from my childhood'*, which she terms as 'Blackened autoethnography' (Boylorn, 2013, p. 313), situates the performative autoethnography of what she calls vernacular language or 'black talk' (ibid) in her family space. She does this as a way of exploring the shared experiences of African American life, through the performance of language. Her starting point is the particularity of her own lived experience as a Black girl from the rural South in the US. She does so to illustrate the strategies, in the context of her family's guidelines and rules for living ('sayin's'). It was these rules and guidelines shared in Boylorn's family context that resonates with my own experience of my mum reciting Jamaican proverbs and sayings as instructions for us, her children to understand the business of 'coming correct' to negotiate life (Bauer, 2018) and also to stay safe in a hostile environment.

Jean 'Binta' Breeze's poetry (2000, 2011) offers historical and social perspectives on Caribbean space, British colonialism and its impacts on Jamaican migrant experiences in the UK. I draw on her poetry to locate and examine my own inherited diasporic subjectivity through my connection with my grandfather's migratory life in Cuba, Belgium and the UK. I discuss my engagement with Breeze and her poems as a way to interrogate my identity in the section on (M)other tongue(s) in chapter five.

In the section '(M)other tongues', I explore the impact of the colonial legacy on my diasporic Caribbean tongue. Using examples of my own original poetry I critically engage with examples of poetry from Jamaican poet Jean 'Binta' Breeze, who interweaves English and Jamaican languages to show the complexities and impacts of the power relationship and how they play out on the diasporic Jamaican tongue (2011, 2000). I also consider the criticality of Trinidadian poet M Nourbese Philip's (2015) work, that explores the legacy of enslavement and colonialism on the African tongue (s) and how enslaved and colonised African tongue(s) have impacted and influenced the English language and infused my own. I present extracts from Philip's work and extracts from my poem 'Alignment' to demonstrate how these constructs

have been integral to my identity formation and on my everyday lived experience in diaspora.

By taking an autoethnographic approach, I am opening up ways to look inwards, to fold inwards on myself in order to explore and interrogate my identity as researcher poet and as diasporic Caribbean woman. In the extract below from my poem ‘folding and gliding (Abuelo)’, I refer to going back to my grandfather and his time in Santiago. There is an intentional, ambiguous interpretation here. The folding could be read as an act of being measured and evaluated in the academy, but also as my act of looking within to explore my identity by folding into my grandfather’s story as a way of connecting historically, geographically, emotionally. It was the unfolding, but fragmented story of my grandfather’s life that served as an epiphanic moment (Denzin, 2014, pp. 12-13; 52-54) for me in the realisation of my Caribbeanness:

In your languid dreaming of Santiago.

did you fold into her corners
and glide along her streets?’

I wrote that verse to connect and negotiate with my grandfather’s diasporic identity, as a Caribbean everyman to make sense of my own identity.
In my poem “my autoethnography is …I refer to the act of folding:

‘from the searcher – researcher - self
connected, folding in on each other, borderless, merged’

Autoethnographic poetry

My autoethnographic approach uses poetry as a mode of explication, interpretation, (Henery, 2017), inquiry and critique (Chapman Hoult *et al.*, 2020; Faulkner, 2009; Naidu, 2014; Pelias, 2005) as well as a reflexive tool to interrogate my positionality in my research journey and its impacts. Poetry as a method of inquiry enables me to reflect the always happening, iterative processes of diasporic identity (Hall, 1990; Hall, 1997) and the always happening, imaginary of the Santiago carnival. I use my autoethnographic poetry as my research, as a way of thinking about and being in the

world; as an act of producing and contributing to knowledge about diasporic Caribbean identities:

reflecting on diaspora as nonlinear,

I conceive of diasporic processes

as iterative

scattered and unframed, local national and transnational,

defying time

space constraints.

//////////////////// beyond borders

and the SdCC as

nonlinear.

space taking and defying

acts of border crossing

innovation

knowledge creation

repeats, iterates, repeats

but never the same

always, already in process

happening

coming into being

in my imaginings

By using poetry as a nonlinear form of expression I can better interrogate my unfinalized identity (Hall, 1990, Hall, 1997), my Caribbean diasporic self, as the product of African, Asian and European encounters; to produce knowledge that is scholarly, ethical and creative. (Brady, 2004; Prendergast, 2009; (Moore, 2017). It is by using the rhythms of poetry that I can capture the rhythms of the SdCC, that is emblematic and reflective of the rhythms and iterations of my diasporic life. Therefore, I use poetry to perform as my autoethnography.

I use my autoethnographic poetry as a means of invoking languages and to play with the colonial languages English, Jamaican and Spanish that frame my lived experience as a Caribbean diasporic woman, doctoral researcher, coming into identity through my grandfather's story and the imaginary site of the SdCC. Crafting poetry enables me to draw connections with social and cultural groups with whom I may share historical and cultural experiences (Hall, 1990, Hall and Morley, 2019) helping me make sense of the complexities of lived experiences in relation to the SdCC.

strengths and weaknesses of autoethnography

> "Autoethnographic writing helps to creatively and critically record, recall, and reflect on moments of cognitive, affective and embodied resonance and dissonance with the PhD [programme], bodies of literature and scholarly communities." (Batac, 2021, p. 63).

Autoethnography is after all a qualitative, not quantitative research methodology which is not looking for answers, but insight, for exploration and not output (Moriarty and Adamson, 2020). It is also human, passionate and messy (Heaton, 2002). The discipline and rigour come the necessary transparency and reflexivity in my autoethnography (Ellis, 2011) and Batac's statement above on autoethnography resonates with my own experience of negotiating my doctoral experience and identity, because autoethnography as a methodology allows for an embodied experience that is expansive, emotional and reflexive in its critical and creative reach, which I have touched on in chapter two and discuss further in chapter six. Atkinson (Atkinson, 1997) charges that narrative inquiry is inappropriate in its assumptions. Walford argues that autoethnography cannot offer objective truths or clear answers and therefore is outside the bounds of academic conventions (Walford, 2004). However I challenge this premise, because however we research and whatever we research, we conduct that research from a enunciated position (Hall, 1990, p. 222), bringing our biases and our subjective, messy selves and experiences to the research (Moriarty, 2008; Moriarty and Adamson, 2020) Others, like Anderson and Glass-Coffin charge too that autoethnography's rigour and analytical performance needs to be assessed against established (often quantitative) measures to have any credibility (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013). Another criticism or problem with autoethnography is its apparent lack of clarity around its ethical responsibility. My response to those criticisms, is that my autoethnographic poetry, facilitates a space of engagement with my research participant's stories, that minimises the extractive elements of my research, by me not using their lives as raw data, or using their stories as my own. I am also countering criticism that autoethnography is narcissistic and "serves no purpose other than self-interest"(Walford, 2004, p. 412), and that generalisability from singles cases and the particular are not always viable. My story, my lived experience of diaspora and coming into my identity as a diasporic Caribbean woman is unique, but I can show that there are shared experiences and overlaps in others' lives in diaspora, in different diasporic contexts. As the interview - elicited stories that inform my autoethnographic poetry show, I have worked with Santiagueros, heard their stories and shared mine with them to create knowledge from lived experiences. I am arguing that my poetry, informed by our stories, is knowledge created from collaboration. The generalisability is evidenced in the

poems and the poems are lenses that broaden out the experiences of diaspora. As Katherine McKittrick passionately states, “method making is the generating and gathering of ideas– across-with-outside-within-against normative disciplines – that seek out liberation within our present system of knowledge. The goal is not to *find* liberation, but to seek it out”. (McKittrick, 2021, p. 49).

Autoethnography’s lack (weakness)?

provoke a question about weakness:
who is measuring? autoethnography’s weaknesses are
lack
of rigour, needs criteria to have any credibility[19]
is self-indulgent and narcissistic.[20] of objective truths
where is autoethnography’s (auto)ethical responsibility?
outside the bounds of academic conventions[21]

A counter: strengths

checks and balances
of rigour and transparency
with built in self-reflexivity an ethical responsibility[22]
of a methodology an empowering
self-exploration way of examining

[19]Anderson, L. and Glass-Coffin, B. (2013a) 'I Learn by Going
Autoethnographic Modes of Inquiry ', in Holman Jones, S., Adams, T.E. and Ellis, C. (eds.) *Handbook of Autoethnography*: Left Coast Press, Inc, pp. 57-83. Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013).
[20] Atkinson, P. (1997) 'Narrative Turn or Blind Alley?', *Qualitative Health Research,* 7(3), pp. 325-344.Atkinson, 1997.
[21] Walford, G. (2004) 'Finding the limits: autoethnography and being an Oxford University Proctor', *Qualitative Research,* 4(3), pp. 403-417.Walford, 2004
[22]Ellis, C. (2009) 'An Autoethnographic Response to Critics
Fighting Back or Moving On', *International Review of Qualitative Research,* 2(3), pp. 371-378. Ellis, 2009

locating researcher self within.

scholarship within practice[23]

Using and crafting poetry offers me a path towards belonging and connectedness that enables me to make sense of my lived and imagined experiences in diaspora. As a method in my research, poetry helps me to interrogate my own experience, while drawing on the stories of interviewees in an evocative and an ethical way (Brady, 2004). I do this by acknowledging the interviewees' authorship of their own stories, and by inviting them to craft their own poems relating to their experience of the SdCC, that I engage with to inform the crafting of my autoethnographic poetry. I also draw on themes, such as Caribbeanness, and Caribbean space (Boyce Davies, 2013), as family, as carnival and my imaginings of my grandfather to craft my poems. This process enables me to capture the essence of the interviewees' stories whilst still being able to tell my own story. I discuss this in more detail in the section on Interviews. I use a combination of English, Spanish and Jamaican to convey the linguistic complexities and legacies of diaspora. I see the processes and methods that I use to craft my autoethnographic poetry, and the poems themselves, as spaces of engagement for mine and others' meaning making and imaginings (Bachelard and Jolas, 2014). My autoethnographic poems become spaces that hold our affective and sensory responses in relation to the experience of the SdCC as a signifier of diaspora. Crafting poetry as a method of enquiry is an enabling, embodied and emotional act of reflexivity, where I question my own practice and its impacts on myself, my co-participants and readers.

Using poetry as a method of autoethnographic writing enables me to negotiate my relationship with the blank page, to write in a way that emancipates me from the tyranny of my relationship with conventional academic prose writing (Bhattacharya, 2016; Moriarty, 2015; Owler, 2010; Papen and Thériault, 2018; Patrick, 2016), which I discuss in chapter two. I am my reader too. I am learning and discovering,

[23]Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2002) *The qualitative inquiry reader.* London: SAGE.

negotiating my positionality in my research through the poems and creating knowledge that is inclusive and hopefully accessible. In chapter four I discuss how I use the SdCC as my muse to inspire and inform my autoethnographic poetry and why I choose it as one of my Caribbean spaces in which to interrogate my diasporic Caribbean identity.

Chapter four:
Caribbean spaces Mr Spence, Santiago de Cuba carnival, my muse

In this chapter I give a brief overview of carnival, from its pagan origins in Europe in the Middle Ages, as a rituals of death, renewal in folk culture (Bakhtin and Holquist, 1981; Bakhtin, 1984; Bakhtin *et al.*, 1994), its later Christian liturgically based evolution and its transportation to and transformation in the Caribbean. I discuss my specific focus on the Santiago de Cuba carnival (SdCC), firstly by giving an overview of the city of Santiago and its people, and why I have constructed the carnival as one of the Caribbean spaces in which I negotiate my identity. I then go on to discuss my reimaging of my paternal grandfather's life as a Jamaican migrant worker in Santiago de Cuba as a way of understanding my own lived experience of diasporic Caribbean identity. Identifying Mr Spence and the SdCC as muses, I show why they inform my autoethnographic poetry.

Carnival Identity and its roots in catholic Europe.

The origins of these practices originating in pre Christian, Pagan rituals observing the changing of the seasons, and the rebirth of the world, were symbolised by celebrations of the Spring Equinox (Mauldin, 2004). These celebrations were framed in the context of boisterous folk culture centring humour to mock and criticise the ruling classes with little scrutiny (Bakhtin, 1984; Mauldin, 2004).

European carnivals then become more aligned to the catholic liturgical calendar (Mauldin, 2004; Rowell and Jones, 2004). Around the fourth century the Easter feast, the most venerated in the Christian calendar, would be prepared for by periods of fasting and abstinence (Mauldin, 2004). By the Middle Ages (1400s) the celebrations

became a conflation of religious ritual, and secular, noisy spectacles of renewal and rebirth of the world. These spectacles occurred outside of and separate from official discourse and its structural power; where social norms were upended momentarily, with carnival as a resistive site of critique and mockery of the established order, a utopian realm of equality and community – the ideal and the real simultaneously (Bakhtin *et al.*, 1994, p. 199). Bakhtin's classic work on carnival and the carnivalesque *Rabelais and his world* set the template for understanding configurations carnival and its history. For Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1984; Bakhtin *et al.*, 1994), carnival is constructed as an inversion of social rules and hierarchies in a temporary upending of them. Carnival as ritualised spectacle gives licence to this upending through popular folk play of a second life that is for all people in opposition to and away from the official, the ecclesiastic. This second life, performed through the carnival space is mediated through the sensuality of the body, which through laughter, mocking, clowning and punishment, is a signalling a permanent cycle of death and renewal as a unfinalisable, never ending (1994, pp. 197-199). This central idea of carnival that Bakhtin posits as always coming into being through death and renewal I appropriate to interrogating what I see as the parallels. I regard these parallels as the iterations of carnival (always permanent, never ending and remaking itself), with the processes of diaspora and diasporic identity as always coming into being, never finalised (Hall, 1990, p. 225).

From its evolution carnival's power to oppose and upend social norms was always altered through its co-option and containment by the state, but still remaining a site of dissent (Crichlow and Armstrong, 2010, p. 400). The Cadiz carnival from eighteenth century Spain celebrated sexuality and gossip (Mintz, 1997), to the Cliffe Bonfire (more familiarly known as the Lewes Carnival in the UK), held on November 5th annually, in southern England celebrates the foiling of the gunpowder plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament in1605, demonising the pope and the catholic church and mocking contemporary political figures (Sykes, 1977), which remains a regular and popular event. The 2021 Lewes Carnival event displayed a masked and syringe-jabbed Guy Fawkes effigy in reference to the pandemic, alongside various UK political figures derided for their management of it. The genesis of mockery and critique through laughter are evident in this contemporary resistive spectacle as the real and the ideal.

Contemporary carnivals, particularly in the Americas show both the evolution and diversity of carnival, through historical encounters of conquest and exploitation. With elaborate costuming and masquerading the carnivals reflect the relationship between catholic ritual, and the combinations and adaptations of European and African cultural forms (Alleyne-Dettmers, 2002; Burke, 1996; Danticat, 2002; Farrar, 2019; Ferdinand and Williams, 2018; Green and Scher, 2007; Jackson, 2022; Mintz, 1997; Teissl, 2000; Wirtz, 2017).

Journey to - and transformation in - the Caribbean.

The world famous carnivals of Trinidad and Tobago (Green and Scher, 2007; Nurse, 1999; Nurse, 2004) and Rio de Janeiro carnival in Brazil (Teissl, 2000) are the most emblematic in the performance of these encounters between African and Europe, synthesised with catholic rituals. What is also apparent is the influence of these carnivals in the Americas on their European originators. For example the nineteenth century Cadiz carnival adopted Caribbean style rhythms and brought styles of dance back with plantation owners and their servants (Mintz, 1997, p. xvii). This should not be read as a benign exchange of cultural practices, but as a continuation of control and patronal power to maintain the status quo of plantocratic power relations. European colonisation around the globe also exported certain cultural practices, such as carnival, especially to the Caribbean and the Americas.

The religious mapping of carnival in the Americas, referencing Vodun, Santería and Candomblé syncretised with catholic iconography and ritual is evident throughout the African diaspora in the Caribbean and Latin America; secularised versions of these various religions and the associative rituals being performed in carnivals throughout the diaspora (Irobi, 2007, p. 902). Caribbean carnivals emerged partly from survival strategies of enslaved Africans to counter the violences of the plantation. With a need and desire to remember and commemorate the cultural and religious practices that survived with them through the violences of the middle passage and plantations, they produced creolised cultural forms as practices of self-preservation, representation, and modes of belonging (Plaza and DeCosmo, 2020). These practices also countered to white elites' seeking to exclude and restrict enslaved

Africans' access to carnival throughout the Caribbean (Hall, 1990; Knauer, 2011). However, I disagree with Burke's (1996) reading of the 'encounter' between European and African traditions that manifest in carnival as a benign transaction of reciprocity between equals (Burke, 1996, p. 15). I am arguing that Burke's analysis is similar to Fernando Ortiz's (Gonçalves, 2014) 'ajiaco' conceptualising of Cuban culture as an admixture mix of African and Spanish cultural practices. Ortiz's analysis suggests that this mixture of African and Spanish cultures is negotiated in a context of partnership, rather than on the power relations of the brutal and inhumane plantation system.

Caribbean cultural forms, such as play mas, steel pans, processional drumming and rumba, emanate from ancestral Africa, India, Europe and China and are blended and played out in other new world carnivals, such as the Trinidad and Tobago carnival (Allahar, 2005; Franco, 1998; Green and Scher, 2007; Nurse, 1999), Notting Hill carnival in London (Ferdinand and Williams, 2018; Tompsett, 2005), and Leeds carnival (Farrar, 2019, Marshall, 2019) in the UK. The Labor Day carnival in the US (Allen and Wilcken, 2001), Caribana in Canada (Trotman, 2005), Atlanta's Caribbean carnival (Jackson, 2022) chart the migrations of these cultural forms and their diasporic mappings and scatterings.

The carnivals in the Caribbean and Caribbean carnivals around the globe then, are recognisable as a synthesis of a variety of Caribbean texts produced in the Caribbean geographic space. And in turn in their migratory flows to the UK and North America, creating a multiplicity of Caribbean spaces, by and of "people from elsewhere" (Hall, 1990: 224). My intention is to use the space of the Santiago de Cuba carnival as a site of knowledge creation, but also as a site of affirmation and of belonging. I have stated that I configure the carnival space as one of iteration and unfinalisability, as I do of my own identity as always in process. Using poetry as a method of enquiry allows me to explore my Caribbean identity in relation to the SdCC, because as a space that I argue is configured as a manifestation of these multiple migratory flows and cultural texts, from Africa, Asia and Europe, which is the Caribbean. In the SdCC space, some of these texts translate into the corneta china, the unique sounding call of the conga (Milstein, 2013; Wirtz, 2017) introduced by Chinese immigrants; the rumba, created from BaKongo dance forms of Central

Africa (Daniel, 1995), Spanish guitar (the 'Tres') and Haitian dance (Carpentier *et al.*, 2000). Caribbean carnivals are spaces offering opportunity to reposition the self through the body in exhibition, presenting a demarcation and temporary break through dressing up, dancing eating and drinking in the streets with family, friends neighbours and strangers, from the quotidian of everyday life (Garth, 2019). For the crafting of my autoethnographic poetry, the SdCC as with other Caribbean carnivals, is a space of diasporic negotiations and inspiration. A common theme in many papers/research on carnivals in the Caribbean are that they are conceptualised as "site(s) where Afro Caribbean people can […]re-decipher and reconstruct their fragmented histories" (Alleyne-Dettmers, 2002, p. 241). It can be understood in the context of common histories of enslaved, indentured and colonised peoples, finding ways, symbolic and practical to reinterpret and reconstruct histories of dispossession and displacement. Carnival in the Caribbean has a wide spectrum of presentations and manifestations in the new world/ Black Atlantic (Alleyne, ibid), and through innovation and creativity Caribbean carnivals build on the strategies of survival in the plantation to develop methods to create knowledge for people to tell their own stories about who they are (McKittrick, 2021).

Carnival as muse

I'm using the Santiago de Cuba carnival as a muse to inspire and inform my poetry as method. The carnival is a rhythmic way of creating new knowledge that presents the complexities, overlaps, and intersections of diasporic Caribbean cultures through performance as renewal and becoming through play and laughter (Bakhtin, 1984; Farrar, 2019). It is the idea of carnival as ritual renewal and becoming that my autoethnographic poetry as a method is inspired and informed by. I am arguing that the SdCC is iterative and constant, as is the process of my coming into my diasporic identity, which is always in process. I am arguing that my negotiation of my coming into my diasporic Caribbean identity reflects the iterations and the rhythms of renewal and rebirth of carnival, because both processes are iterative and open ended (Bakhtin, 1984; Crichlow and Armstrong, 2010). Crafting autoethnographic poetry allows me to configure the carnival space as a muse to inform how I articulate my identity through negotiating the carnival space as dynamic movement rhythmic.

because I use sensory words and phrases to convey my embodied experience, that maps the rhythms and iterations of the carnival.

carnival, my muse
your space like the Caribbean Sea
whooshes and swirls and laps my body into being
washing over old traces of skin, revealing new
textures fresh to the touch

carnival, resistive space
iterative, unending
on my tongue, tasting
like fresh songs of diaspora
sweet in the rhythms
poetry space, resistive

In the context of Cuba and specifically the SdCC, carnival is also about resistance by reimagining fragmented histories, from a spectrum of cultures and ethnicities. From Africa, Europe and Asia are blended stories that Santiago de Cuba tells itself as a diasporic Caribbean space. Cultural practices, such as the conga (Milstein, 2013; Wirtz, 2017) and Rumba (Daniel, 1995), that originated in the city and help to define both the city and its carnival. As does Bettelheim (1993), I configure the SdCC as a Caribbean carnival, precisely because of the diversity of the population as a reflection of the Caribbean region. acknowledging the complexities of its location, geographically in the Antilles, but also through the dominant configured through a Latin American cultural, linguistic and political prism (Hernandez-Reguant, 2005), which as a young child problematised my understanding of my own identity in relation to what the Caribbean is spatially. I understood it at the time as English and French speaking, which rendered the idea of Cuba as complex and liminal. it was Caribbean space, but it was also Latin American. The SdCC then became a space where I could experience these complexities, negotiated through creative reinterpretation, commemorating fragmented and imagined histories, located in diasporic processes of Caribbeanness competing with dominant discourses of nationhood (de La Fuente, 2001; Morejón, 2005). My poem ‘Black Atlantic griot’

presented below considers the historical trajectories and entanglements that create the Caribbean as a diverse migratory space which is played out in the SdCC. I locate myself in the carnival space to make sense of my diasporic identity.

Black Atlantic griot

baobab fruit crashes onto blood red earth
from a grieving tree, loud weeping
bows crack in dry pain
its seeds dislodged, swept up by toxic winds and tossed
in oceans outraged at this visceral plunder

vomited up, exhausted, they take root, grow
in search of sun flecked salvation
bathing parched souls with fresh light
as escape from violent undreamed

fleshed out hurt nourished noisy cuckoos in frilly bodices
twisted bodies flayed with sweet, sweet cane in cruel reward
names and rememberings cut from tongues
forced new world hot branded onto sable skins

Black Atlantic griot, your stories in song embroidered
with once lost words spilling awkward from our eager mouths,
celebrating in the melody
histories in the present future

scattered threads picked up, spun anew
silken tales of turtles, spiders and hares
recalling ancestral messages
translated on to younger crowns

I carry a drum, you carry some words
singing new ways of being
djembe asks,
corneta china replies
“¡por supuesto!”

The verse order is episodic to create a narrative arc to reflect the innovation and creativity of people and their histories that culminate in celebration of the Caribbean as a diverse and always migratory space. I am using my poetry here to situate my English-speaking diasporic identity into another space, which is a Spanish speaking one of the Caribbean diaspora. This facilitates my meaning making predicated on the axes of similarity and continuity with difference and rupture that configures diasporic identity (Hall, 1990:225). By positioning myself in that specific scene of the SdCC I am negotiating my place of belonging within that familiar- unfamiliar Caribbean space that is the Spanish Caribbean. I do that by using symbolic words representing the specificity of Caribbean carnival, such as the drum, and call and response singing. By positioning myself in the first line of the last verse: ‘I carry the drum, you carry some words’, I am situating myself in a present diasporic space. I am conscious in saying that I am trying to understand Caribbean history from my own standpoint through writing my autoethnographic poetry. By positioning myself in the first line of the last verse, I am stating that I am part of a continuing history at a particular moment, which for me was dragging myself (*arrollando*) behind the conga de Los Hoyos in 2018. Adding more lines in the poem, symbolises the continuity; diaspora as iterative, unfinalised, a process in which I continue my exploration of my diasporic identity. Caribbean is diaspora (Hall and Morley, 2019, p. 139).

The Santiago de Cuba carnival, the city and its people as a Caribbean space

> "Cuba – ninety miles south. Caribbean Space!"
>
> (Boyce Davies, 2013, p. 225)

When I read the above quote in Carole Boyce Davies's book *Caribbean spaces: escapes from twilight zones* (Boyce Davies, 2013) to further enable me to make sense of my identity in diaspora and Caribbean spaces, it brought me back to my childhood curiosity about Cuba that I saw as this ambiguous geographic space in the Caribbean. Why was it in the Caribbean if the people in the pictures of the island in the book *The West Indies* (Harman and LIFE, 1965) that I obsessed over, were white and spoke Spanish? What my curiosity was speaking to my own enunciated positioning as a UK born child of Black Jamaican parents living in the UK. I extrapolated in my junior school head that the Caribbean was full of Black and brown people, as was the case in my family. This was how I made sense of the Caribbean and how I made sense of my identity as a diasporic Caribbean person; how I know myself as part of the diaspora (Boyce Davies, 2013, p. 39). This fascination with Cuba was a major reason for writing this thesis. Visiting Santiago de Cuba was a way for me to answer my childhood curiosity, but also to connect m o the city through my grandfather's time there in the early part of the 20th century. Being able to situate myself through my poetry in the city enabled me to make sense of those connections and to make sense of my diasporic identity. One of the ways that I can situate myself in my poetry is to have an understanding of civic and historical context of the carnival and how the Santiagueros see their city.

The city of Santiago de Cuba

The city of Santiago de Cuba is the capital of the Province of Santiago de Cuba (also known as Oriente) situated in the southeastern end of the island of Cuba. It is Cuba's

second largest city and this historical capital (before Havana), founded in 1515 by Adelantado Diego Velázquez in close proximity to Jamaica and Haiti, and its large bay positioned it as the main point of entry of enslaved Africans. Santiago de Cuba port was the reception point later on for plantation owners and their enslaved servants fleeing the revolution in Haiti in the late 1790s (Bettelheim, 1993) and by the nineteenth century the city was a significant urban centre for free people of colour, fugitive slaves and free Black people (Duharte, 2019). Santiago de Cuba is regarded as the most Caribbean city (Bettelheim, 1991; Pertierra, 2021; Viddal, 2006), the demographics of the population signifying it as
“ the Blackest city in Cuba” (Garth, 2021). Although there are no specific statistics on breakdown of racialised groups, in a government census of 2012, 74% of Santiagueros recorded themselves as ‘non-white’ (Hansing and Hoffmann, 2020, p. 31). By the early 20th century Santiago’s significant Black population grew as a result of migration from nearby Caribbean islands Jamaica, Grenada Barbados, Antigua and St Kitts, and Haiti to service the sugar industry (Carr, 1998; Howard, 2015).

Referred to by some of the interviewees as the city of rebellion, and the city of heroes, Santiago de Cuba city is also regarded for its welcoming energy and for its hospitality. interviewees readily expressing their feelings about the city and its people framing the city as one of friendliness, synonymous with the Revolution, and as a historically rebellious city; a reputation that some of the Santiagueros expressed pride in. The 1953 assault on the Moncada barracks, located in the city, signalled start of the insurrection to overthrow the Batista regime and was timed to coincide with the SdCC as cover. The anniversary of the assault on the barracks is celebrated on the 26th of July, each year, its importance marked and celebrated at the pinnacle of carnival (Bettelheim, 1993, p. 7).

The Santiagueros

With a population of approximately 500,000 (Garth, 2009, p. 179), Santiago de Cuba city’s cultural and political significance is renowned throughout the island, and as stated before it is known as and defines itself as the most Caribbean city in Cuba. This is due to its status as focal point of diasporic African/Caribbean culture and

history in Cuba - the Casa del Caribe, being a highly regarded government funded cultural institute located in the city is testament to that (Hume, 2016). But it is also the demographics of the population that signify it as “Cuba’s blackest City” (Garth, 2021, p. abstract). This majority Black and brown skinned population, like much of Cuba, also defines itself through its relationship with its food, valorising perceived African diaspora culinary practices and foodway (Garth, 2013; Paponnet-Cantat, 2003). These and other discursive practices, such as the African inspired religion of Santeria (Gómes-Cásseres, 2018; Maha, 2018), Abakuá secret societies (Shubi, 2002) and La Noche Santiaguera, weekly street parties (Garth, 2019) with reggaeton and timba beats; rituals such as the Santiago carnival, act as modes of celebration, visibility and belonging in a society that still finesses African-ness to the (folkloric) margins, doing so whilst celebrating and identifying African derived cultural practices as foundational to the idea of the Cuban nation (Carbonell, 2019 [1961]). In my poetry, I construct Santiago de Cuba city as a Caribbean space, a differentiated Caribbean context in which I articulate my identity.

rum ballad
Caribbean city in Cuba.
Santiago, focal point
of diasporic African/Caribbean culture
in Spanish
history in Cuba
most Caribbean city
Casa del Caribe,
a home from home
in its familiar unfamiliarity
my British, Caribbean self
my English-speaking tongue
tasting, experiencing, tasting…
a difference
resonances of my family dinner table

I arrive, I linger, I stay. I return to a different self

Santiagueros called Anderson, Brown and Bogue
laugh with me about our Jamaican, Antiguan and Bajan grandparents
we are Caribbean we shout!
I am diaspora. I'm crossing borders
through casava, reggaeton, rumba and rum[24]

In the poem 'rum ballad', I locate and interrogate my diasporic identity in the city of Santiago de Cuba. I do that by reflecting on the context of sameness and difference being played out simultaneously (Hall: 1990: 226). This is in contrast to my poem 'palimpsest: in and out of the carnival/city', where I use spacing and gaps to show how Santiagueros experience the city and the carnival. In "rum ballad" I use enjambment of lines in the first verse to frame my diasporic experience. The line break and spacing mid-way in the poem ('I arrive, I linger, I stay. I return to a different self') suggests a moment of pause where I recognise that coherence.

These sentiments, from the Santiagueros' stories below are expressed about the city of Santiago de Cuba and its inhabitants by the interviewees in the research. Here I present some of their poems reflecting how they frame their relationships with the city:

> "Santiago is my mum's land […] Santiagueros will give you anything. If you ask for directions, they will take you to the place! They treat you like a guest and that is really important, and it's the diversity of the people from the African diaspora there."
> Adriana

> "[…] it was that reassurance that people in Santiago […]that people from the southeast are easier, because there is a bigger presence of the black community[…]Welcoming people! They are very big with hospitality, and they have a great accent, they sound like Dominicans.

[24]Headley, C. (2012) 'A Study in Africana Existential Ontology: Rum as a Metaphor of Existence', *Diogenes,* 59(3-4), pp. 106-125.

Jorge

> “Cubans of my generation have heard of Santiago de Cuba and its carnivals with pride. Santiago de Cuba as the second capital of Cuba, hospitable, with its cheerful, rebellious, boisterous people, who love their land even though they sometimes migrate to any place in Cuba […] When one was introduced to a Santiaguero, he would say: "I invite you to my house during the carnivals”.”
> Rosaida

Santiago and belonging in Caribbeanness

My poem, ‘palimpsest: in and out of the carnival/city, is a found poem, where I have used words and phrases of the research participants (Patrick, 2016). I chose words and phrases that reflects their love and admiration for the city of Santiago, and its synonymous identity as the city of the carnival. The line breaks and gaps (compressed and spaced at irregular intervals) suggest both conflation and separation of the carnival as an always happening event and the city of Santiago experienced as one and the same. Like diaspora it is iterative. The new iterations layer the old ones. The conga is the same as last year but different in its energy and composition – new people, new ways of rolling to the drum. I am arguing that the stories elicited from the interviews place the city and the carnival as markers of diasporic Caribbeanness (Viddal, 2006).

palimpsest: in and out of the carnival/ city

place, context place fitting
folding, folding in dressing
the present in past shadows palimpsest
(re)imagining rearranging phasing

poetry in possibility reconstructing
world in metaphor dreaming
people in Santiago… they sound like Dominicans
(re)present(ing)

conga, music and orchestra
phenomenal friends black community, a bigger presence
picturesque tales
are the carnivals my Santiago is celebrating

the best of my Cuba,
your heat, your colour and your rumbón,
the best in the whole world

from Martí to the Sueño
ever since I was a child
I wanted to sweep in the conga

the carnival
it's the diversity of the people from the African diaspora there

of guarachas and rumba Santiago is buzzing

and fierce magical creatures
clouds and planets are doing their thing
there's always something going on
my angry auntie shouting at a dance tune
"Bam Bam, roll your hips

Bam Bam, girl roll your hips
Bam Bam, baby roll your hips"

Contestations of identities

Where Cuba sits in the world, geopolitically, culturally and specifically in relation to the Caribbean offers up clues to its processes and hierarchies of racialisation and questions of Cuban-ness: who counts as Cuban and other(ing) contested identities (de la Fuente, 2008; Zurbano, 2014). Trying to identify where Cuba sits is an acknowledgement to the multiplicity of discourses and cartographies of power at play (Hernandez-Reguant, 2005) - Revolution, mestizo, African, Latin American, non-Aligned, Caribbean. Indeed, it could be argued that Cuba itself is a liminal space on the periphery of geopolitics and location, like the rest of the Caribbean a violent creation of the West, but not of the West.

I choose to look at the Santiago de Cuba through a Caribbean diasporic lens and the discursive cultural practices and space of the SdCC as mode of my identity articulation. I am arguing that diaspora discourse allows for a flexibility of frame and reference that emerges, but goes beyond constructs of nation, and from plantocratic histories and legacies of colonialism that have constructed the Caribbean. It also allows for articulations of identity that sit outside, but include a narrowing frame of Blackness, that only obscures the granularity and simultaneity of similarity and difference in the Caribbean diasporic imaginary. By centring my research in the site of the SdCC I am demonstrating that Hall's concept of vectors of sameness/difference (Hall, 1990; Hall, 1997) remains dynamic and relevant, and that Santiago and its carnival demonstrate that diasporic processes operate beyond nation and nationality, because It illustrates that African/Caribbean diasporic processes incorporate diversity and are not exclusionary, and to that extent can incorporate versions of Cubanity (Pérez-Firmat, 1997) and versions of Caribbeanness such as my British Caribbean identity, where the presence Africaine is signified and inscribed on my skin (Hall, 1990, p.230). The SdCC configured as a

A tension exists between diasporic claims of African/Caribbean descent Cubans in relation to the SdCC reproduced in and through various cultural practices, such as the Rumba dances, (Daniel, 1995; Daniel, 2011), and the congas (Wirtz, 2017) that lay implicit claims to another identity other than Cuban and the state's insistence on

allegiance to one national identity – the Cuban national identity (Guerra, 2019; Romay Guerra, 2019). This is further undermined by the inherent contradictions in the state's systemic othering of Cubans of African Caribbean descent, such as the absence of African descent Cubans' contribution to the construction of the Cuban identity and history in the school curriculum (Zurbano, 2014), and an ambivalence towards Cubans of African descent in the national frame (de La Fuente, 2001; de la Fuente, 2008; Zurbano, 2014). This is juxtaposed with a refashioning of discursive cultural practices that conjure imagined pasts, articulating identities outside of/in opposition to the imperative of a singular Cuban national identity. Here, the dance forms Tumba Francesa originating in Haiti and the Rumba, the latter regarded as a 'Cuban' dance, have their origins in working class and poorer neighbourhoods populated predominantly by people of African descent (Daniel, 1995). These dances are performed as investments into 'imagined futures' (Sanabria, 2009) in the SdCC space, creating knowledge as legacy for later diasporic African and Caribbean generations, which in turn reproduces the carnival.

Santiago de Cuba Carnival (SdCC)

Following Bakhtin, I am conceptualising the idea of the SdCC as diaspora in performance; iterative and unfinalisable, outside of officialdom, and occupying a liminal space between art and life (Bakhtin *et al.*, 1994). My autoethnographic poetry is inspired by the SdCC's offer of ways of knowing and being in the world that go beyond convention or officialdom, Bakhtin's configuring of the carnival space signifying a second life, where death and renewal occur in a never-ending cycle (1994, p. 197. In my poetry I am using the rhythms of the carnival to reflect the rhythmic articulations of diasporic processes, the rhythms of my own coming into identity and diasporic life, connected to Mr Spence's time in Santiago. Bettelheim (Bettelheim, 1993) sees Cuban carnivals, including the SdCC as "stressing Caribbean and socialist unity expressed through performances that pay tribute to the history and folklore of individual nations" (1993, p. 161). Cuban carnivals, although historically tied to the catholic church liturgy, do not follow the pre-Lenten calendar of

feasting and abstinence, as other Caribbean carnivals. (Bettelheim, 1993: Garth, 2019, Nurse 1999), but are based on the feast days of St Anne and St James (Santiago) in July, rather than the usual month of February, as in Trinidad and Tobago carnival and the Rio de Janeiro carnivals.

The Santiago de Cuba Carnival as public spectacle focuses on its transcultural roots in African Cuban and colonial Hispanic cultures (Bettelheim, 1993; Ortiz, 2019 [1940]; Vega, 2000), but it's important to point out that up until the early part of the 20th century there were two separate carnivals in Santiago de Cuba: one which was exclusively white and mapped onto the pre-Lenten Catholic calendar, and one, for free and enslaved Africans through the Cabildos, for African descent Cubans (Milstein, 2013, p. 224). Early iterations of the Santiago carnival in the 19th century mapped onto Catholic saints and the African presence through participation enslaved African people was evident from contemporary reports of the day (Bettelheim, 1993, p. 140).

The SdCC Post Revolution

The SdCC is performed in the context of the victory of the 1959 Revolution, starting with the push to overthrow the Batista regime, as a point of national celebration, with the carnival's final days staged to coincide with and celebrate the anniversary of the assault on the Moncada barracks located in the city (Bettelheim, 1993, p. 110; Waters and Fernandes, 2012, p. 127). The SdCC exists in two realms - the imaginary, through peoples' utterances – their imaginings and stories of carnival, and the material performance. The carnival is always, already happening – a continuing and unfinalisable cultural practice that is constitutive of the unfinalisable and iterative processes of diaspora.

Bakhtin's conceptualising of the carnival as never-ending, as never finished, in a perpetual state of becoming, can be squared with notions of always coming into

identity (Hall, 1990; 2019). The Santiago carnival, like my identity articulation is rearticulated in a process that is iterative and everchanging, whilst also staying the same. At first glance this may seem a contradiction, but I am suggesting here that neither the carnival nor my identity can be negotiated through that binary. Neither the carnival nor my identity can be seen as fixed; my identity is always in the process of becoming (Hall, 1990). My identity, as poet, as doctoral researcher, as diasporic Caribbean woman, plays out differently in different contexts. With my interviewees my identity as a doctoral researcher is privileged in those interactions, but I am still a diasporic Caribbean woman.

The SdCC, imagined and in material reality is iterative, not duplicative; it repeats, but is not a facsimile. In its reproduction and material performance each year, there is similarity and difference operating simultaneously (Hall,1990) . It can never be the same every year, but it is the same, every year; there are the food stalls, the congas and the choreographed set pieces of the official parade, but each person's experience of it is different in encounter, engagement and interpretation. Bakhtin's notion of carnival as the temporary upending of social norms and hierarchies (Bakhtin *et al.*, 1994, p. 199) may not directly map on to the Santiago carnival, because carnival is tied to the anniversary of the 1959 revolution, in which people invest as a matter of pride and civic identity as evidenced in the stories: The funding of comparsas (carnival groups) and free beer for carnival goers through state provision serves to ameliorate the daily struggle that people experience in accessing essential provisions and resources (Garth, 2019). It also serves to quell dissent and protest, as was the case in 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic which exacerbated the already precarious economic conditions in the country (López Segrera, 2021). I witnessed the state's policing of the event in 2018 when I took part in the conga, mobilised by thousands of bodies on the streets. Police lined the streets and was indicative of containing any potential of inverting social norms and order (Montoya Gonzalez, 2014; Wirtz, 2017). The carnival then, is a space of both affirmation and belonging, and a resistive space. The sense of affirmation and belonging is reflected in the interviewees' poems, some of which are presented below:

In my poem ‘palimpsest: in and out of the carnival/ city’ I use the line ‘folding, folding in’ to show I am connecting my own experience of the carnival and the city as Caribbean space to my grandfather’s experience of the SdCC and the city as a differentiated Caribbean space. In the poem ‘folding and gliding (Abuelo)’ which is presented in chapter six, Mr Spence is ‘folding into the corners’ of Santiago’s streets. I am speculating here that his act of ‘folding into’ is his negotiation of his English-speaking Caribbean identity in a different, Spanish speaking Caribbean space as a way to engender a sense of belonging in diaspora. This act of Mr Spence’s as a Jamaican folding into Santiago’s streets in the carnival is to suggest the symbolic historical relations between the SdCC and the Caribbean diaspora which I explore in the next section.

The SdCC as a Caribbean space

This is an exploration of the SdCC and its historical relations with the Caribbean diaspora. I discuss the carnival as inspiration for my autoethnographic poetry. I examine how the carnival as muse also provides me with strategies for framing my own Caribbean identity whilst rethinking other diasporic spaces. The SdCC becomes a site of translation and imagining of African diaspora cultural practices, iterated in through Caribbean imaginaries and innovations (Farrar, 2019; Franco, 1998; Jackson, 2022).

My conceptualising of the SdCC as a space of African/Caribbean identity articulation, is one configured through multiple texts (the music, the dance, the food). These create and are created by diasporic processes and flows, predicated on the performances and intersectional encounters of sameness and difference that I experienced. The sameness – my Blackness, my Africanness, my Caribbeanness inscribed on my skin. I understood the script of the carnival, as part of my diasporic ritual literacy. My difference was my English tongue. This is what I understood and experienced as constituting and reflecting diasporic conditions (Burman, 2010, pp. 71-74); translated reproductions and imaginings of discursive cultural practices of the diaspora. The SdCC as Caribbean space then became for me a space of

Caribbeanness in its diversity and iterations. What I was experiencing was a conflation of particular texts, and a confluence of narratives – that constructed the idea of a Caribbean space, where diasporic identities are affirmed and articulated.

I imagine the SdCC as a lens to interrogate diasporic identity as a continual and iterative process, and how diasporic identity is beyond our conceptions of nation (Anderson, 1991). When I witnessed the SdCC main procession and participated in the conga days before in Los Hoyos in 2018 (I was staying around the corner from the Los Hoyos neighbourhood), I really felt that I was in Caribbean space, because so many of the things I had experienced in the SdCC resonated reminding me of my times attending the Notting Hill Carnival. I experienced differences and similarities, which were not discordant, but many layered and complex: the multicultural, but predominantly Black and brown skinned crowds of people, dancing to the beat behind the drums in the congas, to the live acts on stages set up in some of the surrounding streets later on in the night. There was no calypso at the SdCC, but distinct Cuban sounds, particularly the conga with the corneta china and the wheel arch producing distinctive and infectious percussive beats for the congueros to roll to. Reggaeton blasted out of speakers for the night-time street parties, just like Notting Hill street parties after the floats and samba schools had been heralded earlier on (Ferdinand and Williams, 2018, p. 36). I recognised the familiar blurred lines between audience and street performer I observed at the Notting Hill carnival (Tompsett, 2005). What was different was the theatre of the SdCC procession – narration accompanying set pieces presented by some comparsas as they paraded through the official area. This is where ticketed seats were occupied by tourists and the judges' where I was invited to sit, but not to judge!) and where the comparsas paused to showcase their set pieces. With some of the comparsas, a performer would step up to the mic on the central podium opposite the judges' benches. From there they would recite a poem, perform a piece of oratory celebrating carnival (and the Revolution) or sing to the accompanying percussion, some of which invited a call and response from the people in the stands, including the judges. A similar call and response relationship became evident between the congueros and the conga musicians in the neighbourhood streets (Milstein, 2013; Wirtz, 2014). Again, this was different to what I had experienced at the Notting Hill carnival, where the focus is on

the processions, following the floats, with the pans playing soca and calypso tunes, and the sound systems set up under the Westway (Ferdinand, 2020; Thompsett, 2005). In both cases I was part of a story of the Caribbean diaspora - I was experiencing a sense of belonging, a sense of Caribbean space, and coming into identity in that space; I imagined my grandfather in the crowds in this Caribbean space in Santiago, rolling with the conga, along its streets. I was experiencing a simultaneity of past and present, of future; here and elsewhere, a diasporic consciousness emerging, configured by a defining coexistence of loss and hope (Clifford, 1994, p. 312). The poem “similarity and difference” is informed by Hall’s “axes of similarity/continuity, difference and rupture”(Hall, 1990, p. 226) as I experienced it during my stay in Santiago de Cuba and attending the carnival. Repetition in the 10th and 13th lines of the poem play on these axes that Hall articulates.

similarity and difference
iterates as a universal similar
spectacle of dance, dressing up,
special food and music,
holiday mood and disconnection
from the mundanities of everyday life
the presence Africaine
the particular, the difference,
for me the SdCC
as a Caribbean space
that is part of my diasporic literacy – congas, Tumba Francesa and free beer.
for me Notting Hill carnival
as a Caribbean space
that is part of my diasporic literacy - steel pans, sound systems and rum punch.
the présence Africaine

Cuban Identity, diasporic Caribbean identity

Participating in the carnival I experienced my diasporic 'Caribbean-ness' in the context of a different Caribbean space. I recognised the similarity in the costumes in some of the comparsas and dances (Tumba Francesa with its origins in Haiti) that I had seen in Jamaica; some of the food (plantain, ajaca, rice and beans) that was part of my diet in my childhood home. I witnessed too the influence of Jamaican dancehall in the reggaeton tunes that were danced to in the side streets (Fairley, 2006). These subtle and not so subtle expressions of diaspora – I witnessed a few people draped in Nigerian and Jamaican flags during the conga procession, played out in the context of continually changing political, economic, and social formations in Cuba. A few of the Santiagueros that I interviewed flagged their Cuban identity's primacy at the start of the interview but were also clear about fighting racism and sexism in the society. Other storytellers regarded their Cuban identity as conditional, framing it as a space of ambiguity and precarity, seeing their Blackness as problematic in a racialised hierarchy that centres whiteness. One interviewee cited the togetherness that is invoked during carnival, across class and racialised lines as a challenge and to decentre that whiteness. My own experience in this context was one of belonging, where my identity was not contested. The poem presented below, 'ten days of belonging. what the carnival gave to me' reflects how I configure the SdCC as a diasporic Caribbean space. The poem is a found poem, using the words of the interviewees about what the carnival means for them. The poem is also reflecting my feelings and experience of the carnival in relation to my own identity, bringing my British Caribbean self to the space. The carnival lasts for approximately ten days at end of July and the poem is a way to reflect the festive experience. The format of the poem, mimicking the rhythm of the English Christmas song 'the Twelve Days of Christmas', was inspired by Brian Heap's 1997 essay[25], the central theme of the poem positing the reach of colonialism through language creating and dominating the ways the Caribbean diaspora reads, writes and speaks itself into the world.

[25]Heap, B. (1997) 'Songs of a Surrogate Mother: The Nursery Rhyme in Caribbean Culture', *Caribbean Quarterly,* 43(4), pp. 26-36.

ten days of belonging. what the carnival gave to me

(a bit like the 12 days of Christmas…)

1. celebration
2. competing discourses!
3. Santiago, rebellious city
4. of the conga, roots
5. man, my people at carnival!
6. so different outside the white gaze
7. Conga de Los Hoyos!
8. bodies inscribed, African presence, Caribbean culture, Island life
9. danced in ebony skinned blue-eyed blondness, taboo piercing
10. in community, and valuing diaspora visibility in a carnival scene

My physical and imagined presence in the carnival scene becomes part of an encounter between texts embodying legacies of colonialism and its domination through language, that in turn produces diasporic processes and space; the Santiago carnival scene, as Caribbean, as diasporic space is produced in and through the languages of domination: English and Spanish. In turn it becomes a space of challenge to that domination, using those languages of colonialism and domination to challenge dominant discourse, bringing it into in the immediate context of the carnival through laughter (Bakhtin *et al.*, 1994, pp. 19-22) and mockery in song (Wirtz, 2017, p. 64). There was a pride in some of the Santiagueros' stories, of their Blackness and positioned it as a diasporic, communal experience, expressed through participating in conga. One of the research participants recounted a visit to a city in the UK with a large African and Caribbean population, as positive affirmation of her diasporic, identity and sense of belonging. By listening to the interviewees' stories and reflecting on my own experience of the SdCC, carnival made me locate my own sense of Blackness as Caribbeanness, translated through a strong sense of belonging articulated in different diasporic Caribbean contexts.

I wrote 'spicy pork and the spider women' (presented in chapter five) after reflecting on my experience of attending the SdCC in 2018. What struck me was just how

familiar and how Caribbean the carnival was. I had visited Cuba before but had perceived it only as a Latin American country. Participating in the SdCC provided me with references that had more familiarity for me - the food, the crowds and some similarities with the Notting Hill carnival. One float caught my attention: women in glamourous costumes, with headdresses that looked like spiders. I immediately thought of Anancy the Spider, the main character familiar to children and adults in much of the English-speaking Caribbean and West Africa – an emblematic totem of diaspora.

Street parties and Congas

The poem, ‘ella prepara’ (presented below) was crafted to reflect the excitement of dressing up and getting ready in anticipation of the street parties and the conga. The official procession was not held in high regard by many (Garth, 2019). The focus was the conga and the bands later at night. This poem attests to the comingling of cultures, that configure the idea of the Caribbean as diasporic space, and references, at the site of the SdCC, the confluence of diverse texts that constitute the conga, emblematic of the carnival. With the African drum, the corneta china, and the wheel brake from Asia or Europe (Wirtz, 2017:64), we are presented with that Caribbean, diasporic space, a signifying space of migration (Hall, 1990, p. 234).

The conga processions

> To the greatest memory of the carnivals, I would add that of seeing the congas like a bus, because as they are from different neighbourhoods, you get on a conga and go along without realising it and you get to another place without taking a car.
>
> Norma

Congas have deep historical roots in the Santiago de Cuba carnival and arguably most popular because they are participative and based in the neighbourhood streets. The Conga de Los Hoyos, the most popular conga both in size and reputation (Bettelheim, 1993: 45), unofficially kicks off the Santiago carnival with its famous 'Invasion' traversing the city, rolling into the territories of other neighbourhood congas, in friendly rivalry, trying to outplay each other to establish who the better conga is (Wirtz, 2017, pp. 64-66). Over roughly five hours' duration, the conga progresses, with thousands of people 'rolling' behind and alongside the conga musicians. The conga procession winds through the different streets, communities and neighbourhoods, irrespective of their demographics, whether predominantly white, working-class, Haitian, or middle-class, the conga traverses and includes all in its sweep (Milstein, 2013, p. 226; Montoya Gonzalez, 2014, p. 2). Milstein argues that congas have no clear association with any one ethnic group in Santiago (Milstein, 2013:228). This was my own experience of congas as the most historically African of the carnival groups, (Bettelheim, 1993, p. 145), but musically polyethnic in contemporary carnival, with the drums from Africa, the wheel arch or brake shoe with its distinctive percussive sounds and beat, from various auto brands from around the world, and the corneta china, a small trumpet imported into the country by Chinese immigrants (Wirtz, 2017, p. 62), signifying the diversity of the Caribbean.

I was making meaning of my Caribbeanness through some of the cultural practices, such as the rumba dance that I witness. That resonated with my experience of watching rumba being danced in Jamaica and Florida. Iliana's poem expresses a fondness for rumba:

El carnaval de Santiago, The carnival of Santiago

lo mejor de mi Cuba, the best of my Cuba

no hay otro con tu sabor, there is no other with your flavour,

tu calor, tu color y tu rumbón your heat, your colour and your rumbón

el mejor del mundo entero, the best in the whole world,

con ese el mejor rumbón with that the greatest rumbón

The conga and the street parties are emblematic of the carnival. The conga frames the SdCC and the focus of their preparation. My poem ‘ella prepara’ is a fictionalised version of my experience of being with friends in Santiago as they prepared for and chatted about conga and the street parties they would check out in the evening. This was an important and anticipated moment for them and for me, where getting ready, not getting enough sleep, and making plans about moving between street parties was a well observed rite of belonging and community. It also signals the tension between observing traditions and heritage.

The significance of the congas and how many Santiagueros see that as the (focal point of the) carnival (Garth, 2019) cannot be underestimated. The interviewees showcased the conga as the key feature and highlight of the carnival in their stories, even though it happens days before. They regard the conga processions as the main event, as *the* carnival. The conga groups move along through their neighbourhoods, playing percussion and the corneta china, with people dancing (or ‘rolling’) alongside (Milstein, 2013). Santiago de Cuba carnival draws people from all over Cuba and is regarded as the most popular of the festivals in the country (Bettelheim, 1993; Wirtz, 2017).

ella prepara

Marita’s kitchen table, busy
in hurried, improvised performance, a makeshift boudoir for a shoehorned minute
indifferently hosts the tussle and fight between fancy lipsticks,
an angry hot comb and a tipped-up coffee cup,
indignant at its displacement
for rightful space and status in this theatre of chaos
of freshly painted nails, impatient for some cooling air.

shouty frijoles chatter and splatter their ready sacrifice in the pan on the primer:
quick food, after sleep, snatched hungrily from blurred nights and days and nights.
¡tan poco tiempo!
patting fat curlers in her freshly washed hair,
Marita delights in her skin
pampered with that fancy Queen of the Night soap,
a medical mission souvenir from Costa Rica
scenting preparations for the night to come.
she laughs in affirmation as she checks herself
in the tiny mirror blithely hanging on
a tired looking hook that refuses to yield to gravity. "¡Sí, chica!"
her Kizomba[26] moves will light fires on Maceo, esta noche papi!
Mama tells her again "this is Haiti, hija, don't forget, now"[27].
sure, but Marita just wants to dance
and for Yunior to tell her "look how you move, my love!"
"¡Oye, mami! ¡Por favor, no me rompas el corazón!" he'll say
as he watches her do her thing to the street band playing a Fulanito tune[28]
trippin' and hip hoppin' a stay in her own lane way to the tasty cajita stall.
"Sí papi! Eres loco. No se trata solo de mí" she'll laugh,
hot stepping in his direction, arms outstretched in invitation
to continue the dance in defiant joy of her own red, white and blue.
"Quiero seguir bailando mi historia" she shouts in her sing-song way,

---

[26] Kizomba is an Angolan dance form emblematic of rich currency of exchange and adaptation in African derived dance forms that inform the African/Caribbean diasporic dance space as a site of liberation and counter narrative to western, capitalists' conceptions of (linear) time and space (McKittrick, Moten). it is symbolic of the movement of the Black Atlantic in negotiating and historicizing "the traffic between trauma and pleasure" as constituting the moment and migratory reiterations.

[27] Older generations look forward to the official procession of the SdCC, recalling stories that reflect their heritage. In her story (appx 6) Norma recalls with pride, a comparsa's musical and dance routine about the Haitian Revolution, because of her Haitian heritage. However, many younger carnival goers see the official parade as irrelevant and old fashioned, preferring the congas, bands and the side street parties, which they regard as the real carnival Wirtz, K. (2014) *Performing Afro-Cuba: image, voice, spectacle in the making of race and history.* London;Chicago;: he University of Chicago Press.

[28] *Wiggle, Wiggle* (Spanish version) by Fulanito, from the album '*Reintroducción* 'Verdugo Entertainment. 2009.

writing in time the cuatro-cinco-seis of her story
on the path with the click clack of her made in China Cuban heels.

Congas de los Hoyos

> The conga is typified by drums, bell and Chinese bugle.
> (Norma)

Groups in the various neighbourhoods of Santiago, such as the famous Conga de los Hoyos, the oldest and most popular, organise as congas, with signature instruments of the corneta china, drums and wheel arch, leading pied piper like, through the streets of the city, the rhythms of which act as magnets, pulling people from their homes to follow the sound (Milstein, 2013). All the interviewees talked about the importance of conga and what it meant to them and how they related to it. The theme of conga threads through the majority of the interviewees stories and I have tried to reflect differently expressed sentiments presented in each poem, using the different poetic techniques I employ as I have discussed in chapter three.

I stood on Norma's front step and heard this rumble. It was the Conga de los Hoyos, one of the most significant expressions of the SdCC. I experienced a strong pull. I was part of it. A seamless experience for me; a strong sense of belonging and a visibility that was uncontested, as my identity is at home in the UK. I was not questioned n did I need to qualify my presence. My taking part in the conga processions was consciously seeing and being part of diasporic processes, through a cultural practice as a way to interrogate my identity through a collective act of mobilized belonging, which the conga roll is (Wirtz, 2017). It was also seeing a number of discourses being played out during the conga processions. There were the discourses of taking up space and visibility (Jackson, 2022, p. 58) in the congas, 'invading', occupying and locating their performances in the streets (Milstein, 2013), but also subtexts of challenge through the satirical songs, and challenge to the status quo that positions congas particularly as, Black and messy (Wirtz, 2017). By framing her argument in this way, the congas present only as sites of the potentiality

of Black danger managed, through state control (Wirtz, 2014, 2017). By framing discourse of conga through the lens of Blackness alone neglects the overlapping and entanglements inherent in diasporic processes. Having participated in conga and the carnival, I experienced belonging that was not contested. However, in the next section I will illustrate how these entanglements in diasporic processes can manifest by reimagining my grandfather's life in Santiago de Cuba.

When I participated in the SdCC, I experienced the friendliness and hospitality of the people and an atmosphere of conviviality. What I experienced as a result was a sense of belonging – being addressed as 'prima' (cousin) or 'besina' (neighbour) by friends of the family I stayed with, when they discovered my Jamaican roots. I chose to declare my Jamaican roots as a way of making a diasporic connection.

Ver en esta tierra bella
De gente amigable y fresca
La noche llena de estrellas
Conga, música y orquesta
Amigos fenomenales
Narraciones pintorescas
Esos son los carnavales
mi Santiago está de fiesta

……^……..
See in this beautiful land
Of friendly and fresh people
The night full of stars
Conga, music and orchestra
Phenomenal friends
Picturesque tales
These are the carnivals
my Santiago is celebrating

Rosaida

Mr Spence

Mr Spence, grandfather, Jamaican migrant worker in Santiago de Cuba.

As well as the SdCC being a touchstone for my autoethnographic poetry, the letter that my father wrote to the tax office can also be considered as one. This letter, outlining my father's indignation at being overcharged by the tax office, (I didn't know for what reason) mentioned my grandfather's war service for 'King and country'. This is the memory that connects me to my grandfather. The recollection of this letter writing episode, triggers conversations and stories, and my father's memories of his father, Mr Spence. We only have a few 'facts' – his army card and service medal record are stored in the national archives at Kew (appendix 5) - so his time in a Santiago de Cuba of our imaginings, is a story which helps us to have a sense of ourselves as people from and of the Caribbean; our history and our culture as a family (Millar, 2006):

Linkage
Jamaican, migrant
Caribbean Everyman
the Caribbean, migratory space
you're travelling, constantly travelling
your life
is my Caribbean
configured in a British context
refashioned in a template of carnival
making the connection
to re-contextualise and make sense
my identity
through you.

When asked “are we aware how Caribbean we are?’ by a Cuban interviewer, about Cubans, the filmmaker Gloria Rolando responds, “not enough”[29]. Rolando’s response is an interesting one. How does one measure Caribbeanness? I reflect on my own positioning as a diasporic Caribbean woman who is of, but not from the Caribbean. Am I Caribbean enough through my ancestors? Rolando cites the big migration to Cuba from the Antilles, of Jamaicans and Haitians to the sugar mills of Oriente.[30] Mr Spence, my grandfather from Jamaica was part of that big inter-island migration to service the sugar mills. I am claiming my diasporic Caribbean identity partly though my imaginings of his life in Cuba.

My poem ‘folding and gliding (Abuelo)’, locates my grandfather’s lived experience as a Jamaican migrant in Santiago de Cuba and also places him at the scene of the carnival, to suggest diasporic connection and a sense of belonging:

folding and gliding (Abuelo)

In your languid dreaming of Santiago
did you fold into her corners
and glide along her streets?

Did you slick back your hair, throwing your broken Spanish caramelo’d words
to the nearest señorita? Her curiosity
sampling their sweetness and laughing at the uneven rhythm of their dance?

Or did you verse in patois for a bereft gyal from Mo’ Bay
to wrap herself in the precious embrace of being loved
under a laden ackee tree?

Did you wash off the cane
so that you could forget, for a moment

[29] Howard, P. A. (2015) *Black labor, white sugar: Caribbean braceros and their struggle for power in the cuban sugar industry.*
[30] Gloria Rolando interview, footnote incomplete

the ache of home, just out of reach?

Hold fast,
you'll be back in Lucea
soon bracero!

Away from the tyranny of
muddied boots, shredded hands
and disrespect.

Los Hoyos in hectic step, cast long shadows on dancing walls and
call you to roll and tumble to tight, playful beats
cha- cha-ing with them on the conga line

Down in Santiago de Cuba
where you fold into
corners and glide along her streets.

Carnival memories to share,
stories to tell,
strength to be had

From community
who knows long remembered words
just like you[31].

[31] long remembered words
mouthing Anancy stories
told throughout the Caribbean
diaspora, part of my childhood
my parents' childhoods
my grandfather's childhood.
diasporic links, a spider's web.
Anancy performs on the headdresses
of the spider women
riding the carnival float…

Mr Spence's lived experience in Santiago de Cuba, and of the carnival signifies for me the connective tissue of Caribbean diaspora - linkage, through the processes of the forging of community and belonging, performed and lived in the imaginary and materiality of the SdCC; showcasing aspects of diaspora history and celebrating Caribbeanness (Bettelheim, 1993: 152:2). Mr Spence, like many of his contemporaries, was a Protestant, an important part of his identity as a Jamaican and in diasporic spaces, whether in Caribbean Basin and the Americas, religious observance through regular church attendance was of great importance. Not only did this serve as a mode of connectivity and cohesion for Antillean Caribbean communities in Santiago de Cuba. For Jamaicans especially church attendance acted as a cornerstone of community activity and membership. Attending church acted as a distinct marker of 'respectability' and moral values, such as hard work and thrift and distinguished them from African descent Cubans (Queeley, 2015).
He was employed as a bracero (a cane cutter) during his time in Cuba. He owned a small holding in his hometown of Lucea, Hanover Parish in the western end of the island of Jamaica. He cut cane and cultivated bananas and ground provisions to sell to local markets, so I work on the presumption that he worked as a bracero for the sugar company in Santiago de Cuba. Jamaican and other Antillean Caribbean immigrants servicing the sugar industry in Cuba, were discriminated against, traduced, and subjected to violence in all its forms through practices that sought to exploit, humiliate, and dehumanise them for the sake of maximum profit with minimum humanity, respect and care shown them. (Bauer, 2018; Howard, 2015; Whitney and Laffita, 2013). Both media and state narratives of outrage and resentment at the presence of these migrant workers encouraged African descent Cuban antipathy towards their Antillean Caribbean co-workers (and competitors for jobs) ensuring that the Jamaicans and Haitians were also marginalised by the already marginalised. However, Howard states that many African descent Cubans embraced Garveyism and sought unity and solidarity with the immigrant Jamaicans, Barbadians and Grenadians who had adopted the Garveyite ideals of Black pride, racial equality and Pan Africanism (Howard, 2015, p. 102; McLeod, 2003). The United Negro Improvement Association had chapters in several towns in Oriente and Camaguey provinces (McLeod, 2003; Sullivan, 2014) and benevolent societies such as the Liga de Jamaica demonstrated support, mutuality and community. La Liga de

Jamaica, a benevolent society founded in 1919, of which there was a branch in Santiago de Cuba, sought to “advance the intellectual, economic, social and moral disposition of not only its members, but also other blacks in Cuba”. [32]

In my poem, entitled ‘Mr Spence leans in to hear President General Marcus Mosiah Garvey speak at El Teatro Heredia’, presented in this chapter five I imagine my grandfather’s encounter with his hero Marcus Garvey. My grandfather was a Garveyite, advocating for Garvey’s philosophy of campaigning for the liberation of Black people in the Caribbean, the United States, Europe and Africa. The poem offers an imagined historical context for my grandfather’s own identity as a diasporic Caribbean man.

By situating my research in the imaginary of my grandfather in the city of Santiago and its carnival, I am connecting with the Santiagueros, who articulate their identities as diasporic subjects, as Santiagueros, and as people. Making this connection with Santiagueros who are also interrogating their identities in the space of the SdCC, I can engage with their experiences of coming into identity to craft poetry that can tell a story of those connections as a collective experience of diaspora and identity. Using autoethnographic writing as a methodology allows me to craft my poetry as an enabling space in which to locate myself in the diasporic context.

Carnival as Bakhtin conceptualises has its own laws and is for all the people. It governs itself and is outside of (church dogma) (Bakhtin *et al.*, 1994, p. 198). It is precisely this premise that Bakhtin outlines that I draw on to create my poems. Diaspora has its own laws and configurations – diasporic processes and cultural practices, such as carnival and other Caribbean spaces (Caribbean shop, remittances, Caribbean music, intellectual ideas, people and migrations) are transnational and move in all directions, all the time (Boyce Davies, 2013, pp. 214-215). These spaces are transnational texts and practices not contained by state

[32] Reglamento de la Asociacion de la liga de Jamaica, 1919, AHPSC, Fondo Gobierno Provincial Leg2623, no.12, 1919, cited in Howard, P. A. (2015) *Black labor, white sugar: Caribbean braceros and their struggle for power in the cuban sugar industry.*p.184

borders. In Chapter five, I review some conceptualisations of diaspora as a way to help me make sense of and understand my own lived experience of coming into my diasporic Caribbean identity.

Chapter five: Caribbean spaces and conceptualisations of diaspora.

In this chapter I respond to Stuart Hall's invitation to put aside the notion of "narratives of loss" in relation to cultural memory, and to replace those narratives *with something.* in which to make sense of the diasporic reading of African/ Caribbean identities (Hall, 1997, p. 29). I use that invitation using Hall's groundbreaking work *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (Hall, 1990) as my starting point to investigate the articulations of my own identity. I then draw on Carole Boyce Davies's (2013) theorisation of the Caribbean diaspora as a series of spaces/zones to contextualise my identity articulations in a series of spaces that I construct as Caribbean.

In chapter four I briefly outlined the origins of carnival in Europe and its transportation and transformation in the Caribbean. Here I give a more detailed the SdCC as a Caribbean space, in which to investigate my coming into identity in a Caribbean context. I examine the historical trajectories of diasporic processes and identities, and how they lead to my own processes of diasporic identity formation by imagining my grandfather, Mr. Spence's negotiation of his diasporic experience in the space of the Santiago de Cuba carnival (SdCC) and at a United Negro Improvement Association meeting. I will also look at the ways in which my autoethnographic poetry interrogates Caribbean spaces and identities.

My poem 'kin. Stranger' presented in chapter six is inspired by my stay in Santiago de Cuba in 2018, before I started my thesis. The poem is a consideration of my positioning in my subsequent research and the realisation that my insider/outsider status impacts my research through unchallenged assumptions. An insider, sharing some commonalities with some of the research participants – we were English

speaking children of Antillean Caribbean parents, had family links to Santiago de Cuba, and were very aware of the influence of our African/Caribbean cultural roots (see Adriana's and Norma's stories in appendices 7 and 13). An outsider from Europe receiving a western education. I have to challenge my own assumptions of where that positionality situates me in the research, trying not to assume how the research participants respond (Moore *et al.*, 2015)

In exploring the debates around African/Caribbean diaspora, I follow Stuart Hall's insistence that the Africa Motherland as the focus of the romanticised project of return does not exist (Hall, 1990). I look at my own lived experience as a child of Caribbean parents and extended family with histories from different parts of the world, configuring the Caribbean space as one of diversity and migratory flows (Hall, ibid).

Conceptualisations of African and Caribbean diasporas.

Shuval (2000) suggests that the more common concepts of diaspora are found in what she defines as the classic groups of diaspora: forced dispersal, displacement and a need to have linkages to a home, whether imagined or real. Her suggestions of three key actors in the conceptualising of diaspora: the diasporic group, the host society and the homeland (ibid: 45) are problematic and too prescriptive. Shuval defines diaspora migration, in many cases, based on a "natural right" (her emphasis) of return to a homeland citing Jewish migration to Israel as an example (ibid). These are framed in terms of an implied choice to be migrants and to have a home, real or imagined, to return to. This is similar to Berg's theorising of what she terms as Cuban 'exiles' - one of her three categories of Cuban diaspora, who are white, of Spanish descent and relatively economically advantaged (Berg 2009:267). In relation to the SdCC and the lived experience of Antillean Caribbean migrants like my

grandfather this is more complex. The inter-island migrations that occurred in the early 20th century in the Caribbean space were driven by economic necessity and opportunity for many in the Caribbean during the social and economic aftermath of the First World War. Mr Spence's identity as an English speaking Jamaican man of African descent, was overlaid by his British colonial identity and his island identity as distinct from and in rivalry with other island identities in the Cuban social and economic space (Howard, 2015, pp. 18-19; Queeley, 2015, p. 181). I speculate that his awareness of this would have engendered his occupying what I suggest is a diasporic space, such as membership to Garvey's pan African UNIA (Cronon, 1969), was predicated on a need for belonging, social and economic upliftment and resistance to racist discrimination. Importantly this is a space where he also meets a few Cubans of African descent coming into diasporic consciousness (Howard 2015; McLeod 2006; Sullivan 2015). diasporic, and migrant are not mutually exclusive in relation to African/Caribbean migrants, because Caribbean diasporas are dynamic, migratory spaces. It is these inter-island migrations, such as Mr Spence's that leave legacies of diasporic consciousness in their descendants (Queeley 2015). This contests Shuval's definition of the diasporic migrant, narrowly focused on ethnically or religiously defined diasporic migrations (Shuval, 2000, p. 464) which cannot be neatly overlayed onto African/Caribbean diasporic migrations, whether they occur in Cuba, Panama or Florida (Giovannetti, 2006; Howard, 2015; Queeley, 2015).

African diaspora is a conjoining of continuity of the past and profound discontinuity, similarities and difference; "a necessary heterogeneity" with a history, in opposition to what Hall sees as the ahistorical quality of locating an Africa at the centre of diasporic articulations. It is an Africa that no longer exists, despite Africa being everywhere, embodied, inscribed on the skin and reproduced in new social cultural formations – Africa 'deferred' (Hall, 1990). This confluence of 'routes and roots' that constitute the Caribbean is a paradigmatic configuration of diaspora, a phenomenon that creates and reproduces this heady mix of difference, similarity, memory and historicity; a constant reworking of diasporic identity formation (Hall and Morley, 2019). This is a difference that articulates beyond boundaries, refracts through similarities, is syncretised and multi-modal, beyond the constructs of nation. Indeed, that "the national frame is not helpful" in understanding the processes of diaspora in

the Caribbean space, precisely because of this mix of difference, history and common threads articulating new cultural forms. The diaspora in the Atlantic is configured through rupture, imposition of the colonial project profit and domination of land and people and resources (2019: 234).

Diasporic mappings

My poem ‘diasporic mappings. trying to gain a foothold on theoretical rocks on the shores of the Black Atlantic’ was crafted by me as a way in to debates and discussions concerning the Caribbean diaspora; as an initial encounter with some of the existing research and theorisations of diaspora. It is a personal foray of my own thinking about diasporic processes and conditions as unsettled and unfinalised (Bakhtin *et al.*, 1994; Hall, 1990). The poem references diasporic actors like my grandfather, carving out new routes and planting and resowing roots as ‘home’, new, unsettled or precarious sites of also belonging. In the poem I consider the complex histories of diaspora as mathematical puzzles and play with some of the language, interpretations and contradictions inherent in those complexities.
The poem is a concrete or graphic poem. (Draper, 1971; Meyer, 2017)I have crafted graphically as an atlas reimagined. In the poem the water (the Atlantic) represents peril, unknown depths, churn and constant movement. The rocks – slippery, jagged, dangerous - offer points of momentary stability, purchase on which to have space to contemplate what the sea means; I am trying to make sense of the many theorisations of diaspora and what that means for me. The rocks occupy a liminal space, a third space of in-between, of ambiguity as I conceive of my identity as of, not from, as insider/outsider (Bhattacharya, 2013; Hall, 1990) in my Caribbean spaces. I group words and lines together with spacing between to suggest the islands in the Caribbean. It is also to suggest the east west north south dimensions of the scatterings of African diasporic people, the constant movement of the ocean. Like the ocean, diasporic processes of identity formation and is never finished. Anderson (Anderson, 1991) defines nation as “imagined political community”(p6) and in the poem I envision the Caribbean diaspora as community, coalescing around shared, imaginings of fragmented histories presented and (re)presented through the storytelling of the SdCC.; ‘Home’ in the poem is the myth of an Africa that no

longer exists – Africa deferred (Hall, 1990, p. 231). It is still appealed to and interpreted in the choreography of some of the comparsas, such as the dancing 'Ogun' (Bettelheim, 1993: 36), Santeria invocations through song (Wirtz 2014: 251), and cultural practices, such as the Tumba Francesa that recalls Haiti as homeland (Hume, 2016:43,).

For some of my research participants Cuba is home, but only 'conditionally' as reflected on by Adriana in her story: "My whole sense when I was growing up was that I wasn't 100% Cuban. That is because I was born in an English-speaking house with people born in a different place" (Appx 13). The poem is crafted for the reader to approach in different ways and at different entry points, through the irregularity in the gaps and spaces differently sized on the page, as I experienced the SdCC and as I experience my own identity articulation. The poem, like the carnival and like diaspora is nonlinear in its movement not linear in its procession, and I do this to attempt an understanding of the movement, expansions and contractions of diaspora. I'm using the footnotes *as* part of the diasporic mapping of the poem that I am inviting the reader to navigate. They are intended as an extension of the diasporic mappings of the poem. They are there to help the reader to locate the (historical, social, political etc) narratives in the mapping of the Caribbean diaspora. The poem is presented below:

diasporic mappings. trying to gain a foothold on theoretical rocks by the shores of the Black Atlantic

we/they/you were/are unframed (I was/am unframed in nation)[33]
we/they/you were/are
(I was/am unframed by the violence of history, position, thought)

[33] The 'we' that I use here are descendants like me of those of the African diaspora forcibly transported to the Americas as enslaved chattel for the emerging plantation economies. (Beckles, H. and Shepherd, V. (1991) *Caribbean slave society and economy: a student reader.* New York: New Press. The we also refer to 'people from elsewhere' (Hall and Morley, 2019), that constitute the Caribbean and its diaspora.

conjugated elsewhere edged

transient

liminal

beyond outside nation (inte)state

orphaned from/of land roots aborted cores

decentred

bodies, b l a (n) © k – (you choose) - canvases

projected onto/reframed by (resisting) projecting out/reframing for

(reclaiming) fashioning resilience from entangled threads

agentic crafting of joy redrafting ontologies

reshaping

mapping out utopias and…

and imagined community in speculative futurity made material

hybrids. transnationals. nomads on shifting ground[34]

eddying, still turbulent

in search of 'home' (ex-patria; fruitless)? tracing (mythic)

roots/routes

fading cartographies

[34] The displacement and dispersal that I infer here, in these four words constitute and articulate the migratory condition of diasporic identity. I imagine my grandfather's local, national and transnational, migratory experience as a subject of/to the British Empire and migrant worker in Cuba. I am suggesting that this renders his lived experience as borderless, scattered." [The] post-colonial nomads must now learn to build the structures of their identities on sand" (Gilroy 1993b:152). The language play between Spanish, Jamaican patois and English in my autoethnographic poetry is deliberate to suggest liminality and tangential post-colonial diasporic processes and formations. The colonial trajectories and legacies are embodied by the African/Caribbean diasporic subject, on the tongue. There not through choice, but by violent force, a splitting, the double consciousness of living in the past and the present simultaneously vocalised. It is about not being able to speak with or know (with certainty, with difficulty) the mother tongue languages that my African ancestors' pre-enslavement would have been born into. M NourbeSe Philip's seminal poem - '*She tries her tongue; her silence softly breaks'* (2015) speaks to this with a beauteous anger.

revived in landscaped dances[35]
by old men in guayaberas
and baseball b-boys spitting Abakuá chants[36]

negotiating spaces for a ‘home’ to rest,
untroubled

incomplete footprints graze
chipped, mosaiced walls betray precarity
in search of solid ground to rest,
untroubled
dancing diasporic murmuration
searching, swirling in community

in equilibrium. in place. on tongue. of mother
countries’ foundlings learning
sense making games of (my/our/their/your) – hyph - en - ated - selves
fractals, repeating the whole anew [37]
open ended transformations
in motion, constantly
seeking fit

---

[35] I offer here a suggestion of a reshaping, re-imagining of the dances performed at the SdCC, in this particular social and cultural context of a Revolutionary Cuba that nod to the demands of adherence and loyalty to a singular national identity (Perez, de la Fuente). This is juxtaposed with a refashioning of cultural practices, of imagined pasts, that articulate other identities outside of/in opposition and resistance to the imperative of the singular Cuban national identity.

[36] This is also about the radical resistance of hip hop to the political and social discourses that render young Cuban men of African descent criminalised and marginalised (Fernandes, 89, 2019), and speaks to the ways in which diasporic dialogues, hybridised cultural practices emerge from encounters between different globalised African diasporic spaces (Gilroy 33; 103 1993) and I argue, act as assertions of visibility, celebration and space taking. Importantly, this also illustrates the constancy of rearticulation and the never finishing ontological quality of diasporic subject formation and space making.

[37] Benoit Mandelbrot defines a fractal [as] a shape of parts similar in some way” and as a series of iterations, processes. (Benoit Mandelbrot, p11, quoted in *Fractals*, Feder, Jens (2013), Springer Science and Business Media. I see diaspora as constant, continual processes and iterations that operate in particular social and power relations of raced subjectivities and liminal intersectional spaces, but within that multiple differences are performed.

carving out new space, bedding down to rest,
untroubled

incremental, intricate process(es) of new knowing gained in rebellious spirit

perpetually *pushing* at the pull

pendulums
of here and elsewhere,
west, west, north, south. reluctant nomads[38]
wondering minds wandering it's the bittersweet
dollar pull migratory forces, colonialism's imperative

your labour their sweet gold

interior compasses (re)locate ~~where~~ do I unpack?
nearest safe places, voices familiar ~~when~~ do I unpack?
revised creations, iterations of a home ~~how~~ do I settle?
breath, whispering waits
for diasporic design
drawing points unfixed, shadowing

subject positions plotted on maps, never finalised[39]
citizens? of where? stick a pin on the pink shapes!

---

[38] Migrations, forced, and Caribbean inter island voluntary migrations undertaken as a means of livelihood and survival. In my grandfather's case having to leave Jamaica to find work in Cuba in the burgeoning sugar industry, due to the collapse of the world economies after the end of the First World War. It speaks to those who were enslaved or indentured to build the new world economy in the Caribbean (Beckles 1991; Carr 1998; Mustakeem 2016; Roopnarine, 2003: 31).

[39] This is a meditation on the constant redrawing of diasporic creativity and self-hood. I am thinking here particularly about of the diasporic exchanges and innovations that emerge from diasporic circulations Boyce Davies, C. (2013) *Caribbean Spaces: Escapes from Twilight Zones.* University of Illinois. creating, for example, hip hop, reggaetón and the blues (Fernandes, 2006; Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1990). These influences from the African (American) Caribbean diasporas have global reach and significant cultural influence, but very much speak to and about (imagined) community in the diaspora (McKittrick and Woods, 2007: 67-69).

subject positions seeking a core distant, glowing

from gyrating tectonic plates
constantly shifting unstable
pitching into moments,
perilous
opportune in reinvention
reiterated, reimagined through crafting joy in witnessing
those code-switching magicians! “tah dam, tah dah, tah dam, tah dah!”
echo location on drumbeats))))) embodied GPS

claiming space

to the rhythm of foot stomps and heart beats “bad am bad am bad am!”
shapeshifting contortionists

speaking in tongues, home and colonial
backflipping players
aboard, adrift on carnival floats; ornamental life rafts, disguised

subject positions
peppering landscapes, cratered
by excavations of imaginings, dusted down displays,

memories for souls seeking backstories

one diaspora does not fit all

plenty of stretch in mathematical weave(s) asymmetric configurations:
(im)mobilities + migrations $(forced)^2$ = dispersal, disruption, displacement
sentiment = $(Africa)^c$ x romance + myth = ahistorical, chimerical home(land)
history = enslavement – [indigenous decimation] + indenture = The New World
futurity = Caribbeans + routes + roots x repositioning = diasporas of diasporas

Sankofa birds[40] scratching, scratching, searching, searching
turning our (my, your, their) neck(s) looking back beyond
onward
to where we (I, you, us, they) go (un)settled (un)settling
diasporic roots (routes)[41]
this way, that way
wrap and tug at my ankles
trudging through forests of meanings can't see
the wood for the baobab trees
fragmentation dispersal
displacement

Caribbean space formed of rupture constant churn of waves
fossilised
pot holed histories gaps
filled, with creativity's hope and momentary rapture

in theatre reimagined as memory as theatre of life from memory's theatre
repeated
in the carnival of the changing same
hiding in plain sight, griots
retelling on drum slaps
stories binding with other imaginings

d i a s
s p
g o

[40] The Sankofa bird is the symbol of the Akan (Ghana) and is a folkloric staple in the diaspora. The bird able to turn its head to look back whilst walking forward. This represents a search for knowledge to go forward, the value of communality and belonging. Kande, S. (1998) 'Look homeward, angel: Maroons and mulattos in Haile Gerima's Sankofa', *Research in African Literatures,* 29(2), pp. 128-146.
[41] Configuring the notion of diaspora as one of routes: located in movement, migrations as well as 'roots' where the idea of Africa is continually remade and retold "…through politics memory and desire." (Hall, 1990:232).

n r

i i

m c

a r f

returning to
futurity from
continuities of
becomingness begetting
heterogeneity in
belonging in sameness through difference
“and the difference matters,” says Professor Hall[42].

diaspora

s c a t
t
e r
i n g s
in
all
directions
different p...a.c..e…….s
headwinds
of £apitali$m’s bright and shiny (brave) New World

[42] diaspora as process of African/Caribbean identities in formation, in articulation, simultaneously constituted by rupture, difference, continuity and similarity, bringing about a heterogeneity of experiences alongside a grounded-ness in a shared experience of rupture, but not shared, fixed origin. (Hall, 1990:226 *‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’* in Rutherford, J (ed) ‘Identity: Community, Culture, Difference, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

citizens subject temporary
here, no longer there
heretherehereherethereherethereherethere. here. there.
the line is _ _ _ never broken
the ___line is never__
bro__ken

the line is broken. There is no line
history, like diaspora doesn't repeat, it rephrases

the ocean never finishes

Diaspora fans out geographically, temporally, and generationally, expansive, beyond nation state and notions of assimilation, which is reliant on an immigrant and host model (Clifford, 1994, p. 307). In Clifford's configuration, diasporas are not people from elsewhere as immigrants are, but I argue that Hall's conceptualising of Caribbean diaspora and the Caribbean temporal space comes into being because of that very configuration (Hall, 1990, p. 224). I see myself, as Hall suggests as one whose subject formation is located in a "diaspora of the diaspora" (Hall and Morley, 2019, p. 139) with family and friendship networks that that extend to/from the Caribbean to the US and Ghana. All tracing African Anglophone Caribbean roots of shared histories and cultural practices emerging from the in betweenness of the violent birth of the New World and its attendant and repercussive historical trauma of forced migrations, enslavement and indentureship. And this contemporary reshaping of Caribbean-ness, contextualised by contemporary mobilities and migrations to the UK and North America as well as the inter-island migrations that my grandfather was a part of (Boyce Davies, 2013; Queeley, 2015) situates my research in the context of the SdCC, a Caribbean space where, through performance and knowledge creation my diasporic Caribbean identity is in formation.

African/Caribbean diaspora and terminology

In my exploration of diaspora, and in particular identity articulation in relation to the SdCC, I talk about African/Caribbean diaspora, not the African diaspora or African-Caribbean diaspora. I do this to suggest the translations, intersections and entanglements of my own experience of diasporic Caribbean identity articulation as a British Caribbean woman, of Jamaican parentage. In using this style, I acknowledge that the Caribbean and its diasporas, is populated by people, like the majority of my family network, of predominantly of West and Central African descent as a result of the forced transshipment and trade in enslaved people from the continent to exploit their labour and to enrich the European colonialist mercantile classes (Beckles and Shepherd, 1991; Klein, 1967; Lambert, 2007). However, as Hall states "…the African presence [in the Caribbean] exists in translation with other cultural elements…it is not Africa, but what Africa has become in the New World" (Werbner, 2009, p. 351). The typographical style 'African/Caribbean' that I apply rather than the hyphenated 'Afro-Caribbean' in this thesis, is an attempt to reflect this translation and move away where possible from using totalising language. I am taking notice that the Caribbean and its diaspora is populated by people from elsewhere (Hall, 1990). This resonates with my own family's migratory flows to the Caribbean, from West Africa, India, China and the Middle East, constituting and configuring my lived experience that intersects with the SdCC as a diasporic space of articulation and translation.

As a person of Caribbean heritage, I see as key, the centrality of diaspora in negotiating my lived experience in relation to the SdCC because I come from a family whose migratory mappings locate us in the Caribbean, north America and the UK. These are the trajectories of a particular history that has seen forced migrations of antecedents from West Africa to the Caribbean and the Americas to feed the voracious appetite of economies that grew and profited from their enslaved labour, and indentured labour (Beckles, 1991). Later in the late 19th and early 20th centuries some, like Mr Spence migrating to other parts of the Caribbean and the Americas for paid work (Carr, 1998; Giovannetti, 2006; Queeley, 2015; Whitney, 2013). These inter-Caribbean migrations were catalysed by an economic hunger for readily available and local cheap labour to build the Panama Canal development, and in Cuba to service the burgeoning sugar industry; labour supplied by people like my

grandfather, who needed to find work that was not available in their home countries (Howard, 2015).

I consider diaspora as rhizomatic (Glissant, 1997) branching out in all directions , with routes from, as well as roots in multiple and continual migrations and flows that constitute the Caribbean and its diasporas (Hall and Morley, 2019); a means of understanding and exploring the concept that decentres the idea of Africa as the totemic symbol inherent in some of the discourse that establishes a teleology of 'return' in theorisations of diaspora (Asante, 2020). Diaspora is not an event, suggestive of a temporally bound phenomenon that 'happened' as a discrete episode, but is a continual process of renegotiation, reiteration and movement. Diaspora articulates and is articulated by processes of African/ Caribbean subject formation predicated on displacement and dislocation, migrations and innovations reproduced and revised (Hall, 1990); as processes, contradictory and paradoxical in their constant (re)formations and remapping; of movement, migrations, forced and voluntary, invention and revision; home built from elsewhere. It is through these migratory flows in and out of the Caribbean space that diasporic identities, such as Mr Spence's are in constant formation (Burman, 2010).

Zeleza (2010) protests that the Atlantic model of diaspora conceptualised by Stuart Hall (Hall, 1990; Hall and Morley, 2019) and further theorised by Paul Gilroy as the 'Black Atlantic' (Gilroy, 1993b, Gilroy, 1993a) is part of a hegemonic discourse that dominates in studies of African diaspora (Zeleza, 2010). However, Zeleza concedes that these theories dominate because of the weight of history, the geographical size and significant populations of the Americas in the Atlantic, including the Caribbean make it so (ibid). Gilroy's Atlantic model, whilst masculinist in its approach, with little focus on gender articulations of diaspora (Wright, 2013: 6), is a conceptualisation that I refer to in my consideration of diaspora as movement.

Caribbean spaces.

Carole Boyce Davies conceptualises Caribbean spaces as operating in a number of ways (Boyce Davies, 2013). Firstly, the geography of the region itself; from the island archipelagos, the connective tissue of diaspora reaches the continental Americas - Belize and Guyana, Brazil. The spread beyond the region is created through various migratory flows to Europe and North America. Caribbean spaces manifest and are recreated in different locations through waves of migrations, producing “a decolonised set of arrangements” (p.1).

These decolonised arrangements are signified in the development and growth of commercial enterprises (hairdressers, bakeries, restaurants and Caribbean food stores); entertainments and cultural practices (carnival, parties) and the inventive entanglements of languages distinct and reflective of the diversity and history of the Caribbean, that mark these locations as Caribbean spaces. I identify the cultural markers that resonate with me because they are implicated in my localised diasporic experience: the Notting Hill Carnival the New Beacon Bookshop in Finsbury Park and the iconic Brixton market. But of resonance in relation to my own exploration of Caribbean space is Boyce Davies’s defining of the family space, relations and intergenerational interactions including fictive kinship relationships that signal ways of being Caribbean. I identify the family space as a prime space, one in which I'm able to contextualize my identity formation alongside the SdCC and my imaginings of my grandfather ‘s life in Santiago de Cuba.

Following Boyce Davies’s conceptualising of Caribbean spaces through migratory flows outward to Europe and the Americas, my poem ‘and, and..? displacement without a diaspora to call your own’ considers how the Caribbean, in its formation is defined through the trafficking of enslaved Africans and indentured labour from Asia. It is important to remember that the formation of the Caribbean as a diasporic space through displacement includes the supplanting of Indigenous people – the Carib, Taino and Arawak peoples. In the poem I consider how the Caribbean is created from “…the biopolitics of settler colonialism [..] in the Americas [by] perpetuating African diasporic subjugation and indigenous elimination simultaneously.” (Morgensen, 2011, p. 57). This construct meant Indigenous people, themselves

enslaved in the plantation economies were replaced by African people racialised and constructed as commodities that enabled healthy profit. The violent projects of settler colonialism of destruction and creation were enacted. Indigenous people's enslaved labour was depleted, meaning erasure, physically and historically (Hall, 1990; Wolfe, 2006). The poem, presented below contemplates this erasure further, inserting it in the scene of the carnival, as a symbol of the way we sometimes do not remember, or know the history of the Caribbean space.

and, and..? displacement without a diaspora to call your own.

Hail Hatuey! King of the wild foam beers![43]
Ciboney
Arawak Taino
Carib
indigenous inconvenience all
in the New World Project
crushed like dried casava
underfoot by empires' thieving stampede
noble disappearance in History's writings
your survival unremarked.

sweet promises
a pox
on all your houses
little trace but fronded legacies,
save for woven baskets, mottos and 'come hither' brochures
feeding imaginaries of passive exotica on cruise liner napkins.

[43] "But if Indian culture and music are largely lost, the India past has continued to be invoked as a symbol for various purposes….Still celebrated in Cuba… the chieftain Hatuey for [his] valiant struggle against the Spaniards." Manuel, P. (2016) *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae, 3rd Edition.* PHILADELPHIA: Temple Univ Press.

Hail Hatuey! King of the wild foam beers!
quenching thirsts
of carnival gods – gratis.
you,
brave warrior
celebrated on the side wall of the bottling plant
near Avenida Gomez.

Diasporic Caribbean in relation to my own identity.

I respond to Hall's suggestion to reread the notion of narrative loss (Hall, 1997, p. 29) by articulating my own meaning of what the diasporic Caribbean is in relation to my own identity. I do this in my poetry through a celebration of carnival, my childhood family home and my imaginings of my grandfather's life in Cuba.

Caribbean identity in diaspora articulates through vectors continuity and similarity operating at the same time as difference and rupture (Hall, 1990, p. 226). This difference and similarity played out through discursive cultural practices, like the SdCC (Hall, 1990). It is that simultaneity of past and present, similarity and difference, continuity and discontinuity at play in the diasporic space of the SdCC, where I am able to articulate my own identity; a dynamic process that creates everyday acts of diasporic conditions of 'being and becoming' (Burman, 2010). It is the 'routes to, roots from' configuration; a continual series of positionings and re-positionings of my diasporic Caribbean identity that rearticulates in different and changing social structures and relations (Hall, 1990).

Situating the carnival as a Caribbean space, I take as my starting point Stuart Hall's reading of diasporic identities as always in process in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (Hall, 1990). Hall makes the distinction between fixed identity that is, essentialist and redundant because it is predicated on an idea to a symbolic Africa, a

mythologised Africa, not the contemporary Africa which does not match our imaginings. The second idea that Hall outlines is Caribbean identity as positioned, contextualised and always in process (p. 222). Position that diaspora is constant, always happening processes, iteration and multiple migrations, of diversity, of common historical experience, not common origin. Caribbean diasporic cultures find their origins in dispersal and fragmentation, interruptions and shifts (Hall, 1990, Hall and Morley, 2019). I agree with Hall's position that the common historical experience of trafficking, enslavement and subjugation under empire is a formative one, but does not automatically or logically follow that this means shared origin. Experience is not origin. However, it is the legacy of shared historical experiences that is performed as/in carnival, whether the SdCC, Notting Hill or Rio; it is carnival space articulation and performing African/ Caribbean subjectivities and identities through in its performance as a discursive cultural practice. (Tompsett, 2005, Danticat, 2002, Armstrong, 2010, Crichlow and Armstrong, 2010, Knauer, 2011, Nurse, 1999, Butler, 2017, Irobi, 2007).

Historical trajectories of diasporic processes and identities.

In exploring my grandfather's membership of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) led by Marcus Garvey in the early part of the 20th century (Cronon, 1969), I investigate the historical trajectories of diasporic processes and identities, and how they lead to my own processes of diasporic identity formation. I am referencing what Boyce Davies's calls 'diasporic circulations' (Boyce Davies, 2013, p. 235) as my way to understand what necessitated people like Mr Spence to move around the Americas, the Caribbean basin and beyond in search of work. In so doing they were not only creating diasporic spaces, but also forming diasporic links and exchanges of ideas and cultural practices, which acted as contributary factors in the migratory flows and exchanges of diasporic processes. For example, of The United Negro Improvement Association under the Leadership of Marcus Garvey (Boyce Davies 2013; Cronon 1969). This offers another understanding of the term diaspora which Clifford aptly describes in his examinations of the many theorisations of it as a "travelling term" {(1994, p. 302).

Mr Spence, Marcus Garvey, UNIA and diasporic identity formation.

The influential movement of UNIA (United Negro Improvement Association) with Marcus Garvey at the helm, in the early 20th century in Jamaica, Cuba and the United States, offers examples of contemporaneous diasporic encounters and 'linkages' in Mr Spence's time in Santiago de Cuba (Coleman, 2020, McLeod, 2003). By examining existing research on the UNIA movement (Cronon, 1969, McLeod, 2003, Coleman, 2020, Van Deburg, 1997, Garvey and Garvey, 1986), my poem 'Mr Spence leans in to hear President General Marcus Mosiah Garvey Speak at El Teatro Heredia' offers a moment in the imagining of Mr Spence's lived experience viewed through his attending a UNIA meeting and in dialogue with an African descent Cuban, and fellow migrant coworkers, to hear Garvey's words in (McLeod, 2003).

Mr Spence was interested in rights and liberation for Black people, was politically engaged and was a Garveyite in Jamaica, but was not according to my father, an officer in the movement. That burgeoning Garveyite movement, the United Negro Improvement Association in Cuba and especially in Oriente province, demonstrated the growing Black consciousness of Antillean migrant workers and some of their Cuban co-workers (Whitney and Laffita, 2013). My father's story in relation to his father, Mr Spence's membership of the UNIA movement during his sojourn in Cuba, attests to his strong support for both the ideals of Garveyism – 'Unity, Upliftment and Advancement', and for Garvey himself. My own coming into identity as a child of the Africah/ Caribbean diaspora is here too; its linkage and formation situated in my grandfather's lived experience in Santiago de Cuba. My father did talk about Garvey, funny enough.

> "That is one thing I do remember him telling me about - Marcus Garvey and his campaign. Oh yes, he thought he was great! He said it was the first movement of the freedom train for Black people...He was enthusiastic about him. He was excited about Garvey and the UNIA and that was the first time I had heard anything about a black revolutionary movement".
>
> Elwardo

The poem is inspired by a UNIA (United Negro Improvement Association) event that took place in El Teatro Heredia, a venue in Banes, Cuba in 192 at which Marcus

Garvey spoke. I am imagining my grandfather's presence there. He was a Garveyite and was active in labour politics and anti-discrimination campaigns on his return to Jamaica. The poem serves to illustrate Mr Spence's diasporic identity formation, linkages and agency (Sullivan, 2014). I crafted the poem about my grandfather attending this Garvey meeting as a melding of the imagined and the reality of its happening. It plays with the occurrence of a real event and mingles that with my own imaginings. What I am suggesting here is that my own imaginings come from a position of not quite remembering an overheard story about my grandfather. As I explain in the preface to the poem, I had no way of knowing whether Mr Spence attended, so I reimagine the event and his attendance. I started crafting a first draft of the poem after reading Frances Peace Sullivan's essay on the organising power of the Garvey movement in the migrant Caribbean worker community and alongside some of their Cuban allies in the context of the dominating hostile presence of the United Fruit Company in Eastern Cuba (2014). Crafting the poem offers is a way for me to connect myself to wider, historical links of Caribbean diaspora, by situating my grandfather's imagined presence in what I construct as an emblematic African/Caribbean diasporic setting, such as the Garvey event that took place in Banes in Cuba.[44] The poem is presented below:

Mr Spence leans in to hear President General Marcus Mosiah Garvey speak at El Teatro Heredia

suit and tie, Sunday best on a Friday night

polished shoes (always)

tall, sure foot

"walk good!" a friend salutes on

an occasion anticipated

[44] Sullivan, F. P. (2014) '"Forging Ahead" in Banes, Cuba: Garveyism in a United Fruit Company Town', *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids,* 88(3-4), pp. 231-261.

in snap sharp uniforms

synchronising in respectful anticipation

a Division meeting at El Teatro Heredia

bursting at the seams in expectation

Mr Spence leans in to hear

President General Marcus Mosiah Garvey

speak!

Unity and Upliftment and Africa.

delicious words

tasting of Mr Spence’s dreams

U.N.I.A. CAPITAL LETTERS

weighing solid and sure on proud lips

Mr Spence

gives a soul deep, quiet

thanks

to the great man

pronouncing liberation

promoting advancement

protecting community,

look we all, small island, big island

marching, marching

bible in one hand, respectability in the other

“Black Stars for the Black Star Liner!”

rhythm pulses in words buoyed by wishing, whispered

affirmations ribboning aspirant chests

prideful self-esteem filling the hall

with bright nuggets of a just future and sweet-smelling speculations.

Mr Spence

shrouded in his own attention

listens for a plan

no map from empire will ever show

since war finish an’ done.

He done see

“*Cuba tough like rock stone*

backra boss, dem teif like Jancro

and work you till you don’t know

ah no so it go?

I don’ pay dem no mind,

but give thanks to the most high”

Snr. Hernandez leans in to hear

President General Marcus Mosiah Garvey's words

dancing on Spanish tongues

in African mouths on Cuban bodies

the rich, the powerful would rather forget

"¿Dónde está Martí? Ahora

Yo también soy guantanamero

y yo también, soy yoruba"

Mr. Spence

nomad from elsewhere

finds community in mirrored souls and *Negro World*,[45]

mutual aid offered, received

with good grace

[45] diasporic dialogue
connection performed
in community halls, worksites and salons in Harlem, USA
political meetings in Havana,
the word 'diaspora' itself was not used
or conceived of
inferred in terminology
'the coloured race'
'negro peoples of the world'
an understanding of shared histories and routes
beyond national boundaries, as
Mr Spence may have experienced during his time in Cuba.
(Guridy, 2009, Feeling Diaspora in Harlem and Havana}.

in high shine pews

of Beulah Evangelical Gospel Hall

yellowing cane fields

and thirsty cricket pitches.[46]

satisfied, he dusts off his righteous, bible-carrying, church gloves

waves a big and certain salute

as a comrade passes by

“walk good sah, walk good”.

In the poem I speculate on processes of identity formation, political and social engagement and community cohesion realised amongst African descent British Caribbean (‘West Indian’) migrants (McLeod, 2003, Queeley, 2015, Coleman, 2020). I also consider how they associated with (in very limited numbers and ways, admittedly) African descent Cubans who looked actively to their African Caribbean roots, displaying varying levels of awareness of their diasporic identities (Coleman, 2020, McLeod, 2003, Guridy, 2009).

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[46] Cricket pitches
emblems of Empire
history’s tendrils reaching
into leeward hearts

and windward heads
Britain’s colonial legacy
bowled out by Anglo Caribbean migrants
in Cuba’s green and sugar caned lands

an “expression of nested loyalties to parish, to class, to island to empire…”
(Putnam, L. (2014) 'The Panama Cannonball's Transnational Ties: Migrants, Sport, and Belonging in the Interwar Greater Caribbean', *Journal of Sport History,* 41(3), pp. 401-424.

Terminology

I use the term British West Indian, when discussing some of the social relations and structures of early 20th century Cuba; about the ways in which Mr Spence and his contemporaries may have experienced life as Antillean migrant workers and diasporic actors (Carr 2015; Giovannetti 2006; Sullivan 2014; Whitney and Laffita 2013). I also use the term Antilles or Antilleans, to include Haiti and Haitian descent Cubans in relation to people who are of African descent in the Caribbean, and French/Kreyol speakers (Viddal, 2006). illustrative of the complex diversity of African/ Caribbean diasporic lived experience, the hyphenations and entanglements of identities emerging from disrupted, colonised and fragmented histories. Theorisations of diaspora are as varied, complex and entangled as the experiences they try to explain.

It is knowledge produced from the lived experiences, stories told in relation to the SdCC that are constitutive of linkages of diaspora (Hall,1990,2019), in relation to the SdCC, as a different contextual Caribbean space to my own British context of my family home. I straddle a 'not us/us/not quite other', insider outsider borderlands (Bhattacharya, 2013, p.613; Moore, 2015, p. 214) where boundaries are blurred and contradictory, framed in a colonial/imperialist discourse (Hall, 1990; Hall and Morley, 2019; Osborne, Segal and Hall, 1997; Boyce Davies, 1994). This underpins the many labels attached to my hyphenated identity – British, Black British, African-Caribbean, Jamaican. and how I negotiate them as part of my everyday experience.

The poem 'diaspora conundrums (bracketed)' continues with the considering of the complexities of diasporic articulations that I consider in the poem "diasporic mappings. trying to gain a foothold on theoretical rocks by the shores of the Black Atlantic". In the poem I am thinking also of my grandfather's time in Santiago, as a migrant worker, Jamaican, British colonial subject, West Indian, Black, Negro, of colour, Garveyite, Pan Africanist. All of these, some of these, any of these. Some of these labels served to subjugate him, others served to unite him with co-workers, other Caribbean people and to unite with Cubans of African descent, through organisations like UNIA. Belonging at moments (Giovannetti, 2006).

In the opening verse of the poem, I use spaces and line breaks as moments of pause to consider diaspora as an entity or as process(es), suggesting no definite way to describe diaspora as a noun, adjective or verb. The rest of the poem employs line breaks to suggest a shopping list of terminology, that is complex, diverse and contradictory. The crossings out of some words also reflects the pathological and deliberate misnaming through enslavement and colonialism and how that labelling changes historically through a “simultaneous constant striving of the dispossessed for full representation” (Boyce Davies, 1994, p. 5).

diaspora conundrums. (bracketed).

thing noun Event (Capital E) process(es)

(travelling), migratory concept

symbol(ic)

idea idea(l)(s) spaces

singular concept(s) (multiplied)

(processes) iterations

hold all(s) so full of diversity

busting at the seam(s)

extensive, expansive experiences

converging

through a narrow channel of definition

part of the whole of the many parts

absolute fragmentations

(how) do we hold (it) them

together?

in (authentic) unity

a fix of flow

(not) of community

the changing same

in the meaning (beginning)

of the word

there was the genesis

of the word/phrase diasporic (adjective? verb?)

diaspora of diasporas

evocation

of origin (a problem of romance) myth

(not) an Event, an already, always happening

evolution (revolution)?

of repercussions

of process(es)

(not) a system.

churn.

~~African~~ (Caribbean)

African (~~Caribbean~~)

Antillean (Lesser or Greater?)

Afro (Brit) ~~Caribbean~~

Carib(be an long gone)

West (Indian) with (East) Indian[1]

Indigenous (Indignant, nearly Invisible...) (British) West Indian (Indignant, not Indigenous…)

Black

Person of Colour

routes (migrations, multiplied)

roots (deep, knotted, resilient)

across lands, through the deep of the many seas

carried in whispers windward (leeward?)

Ways in which my autoethnographic poetry interrogates Caribbean spaces and identities.

In my autoethnographic poetry I use the conceptualisation of diaspora as a series of processes analogous to the churn, renewal and fluidity of the Atlantic (Gilroy, 1993). Hall's conceptualisations diaspora is conceived of as 'routes 'as well as 'roots', where movement, migrations are key in the configuring and understanding of it as a nexus of change, exchange and iteration. I follow on from Hall's concept to draw on the SdCC's dynamic movement and mobilisation of people as a metaphor of the dynamic movement of diaspora. I frame the carnival as of version of Caribbean space, such as my family home, my imaginings of my grandfather in Santiago de Cuba as "products of diaspora" (Boyce Davies, 2013, p. 2) in which I articulate my

identity. It offers a sense of movement, as does carnival and historical, geopolitical and cultural complexities that configure and are constitutive of the Black Atlantic as an idea and a space of flow and flux (Gilroy, 1993b:15).

The SdCC

It is discursive cultural practices - music, art and dance that emerge from and tell the stories of exchange, revision and iteration (fractals) that constitute the diasporic space of the Caribbean. These can be mapped onto, revised in and played through the site of the SdCC, as a transnational diasporic space (Bettelheim, 1993:158; Queeley, 2015:125; Wirtz,217:62). For example, reggaeton which finds its origins in Jamaican dance hall and Puerto Rican hip hop is now a staple as dance and music in the side streets of the SdCC (Fairley 2006:477); as African/Caribbean diasporic space, in constant rearticulation, through by and of “compound cultures from disparate sources” (Gilroy, 1993:15).

In my poem ‘Spicy pork and the Spider women’, I consider the Caribbean space, a migratory space, always travelling, always in process. It is one of fractals and nuance, the vaguely familiar tropes and the different sensory signs operating at the same time. and this is what I was experiencing in the carnival space in Santiago. This was the slightly disorienting sense when participating in the conga; the visual familiarity of communal, processional dancing of masses of people, as I had experienced in Notting Hill, but the difference in sound, especially that of the corneta china (the Chinese bugle). As a result, these moments in the conga engendered a sense of also belonging.

spicy pork and the spider women

heavy bottomed plates piled high
mountain peaks of hot, spicy pork shrouded
in fluffy pillows of white rice

deftly negotiated with gymnastic and sticky fingers, slicked and freed on the lips with peppery oil
looser tongues swimming and sploshing in liberating cerveza
playing hard[47]
party-time dressed bodies shimmying and shaking off the struggles of that day
with salsa swirls and well-timed timba steps
dancing out shapeshifting identities
committed to the project
of joy making
high on shared memories and new knowledge.

the past, a parade the present dances through
into hoped for futures[48]
reshaped
in the constellations of bright, flashing eyes

swaying arms fringing the tessellated grandstands
signal the arrival of the spider women manicured, glossed, beaded
satin cuffed arms arched in their own announcement
in burnished golden and sky-blue diamonds,
sharp as fresh lime on cut skin their hot red Annancy! Anansi! Anansy! crowns sparkle,
those queens! sweet chaos of a luminous dream.
bias cut hips and polished legs dancing up a hurricane
in sturdy, well-worn shoes covered in last year's sequins and still fresh hope.

[47] The 'play' here references Stuart Hall's employing its use with a doubleness of meaning. Firstly, there is the play of the (diasporic) Caribbean as permanently unsettled and unfinished. At the same time, it is the play of the simultaneity of sameness and difference that constitutes and configures the Caribbean diasporic, literally played out in the different music and dance styles (Hall, S. (1990) 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in Rutherford, J. (ed.) *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp. 222 to 237.performances and practices at the SdCC and other Caribbean diaspora carnivals that Benitez Rojo defines as part of the "Caribbean text' 1985: 450)

[48] A memorialising of history and African diasporic traditions performed in the official SdCC procession is a nod to the past that marries the present, to be carried into the future by later generations. This acts as an insurance in maintaining diasporic cultural practices, through practices and traditions. Sanabria, A. M. (2009) 'African Matrix Cultural Production: Towards a Model of Sustainable Human Development in Santiago de Cuba', *Caribbean Quarterly,* 55(3), pp. 43-51.

I watch the state news later on Zara's TV:
"what a show!" the state broadcaster trumpets to no one in particular.

families mingle and sharp young peacocks pouting, posing, preening
holler greetings and the latest news, rocking to their own beats
"¡oye! ¡hablas conmigo!"
down Garzon Avenue and along her side streets
where a frayed bunting of sullen police in crumpled khaki are strung out
as revellers sing slightly off key, subversive songs[49]
from laughing, dribbling mouths busy with juicy, spicy pork.
up close to the nation's camera

determined ebony hued visibility
challenges tidy TV images
offering Granma wrapped, folkloric delight[50]
to neat families in white, tiled, Habanero homes.

at a distance

[49] I experienced the congas as spaces of belonging, challenge and visibility. In them, the revellers acted as protectors of each other's claims to space taking through their often spontaneous mocking and defiant songs of protest targeting the police lines as representatives of the state's authority and repressive practices. Montoya Gonzalez, T. (2014) 'Pleasure is Power: Invading, Conquering and Dominating through Celebration', *ReVista,* Spring 2014, Volume XIII(3), pp. 18. Carnival offers a space for creative agency and I would argue the congas, through their performance and participation are a 'resistance event' as described by Moten (2016) where [Black] people "denied capacity to claim normative personhood" can do so in a most spectacular fashion(*Hesitant Sociology, Blackness and Poetry* (3rd May, 2016) [Lecture]. University of Chicago.; where young Afro Cuban men in particular whose racialised bodies are subjected to routine everyday acts of aggression by the police 'check' and disrupt this actualisation of normative personhood.

[50] Standardised short clips regularly repeated on TV offer a very limited and controlled vision of the SdCC a space of African /Caribbean diasporic traditions performed in the comparsas and the floats of the official parade. Wirtz, K. (2014) *Performing Afro-Cuba: image, voice, spectacle in the making of race and history.* London;Chicago;: he University of Chicago Press. It is an edited version of incidental folkloric performance that serves as entertaining distraction at a distance with the state stamp of authenticity. Hernandez-Reguant, A. (2009) 'Cuba in the Special Period: culture and ideology in the 1990s', pp. x-x, Schmidt, J. D. (2008) 'Locked Together: The Culture and Politics of "Blackness" in Cuba', *Transforming anthropology,* 16(2), pp. 160-164.

back and forth the rumbling conga lines refuse to be controlled[51].

Poetry and diasporic experiences

My poetry throughout the thesis is in response to the themes of belonging, and connection from my lived experience as African /Caribbean woman, granddaughter of a Jamaican migrant worker, where I negotiate my many subject positions in relation to the SdCC and the research process. My poetry in my research is informed and inspired through engagement with the stories of the carnival as diasporic Caribbean space in which Caribbean identities articulate.

My poem ‘connectedness’ (in chapter three) was my response to how I focused on themes were emerging from the Santiagueros’ stories: the Caribbean, Caribbeanness, identity, family, the life affirming multisensory experience of the carnival, especially participation in the conga. It reflects on how these storied memories of the SdCC from the Santiagueros resonate with my lived experience of Notting Hill and dhow these become spaces of identity expression. In the poem I demonstrate how my poetry interweaves the themes and us as diasporic Caribbean people (the interviewees and me) as participants. I too on the preparations and performance of the face-to-face interviews with Santiagueros living in the UK - happy to talk and engage in a way that it became a conversation about diaspora and a shared Caribbean space, sharing comical and familiar stories about our Caribbean families and strict parents. I use poetry to capture the performative qualities and the ‘play’ of the carnival – its music and the movement of it -as a site of translation of diasporic processes inspired by the interviewees’ stories.

I experience the carnival as a site of Caribbeanness, contested identities and belonging. In my autoethnographic poetry the SdCC is constituted as a site of diasporic belonging and connection by taking part in conga, a powerful motif, of

[51] Wirtz, K. (2017) 'Mobilizations of Race, Place, and History in Santiago de Cuba's Carnivalesque', *American Anthropologist,* 119(1), pp. 58-72.

mass mobilisation, and collective visibility a sense of community for me in this different Caribbean context.

M(other) tongues

How does the legacy of colonialism inscribe itself on my diasporic tongue? To better understand the legacies of colonialism through language and how that shapes the everyday of my diasporic Caribbean experience, I use poetry, my own and the work of other poets such us Marlene Nourbese Philip (2015), as a space to explore the role of languages as representations of the entanglements and power relations of colonialism. Below is an extract from Philip's poem "Discourse on the Logic of Language'"

I have no mother
tongue
no mother to tongue
no tongue to mother
tongue
Me

(Philip, 2015, p. 30)

English my mother tongue?

Yes, until now
unquestioned uncontested imposition?
I have another tongue
unquestioned, unequiVOCAL

until now.

It is a language that shapes my identity
in my poems
my own doubly mothered tongue
wraps itself
around the complex, the entangled
connections to my past
in Shakespeare…

Jesús Cos Causse centres Santiago de Cuba and the family as sites of articulations of Black identities and belonging in Cuban and Caribbean spaces (James, 2022, Ramsay, 2001, Sarduy and Stubbs, 1993). These poets and their poems influence the way that I think about, shape and craft my poetry, by giving a central place to my family's history and cultural practices. I see them as spaces for articulations of my diasporic Caribbean-ness. They influence the way that I can incorporate and reflect the complex relationships between the languages that have emerged in the colonial encounter: English, French, Spanish and Jamaican.

I use a technique of deploying and interweaving the colonising languages of English and Spanish with Jamaican to acknowledge the legacies of colonialism and its entanglements, co-dependencies and relations of power. Similarly, Breeze writes *Nanny siddung pon a rack/a plan a new attack/puffin pon a red clay pipe,* "Sound the abeng fi nanny" (Breeze, 2011: p. 31). So, for me too these interweaving linguistic patterns interact with my lived experience, contextualised in discursive spaces such as the SdCC and my childhood family home. I use English, Jamaican patois, and Spanish in my poem 'Mr Spence leans in to hear President General Marcus Mosiah Garvey speak at El Teatro Heredia' I do this to signify migratory character of Caribbean culture, "where travelling …and return as fate, is destiny" (Hall, 1990: p. 234). This combining of languages includes the "people from elsewhere" who constitute the Caribbean diaspora and its trajectories (Hall, 1990, 2019; Chamberlain, 1999: p. 4).

I use these languages to demonstrate how colonial legacies are inscribed on my diasporic Caribbean tongue. I imagine my grandfather's thinking about and experiencing a sense of the possibility of creating community, in a space that I define as both liberatory and affirming. Mr Spence is attending a meeting for Black unity and upliftment alongside fellow sugar industry workers, including a Cuban, Spanish-speaking co-worker. They are brought together through shared experiences of discrimination, legacies of historical trauma and displacement, the trajectories of which begin in the African continent, and which brought them via historical and migratory flows to Cuba.

As well as "Mr Spence leans in to hear to hear President General Marcus Mosiah Garvey speak at El Teatro Heredia' my poems 'kin. stranger', and 'folding and gliding (Abuelo)' are examples where I have also used all three languages, to reflect the confluences and divergences of Caribbean diasporic processes and the long shadows of colonial legacy (Nourbese Philip, 2015: p. 81). I do so to place and connect my grandfather and myself in Santiago de Cuba, where our differentiated Caribbeanness translates simultaneously as both sameness and difference (Hall, 1990:224): my UK born and based Caribbeanness and my grandfather's, colonial era, British framed Caribbeanness, embodied and produced through the confrontations of Spanish and English language being spoken at the scene.

This technique of interspersing the three languages is also concerned with how linguistic developments in the Caribbean diaspora have influenced and re-invented the colonising languages (NourbeSe Philip, 2015: pp. 83-87). And like the reiterative processes of diaspora, these new confluences of language signal continually change. Jean 'Binta' Breeze's poems give space to African and Caribbean inheritances of language, culture and displacement (2001, 2011). I adapt that technique by including fragments of those languages in my poetry to reflect on my own lived experience of inherited African/Caribbean diasporic identity articulation in the UK. Breeze's poem "The Wife of Bath speaks in Brixton Market" (Breeze, 2011:132*)*, fuses Chaucerian English with Jamaican patois to bring together the migratory and the fragmented conditions of African/Caribbean diasporic subjectivities through language. It signifies Brixton market as a Caribbean space:

An wat about de wise king Soloman
look ow much wife im tek, Lawd
ah wish ah did have as much in bed as him!

(Breeze, 2011:132)

At the same time Breeze deconstructs, and subverts English language, playing with biblical references demonstrating the imposition of Christianity as part of the colonial project. In doing so she blends it with popular Jamaican speech to bring together what Philip calls the" father" tongue of the coloniser and the "mother" tongue of the colonised, "the confrontation of the formal and the demotic within the text itself" (Philip, 2015: p. 84). I illustrate a similar confrontation in my poem 'and, and? displacement without a diaspora to call your own' which, in alluding to Shakespeare's line in *Romeo and Juliet*: "a pox on all your houses" at once highlights the colonial shadows of the English language as a displacing agent of other languages and cultures (Meighan, 2023). Critically, it signals the near destruction of Indigenous communities in the Caribbean as part of the colonial project. It is also a commentary on my own lived experience of navigating the complexities of my inherited Caribbean diasporic identity with the precarity of an often contested British one. M Nourbese Philip's extraordinarily moving and righteously indignant poem 'She tries Her Tongue; Her Silence Softly Breaks' addresses this beautifully in this brief extract from the stanza on page 70:

Hold we to the centre of remembrance
that forgets the never that severs
word from source
and never forgets the witness
of broken utterances that passed
before and now
breaks the order of silence

in the ordeal of testimony

(NourbeSe Philip, 2015)

Philip crystallises the resistance to colonial violence that I argue is part of the legacy embodied in the utterances of African/Caribbean diaspora tongues (Philip, 2015:77). With this allusive poetic parody, Philip deconstructs, plays with and reshapes the uses of English language, to illustrate the long shadows of colonial history (p. 81) and the marks that it has left in “the differently shaped Englishes of the Caribbean” (Mahlis, 2005, p. 166). I reflect on how I can hear it. This reshaping in how my parents and their diasporic contemporaries blend, invert and reshape English language words, introducing reconstructions and reconfigurations of words. In my poem “Alignment” I reflect on the way my mum says cucumber – “ku-kumbah”, which in her pronunciation becomes a Jamaican word that seems more African: an emblematic and linguistic reimagining of West African ancestral ways of pronouncing a presence in the world and “offering a continued connection and conversation with the ancestors” (Bryan, 2004:646). When I hear my mum speak the word ku-kumbah, in Jamaican, the Caribbean space that I conceive becomes actualised. It is this which I reflect on in my poetry, using languages that underpin my lived experience in Caribbean diaspora (Hollington, 2021).

Jean ‘Binta’ Breeze (2000, 2011) uses the languages of coloniser and colonised in her work to demonstrate the continuing legacy of that power relationship. In the foreword to Breeze’s book of selected poems *Third World Girl*, Colin MacCabe writes: “This is a book of poetry written in two languages, English and Jamaican. Both are creoles” and that English “…is a tongue…she has so thoroughly inhabited…[to] use it for her own anti-imperial purposes” (Breeze, 2011: p. 10). In the poem “The Arrival of Brighteye”, Breeze destabilises the central theme of love and longing, using the rhyming pattern and meter of a British folksong “My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean” [6]. By translating it into Jamaican and then adapting the lyric Breeze highlights the rupture experienced by a family through economic necessity, as the mother travels abroad to find work to send back remittances that the child hopes will be for her to join her mother overseas. This was a theme that was very much present

during my visit to Cuba and a familiar practice in the Caribbean diaspora globally (Piras, 2023), including my own friend and family networks.

This suggests a continuing of the migratory flows and churns of the Black Atlantic geographies and configurations or, as McKittrick and Woods state “the oceanic remnants of the middle passage and the transatlantic slave trade” (2007: p. 4). And in another verse of the same poem, the recitation of the nursery rhyme Row, row, row your boat’ in its original English, Breeze successfully plays up the jarring simultaneity of innocence of life being a dream, manifested in the aspirations of Caribbean migrants for a better life across the sea. What many of these migrants encountered was the harsh realities of racist discrimination whether in Cuba, as my grandfather and his contemporaries may have faced (Howard, 2015, Whitney and Laffita, 2013) or for those, like my parents arriving in the UK (Hall and Morley, 2019).

My ‘guarapo (cane juice)’ is a lyric poem (Leavy, 2015: p. 80) which merges my own experience and affective responses with those of the imagined scene and protagonist, a young woman. The poem, as with my other poem, ‘(do) the peso doble’ is also in dialogue with Breeze’s poem “The Arrival of Brighteye” (2011:124) to reflect on my own diasporic links through family and friendship networks in the Caribbean, West Africa, Europe and the US and those newly forged in Cuba, and to understand how some of the Santiagueros I met were claiming or re-claiming their diasporic identities in order to leave Cuba. She plays this out in the context of the SdCC scene, just as the children in *“*The Arrival of Brighteye” play out their dreams through the enactment of a childhood rhyming game in “Row, row, row your boat”.

I present extracts from Breeze’s poem “The Arrival of Brighteye” below, followed my poem “Guarapo”. Both illustrate the complex, inherently migratory social relationships and repetitions of Caribbean diasporic processes, positioning me and the some of the young people accompanying me at the SdCC as migratory subjects:

The arrival of Brighteye

My mommy gone over the de ocean

My mommy gone over de sea

She gawn dere to work for some money

An den she gawn sen back for me

An de children, playing ring game an clapping...

Row, row, row your boat

gently down the stream

merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily

life is but a dream

(Breeze, 2011: p. 124)

guarapo (cane juice)

sugary crystals
ghosted

translucent droplets
suspended

linger precipitously on the vermilion coloured line of her top lip,

glossy, languid

they tickle Julita's mouth.
we are both laughing up and out in expected delight, ha!

her
feet
tap,
tap,
tap in admiration

to the merengue
in time

to that precise thrill as her Sunset Flame acrylic nail,
little finger
left hand – "¡Mira, mira!" she says to me
collects he joyous itch and scratch of sugar bubbles. uh, hmm, hmm

depositing the treasure
her tongue, excited

smacks! and snaps! "ayeee!
worth the wait, si!" she declares

I sip mine like I don't want to finish it.

Hands on my hips, I shake my head in mock exasperation, like a disapproving Caribbean aunt on an inspection visit

"mnmmm, I'm tasting a hit of freedom
I'm not wasting
opportunities of a cane juice trip" Julita
whispers, conspiratorially,

the popping pink rhinestone gems
on her lime green, low cut, camiseta,
shout: "I heart New York".
she's celebrating connection with La Yuma[52]:

guarapo sugars my throat, makes me hum
"I want to be in America!" she sings

under her sweet, hot breath
just so only I can hear…

she tells me her tía Hortense
living in Miami,
via Spanish Town, swear down!
is gifting her gold hoop earrings
to capture dollars for a future
in her bronzed up platform shoes
dancing her ground

[52] Katherine Hansing explains in her 2011 article on changing attitudes in Cuba, that the term La Yuma is a colloquialism to describe the United States. Hansing, K. (2011) 'Changes From Below: New Dynamics, Spaces, and Attitudes in Cuban Society', *NACLA Report on the Americas,* 44(4), pp. 16-19.

performing her abundant dreams

“si, let’s take a selfie”. we buy another guarapo

My poem “(do) the peso doble” is crafted to be in engagement with Breeze’s poem, by mirroring her technique of using established and familiar rhymes or songs, overlayed with Jamaican words that Breeze employs in her poem ‘The arrival of Brighteye’ (2011: p. 124). In the poem ‘(do) the peso doble’ I use Spanish, Jamaican and English to interweave three narratives drawn from my own experience as a diasporic Caribbean woman and doctoral researcher. staying in Santiago de Cuba, spending time with Santiagueros, witnessing their daily challenges in negotiating resources and finances, and reflecting on my position as insider/outsider - implying the connectedness and experiences of my diasporic subjectivities and how I perform them in these different contexts. I have crafted the poem ‘(do) the peso doble’ by re-imagining the tune ‘The Locomotion’, sung by Little Eva, setting the words and verses to the tune’s rhythm, which is upbeat and joyous[53]. I do this so that some of the words and verses, presented below belie this upbeat rhythm, inferring experiences of liminality and vulnerability. I achieve this by focusing on the exhausting and mundane, on my insider/outsider status and ambiguity of identity. I juxtapose this to my observation of the crucial project of “la lucha” – the daily struggle that my Santiago host, her friends, family and neighbours were facing. And my poem itself responds to Breeze’s crafting of Bright Eye, conveying the constant underpinning negotiation of my own lived experience of diaspora, just as Breeze explores her own:

we do a dance, surviving

almost every day now

[53]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Loco-Motion

vamos, vamos

do the peso doble

to tussle with la lucha

in inventive ways how

vamos, vamos

do the peso doble

In his poem ‘Jonathan Jones’, Cos Causse imagines a moment in the life of a Barbadian migrant worker in Cuba as a way of understanding the processes of diasporic life in the migratory space of the Caribbean. He centres his poetry in the city of Santiago and specifically the Black family, which James calls “coordinates of belonging for Black Cubans” (James, 2022, p. 77). And through his poetry he further articulates his identity in relation to his African-ness and Caribbeanness. This is evoked through his relationships with his grandparents and his storytelling with and of them, linking them and himself to Africa and the Caribbean in poems such as “Family Legend” (1987).

Jonathan Jones (translation by Paulette Ramsay)[54]

Came from Barbados to cut cane in Cuba

He came with an empty coffer seeking his fortune

[54] Ramsay, P. (2001) 'Jesús Cos Causse—Afro-Cuban Poet', *Afro-Hispanic Review,* 20(2), pp. 57-59.

and together along with the lament of the drum

they shared their secrets, songs, sacrifices

dreams and longings

Cos Causse (2001)

Cos Causse (1987) valorises historical heroes of African descent, such as Nanny of the Maroons and Cuffy in the poem ‘Maroon Settlement’, which I argue situates his sense of African descent Caribbean-ness and further, Santiago de Cuba as Caribbean space. In “Family Legend” he continues this highlighting by including Marcus Garvey and Toussaint L’Ouverture in his pantheon of Caribbean heroes of African descent (James, 2022, p. 80). Here too, I argue, he affirms and situates his own articulations of his Caribbean identity embedded, in the stories of his grandparents as I have done with my grandfather’s story. He constructs the Caribbean itself as a mother figure:

My mother is gray like Guadeloupe and sad like Martinique

Her paths are crossed by a galloping Toussaint L’Ouverture

Amidst her waters sails the errant crew of Marcus Garvey

(From ‘Family legend’, Cos Causse, 1987)

I had not then heard of Jesus Cos Causse, the Santiaguero poet, or his work. When I did read some of his poems, I was astonished by the parallels in our lives and the fact that as a Cuban man he also saw himself as a Caribbean man, his Blackness configured through his Caribbeanness, and that some of his family members were followers of Garvey and other key figures of Black liberation.

I take inspiration from Cos Causse's poetry and how it allows him to navigate his identity through family life and Caribbean history, and like him, I articulate my inherited diasporic Caribbean-ness through my childhood memories and family home, which I configure as Caribbean space. I negotiate my Caribbean-ness through my imaginings of my grandfather, his life in Santiago de Cuba, and my relationship with an imagined Santiago and its carnival.

Cos Causse's poems mainly focus on the Caribbean's people of African descent, while my poems, such as 'people from elsewhere' presented below, explore other configurations of Caribbeanness as integral to the complexity of the Caribbean diaspora:

.

people from elsewhere

my great, great grandmother

Indian labouring hands

my great, great grandfather

African eyes and soul, with joy

thread the bloodlines

of my Caribbean family.

African, Chinese, Lebanese

assimilations …

syncretism negotiated (Hall, 1990: 234).

It is the people from elsewhere, my diasporic Caribbean ancestors', their histories and cultural practices that give me the contexts in which I can articulate my own being and becoming into my own diasporic identity, as UK born Caribbean woman, poet and doctoral researcher. In chapter six, I offer my autoethnographic poems that illustrate the epiphanic moments of my identity formation.

Chapter Six: Bookmarked memories. Epiphanies

In this chapter I present a series of my autoethnographic poems that chart my lived experience of coming into my diasporic identity as a poet and doctoral researcher. I reflect on how these events have shaped and informed my autoethnography, the ways I have thought about my diasporic Caribbeanness. I explore the epiphanic moments and trajectories that led to me writing this diasporic, poetic autoethnographic thesis.

Bookmarked memories. My identity formation though my engagement with the books on the family bookshelf.

Though I didn't know or realise it at the time, my doctoral research started when I was about six years old. Robert Romanyshyn asserts that "your research chooses you; you don't choose your research."[55] My memories and imaginings, and my lived experience of growing up in a Caribbean household in the UK– engendering my feelings of connection and belonging to a Caribbean through the books on the shelves, my parents' and their friends' conversations, the food that we ate, and family trips to Jamaica - would develop many years later into my doctoral research thesis. I didn't realise at the time that I would go on to develop my own original method of autoethnographic poetry to communicate my research. This was a way for me to explore a way of being, grounded in my experience that I didn't experience in the school classroom, where I was invisible in the textbooks.

Growing up in a UK based, Caribbean centred home, I was surrounded by sounds, aromas, images and books that infused this sense of Caribbeanness (Boyce Davies,

[55] Romanyshyn stated this point during a PhD Life Raft episode produced and hosted by Dr Emma Brodzinski. in March, 2022. Romanyshyn, R. D. (2020) *The wounded researcher: Research with soul in mind.*

2013). From time to time, I would pick up a book or a pamphlet, flick the pages so that I could inhale their fine dusty, musty smell, try to understand the text and delight in scanning photographs and illustrations of people who looked like me in these far-off places, in a Caribbean that my parents called home, even though we lived in the UK. Engaging with the books on the shelves was an act of embodying my Caribbeanness. There was one book in particular, '*Life World Library – the West Indies.*' This book held a particular significance in the formation of my identity as a child of Caribbean people, my growing awareness that there existed another space, another place that I could belong to that wasn't the UK, wasn't south London.



'Life World Library – the West Indies.'

My engagement with this book was (and still is) a significant turning point, an epiphany (Denzin, 2014, p. 52), marking how I situate myself in my research as poet to discuss my lived experience of coming into identity as a diasporic Caribbean woman and is one of the main reasons why I am doing this research. I am constructing a spiritual and physical space grounded in my lived experience (Weems *et al.*, 2009, p. 843), using the book *The West Indies* (Harman and LIFE, 1965) as an artefact to create a performance text of my childhood reflections to show a moment where, how and why I became a poet who is writing about her lived experience. As a child, the book *The West Indies* fascinated me because the images in the book that were familiar to me, because there were people who looked like me, my family and our friends; The images were a reflection of people and stories I could reference and link to my parents and their friends and begin to make sense of myself

as a child in a Caribbean space and in the world. There were stories and images that I heard my parents talk about in *The West Indies* book that I did not see in books or hear discussed or taught at school. At home I had access to knowledge that gave me context to construct my own Caribbean identity. I could also access similar books and stories about Caribbean people and places at home and through my supplementary Saturday Caribbean history lessons taught by my parents' schoolteacher friends, Jeff and Thelma in their home. I was now developing a lens through which to see myself in the world. I was obsessed, going back to the book's pages of pictures and captions and text time and time again; drawing me in with its seductive photographs of gruff men in Trilby hats, cruel looking white men on white horses (this cruel white man in the photograph was Trujillo, former dictator of the Dominican Republic); swan like women wearing colourful dresses in a marketplace, and another image of a woman cradling a rifle in her lap outside the window of a fancy dress shop. I was totally captivated by this book; it was my sense making connection to my imaginary of that Caribbean space and to give context to my identity formation – a position from which I could look out (Hall, 1990, p.222). Because of the enigmatic story of my grandfather and his mysterious, mostly unknowable life in Cuba, I would scan the photographs in the book, looking for his face in one of the many crowd scenes. His face wasn't in the pages of that book, but I could imagine him in those spaces to connect myself to the images and stories within the book.

The poem 'bookmarked memories or revisiting my parents' record collection and books: stories of a (UK based) Caribbean diasporic family (shelf) life' is crafted as a graphic poem (Draper,1971), with a hard line and spacing between the verses to suggest the organisation of the shelves, containing books, pamphlets, vinyl LP records, CDs and tapes in my childhood/family home. This was an idea that my supervisor, Jess Moriarty came up with during one of our supervision sessions on a mild spring morning, involving lots of tea drunk from huge mugs and discussing ways for me to draw on epiphanic moments, significant in the shaping of my awareness of my coming into identity as a researcher, a poet and diasporic Caribbean woman who wants to find new ways of writing and presenting knowledge (Pelias, 2013; Bhattacharya, 2016; Moriarty, 2008). I started to work on the poem by recording lists

of the books and music – LPs, CDs and tapes on my parents' bookcases and shelves. The poem is to be experienced as a few bookshelves, where some of the books and LPs are 'indexed' with a footnote, to be read against the title of the book, CD or LP, to indicate episodic moments in my identity formation. I do this to invoke a sense of the constant movement and the physicality of looking up and down the shelves; an embodied act of situating myself in that moment of knowledge acquisition to make sense of myself in the world. The indexes are a reimagining of my engagement with the book *World Library – The West Indies* as a significant zone in my family home in the UK as a Caribbean space. I invite the reader to engage with the footnotes in the poem as a way to reflect on their own epiphanies, and how these might inform their own identity articulation (Bhattacharya, 2013, p. 607).The indexing of the books is also an act of encoding my childhood memories of living in a diasporic Caribbean space, making it a site of meaning making in reference to my identity formation (Clare and Johnson, 2000, p. 221).

I spent three or four hours recording the titles of the books. I sat with my mum as I recorded the book titles, writing them down on a pad of A4 paper, and as I did so she offered little anecdotes. She recollected how she would take me and my brother to zoos, parks museums and the Commonwealth Institute (where we always went straight to the installation describing the history of Jamaica) regularly, to show us that learning at school wasn't sufficient and taught us nothing about African or Caribbean histories; that Caribbean history is British history. I have rendered a couple of these anecdotes in the poem's footnotes. I also asked my brother and sister to record the books and /or music that they have taken from my parents' shelves and are now on shelves in their own homes and I have done the same thing. I call my actions and my siblings' actions 'migrations,' to suggest the always happening processes of diaspora and its attendant discursive cultural practices; exchanging and consuming the books and music as ways of affirming and articulating who we are as a diasporic Caribbean family. The migrations of the books to my home and my siblings' homes signal a continuity of how the *elsewhere* (the Caribbean region and our imagining of it) and the *here* of my constructed Caribbean family space are foundational to my diasporic identity. I configure the bookshelves as touchstones of memory in the family archives (Millar, 2006) as a means of situating myself in family home Caribbean space and to imagine a historical link to my

grandfather. These are moments of my identity formation and articulation in the continual process of becoming, as diasporic Caribbean woman, doctoral researcher, and poet. The poem is presented below:

bookmarked memories or revisiting my parents' record collection and books: stories of a (UK based) Caribbean diasporic family (shelf) life.

Top shelf:

Beautiful Jamaica – Evon Blake
The Heart of a Woman – Maya Angelou
Geography and History of Jamaica – Gleaner
Caribbean Cooking- Judy Bastyra
People of Africa
The Mango Season – Ivor Osbourne
A New History of Jamaica- Clinton Black
It a Come – Michael Smith
Mama – Terry McMillan
Singin' and Swingin' and Getting Merry like Christmas – Maya Angelou
Anansi the Spider man – Philip M Sherlock
All God's Children got Travelling Shoes – Maya Angelou

Second and third shelves:

The African Trilogy – Chinua Achebe
The Benn Diaries – Tony Benn
The Cuba Project – Fabian Escalante
Politics in England Today - Richard Rose
The Autobiography of Malcom X - with Alex Haley

The State and Revolution – V I Lenin[56]

Mao and the Chinese Revolution – Ch'en

Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin – George F Kennan

Delia Smith's Winter Collection – BBC

The Book of Common Prayer

A History of Negro Revolt – CLR James

1984 – George Orwell

Aids to Psychiatric Nursing – Baillier, Tinder and Cox[57]

Poems- Mao Zedong

The Great Marcus Garvey – Liz Mackie

The Axioms of Truth – Kwame Nkrumah

'Honorary White' – ER Braithwaite

The Asante – MD McLeod[58]

Mandela! Struggle and Triumph – Abrams

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[56] my dad was the winner in a writing competition with Lenin

because dad's blue ink jottings in the margins of The Autobiography of Malcolm X

saying 'Black power' and 'this is truth!'

was telling me more of who I am

than the dry uniform print on the pages

of what V I Lenin wrote

his letters disappeared in the yellowing middle.

[57] mum, a registered nurse, a RMN (mental health)

answered the call of the Mother country.

working the liminal, the twilight,
the margin of the night shift,
"that is how we Black nurses were assigned by the matron on the rota. "
not regarded as subjects, as citizens
but foreigners, holding British passports
where is 'home' in the diaspora?

night shift didn't stop her educating us
trips to the Kensington museums
the Commonwealth Institute (Jamaica is there)
every school holidays. A well rounded, British colonial education, reworked.

[58] my mum is an Asante queen.
she looks like the Asante king on the cover,
so, we must be
Africans, scattered; our parents tell us

The vinyl LPs on the fourth and fifth shelves:

Jimmy Cliff – Anthology[59]

Dizzy Gillespie – Jazz

Miles Davis – The Collection

Lou Rawls – It's Supposed to be Fun

Lester Young - The Lester Young Collection

Ladysmith Black Mambazo – The Best of Ladysmith Black Mambazo

Ray Charles – Greatest Country and Western Hits

Charlie Parker – The Collection

Grace Nichols and Sam Selvon – Contemporary Literature on Tape

Jamaican Folk Singers Vol 3

Salif Keita – Sora

The Golden Age of Paul Robeson. 14 Beautiful Songs

Soukous – Sound D'Afrique

The Legendary Staple Singers

Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein's 'Showboat!'

Frank Sinatra sings Cole Porter

New York City – I'm Doin' Fine

Aime Bebe Nsimba Foguis or Taxi Pata Pata

Ipi Tombi featuring Margaret Singara – The Warrior[60]

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[59] Jimmy Cliff's music
a staple at family and friends' parties
he is Jamaican, he is African
he is Caribbean
it is his history's destination
he is a person from elsewhere (Hall, 1990:234)
the Caribbean is diaspora
I am of the diaspora

[60] a trip family to see the musical 'Ipi Tombi'.

Percy Sledge – When A Man Loves A Woman

The Very Best of Neil Diamond

Reggae Hits Volume 9

The Best of the Stylistics – Weekend

PNP – We Know We Are Going

Marvin Gaye – Greatest Hits

Byron Lee and the Dragoneers – Tiny Winy[61]

The Choir of St John's Methodist Church, Montego Bay, Jamaica Singing Great Hymns of Charles Wesley

Bob Marley and the Wailers – Catch a Fire

The Four Tops – Greatest Hits

Bob Marley and the Wailers – Exodus

Ahmad Jamal – All of You[62]

---

we were the only people in the audience

looking just like

while looking at the people on the stage

my 14-year-old soul held

in balance, pride and unease

at the tamp, tromp, tamp stamp of the stomping, dancing rubber boots

slapping, squeaking twisting of an unfamiliar world into existence in the Wimbledon Theatre.

[61] Byron Lee and the Dragoneers' music
a staple of family and friends' parties
he is Jamaican, he is Chinese
he is Caribbean
it is his history's destination
he is a person from elsewhere (Hall, 1990:234)
the Caribbean is diaspora
I am diaspora

[62] I examine the face on the cover of Ahmad Jamal's LP record

as time floats gently

gliding neatly between

my questioning 8-year-old fingers

frame the embossed cover curiously

checking that he really isn't my dad

Migration: From my parents' shelves to mine:

History will Absolve Me – Fidel Castro[63]

The West Indies – Life World Library[64]

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moonlighting as a jazz pianist. I'm not convinced.

he's wearing the same horn-rimmed glasses and neat goatee

tweed sports jacket and polished 'see your face in them' lace up shoes

like percussion instruments, his hands tap, tap, tap the keys

my dad, I think, has never placed himself

on the brocaded cherry wood piano stool in our front room
playing like Ahmad Jamal, with his African American hyphenated identity

[63] Fidel Castro does not lie

Fidel Castro does not lie

Fidel Castro does not lie

History will absolve him

Fidel Castro tells truth

Fidel Castro tells truth

Fidel Castro tells truth

History…is Caribbean history?

[64] the book *World Library – The West Indies* is the catalyst

where my poet self moves from the kitchen table to the book

where my researcher identity begins

where my research chooses me

where I don't choose my research (Romanyshyn, 2021, p.4)

cover and page 17:

Black swans in the quayside

I go back and forth, stare and stare and stare for a lifetime

at the cover of the book with the women, swans in red kerchiefs

expectant, waiting in blue cheesecloth and striped cotton dresses

in a moving stillness, their grace floats

I can't stop looking at them

I don't know that it is Haiti. The similarity is different

page 22:

I want to go to that school yard in Trinidad

to taste Caribbean space as the warm deliciousness of a ginger biscuit

haloed by my milk-stained mouth

just as the other ebony mahogany mango wood honey-coloured girls with black plaits do

people from elsewhere

Caribbean I am of but not from

page 87:

Francois Duvalier is holding his trilby, sternly

over his heart

I run upstairs

I reach for one of dad's hats, holding it happily

over my heart like in the photo, curiously

I know this is Haiti

they speak French

Toussaint L'Ouverture

sounds like a fine orchestra

page 127:

a machine gun

menacing, oddly elegant in its repose

framed by fussy, frilly drapes in a dress shop window

rests on a woman's black silk Dior skirt

Jamaica Labrish – Louise Bennett

The Interpreters – Wole Soyinka

Lady Chatterley's Lover – DH Lawrence

Politics in Jamaica – Anthony J Payne

The Soviet Achievement – J P Nettl[65]

Malcom X on Afro-American History- International Socialist Review

Narratives of Resistance: Jamaica, Trinidad, The Caribbean – Brian Meeks

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Vinyl LPs:

The Edwin Hawkins Singers - Oh Happy Day

Lil Armstrong - Harlem on a Saturday Night

Bob Marley and the Wailers - Uprising

Al Green - Spotlight on Al Green

Walt Disney presents The Jungle Book

---

skimming her righteous lap and tense knees

complemented by her tight, defiant stare

isn't Havana supposed to be fun, dad?

now that Fidel's promised of a liberation rainbow

Caribbean as resistive space

[65] so many books about Soviet history on the shelf

I'm 8 years old

I decide to move to Russia and live

the life of a proper socialist

next to St Basil's

onion domes to slide down and maybe, eat

for my parents to have a turn and be proper spies in fur hats

I'll go to Egypt, by the sandstone pyramids and the statue with the crumbling nose:

"African-ness smashed away by the colonialists" says mum

that story is inscribed on my face

The Drifters - Original Hits
The Detroit Spinners - Live!

Migration: From my parents' shelves to my brother Eddie's shelves:
The Cambridge Concise Encyclopaedia – Editor, David Crystal
The European Tribe – Caryl Phillips
Spy Catcher – Peter Wright
The Labour Party: An Introduction to Its History, Structure and Politics – Edited by Chris Cook and Ian Taylor
Hugo's French Conversation, Simplified
Black Boy – Richard Wright
The Conservative Party from Heath to Thatcher: Policies and Politics 1974-1979 – Robert Behrens
The Government and Politics of Britain, 4th Edition – John P Mackintosh
School Certificate Algebra: An Alternative Version of "A New Algebra For Schools, With Answers – C V Durrell

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Migration: from my parents' shelves to my sister Angela's shelves:
Garvey: His Work and Impact – Rupert Lewis and Patrick E Bryan, Eds

The poem is my rearticulating my identity in/through my engagement with the books and the music on the shelves, where the materiality of the books, the music playing on the record player are sensory experiences converging and informing my identity. These moments of exploration, discovery, and affirmation are transformative for me coming into identity as a poet and as a diasporic woman, a moment in the ongoing process refracted through these texts on the shelves. I am acquiring new knowledge

within the Caribbean space of my family home. I was learning a version of being Caribbean, even though I was not growing up *in* the Caribbean, through language, amongst the other discursive cultural practices; how these constructs and combining of languages in my poetry contribute to my own identity as a researcher poet and inform my poetry and as new ways of knowledge:

sounds of the Caribbean (in the) home

I was fascinated by the voices of my parents and their friends

talking about home as simultaneous locations

versions of there, the Caribbean and here in the UK.

in awe of all these big people, I was giddy on their living life and talking revolution,

while they ate curry goat and rice, souse and yellow yam

washed down with carrot juice, Appleton rum or Babycham,

Ahmad Jamal or John Holt played on the radiogram

in the background.

it seemed all of the Caribbean was (in) the house.

Miss Elaine, and Mr Crawford, hailing from Barbados

Uncle Felix, professor, Kittitian,

professional Kittitian

Miss Lewis, our teacher from Guyana

Sis Keating, greeting with the “sa ca fait?” of St Lucia

“moi alright!” answers Olivia, Carib from Dominica

varied, familiar and unfamiliar Caribbean hums, chupses, senses,

entanglements of words, interwoven

patterns of English, Spanish, French rhythms and cadences

a poetry of patois, accents, *the Presence Africaine*[66]

sounding sung rather than spoken

shaping me.

My poem '(do) the peso doble (party version)' is a reimagining of a childhood memory/imagining of a family party, dancing to the tune of "The Locomotion". The poem recounts an epiphanic and pivotal experience in the shaping of my diasporic identity (Denzin, 2014; Cooper and Lilyea, 2022). I use Jamaican in the verse to contextualise and reflect this reimagined experience, in order to offer the reader an immersive experience that facilitates their own reflection on their coming into identity. The line breaks and short lines in the poem contains cultural references to and motifs of Jamaica, such as Byron Lee, a popular band leader who symbolised the island's culture. The air mail reference is suggestive of the links between diaspora and notions of home. Using the upbeat rhythm of a pop a song is an invitation to have fun, dance a particular dance and to be carefree, re-imagining of the parties of and my childhood's confident optimistic and naïve certainty of being grounded in my family's Caribbean cultural space. I chose the title of the poem to infer the relentlessly aggressive quality of the paso doble ballroom dance, originating in colonial Spain[67] juxtaposed with the light, cheery rhythm of the pop tune, sung in North American English, by an African American woman and enjoyed and danced to at one of our Caribbean family New Year parties in the UK.

(do) the peso doble (party version)

I shake my little waist
at the party scene now
come on, come on
do the peso doble

[66] "Everyone in the Caribbean, of whatever ethnic background, must sooner or later come to terms with this African presence. Black, brown mulatto, white – all must look *Présence Africaine* in the face, speak its name". Hall, S. (1990) 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in Rutherford, J. (ed.) *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp. 222 to 237.

[67]

I tek me time an' do dat
like the big people dem show

come on come
do the peso doble

we all sing
to the sounds of Byron Lee
our link to JA
air mail and BOAC[68]

come on, come on
do the peso doble

tekin' oonoo- time
wid the chimes of Big Ben
adults singing folk songs
that I'll sing when I'm them[69]

so come on, come on
do the peso doble with me

for 'home'
and good times
read the Weekly Gleaner now! eh, eh!

I want to shake myself now
as in between girl
jump up (JA)
jump back (UK)
I've got to swing my inside out, whoa, whoa!

do the peso doble with me

[68] The BOAC (British Overseas Airways corporation) airline was part of the landscape of my family home Caribbean space, with my parents making regular trips back to Jamaica, individually or mum taking me and my brother for holidays. https://airlinehistory.co.uk/airline/boac-british-overseas-airways-corp/ . This form of travel is what Marcus L Stephenson defines as 'ethnic reunion' where travel is for visiting family networks and trying to trace ancestral roots. Stephenson, M. L. (2002) 'Travelling to the Ancestral Homelands: The Aspirations and Experiences of a UK Caribbean Community', *Current Issues in Tourism,* 5(5), pp. 378-425.

[69] 'Linstead Market' - A popular folksong in Jamaica, that I would heat my parents, especially my mum would sing around the house. Jekyll, W. (1966) *Jamaican Song and Story: Anancy Stories, Digging Sings, Ring Tunes and Dancing Tunes.* Dover Edition edn. Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications Inc, p. 219.

On a trip to Cuba the year before I started my research, I stayed in Santiago de Cuba. I passed a woman on the street we were simultaneously struck by our physical similarities. We both laughed in recognition and conducted a hesitant conversation in school grade Spanish and English. In that moment, I could hear the legacy of our shared histories of enslavement, colonialism and displacement on our tongues (Philip, 2015). We could only communicate with the colonisers' languages because we could not identify and locate our African languages, near drowned through the violent churn of the middle passage (McKittrick, 2021). We could have been kin, but we were strangers, and I could not assume otherwise. I took the memory of that incident to interrogate my positionality in my research – the who am I being? Taking an autoethnographic approach being the most appropriate in order to do so, because it encourages reflexivity, which in turn facilitates different ways of seeing and being. (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013b). The poem is presented below:

kin. stranger

we examine
each other

mirrors
c
ra

c k
ed

from side to side,

trying to make sense of the splinters.

before that time
finding ways through the babel maze
to each other

small, big things

like languagin' in split, stumped tongues – footnote[70]
searching for The Mother. La Madre. The Myth.

¿cómo se llama? the woman asks
I don't know I say, caught

I'm treading water
unmoored by clumsy assumptions -footnote[71]
wanting community
of shared histories
reflected back

shapes known
but different
stories known
but different
silences

My constant thirst to know needs quenching
but I fear drowning
in the unending Atlantic churn
or suffocating
under billowing clouds of contested notions

of Diaspora
of diasporas
of diasporisation
of diasporic confusion

I will return says one
I will continue says the other
I am here says one more

Curious, I enter the overwhelm of a noisy banquet long started

Tables laden with familiar starchy foods, in elaborate pots

I find a space for my own research
I pull up my own chair, choose my own plate,
and select my own sweetmeats as my main course.
fashioning my own cutlery, I cut my morsels in different ways

and leave the day-old bread on the lazy-Susan[72]

Coming into identity as a researcher

Returning to academia, after a long break to raise my family, I was excited and a little apprehensive about being in the university setting again. I felt excited but challenged about this new chapter in my life and I was curious about how I would perform as a doctoral researcher. This was my opportunity to find a challenging and celebratory way to discuss diaspora and identity grounded in my lived experience, by writing in a way that was scholarly, innovative and unconventional. However, I felt the pull and power still of a particular academic way to write (Moriarty, 2008) that contrasted with my newly developed way of thinking and writing. With poetry, I can resist dominant discursive practices in academia that create a fictive distance between me and the reader (McKittrick, 2021, p. 36).

I knew I wanted to research Caribbean identity, and I knew that I wanted to write about my Jamaican paternal grandfather's experience as a migrant worker in Cuba in the first quarter of the 20th century., and I knew that the ancestors were calling again to be written into a text their histories recorded. I also wanted to make sense of my childhood fascination with Cuba and wanted to make sense of how Black people in Cuba were positioned (de La Fuente, 2001; Doane, 2018; Gómes-Cásseres, 2018; McLeod, 2003; Sartorius, 2013; Sawyer, 2006). What I didn't really recognise at the time was that this was a way to understand my own identity formation, to make sense of this duality – of, but not from the Caribbean, that I was experiencing. I was already apprehensive about how I was going to write.

Returning to academia

In the spring of 2016, I decided that I wanted to reengage with academia, to find out what the current debates were and what people were researching and writing about on the Caribbean and identity. I wanted to meet up with people and ask questions and get involved in discussions. I wanted to know what language academics were using and whether I would understand. I busied myself attending workshops,

[72] Weems, M. E., White, C. J., Alvarez McHatton, P., Shelley, C., Bond, T., Brown, R. N., Melina, L., Scheidt, L. A., Goode, J., De Carteret, P. and Wyatt, J. (2009) 'Heartbeats: Exploring the Power of Qualitative Research Expressed As Autoethnographic Performance Texts', *Qualitative Inquiry,* 15(5), pp. 843-858.

seminars and spent a lot of time in the British Library, reading article and books on Cuban poets. I joined the Society for Caribbean studies and attended their 40th Annual Conference at the University of Newcastle in July 2016, and also joined the Cuba Research Forum, attending their Annual Conference the following September at the University of Nottingham. These were useful experiences, and I now had built a network of people to contact and speak with to help me to prepare for my doctoral research.

In Batac's autoethnographic work *"Failing" and finding a Filipina Diasporic Scholarly "Home": A De//colonising Autoethnography* (Batac, 2021), she traces her childhood to doctoral level educational experiences as a first generation student and a second generation Filipina Canadian, to highlight recurrent tensions with various forms of knowledge production. She does so to de/colonise autoethnography as method, process and product. Carrying that small girl, Yvonne into my PhD programme, was not with a sense of shame, as was Monica Batac's experience (p. 66). What I brought from my childhood experience of state education's lack, and from the Caribbean space of my family home and an affirming Saturday school education in Caribbean history, was a sense of curiosity and a sense of injustice. I also wanted to contribute to knowledge on diasporic Caribbean identities. Where were we in the text? Where were our voices, voiced by us? Autoethnographic poetry as a method is my way to make those diasporic Caribbean voices including my own lived experience, heard and visible I the text by me. Quiana Cutts (2019), proposes *ars spirituality* as a necessary underpinning of and influence in her writing, her poetry. Part of that is accessing cultural and racial memory (p. 914). I recognise and take up Cutt's proposal. I am also writing from a position of accessing my cultural memories, of family history, and my raced, diasporic and gendered self, with my insider/outsider status vis a vis traditional academic writing and my research. This brings me closer to the research participants and their stories, and I can write from a political, creative, emotional and intuitive space; a Black woman writing, which goes still against what the academy, focusing on output and product wants (Moriarty and Adamson, 2020). Things may be changing, with the growth of arts-based research (Bhattacharya, 2013; Faulkner, 2023; Hodgkins and Boydell, 2014; Leavy, 2018). There remains a legacy of reviewing method making and knowledge creation and writing that is not following the positivist, heteronormative tradition of 'facts', objectivity and distance as

not intellectual, theoretical, not disciplined (Boyce Davies, 1994; Fournier, 2021; hooks, 1999; Leggo, 2018; McKittrick, 2021); not *enough*. I look to what Carol Boyce Davies wrote in 1994 that "[T]heory, as it is reified in the academy, still turns on Western phallocentric (master) or feminist "gynocentric" (mistress-master) philosophy" (Boyce Davies, 1994, p. 39). I then look at what Katherine McKittrick wrote in 2021 that what still persists is "the […]tendency to privilege some theoretical or academic work as the methodological and intellectual frame through which to analyse the data (so we apply Karl Marx or a Marxist frame" (McKittrick, 2021, p. 49). There is still a way to go. Autoethnography is a discipline that is still critiqued as unintellectual and emotional (Sparkes, 2024; Walford, 2004; Winkler, 2017), but it has been adopted as a methodology, by scholars, who, like myself want to find an emancipatory way of researching that makes space for our ideas, innovations and creativity (Brown-Vincent, 2019; N'Diaye, 2021; Weems, 2013b; Richards, 2008). My life is the theory, from which I write draw play my research (Fournier, 2021; Moriarty and Adamson, 2020). Scholars such as Boylorn (2013; 2021), Faulkner (2018; 2021) and Ohito (2021b; 2021a) have engendered a reframing of autoethnography in order to encourage diverse ways of writing, like my autoethnographic poetry which is informed by historically and culturally lived experiences (Chawla and Atay, 2017, p. 4).

At the start of my research journey, I was confronted by my own questions and assumptions of how to perform as a researcher, and how to manage my expectations and apprehension about entering the academic community again after taking time out to raise our son and manage my work projects. In those early phases of the research process, which often felt daunting and confusing, I was confronted by dominant discursive constructs of academia – the language codes, the rituals and performances of seminars and conferences, outputs and profiles, practices and spaces in which I was now positioned as a researcher (Owler 2010). Here, I looked at and to my community of research peers, each of us offering, receiving and sometimes eschewing support; discussing and comparing the varying degrees of belonging and connection, exchanging our differing and often similar experiences of excitement, curiosity and self-doubt: how were we to negotiate modes of representation and knowledge production? I was feeling my way into the story of knowledge production in the communities of academia and diaspora through

poetry; a way of seeing and being in these worlds and sites of meaning (Denzin 1999, 2014). For me to make sense of this new experience was to think about and produce poetry as scholarly, creative work within prevailing academic systems (Heaton, 2002). My method of autoethnographic poetry offers an antidote or alternative to conventional academic writing that is synonymous with hierarchy and privilege (Bhattacharya, 2013; Boyce Davies, 1994; Fournier, 2021).

I was more confident about who I was as a poet and how I could use that poetic voice to represent my research (Faulkner, 2017a), finding my way to coming into my identity as a doctoral researcher. My poem "my hyphenated self: practising/performing/ being a researcher - the lab coat doesn't fit" is my negotiation of my researcher identity; how I was going to tell my research story. My use of dialogue represents my thoughts and workings out in my research diary and talking to myself carrying our everyday errands about how I was going to approach and how I was going to 'be' as a doctoral research student. (Brabazon, Gribbin and Sharp, 2023). The poem is presented below:

my hyphenated self: practising/performing/ being a researcher - the lab coat doesn't fit.

in split screens
where to look? what to witness?
what head? whose eyes?
examining scattered texts
hiding deep stories in plain sight
I journey towards identity
of researcher[73] searcher self.

on the way, I'm entangled in
theoretical bindweeds, thinking them

[73] "If we think about the prefix "re" in researcher, we understand that our questing/questioning is always a returning, a turning again. Carl Leggo, p171 in Cole, A. L. and Knowles, J. G. (2008) *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues.* London: SAGE.

poems of knowledge and The Answer(s).
to questions, rushing, impatient
leaving me wanting
so, I stop
to gather up thoughts
along oft trodden paths.

cut a new trail, hija!

I practise my faulty Cuban Spanish…
the words, shiny new shoes
rubbing on my heels making me stumble on flagstones
of solid doubt and rocky confidence.
but I carry on, hesitantly
clearing my throat
sitting up straight
ra, ra ra rolling the words on the tip of my tongue
who am I being right now?
I address my imaginary interviewee
in my Best Cuban Spanish:
"Perdón Señora Álvarez, por favor, tengo una pregunta para ~~usted~~ Usted (¿?):

¿Yo quiero conocer?, no*. ¿~~Yo quiero saber~~?* No*. yo quiero conocer a sus memorias del carnaval, ¿Señora?"*

in my head she replies "Tengo muchas historias del carnaval"
I need to sit with and pay attention to, as Soyini Madison tells it[74]
working hard herding up my assumptions trying to roam free[75],

[74] D. Soyini Madison challenges that we pay attention to positionality, as self-reflexive beings, aware and critical of our thoughts and judgments and how they impact. Soyini Madison, D. (2006) 'The Dialogic Performative in Critical Ethnography', *Text and Performance Quarterly,* 26(4), pp. 320-324. By writing poems, I was able to stay present and aware of what assumptions I was bringing to the research table.

[75] Nakata Moore's essay is an object lesson in how these assumptions can destabilise your research, but also encourage you to be reflexive. Nataka, M., Tiffany, M., Mildred, W. and Caridad Morales, N. (2015) 'Talking about Race in Cuba: Four Trans-Atlantic African Diaspora Women Share Their Experience', *International Journal of Cuban Studies,* 7(2), pp. 212-235, Moore, N., McDowell, T., Watson, M. and Caridad Morales, N. (2015) 'Talking about Race in Cuba: Four Trans-Atlantic African Diaspora Women Share Their Experience', *International Journal of Cuban Studies,* 7(2), pp. 212-235.

ha! ‘Truth’ in sheep’s clothing.
I resist painting stories with only colours familiar[76]
casting tentative strokes, to capture detail
I may miss in wide conceptual landscapes.
looking for reassurance in grainy detail
finding possibility in the unknowing
in listening for
my cues from the lived experience of others
finding clues in my own storied life

Decolonising the archive?

The poem “filling in the gaps” presented below was written in my research diary, reflecting a conversation that I initiated with Professor Michael Roper in response to a comment he made during his presentation *Family histories and the emotional legacies of the Great War* at a Centre for Memory, Narrative and Histories symposium ‘New Critical Directions in Memory Studies’ at Brighton university June 10th, 2022. The conversation His talk was focusing on his family history in relation to the first world war and he commented, in passing that he could have gone back much further chronologically, but he didn’t. It struck me at that moment, of whose histories count in the academy, who gets *written* into history, and who can access historical records in the expectation that the information needed will be available, and the poem is my key of working through that conversation. Hearing that statement reacting to that statement gave me an opportunity to rethink How to respond to the notion of narrative loss that hall referenced in his 1997 paper in which he invites us to move from that space But to replace it with something. This is my opportunity to reframe, to decolonise the archive using my own story practise to fill in the gaps of my own story in relation to diaspora, to create those historical links through my grandfather and beyond. I now have the power to decide which bit of my story I use to talk about and relate to broader stories of Caribbean identity and

[76] Katherine McKittrick states the importance of reading and rereading theories and books that you don’t like as a means of coming into knowing (p15). McKittrick, K. (2021) *Dear science and other stories. Errantries*: ©2021. I try to do that, but I don’t find it and easy thing to do.

diaspora. The poem is written to reflect the conversation we had after his presentation.

Filling in the gaps

he said: " I didn't, and I should"
she said: "I didn't because I can't"
I am not written in history
someone changed the names.
If diaspora is space and process
how do I
fill in the gaps
with my own imaginings
to make my memories seen?
"Memory is, in fact, fact
filter and fiction"[77]
You don't even have to try
but I need to
so, I do.

Making from the mess as a new doctoral researcher

Three years after attending those conferences I had registered at the University of Brighton, securing a Techne scholarship for my research. I was back in the throes of academic life, watching myself and others perform and the joyful, but the sometimes-confusing mess of realising ideas, understanding complex and often obscure theories and theorists. I was back in the intense moments of writer's block and staring at a blank page for want of some idea to unfold, searching for those elusive links; wanting to craft, to write, but not feeling able to (Moriarty, 2015; Papen and Thériault, 2018). My poem 'making from the mess' reflects my initial responses to

[77] Ohito, E (2021). What Can We Not Leave Behind? Storying Family Photographs, Unlocking Emotional Memories, and Welcoming Complex Conversations on Being Human. *Occasional Paper Series, 2021* (45)

my new enviornment, and negotiating my new identity as a doctoral researcher, attending a Techne welcome event for new PhD researchers. I was trying to make sense of being back in an academic space, that didn't feel like a return. I was conscious about how I should perform this new identity. The poem is presented below:

making from the mess

butterfly strokes of random thoughts,
Gordian words splashing and crashing onto the page
dizzying my sight, fogging my mind.
taking time, the text orders itself
as the poetry pen nets phrases before they flee,
too remote to gather and sort into meaning.

dust plumes betraying the urgency
drift, haloed by the sunlight,
becoming balm steadying a worried hand
and rushing mind, playing tag
with frantic words, scattering
waving and drowning

in the big, white space.

wavy lines whorl,
a creative turn capturing images from the mist
kneads and leavens them into delicious, doughy sense,
vaporous shapes merging into meaning.

I watch the leaves
conferring with ghosts,
punctuating evolving sentences.

I wait.

vague ideas from long pregnant fruit
emerge, shy in the light

I pluck seeds, savouring their sweetness.

A feast.
A famine.
A feast.

My community spaces and my identity as a doctoral researcher.

At a doctoral researchers' conference on "Engagement in Research"[78], one of the headline conference questions in the call for papers, asked: "how does foregrounding engagement with the research process change the form and nature of research?", I responded by thinking about how I draw on three intersecting community spaces that inform my lived experience as a poet, diasporic Caribbean woman in relation to my research, that I move helix-like, between: the community of poet and researchers inside and outside the academy who use their poetry to make sense of their lived experience in relation to their diasporic identity[79], and diasporic Caribbean communities - the diaspora of the diaspora[80] that I am part of and key in my research of lived experience in relation the Santiago de Cuba carnival (SdCC). I thought too about the community of research peers I shared office space with at the university, those I worked online with, attending writing retreats and researcher development programmes at the university. We shared ideas, concerns and joys as well as the practicalities of doing research. I was finding my way into my identity as a researcher. Previously I briefly discussed how crafting the poem 'love and stoicism in One Act on the number 13 bus' took me over a year to write. The poem is indicative of how I was coming into identity and my realising that my research process is part of

[78] Techne Summer Congress 2022: 'Engagement', 22 June 2022, Royal Holloway, University of London, organised by Techne Doctoral Training Partnership.

[79] This is one of my of poets who inspire me to write and think about among many other things, my diasporic identity: Louise Bennett, Jean 'Binta ' Breeze, N. NourbeSe Philip; Audre Lorde, Jackie Kay, Akila Richards, Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Fred Moten, Dorothea Smartt and Christian Campbell. Some I have shared thoughts, food and poetry with, others I have met and communed with on the page.

[80] Hall theorises the Caribbean diaspora as populated by people who migrated there, forced or otherwise and its diversity of cultures, its simultaneity of difference and similarity constitutes its being. (Hall and Morley 2019, p.139)

my everyday life, that it is informed by the everyday, not separate from it. The poem is presented below:

love and stoicism in One Act on the No 13 bus.

the cloistered air rises, heavily like stale incense
from rounded shoulders and soggy hoods, in silent prayer
to Instagram gods on tiny flashing neoprene altars
I strain to listen in my single seat behind the driver on the number 13 bus
to the woman across the aisle, all grace and stoicism in a damp mac

her words drip into the honeycombed holes
of her cell phone
gently she raises her right hand
softly coaxing and conducting the music of her words
whispered, molasses and deliberate

as if caressing her lover's face,
she shares her feelings in feathery sighs
of being weighed, calculated and considered
by a politeness of medics guessing and thinking, poking and pondering
bearing her malady with an oppressive dignity

that makes me hold my breath

a river of rippling calm, her voice washes over pebbles of detail,
smoothing them for the anxious ear
on the other end of the line

I clutch my notebook, pen poised in vain attempt
to order thoughts from the conference

but see some of her words where my notes should be
a Tango of quick, quick slow salidas and ganchos cross the page

I close my book after the dance.

My notebook on that bus journey was an epiphanic moment of realising my coming into identity as a researcher crafting autoethnographic poetry to make sense of my diasporic identity.

“Research as re-search answering the ancestors’ questions.”

(Romanyshyn, 2020, p. 65)

My poem ‘routes/roots’, mapping the trajectory of my research or “your research chooses you; you don’t choose your research” (Robert Romanyshyn)’ explores the relational interplay and connections of those burgeoning community spaces my lived experience inhabits: the researcher/academic/poetry communities, the SdCC, poets, and the Caribbean diaspora. It is a concrete poem designed as two parallel texts on the same page that are contrapuntal (Novák, 2019) to suggest their connectivity. The poem can be read and experienced by the reader as two poems in dialogic engagement with each other, and that can be read as one poem. I have crafted it this way to convey my embodied experience of my research, drawing on my experience of the carnival in 2018, before I started my research, and my engagement as a young child with the books on the shelves at home. The musicality of the carnival procession text in the left-hand column is a metaphoric signifier of my celebration of my coming into diasporic Caribbean identity in the Caribbean space of the carnival. The column interplays with the parallel text exploring the genesis of my researcher experience and my coming into my researcher identity (Lapum, 2008); how I have experienced the back and forth of ideas and thoughts, the frustrations, excitements of new approaches; the highs of ideas coming together and the lows of writer’s block. The poem is the trajectory, from my childhood memories of engaging with the books that ignited my interest in the Caribbean, and the start of my exploration into my diasporic identity, marking the genesis of coming into my researcher identity and writing this thesis. The poem is presented below:

routes/roots, rhizomes. mapping the trajectory of my research or "your research chooses you; you don't choose your research" (Robert Romanyshyn)[81].

meandering, ebbing and flowing, thoughts worm and curl
bubbling up a quiet roar back and forth
"¡aquí estamos!" hear,
"¡aquí estamos!" here
creating gritty tributaries to the holy grail with meaning, ideas

food stalls, oases for parched throats and expectant bellies
promising, then fading
appear
to gather, disperse and regroup in irreverent clusters flow again
of pointed insistent fingers and shouted commands: scoop them up, quick!
"más plátano, no seas tan malo con el cerdo!" I try to fill a page
momentarily sated another path cut in this wayward procession anew

rhythmic feet and walking sticks syncopate journeys writing becomes
rhythm
to empty bandstands then pauses…
in nothing

eager ears searching out lauded musicians
selling reggaeton, heartbreak and revolution.
waiting, waiting this expectant crowd I wait, wait
listening
conjuring up well-rehearsed skills of patience and resignation
for all things *en la lucha* [82] my ideas struggle to find
the procession, falling back on itself rippling their reflections

[81] (Romanyshyn 2020)
[82] *'la lucha'* (the struggle) experienced on a daily basis by Santiagueros, in constant negotiation with the challenges of life in contemporary Cuba as outlined in Hannah Garth's essay 'Consumption, Temporality and Celebration in Contemporary Santiago de Cuba' *American Anthropologist, 121, 801 – 814*

on the page

with people dancing their own private joy[83] return, reframe themselves

rolling again in contexts unexplored

this sea of bodies revealing wider truths

buoyed by tidal waves of imaginings, I peel back memories

heaving in and out of side streets familial, communal[84]

melding with the pop and hum of pulsive community tucked away in the folds

conga returns to the main lines of Castro, Garvey and Nkrumah's

on Calle Antonio Maceo, just before the wide, tall steps words still vaulting,

up to Norma's mama's house before my eyes

tengo ganas de bailar! jumping to liberation hymns in yellowing pages inked

like the spontaneous displays of *son* from regal couplings with my father's notations

magically appearing on the town hall steps by Cespedes Park tapping in liminal spaces

precise patterns drawn on dusty ground counternarrative,

by determined toes in American Tan tights hot stepping

spidery ladders webbing the way down back onto my blank pages

to tired shoes that haven't seen rest kicking up busy ideas

in ten *makuta*[85] days and nights. in my fatigued mind

researcher, searcher poet. Diasporic self.

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[83] A celebration of my diasporic Caribbeanness in the individual, private and communal rolling in the conga, performing African/Caribbean diasporic subjectivity as a text of belonging.

[84] Jamaican writer Andrew Salkey, on interviewing a former enslaved man in Cuba in 1963, said that he felt "…like a robber' in 'appropriating' this man's "limited time and energy left" in telling his story, recounting his memories (Andrew Salkey quoted from the chapter *'Slavery, Historicism, and the Poverty of Memorialization'* by Stephan Palmie, p363 in Radstone, S and Schwarz, B (eds.) Memory: Histories, theories, Debates, Fordham University Press, 2010. This is something that I have often thought about in reimaging my grandfather's life. Jamaican, pan Africanist living in the colonial frames of the UK and Belgium and then Cuba in the early years of the 20th century. Am I a robber too? No, I am a diasporic legacy carrier with my autoethnography.

[85] Makuta is a form of Rumba, seen as the national dance of Cuba and I suggest it in this line to reflect on the complexities and dimensions of diasporic Caribbean life, that the dance *…" requires play as well as deliberation…full of contrasts and contradictions."* Rumba: Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba. Daniel, Y 1995, Indiana University Press

Chapter Seven: A conclusion. Like diasporic formations, to be continued…

there were two questions that I asked myself
to frame my exploration, interrogation, examination
of my lived experience of coming into a Caribbean, diasporic, poetic researcher identity:

how can an original method of autoethnographic poetry
be used to explore diasporic Caribbean identities and Caribbean spaces?
and
how do I use my autoethnographic poetry
as a tool of reflexivity
in my research and challenge conventional academic research?

it seems at odds to write a conclusion, a finishing, and ending
for an autoethnographic thesis that focuses on an evolving
original, autoethnographic poetry to explore
my diasporic Caribbean identity
my identity
in formation
Bakhtin (1984) says that carnival never finishes
Hall (1990) says that identity formation never finishes
always in process of being and becoming
for me, my identity,
like carnival
like poetry
Is always in formation

I tap into transformation, resistance and possibility
to write to think clearly, autoethnographically, poetically
from my particular to a universal singular
I developed an original method of autoethnographic poetry
that I crossed from an embodied Caribbean space,
an emancipatory space
to think and write to exhale
to be fully expressed.
my struggle with linear prose is symbolic of my struggle
with dominant ways of producing knowledge
privileging objective, positivist facts and data
and not people, emotion and the mess of life

I have tried to show
rather than tell my reflexivity by weaving
my responses, missteps
contemplations and decisions throughout the thesis.

I write in context, from a position
Stuart Hall says everything has to be said
in context
I am positioned
Carole Boyce Davies (2013) says we create the Caribbean spaces
I move around in to make sense of myself

what are the whispers carried
in my blood needing to be expressed?
the words that are desperate to be heard
I am a survivor I am a survivor
of cancer
twice over

a woman, a Black woman, a mother, a granddaughter,
a poet
a researcher in higher education
that last one nearly bruk me.

poetry, like carnival
is my space of engagement, movement
and storytelling
of my grandfather
who travels in my imagination

the Caribbean
like poetry
like carnival
is a space of imagined community
a constant remaking
a constant reframing

diaspora
diaspora like carnival like poetry
is the Caribbean. it moves
reshapes
it travels
and is beyond frame and time
it migrates, scatters and settles momentarily
spirit goes beyond, exists beyond
borders
it is local, it is national, it is transnational
it is all of these things

my poetry like carnival is a story of myself

in imagined spaces, different contexts
Caribbean spaces, for me as poet

the carnival of my self

I have developed
an autoethnographic poetry
exploring my life experience
to understand my place
as a diasporic Caribbean woman
in the world

I used autoethnographic poetry
a qualitative research method
reimagining
Caribbean identity and space

to understand poetry
as a reflexive tool
to explore my researcher identity,
my reflexive practice

I used autoethnographic poetry
as a method
to interrogate entanglements
of the colonial encounter

to inform my autoethnographic poetry
I developed an original method
drawn from lived and imagined experience
adapting the idea of carnival,
as a resistive site of storytelling, of transformation, of possibility

of knowledge creation
iterative and unfinalised

my autoethnographic poetry
challenges conventional academic writing
by opening up spaces, creating knowledge in the silences
on the page
offering insight into
lived and imaginary diasporic Caribbean lives.

writing myself and others in the text
enabled me to address vulnerabilities
for myself and others
In my research

by doing that I …

I explored my ethical responsibilities
to the interviewees
and myself
in/as my research

my autoethnographic poetry
creates spaces
or me to acknowledge the historical trauma
the violence of enslavement
colonisation and migrations
configuring the Caribbean Diaspora

that's why I'm here.

I investigated trajectories
of diasporic Caribbean processes
identities
that led to my travelling in and to my own

My research adds to a rich legacy and growing movement of creative+ diasporic literacies and what Hall calls a “diaspora aesthetic” (Hall, 1990, p. 236) by evolving a new method of autoethnographic poetry that centres the lived experience of diasporic, from a position of knowing and being. My intention in developing my diasporic autoethnographic poetry is to show a more democratic and inclusive way to write and create knowledge. I craft my autoethnographic poetry as embodied experience, to transform the reader’s experience so that they engage in another social world that they may not be familiar with; one that is personal, emotional and human (Faulkner, 2019; Weems, 2016).. By crafting my poetry on these terms, I am resisting and pushing through the borders of conventional academic discourse, that is Eurocentric and exclusionary on writing and presenting my research. My autoethnographic poetry is “my deliberate narrative strategy” (Boyce Davies, 1994, p. 7). I have demonstrated how my autoethnographic poetry’s “self -representation speaks of the presence of lived lives, revealing subjectivities that are occluded from history” (Scafe, 2013, p. 203). My autoethnographic poetry subverts and resists dominant knowledge systems in academia (McKittrick, 2021, p. 41). I do this to show others who want to carry out research how they can by adapting this method that I have developed.

I am connecting on a human level with the other research participants, not as data, but as people with lives, loves and rich experiences in diaspora that I want to share in with them to create knowledge. By situating myself in my methodological, creative practice I can “claim a solidarity with the other participants’ experiences” (Bhattacharya, 2016, p. 310) of coming into my identity as a diasporic Caribbean person alongside the stories of others’ experiences of diasporic identity formation. Sharing is knowing. My autoethnographic poetry becomes “that act of speech, of “talking back” that is no more gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice”(Hooks, 1989, p. 9). I do this to contribute to indigenising knowledge production (Bhambra, 2014), from the source of my lived experience as part of a collective of experiences of diasporic Caribbean identity formation, to convey the livingness of Black and diasporic life (McKittrick, 2021).

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Participant information sheet (English)
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Santiago stories

Appendix one



University of Brighton

Participation Information Sheet

Title of Study:

The Santiago de Cuba Carnival as transformative performance art and archive.

Introduction and the purpose of the study/project?

Please let me introduce myself; my name is Yvonne Canham-Spence, I am a doctoral student at the University of Brighton in the UK, and I will be carrying out research on people's experiences of the Santiago de Cuba Carnival. The aim of my research is to explore through your stories and memories how the Santiago de Cuba carnival has affected your everyday life.

I would like to invite you to take part in the study. Before you decide I would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. if there is anything that is not clear please ask me. You will be given time to think about whether you wish to take part before making a decision and you can keep this sheet to refer to.

Why have I been invited to participate?
I have asked you to participate in my study, because I am looking for between 20 and 30 people from the age of 18 (although those under 18 can participate with the consent of their parents or guardians), from different backgrounds, who will have different experiences of the Santiago de Cuba Carnival. It is important for the research to hear a variety of voices and experiences of the carnival.

Do I have to take part?
Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If your decision is not to take part at any time during the research this will not have any negative consequences for you.

What will happen to me if I take part?
Originally the intention was for me to meet you in a series of face-to-face interviews in Santiago de Cuba, between the months of March and September. However, due to current restrictions with the COVID 19 pandemic my travelling to Santiago de Cuba will not be possible at the current time.

The interviews will now take place via email with your written responses to some opening questions initially, with the intention and hope that I can travel to Santiago to conduct follow up interviews in your home, with your permission, or in an agreed public place. These interviews will be for my research purposes and my sole use only. Your consent will be requested by you signing a consent form before the start of the interview. The first interviews, via email will take place from March 2021 until September 2021.

If the situation with the COVID 19 pandemic is resolved it is hoped that you will have the opportunity to perform your short story or poem to an invited audience of friends and family in Santiago de Cuba and to have it published, with your consent, in an anthology at the end of the research period in 2023. Photographs or memorabilia may be reproduced, with your permission, for illustrative purposes in the anthology and also the live performance. I will be assisted by a research assistant/ interpreter, who will also respect your privacy and keep any information disclosed confidential and private where necessary. The information that you share with me about your carnival experiences will be used for my research thesis only, apart from your stories and/or poems which will be published in a book. For that you will be asked to provide written copies of your poem or story.

Will I be paid for taking part?
There will be no payment for taking part in the research. You will receive a complimentary copy of the anthology and you will be invited to a dinner at the end of the research project as a token of thanks for your contribution.

Will my taking part in the study/project be kept confidential?
I will be presenting my research in papers and at conferences and would like to use some of your creative work and comments as examples of how people understand and reflect on their experiences of the Santiago de Cuba Carnival. You will also be invited to contribute to a live performance of the poem or story that you offer as part of the research and if you agree to this, your anonymity cannot be guaranteed. However, your name can be anonymized or pseudonymised on your request if you do not take part in the live performance but wish to contribute to the written anthology. I will be using a coding system that only I have access to which will keep particular views or statements unattributable.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?
You may withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and any information that you have given will be withdrawn by me, so that your privacy is maintained and respected.

What will happen to the results of the project?
The results of the research will be published as a doctoral thesis and will be available to read online. The anthology of poems will be published in a book and will be made available to participants beforehand.

Who is organising and funding the research? (not required for student research where there is no funding involved)
The research is funded by AHRC Techné, and the University of Brighton in the UK.

Contact details
I can be contacted via email: ycs19@brighton.ac.uk

What if I have a question or concern?
Please contact me at ycs19@brighton.ac.uk

Who has reviewed the study?
The study has been reviewed and given a favourable ethical opinion by the Research Ethics Committee, University of Brighton, UK. If you believe your concerns have not been dealt with to your satisfaction, you can contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee as follows:
Dr. Annabella Pollen A.Pollen@brighton.ac.uk 00441273 64364

Thank you.

Yvonne Canham-Spence
PhD Candidate
School of Humanities
University of Brighton
UK.

Appendix two Ethics Committee approval letter



University of Brighto

Arts & Humanities CREC

424 Watts Building
Lewes Road
Brighton
BN2 4GJ

11/01/2021

Ref: 2021-7269-Canham-Spence A Poetry of Resistance: The Santiago de Cuba Carnival as Transformative Performance Art and
Archive

Dear Yvonne

Thank you for your resubmission to the Arts & Humanities CREC at the University of Brighton.

The committee are happy to offer a favourable ethical opinion for this study.

Please continue to follow national and international governmental guidance on conducting research under Covid-19 conditions.

Favourable ethical opinion is given on the basis of a project end date of 31/07/2023. If you need to request an extension, please complete a change request form. Please note that the decisions of the committee are made on the basis of the information provided in your application. The CREC must be informed of any changes to the research process after a favourable ethical opinion has been given. Research that is conducted without having been reviewed by the committee is not covered by the University research insurance cover. If you need to make changes to your proposal please complete and submit a change request form in order that the CREC can determine whether the changes will necessitate any further ethical review.

Once your research has been completed, please could you fill in a brief end of project report form. Finally please could I ask that you flag up any unexpected ethical issues, and report immediately any serious adverse events that arise during the conduct of this study.

We wish you all the best with your research and hope that your research study is successful. If the CREC can be of further assistance with your study please contact us again.

Best wishes

Dr Annebella Pollen

Chair, Arts & Humanities CREC

Appendix three

University of Brighton

Participant Consent Form

Title of Project: The Santiago de Cuba Carnival as transformative art and archive.

Name of Researcher: Yvonne Canham-Spence

	Please initial or tick box
I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions.	☐
The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study and any possible risks involved.	☐
I understand that the interview will be via email and I will give my written response to written questions via email and that I may be asked to scan personal documents such as photos and memorabilia regarding the Santiago de Cuba Carnival.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without incurring consequences from doing so.	☐

I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will normally be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else.	
I agree to take part in the above study.	

……

Name of Participant, Date, Signature

……

Name of Researcher, Date, Signature

Appendix four – interview questions

Before answering the questions, please say something about yourself. If you want to remain anonymous, let me know and I will remove your details and provide you with an agreed pseudonym. Please write as much or as little as you feel comfortable with.

What does the city of Santiago de Cuba and the Carnival mean to you?

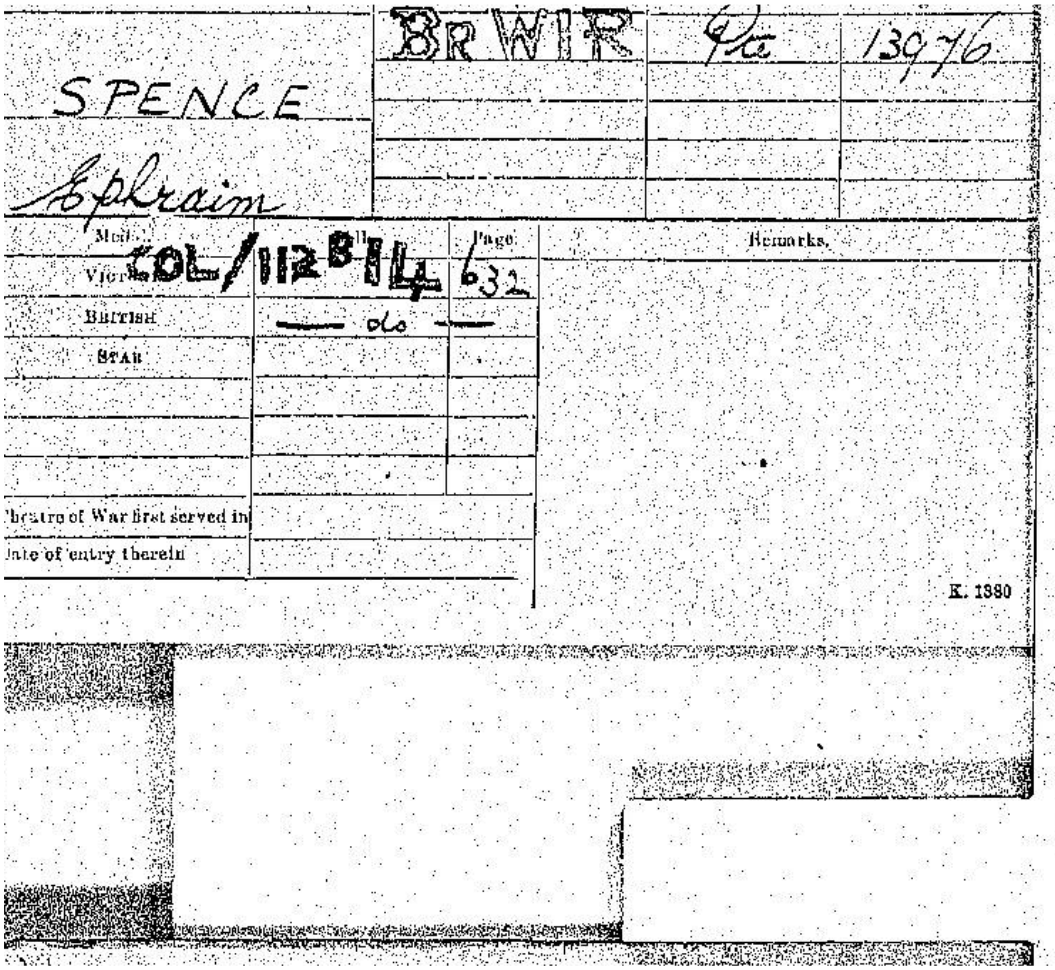
What do you remember most about the Carnival of Santiago and why?

If you performed in the Carnival or contributed in any way, what were your reasons for wanting to be part of it and how did that affect your daily life?

Tell me about your memories of preparing for, participating in and observing the Santiago de Cuba Carnival, the congas and the street parties.

I would like to invite you to crystallise your memories and stories of the Carnival of Santiago by writing a poem about Carnival as part of your daily life.

Appendix five Mr Spence's war medal card


SPENCE
Ephraim
BR WIR
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13976
Roll
COL/112 B 114
Page
632
Remarks.
Victory
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Star
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Theatre of War first served in
Date of entry therein
K. 1380

Appendix six

Santiago Carnaval stories – Norma

I am a Santiaguera, the great-granddaughter of a Haitian woman who was a slave of the French Guillard family in the coffee-growing area of El Cobre, in Santiago de Cuba. This surname is still in my family. As a single mother and potential feminist, she passed this surname on to my grandmother Monica, who in turn had to repeat the situation of being mother and father, passing this surname on to my father.

This family history called us to be family women who from a very early age knew how to face difficult realities and confront machismo.

With this example from the beginning of the Cuban revolution, at the age of 15, I joined the literacy project for the peasantry and from there I began to participate in the social and political development of the country. I was a leader on several occasions when I was a student.

My career has always been linked to the teaching profession and has allowed me to exchange feminist experiences with different generations, even if I was not aware of them. I was the Public Relationist of the Association of Women Communicators (MAGIN) Association with the objective of permeating a gender approach to the communicative products of Cuba, I worked in an advertising agency. I worked in an advertising agency where I dealt with the image of women and their representation, both black women and lesbians. coordinated a Lesbian Women's Social Network, published several articles on cross-cutting feminist issues raising gender with race, racial discrimination and HIV/AIDS.

I support and participate in the work of several audiovisuals on these issues.

Now retired, I am the President of a research section (SERES) on human rights issues, racial discrimination, and the fight against LGBTQI+ phobias. I am also one of the coordinators of the Network of Afro-descendant Cuban Women and of the board of the Afro-descendant Regional Articulation of Latin America and the Caribbean, Cuban chapter (ARAAC) for the fight against racial discrimination in Cuba.

Santiago de Cuba is my city, I was born there, and I grew up there, although I don't live there now. I frequent it because my mother is still alive in her 101st year and her birthday is on the very day when the carnivals begin, so we always have a double party.

Santiago is recognised as a rebellious city, from where the fundamental struggles and revolutions were born to face independence in various stages, as a hospitable city always ready to receive and attend with love to all people no matter where they come from and always heroic because of the example of struggle given and because many of the fundamental heroes of independence were born there.

To say "I am from Santiago" has a great meaning for those who hear it, it represents pride and a particular way of being.

The Santiago carnival is unique, full of joy and flavour. It has a lot of tradition because of all the stories it tells in the different comparsas and parades showing a real joy. They even show representations of the life of the Haitians and their culture when they liberated themselves from the French.

There, to the beat of the music, there is a movement that drags the people to follow it, it is a great celebration of the culture of Santiago. It takes place all over the city, the comparsas, parades and congas are in different neighbourhoods, and they visit each other. Neighbours and friends get together to enjoy themselves and go out to enjoy with the family, it is a street party for the whole city.

For Santiago the carnival is not only a great celebration of the people, of the families, but also a source of pride.

I have many memories of the Santiago carnival, but the one that has marked me the most is what it means for my family. Our childhood is located in a neighbourhood where carnival rehearsals are always held and the whole family, including my grandmother, would go out to visit the preparations and accompany them when they rehearsed in the street.

There are preferences when choosing whether to arrollas (shuffling dance) with a paseo which is more of a trumpet, with a comparsas or with a conga.

The conga is typified by drums, bell and Chinese bugle. My family had the privilege that an uncle played the bell on one of the most famous congas "La Conga de los Hoyos" and the whole family was there to support him. Even today this situation still exists because the bell has been passed down through the different generations of the family and the tumbao it produces is a magical joy.

On carnival days the whole city is mobilised and ready to celebrate and another of its wonders is that you can meet friends and agree to share.

To the greatest memory of the carnivals, I would add that of seeing the congas like a bus, because as they are from different neighbourhoods, you get on a conga and go along without realising it and you get to another place without taking a car.

The carnival in Santiago is very similar to the one in Brazil, all movement, friendship and familiarity. In the carnivals I was never one of those who contributed to their development, nor did I take part in their rides as a dancer, although I never lacked the desire to do so. I am the daughter of a woman dancer, and I went out to her as a conguera (conga dancer), but I stopped living in Santiago when I was 15 years old and then only visited at carnival time.

My only way to contribute is by dancing, every time a conga passes by the corner of my house, I join my neighbours, and we go to dance for a while.

The Santiago carnival has a tribune and judges because the presentation is competitive, so each dance group chooses their costumes, their music and scenery according to something that is competitive and for that they spend a lot of time preparing themselves

The preparation of the carnival entails that the members of the parades, comparsas or congas rehearse for two months beforehand to prepare the performances they are going to present and with which they are going to compete for a first prize, a second prize, a third prize or a mention.

These groups of participants are from the same neighbourhoods where they are preparing and sometimes some of them have been participating for years.

The government, which organises these events from the municipality of culture, provides them with fabrics, shoes and accessories for their costumes.

They also have the help of different organisations that they represent and these provide logistical support. The university has its group, the young people from the organisations, the textile company, and so there is a combination of support.

There are already comparsas that are historical for representing cultural traditions and the support comes from the government itself through the area they are going to represent.

There are those who prefer to go as observers and get their tickets for a grandstand and from there enjoy the moment of the choreography presentation.

There are also those who don't go to the conguera or to the grandstand and enjoy it in the streets where there are kiosks selling beer, food and with orchestras that rotate through the different organised points and thus move depending on the place or the street where the orchestra of their choice is going to play.

In my case, for a long time as a young woman, I was always interested in playing in the streets, then I had a day of preference in the Kiocos, which were also decorated with competition motifs, but I also looked for the orchestra that was invited and of preference, for me it was very lively. Sometimes in the neighbourhoods there was a party that used to be fabulous and we would stay there.

I often hum a poem not created by me, but very descriptive of my daily life:

AL CARNAVAL DE SANTIAGO ME VOY

PORQUE ES DONDE MEJOR

SE PUEDE GOZAAAAAR

……..^……

TO THE CARNIVAL OF SANTIAGO I GO

BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE IT'S BEST

YOU CAN ENJOY IT BEST

Appendix seven

Santiago Stories – Naima

Naima Alena Torres Guillard Graduate in Sociocultural Studies. Crafts Technician, Entrepreneur, Independent Worker.

I belong to the SERES Identity Section of the Cuban Society of Psychology. Activist in the fight against racial discrimination. Assistant of the research on the fight against LGBTQI phobia and human rights related research. I teach workshops related to handicraft art and self-esteem issues.

I was born in Havana, but I define myself as Santiaguera, because it is the city I love, despite having lived in three provinces such as Santiago de Cuba, Matanzas and Havana. I am very funny, humorous and communicative. I am currently working as a freelancer. A dancer like my mother and grandmother.

For me the city of Santiago de Cuba and the carnival are two things that I love, as I said before I was born in Havana but I defend Santiago to the hilt, as I defend that province so much many people tell me why I don't go there and I tell them all that I would love to, as the majority of the population of Santiago wants to come here I would like to live there. I have spent my whole life there, I remember when I was studying in primary, secondary and pre-university here in Havana I was crazy for the holidays to come so that I could go to Santiago and spend the two months of my holidays there. I am fascinated by that province and I love the carnivals, not to mention the fact that they are very colourful, their costume designs, their costumes and their floats are beautiful, but the main thing is their congas, getting into them and dragging myself to exhaustion is the best thing of all.

The carnival of Santiago is fascinating, they say that there are other very good ones, but I can only compare the ones in Havana, Matanzas and Santiago, which are the ones I have been to, although the one in Matanzas is also very good, I still prefer the one in Santiago de Cuba and before it was 10 days non-stop, the carnival days were continuous, from morning to dawn, 10 days where all the people of Santiago asked for a holiday to live those days of celebration from morning to dawn, now there are only 7, not with such intensity but for me it is still the best. Carnival is the time for the whole family to get together to share, celebrate, have fun and above all to disconnect. As the whole town goes out into the streets you meet friends you haven't seen for a long time and it's a time of happy reunions. I never performed in the carnivals, although I would have liked to, but living in Havana I couldn't rehearse with them and that took a whole year's rehearsal to participate in them. For me it didn't affect me at all if I couldn't take part, I enjoyed it just as much as if I had taken part in them.

The memories are many and very good since I was a child, especially that I didn't want to miss a single day of carnival, every day I wanted to see the rides and roll behind the congas and in the end I would end up so tired that I would end up sleepwalking down the street

holding the hands of my maternal grandparents who always took me, they were as much fun as I was. I was lucky that as my grandparents lived at the bottom of the stairs in the carnival zone, they would put up music stages on my block and there would be good street parties.

I don't have a poem about the experiences of carnival, but it can be simplified with a saying that was said a lot in a roll, celebrating and very happy that goes like this:

"I LIVE IN THE WATER LIKE A SHRIMP

AND NOBODY CARES HOW I LIVE".

……..^……

“YO VIVO EN EL AGUA COMO EL CAMARON

Y HA NADIE LE IMPORTA COMO VIVO YO”

I loved to repeat it because one had fun as one wanted and in different ways humming that refrain from the congas.

Appendix eight

Rosaida Santiago Carnaval story (translation from Spanish)

Personal data: My name is Rosaida Ochoa Soto, born in Holguin (eastern province north of Santiago de Cuba), I am 67 years old, I am a medical epidemiologist, I have visited Santiago de Cuba on many occasions, among them during the carnival season.

l Cubans of my generation have heard of Santiago de Cuba and its carnivals with pride. Santiago de Cuba (SCu) as the second capital of Cuba, hospitable, with its cheerful, rebellious, boisterous people, who love their land even though they sometimes migrate to any place in Cuba. Santiago de Cuba and Holguin (my province) always disputed the merits in social indicators (education, health, sports), but deep down it was recognised that Santiago de Cuba was a rival to be considered for its good work in these spheres.

The Santiago carnivals are the most joyful in Cuba, some have dared to compare them to those of Rio de Janeiro, with their comparsas and their oriental conga where the people hear a drum and go out behind the congas and the movement of the hips and buttocks of the Santiago woman is famous among the men. Although the carnivals are remembered for their contagious music, the joy of the people, the kiosks selling ayacas and beer, and in other times the street costumes, we also remember the advice of the adults about the necessary protection against violent acts resulting from fights caused by excessive alcohol. This is the origin of a street word that said, "at carnivals, drunks don't drink", reminding us that in times of danger we had to take care of ourselves.

People from all over the country came to the carnivals in Santiago de Cuba to enjoy the spectacle and were invited by the people of Santiago de Cuba to show their politeness. When one was introduced to a santiaguero, he would say: "I invite you to my house during the carnivals".

When comparing the carnivals of Santiago with those of Havana they would say: "The carnivals of Havana are just beautiful floats and a lot of luxury, if you want to have fun you have to go to the carnivals of Santiago de Cuba". I remember the stories of my grand aunts and my mother of their visits to the Santiago carnivals, staying with friends and enjoying the costumes and the music.

It was also said that " *at carnival time the people of santiagueros take holidays to be able to wake up in the street ".*

As a child and adolescent (in Holguin), I was never taken to the carnivals in Santiago, because it was considered that the transfer to this popular festival from one province to another was for adults, and if I was taken afterwards, the adults could not go out to party until the early hours of the morning.

I consider that there are two stages in the SCu carnivals, one before 1959 and one after. After 1959, costumes were banned, products and supplies became scarce and despite the efforts of the carnival organisers to maintain them, their quality has been declining.

I attended a carnival in Santiago de Cuba, having already graduated as a medical epidemiologist, I arranged for an HIV workshop to coincide with the date close to the carnival, so that I could stay and enjoy it. What I remember most about the carnivals is that the joy of the people is contagious, and the congas keep the whole town awake until late at night, not to mention the awarding of prizes in the neighbourhoods, and the pride of the people of Santiago in their carnival. Every time I talked to a Santiago resident, and I knew that I was not from that province, I had to answer the question: "Do you like the carnival?

I remember days before the start of the carnival, the congas rehearsing their choreographies and the people behind them dancing to the rhythm of the music as if they were already in development. After the carnival has started, the streets are full of people, with food and drink kiosks, music and the only thing people talk about everywhere is the carnival, people talk about where the best orchestras will play, where the best food is, which conga will be the winning conga. The managers talk about the daily insurances to guarantee the popular festivities.

Ver en esta tierra bella

De gente amigable y fresca

La noche llena de estrellas

Conga, música y orquesta

Amigos fenomenales

Narraciones pintorescas

Esos son los carnavales

mi Santiago está de fiesta

……^……..

See in this beautiful land

Of friendly and fresh people

The night full of stars

Conga, music and orchestra

Phenomenal friends

Picturesque tales

These are the carnivals

my Santiago is celebrating

Appendix Nine

Santiago stories –Humberto's story

Well, being a native santiaguero, for me santiago de cuba has been the best.

Always defending my homeland from negative comments and recognizing the achievements of my teams and the successes of santiagueros artists.

About the carnivals always recognized as the best in Cuba, where historically the people have fun without rest, I remember from the times when the festivities lasted thirty days of the month, enjoying the beautiful colours of the comparsas and the enjoyment of the great orchestras that performed in the different dance areas.

My greatest identification with the carnival was always the congas, because although I never joined any comparsa, I enjoyed the street shows of the different congas, especially on the days of the invasion of the conga de los hoyos to the other comparsas, which was to throw the conga de los hoyos to the different rehearsal points of the other comparsas, a journey that began at eight o'clock at night until five in the morning.

The popular festivities that formed part of the carnival were always framed in the different dance areas, very famous by the way as they were attended by the best orchestras of the time and of Cuba.

The Covid 19 for the Santiaguero Carnival has been of great affliction, firstly because it is the greatest joy that the people wait a whole year for and then because being such a massive movement of people together enjoying at all hours was a great source of contagion and for two years it was not possible to do it, very sad. This meant that I could not enjoy my holidays as usual, although I am from Santiago I live in Havana and every year I go to Santiago on this date and for two years now I have not been able to enjoy it as much as I love.

That carnival for me is the glory and I follow and pursue it, they are days of great emotions with families, friends and new acquaintances.

That carnival can never be avoided, it is already in the blood of every Cuban and of many foreigners who visit, even now there are two stages because the Festival of the Caribbean is almost another carnival, which we tried to make virtual, but it is not at all the same, but it will never stop.

Appendix Ten

Orlando's story of Santiago de Cuba Carnaval

Before answering the questions, please say something about yourself. If you want to remain anonymous, let me know and I will remove your details and provide you with an agreed pseudonym. Please write as much or as little as you feel comfortable with.

I am a musician of the Conga de Los Hoyos and the instrument I play is the main bell since 1986.

What does the city of Santiago de Cuba and the Carnival mean to you?

The city of Santiago de Cuba is where I was born, where all the heroes of our Revolution lived. Carnival is the most important, joyful and fun festival of our Santiago.

What do you remember most about the Carnival of Santiago and why?

What I remember most are the visits of other congas that went to the conga of the Hoyos because it was the mother conga and then the mother conga went up to see her children who were called the invasion and the conga outings on the 24th and 29th of June.

If you performed in the Carnival or contributed in any way, what were your reasons for wanting to be part of it and how did that affect your daily life?

Yes I performed in the carnivals until 2019 representing in the jury rescuing the traditions of our carnival, like the chancleta, the masks on foot, the gulonas, etc. The reasons were that my family has always played the congas and it was in my blood and an uncle who also played the conga taught me how to play. My life was not affected by the carnivals, I became a primary school teacher and still am.

Tell me about your memories of preparing for, participating in and observing the Santiago de Cuba Carnival, the congas and the street parties.

My greatest memories have been when we went to play at the different carnivals in the provinces, municipalities and towns: carnivals in Ciego de Avila, Moa, Morón, Cayo Coco,

Las Tunas, Bayamo, Havana, Baracoa, Guama, Pinar del Rio, Florida (Camagüey), La Maya, Contramaestre, Yerba de Guinea, Guantánamo, we participated in the awarding of the Manzana de oro de Santiago (Golden Apple of Santiago). We also welcomed and bid farewell to internationalist flights to Venezuela to the rhythm of the conga. We were at the 1998 Football World Cup in Paris, France.

I would like to invite you to crystallise your memories and stories of the Carnival of Santiago by writing a poem about Carnival as part of your daily life.

These themes or songs are done on the congas, it is a dance and song that everyone learns along the way and sometimes they are repeated, or others come out of soap operas or everyday realities.

Soy carabela vengo arrollar

I'm a caravel, I'm a caravel, I'm a caravel I'm a caravel

The one who doesn't roll is going to weigh you down

Because the conga never comes back

I'm a caravel I'm coming to roll over

Because the conga won't come back no more

Ojala, Ojala.....

We come remembering those times

We come remembering those times

That we were invading the Tiboli

That we were invading Tiboli

The conga of the Hoyos is well known

Popular in the country

The conga of the Hoyos is known

Popular in the country

How did Covid 19 influence the carnival and your feelings about it?

It influenced a lot because it brought sadness to the country and to the carnival, because people who participated in the carnival have passed away.

What does carnival symbolise for you?

The biggest festival that is celebrated in the country in general, and also in the Santiago carnival we celebrate a historic date which is 26 July, the attack on the Moncada barracks.

What does the future hold for Carnival and your relationship with it?

Until the pandemic is eliminated in the country, there will be no more Carnival.

If you have any questions, please contact me at ycs19@brighton.ac.uk or on Facebook messenger.

February 2022

Appendix 11

Santiago stories: Iliana's story

For me the city of Santiago de Cuba is my whole life because I was born here and I have always lived in it, the carnival of Santiago is something

that brings me very good memories of my youth,

since we enjoyed the carnival from the first day to the last,

I would roll with my friends in the comparsa la placita

and behind the conga de Los Hoyos,

We would go along Trocha street

the Martí promenade

and Céspedes avenue in Sueño,

enjoying cold beer and food in the kiosks

we were at the carnival from night till dawn

it was the best.

nowadays I still enjoy it

but as the years go by now

we do it in a more moderate way ha!

I never performed in the carnival

but my son did go out once on a float

he is a phono mimic, and his stage name is Juan Gabriel de Cuba

because his biggest success has been

with the imitation of the Mexican singer Juan Gabriel,

in that carnival during the jury awards, he won the Popularity Award

and was in all the media,

that made me feel very proud of him and very happy.

Regarding my observation about the Santiago carnival,

I think it is the one with the most flavour in the whole country,
as I have participated in the carnival in other provinces
and they are very beautiful and colourful,
but there is none like the flavour of the Santiago carnival,
besides all the people participate,
they sweep the streets with the rides and the congas,
and like the Chinese bugle of the conga de Los Hoyos
there is no other in all of Cuba.

The carnival of Santiago,
the best of my Cuba,
there is no other with your flavour,
your heat, your colour and your rumbón,
the best in the whole world,
with that the greatest rumbón.

Appendix 12

Santiago de Cuba stories – conversation with Jorge E April 22 2021.

Yvonne: Jorge, please tell me about your experiences and memories of the Santiago de Cuba Carnival.

Jorge: So, my name is Jorge Eversley Goldbourne, and I have been living in the UK for the last 21 years, but I was born and raised in Cuba. I happened to live in Santiago for total of three years. For two of those years, I was studying at the football academy. I was also at university there for another year doing my Russian language prep before going to study zoology at university in the Soviet Union. But during that time, I had the privilege of attending the Santiago de Cuba Carnival. What was so good is that some people who don't even live in Santiago go just for the carnival. I was lucky, I had the opportunity to be involved in the pre carnival and enjoyed the preparations, the decoration and the rehearsals of the congas and that is amazing. It is an unforgettable and important to experience to see them.

Yvonne: tell me a bit more about what was so unforgettable and amazing about that experience, watching these people prepare and rehearse.

Jorge: I can compare it to the Olympic Games, because it is the biggest event in Santiago de Cuba that happens once a year and for the Santiagueros, it is a matter of pride. The reason that I dare to say that it is an event that you can compare to the Olympics or even to the World Cup is because it brings together everybody in Santiago de Cuba. People of different ages, religions and of different colours of skin. And you can even breathe the different air of Santiago! I don't know how to describe it, it's just something that you really need to experience. The first time that I experienced that I was in my teens. I had heard so much about this carnival and the first time that I went was in 1971, I was going for a training session for the national football championships. I managed to represent the province of Oriente. Yeah, in July that happened at the same time as the carnival. I was twelve years old, so they didn't let us out on our own at night, but in the daytime and the weekends, we were allowed to go out. So, I saw for the first time all the preparations and the decoration. Going into the city centre, the main areas like Marti and Almeida, the port was all amazing. It was in my later teens when, I was able to enjoy a little bit more. We could go out in the evening and join in and watch the rehearsals of the congas and the comparsas. It was amazing.

Yvonne: what impact did that spectacle have on you seeing the congas and the comparsas the first time?

Jorge: Ha, yes! It was very positive. It brings together everything and everybody. Black, white and mixed race, everybody was there. Mums and dads with their kids, old people, all

following the comparsas with people dragging their feet to the sounds and all on the streets. It reassured me that it is possible for people from different backgrounds to come together and be happy, even though nothing is perfect. There were thousands at the carnival. But there was also a bad side. I think that some people use it as an opportunity to take revenge on other people, brining knives and machetes. There would be stabbings. They hated to see other people having fun, doing fun things. But it is something that you cannot underestimate. Not like in my hometown, Manati where I would join in and walk blocks and blocks, but I was younger, so in Santiago carnival I would prefer to stand on the side and watch the massive crowds pass by. Occasionally I would stand at the back just in case, ha! So, if any trouble I would just run away, ha, ha!

Then watching all these rehearsals all day with the floats, what is the name in English? I don't know what you call them in English. Munecones? (**Yvonne:** “puppets?”) Yes, there is the big giant puppets, the big puppets, people and the decoration of the roads; it was something magical. Yeah, you can see the place is transformed. Early in the morning you would be going to work or school and there would be nothing there and then you would come back, and you would see “wow, what happened here?” Magic: somebody came with a magic wand and now you didn’t see it and now you do, ha ha!

Yvonne: You said that at the carnival it was really reassuring seeing all these different people from different backgrounds mixing. Why?

Jorge: Different people from different races and colours of skin. I had experienced a little bit of it, but it was so different to what I had known. Things like conga, comparsas and rumba they were classed as ‘Black people’s music and Black people’s culture’, even though white people loved it – it is something that you could not resist. But if they were caught by their parents or any person that knew them, or didn’t they would ask them what are they doing dancing Black people’s music? It created a taboo.

Yvonne: This thing about ‘Black music’- this was seen as quite negative?

Jorge: Oh, yes, oh yes. If you were white and middle class or something like that you couldn’t be seen joining in these kind of things because it would degrade you. That was the kind of society we lived in. When we were young these were the attitudes. We didn’t know anything else when we were younger. I have a gift of music and art and I had close friends, we were like brothers who would say to me something really offensive, like “Jorge, you should have been born white” or “you are a black man with a white soul.” I would say “excuse me – what do you mean?” and they would say “no it is because you are clever, you can sing and make things”. But I could not blame them because this is what they got from their parents and grandparents and other adults. Well, a group of us friends, all Black and mixed race would get together in the park or on the corner and play rumba and some white friends of ours would be watching and listening to us, but looking around not to get caught, making sure that mum or dad didn’t see them.

It was at the Santiago carnival where I experienced that particular freedom, that colour didn't matter. And it was that reassurance that people in Santiago and Guantanamo, and I have heard this before, that people from the south east are easier, because there is a bigger presence of the Black community there. Because in that area there were loads of sugar factories and coffee plantations and things that there were loads, an invasion of West Indians and Haitians and people from all over the Caribbean seeking a better life. At the time Cuba was the most prosperous country in the Caribbean.

Yvonne: yes, indeed it was. My grandfather was one of those people that came over after the first world war to work in the sugar industry in Oriente as it was called at the time.

Jorge: my hometown, Manati has the largest West Indian community, probably in the country.

Yvonne: so, do you think that has had an impact on the carnival itself, that you have all these different people living in that part of Cuba?

Jorge: Definitely, definitely, because the essence of the carnival are the congas and the comparsas, when you talk about congas, what people understand is the musical instrument. For me the conga is a group of people playing these different drums and the drumming is something that came from the African slaves. These are the roots of the congas and the comparsas and the rumba. They used to play with empty wooden boxes – the rumba de cajon, yeah. They would use hoes, different sizes to make the different sounds. And now they use the rims of the car wheels to make the sounds. You know, you can make anything to make the sound for music. There are normally three or four different diameters, so they make different sounds. When you combine all these different rhythms and harmonies, I'm telling you it gives me goosebumps. It is something you feel deep down.

In Santiago in the 70s, you would here so much about the people, about the life and the love, even relationships that were mixed couples, which was a "no", especially in Holguin and I was at sports school in Holguin from 1971 to 1973 and I experienced with my own eyes the racism, oh boy and that is why people love Santiago, you don't see it like this in Santiago.

Yvonne: why do you think that is?

Jorge: Santiago is different, it is known officially, on the television, on the news as the most Caribbean part of Cuba, because there are loads of Jamaicans and Haitians and Dominicans. They are close to Santiago, because of the proximity.

Yvonne: so even the state television broadcasts describe it as the most Caribbean?

Jorge: Yes, and in the Santiago carnival, you see the presence of the African slaves and their descendants. They took their culture to the Caribbean, especially the drums. I wrote this song, called Solaris, where there is an earthquake and the Black people brought their drums, the rumba and the jambul. The other time at Santiago carnival I was an older teenager, we had more freedom of movement and we had to be back by midnight, but things started earlier around 7pm, so we made the most of things. I would try to find out where the two conga arch-rivals were: Los Hoyos and Paso Franco who have been rivals for ever, but it is a tradition and sometimes there would be a collision and there would be blood! Wow! Because it was like Manchester United and Liverpool or Chelsea – the big guns! Yeah, the big teams. These two giants, ha ha!

Yvonne: Did you witness it?

Jorge: No, I didn't witness it. I would exit there fast as I know the stories of knives and machetes. When the situation was getting worse and the police came, they would go a different route. But the good thing is, they would rehearse and rehearse until they were ready to go out and they would drag so many people behind them. And then there was a route with the floats and so many people, three, four, five blocks of people, dragging behind them because it is contagious. Even you see it on YouTube now, videos made by tourists and you see them, the Europeans dragging their feet too, because it is infectious! Who doesn't move to this?

Yvonne: Yes, it is fantastic! You have to move you cannot just sit there!

Jorge: You move even in the place where you are standing! You move and these are experiences I never forget!

Yvonne: So, you lived in Santiago for a total of three years, what would be the strongest memory of the carnival for you?

Jorge: With the carnival everything was memorable. But especially everyone blending together. Cuba like the rest of the Caribbean is so macho, so it was great to see blonde, blue eyed women dancing with these big ebony men. This was something was not seen in my hometown. My father was a preacher, very strict! And both my parents were of West Indian descent. They were born in Cuba, but their upbringing was West Indian. Outside we would speak Spanish, but at home we would speak English and Patois. The neighbourhood was called Jamaica and there were people from Barbados and Antigua and later on the Chinese came with their traditions and also some from Morocco and Spaniards from Andalucía, Asturias and Galicia and we would all mix together as kids. The adults had their different lives. I saw this in Santiago, but the difference is that this was love relations. Not in my hometown, and I can't blame them as it was passed down from generation to generation, where people who I loved, and they loved us would say that they are friends, but they would

not let a black guy marry their daughter. But now with social media and the young people you see it more, but with work, no nothing changes. The tourist industry, the managers are all white.

(At this point the internet /WIFI dropped out for a period of about five minutes)

Yvonne: All right, I think because the internet keeps dropping out, let's move on. How would you describe Santiagueros?

Jorge: Welcoming people. That is my memory, very opinionated and big headed, ha, ha! Especially the rivalry between Habaneros and Santiagueros, which used to be the capital. But that is where all the revolutions happened. They are very with big hospitality, and they have a great accent, they sound like Dominicans, just some of the words are different that you know. I visit Santiago often when I go to Cuba.

Yvonne: OK, let's move on and hope that the internet doesn't fail again. What does the Santiago de Cuba Carnival mean to you and why?

Jorge: Santiago carnival means joy happiness, togetherness. It is a shame that the carnival is not what it used to be. It has changed for the worse. The budgets are smaller, so the essence is lost. It started as a celebration of the whole year of hard work. It used to be a whole month but now it is officially ten days. The pre carnival was great as it showed what would happen over the ten days – people getting into the spirit and old traditions. The government has politicised everything. For example, the King and Queen day, they say you can't call it that. Why? No because (in a mocking voice) "It is capitalism, no!" That's what the government say. So, they use different names to disguise it so, instead of 'Queen of the Carnival' they call it 'Star of the Carnival'. They control everything, they change everything, and they control all the resources, even though they don't have money anymore. Without resources there is little you can do. People can still walk with the congas, but they wear the same outfits from the year before. Congas had their own uniforms and loads of people used to want to join the congas, because they would get paid, not a huge amount, but still important, and of course the booze. A car cannot run without petrol! Things became difficult, so the government would blame the blockade.

The last time I attended carnival was in 1979. But my sister lived there after university for five years she lived with my two aunties who were born there and lived there until they were married and moved to Manati but moved back to Santiago in the 80s.

April 2021

Santiago tierra de ensueños

Y belleza fascinante
Cuna de grandes cantantes
De Martí al reparto Sueño
Siempre desde muy pequeño
Quise en la conga arrollar
Con sus mulatas bailar
Disfrutar los carnavales
Andar por sus arravales
Sentir la brisa del mar

Y cuando se hable de Son
De Guarachas y de Rumba
A Santiago sí le zumba
Porque es puro corazón
Es tierra de inspiración
Se ama la música buena
Beben ron y bailan Plena
Al ritmo de los tambores
Porque Santiago señores
Eso sí que es cosa buena

Appendix 13

Adriana's Santiago story of carnival. September 2022. Brighton.

YCS: Okay so before we start with the questions about your lived experience in relation to the Santiago de Cuba carnival, can you first of all tell me a little bit about yourself?

A: Well, regarding my ancestry and nationality?

YCS: Anything you want to talk about. Tell me a little bit about yourself?

A: My name is Adriana, actually Neri Adriana Lord Romero and that in my name you have part of my history, right? Because Neri(?) means Black. There is a city in Italy where the saint, my mum's saint – St Felipe de Neri is my mum's saint. Nero means Black and Neri is plural for Black, so Adriana means the person who lives in the city by the sea. So that is part of my story because I was born in Havana and then went to live here in Brighton, which is by the sea too. Lord is my father's name; he's from Barbados and his family migrated to Havana during the 20s, well I think it was the beginning of the 20th century and they're very connected to the Caribbean and to Sussex in some ways.

YCS: Tell me a little bit more about your father. You said that your father is from Barbados, so just tell me a little bit more about that and why it was that he and the family came to Cuba?

A: He's not directly from there, he's born in Cuba. My Grandfather went to Cuba because he heard that the situation was good where there was lots of work in Guantanamo Bay with the Americans. In general, it was a better economic situation, there was more work. So, he got in a boat, el polizon (a stowaway) ? I don't know how you say it in English. He got into a boat hidden and then he arrived in Cuba.

YCS: Oh, he stowed away?

A: Yes and then he became a carpenter, but he also helped to found the Caribbean Association. I heard that he started the first cricket team with different people in Havana. My grandmother, her family went to Panama to build the canal, and they were from Barbados. From Panama they went to Cuba, and they met in Havana and my aunty, and my uncle were born. My mum and my dad met when my dad was doing residency. He was a cardiologist, and my mum was a nurse, a very good nurse and she was helping him and then and then, yes, they fell in love, and they were both of Bajan heritage.

YCS: Okay. So, I'd like to talk to you later on about that Bajan heritage and how it influenced your life and how you think about yourself in relation to the Santiago de

Cuba Carnival as well. Thank you for that, but what I want to ask you now is what does the city of Santiago de Cuba mean to you?

A: Even though I was born in Havana and raised there I have a very strong connection with Santiago de Cuba because of my own identity and Havana. Havana is the capital city, and Even though statistically there are more Black people in Havana it is very white led and everything is very like the United States. I heard stories about Santiago from all my aunties and my cousins from there that used to visit us in Havana every year. We have like a very good strong connection and the first time I went to Santiago I was delighted. I loved it! The people are different, and my mum was telling me "now people from Havana are different in some way. They are not like… they're not real in some way." I understood what she meant when I went to Santiago. They just host you; they just embrace you and I have really beautiful memories of that. I don't know how or why, but it's more Caribbean.

YCS: You said you there were differences. It was just so different in Santiago?

A: People are very welcoming. My first visit to Santiago I was little, but I'm really talking about the second time that I went there I was more aware, and I was 20 maybe, 19.

YCS: **And you said it was very Caribbean. What was it that you were experiencing that told you that this was a very Caribbean space**?

A: and I was aware of the way people carry themselves, the way they talk to each other with familiarity and the way they speak, with their accents sounding more like people from the Dominican Republic than people from Havana and the food is good because of the way they use all the spices. Santiagueros like Black people and they like to celebrate Black women, you and that's also something that I heard from friends that have been to Haiti and to other places where they like a woman who is full bodied and we're not talking about Megan Thee Stallion or the Kardashians, that sort of thing, still too skinny! It's OK to have a tummy! It doesn't matter, but what matters is how you carry yourself; It's your soul. I know that sounds poetic, but that was the gist of it when I got to Santiago and saw it myself. It's an amazing thing to see. And it's really common to see people from Jamaica, from different islands that have settled there.

In Havana Black men are fetishized, like they are all over the world for their masculinity, but in Santiago, I noticed that they are celebrated too. It was my impression was that people were happier, maybe because it was carnival time, and I was in love with the city already because of all the stories from my family. The first time when I went with my friend Senya. had a friend, a classmate from Santiago and he was white. I say this because he used to say "oh, let's not go into the conga because they're going to cut your arse. We're not like them, we're not like that." That was the discourse about the conga in Santiago and the people and some of my aunties believed that too and they didn't want me to go to the Rumba. They didn't want me to mix with 'rude' people and they meant Black people who were too noisy. I couldn't believe it. It's this rich part of our culture, what remains from Africa. All the music and the drums are seen as 'Black people's things' and that we should be getting closer to whiteness, to 'civilised things'. But there was a lot of that attitude in parts of my family too. So, I'm there at the carnival and thank God I was with my family, and they were all in. It was amazing, a great energy. I was feeling my people, Black people just walking around, dancing

and eating different sorts of foods and listening to reggaeton for the first time. We were listening to this guy from Dominican Republic. I think he was called Elvis Crespo and his song [..name of song…]It was merengue, and it was everywhere! We were just hanging out in different places, but my most vivid memory was of the conga, which is to me the main event, and the thing that I heard so much about. Los Hoyos are really famous. They have some power because the music just drags everyone and people make up lyrics and everyone just follows them if they're good, but if they're bad, that just dies!

My mum, of course loved it. She would say “you young people, why don’t you start dancing when you listen to the music?”

Many people from Havana say that is a test to go to Santiago during Carnival as a band and play there because they don't give a damn, they choose you if you're good, if you have it. I have been twice and when you're involved and you fall in conga or watch the possession, I was very happy to be there. It was like being somewhere else other than Cuba. It’s like “my people!”, my family. It Is the freedom to embrace Blackness without the white gaze all the time I'm there, you know? It doesn't matter; you dance, it doesn't matter. You shout, you laugh, you just be yourself. It doesn’t matter. You do embrace your femininity, or masculinity, of all of these things. It's more complicated when you get to experience everything.

YCS: Tell me about that complication? **What do you mean “to embrace your blackness without the white gaze”?**

In all the celebrations people, my family, are telling me, you have to be like this or that, that you have to move like this, don’t shout and open your legs. Don't do this, don't do that. Growing up in that environment if you don't have your hair well done (because you are Black) or you are laughing too loud - “that’s the Black one”, that would mean that you have no education, that you’re dirty, which is something that is around all the time, with a queue of stuff that comes with Blackness in Cuba, as I experienced it. I never heard my father say anything like that and I think that is something that I interpreted and embraced as self-esteem. If you were a Black person coming from the Caribbean it was in my eyes that they liked being Black. I don't know if that's something from those places, but it felt like my father was like that. I never heard my dad talking, saying anything racist and I did hear lots of people in my family, even though they were Black, saying that crazy stuff, that we have to behave in certain way to be accepted and we’re not going to be judged by the same standard that everyone else is. You are going to be judged because your woman, because you're Black. I think it was pressuring all the time, but I got used to it and took it for granted. When you’re a child you question things, but then you are full of joy.

YCS: Carnival is coming. How do you prepare for it?

Getting ready for carnival, preparing for it is a big conversation! I knew it was a big celebration and I knew it was going to be something special that I had never seen before. I was just very excited about it, but at the same time I was afraid because it was going to be like a big mass of people, and I had all these people telling me to be careful. But my cousins were there and told me to not worry about it. The conga , I remember, was like some sort of procession and lots of people dancing and joining in other things the other things organised

by the government; everyone was excited. You could feel even in the morning before everything happened, you could feel that people were oriented and thinking only of the carnival. Everyone was involved and even my cousin who didn't want to go because she was frightened, she was excited. There were lots of songs about that, about all those girls whose mothers won't let them out of the house. We just liked looking at everything and being mesmerised – it was party party, party in the streets! The food was really nice, I remember – Ajaca caliente, tamales, polenta wrapped in banana leaf. The food vendors would be out early in the morning, singing "Ajaca, ajaca caliente". Delicious, very cute and very Caribbean because of the Taino who used to cultivate corn. My mum used to make root beer and it was great because it's the best brew in Santiago, like Coca-Cola but nicer and good for you because it has lots of antioxidants and is anti-inflammatory!

My whole sense when I was growing up was feeling like I wasn't 100% Cuban. That is because I was born in an English-speaking house with people from a different place. When we were growing up we spoke English, then we left my grandmother's house when I was four or five and then I used to go visit, but we never spoke in English, so I had to learn at School, watching movies, listening to my father's music like the Platters and, it was easy for me. It was easier, I had like an understanding even though I didn't speak really well until I started studying. In Havana I never felt like I was part of being Cuban, We're all Cuban, and Cubans are proud of their nationality and their flag, but I'm a Black Cuban. And they don't say it, but everything tells you that. But I was told I'm not like Black Cubans. Everyone that sees me they never think I am from Havana; they think I am from Santiago. Maybe it is the way that I speak, like my mother always made sure our pronunciation what right, which she got from my grandmother. My grandmother from Barbados had a very strong accent, but also I recently discovered that my other grandmother had Caribbean roots too, but she never talked about it. She used to speak English, but we didn't know why. I was reading about it and thinking about it recently - how it was for people from the Caribbean. I kind of suspect that it was because of all the discrimination because they were called names and people were racist against them.

At the carnival I felt myself, I felt at home. I didn't feel erased or afraid even though people said things would happen. I feel like I'm home, like I'm embraced, being myself and not having to think about negative connotations that people like to attach to Black people.

The feeling of being accepted. I didn't have to think about any of that, it was natural. We didn't have to think about any of the negative connotations that people were putting around the carnival and around my safety as a person, as a woman. They were thinking about crime also because they associate all of carnival with being marginal and being by violent, and that was not my experience. Of course, with being marginalised, with being poor, there are things like that, but that is not the core that's a consequence of systemic racism and colonialism. For me at least it is part of all that but is not the core. Most people who were there, which is like normal, people like me, Black people. Carnival symbolises celebration of just being there and celebration of ourselves and of our culture. It is revelling in Caribbean people in the islands, in the archipelago and that there is also acceptance of everyone at the same time. It is something that bonds you to people and it is taking away all the noise of all the stuff that stop us connecting as human beings. Everyone is equal in that moment. Everyone. It is all love, and it is all joy and that is in the words and music, and you are just in that moment right there. And this experience gives you good memories and gives you strength, that we are going to be happy and full for one day. There is a Brazilian song about

carnivals that says sadness is endless, but happiness has a stop. It just speaks about the joy of preparing for the carnival. And that then it's just for one moment, just for one day, but there's so much joy. But it is the preparation for the whole year until that moment where we will meet again, when there will be joy and then we'll carry on with our life again until next year.

I live for those memories and the emotions stay with you and you remember that feeling of pure happiness there and feeling that you amongst your people and that you enjoyed it. I was treated well, and they welcomed me because I was from Havana and to me it was amazing, and I thought it was well done. That's the way people from other parts of the Caribbean are- they all like being Black. They all enjoy the culture, and they don't worry about the consequences of what they say or what they do at that moment, and it is in a nice way, because it's all joy. I haven't visited any place in the Caribbean. Maybe when I get there it will be so different to what I think. For example, when I arrived in the UK and visited Brixton, I was amazed at seeing all these Black people and their hair and the men with dreadlocks and women too and how they take care of themselves and had their own styles, I thought it was beautiful, that Brixton was a paradise. And I was being called sister. The first time they called me sister I was hearing the same thing. In Santiago they called me prima (cousin). It is all like a beautiful dream, all sparkly. When I went to Notting Hill carnival for the first time I was with my daughter, with a Brazilian band, and we walked around. Lots of life with soca and reggae and lots of dancing and they were not afraid, and we know that is not about being sexual all the time, you know, part of expressing joy. I know that many people from different parts of the world will have different interpretations and it will mean different things for different people, but we know that's a moment of connection, minutes there and which is enjoyed, and then when that moment finishes, that's it. You're another person. You feel safe because that's your people, being surrounded by other Black people is special and I felt that in Notting Hill, too, even though it's a foreign country and I was just there with my little daughter. Like Santiago it was more about the feeling and the way people move. I think it's the energy and the freedom to express yourself through dancing and playing and being in the moment and the way you feel connected to other people that you don't know. You go to talk, and dance with other people and it's OK and you don't think twice about it. It's like a big party.

Santiago is my mum's land - she was born there, and all the family is from Santiago. Every time I go to Santiago I have the hospitality of people which is completely different from Havana. Santiagueros will give you anything. If you ask for directions they will take you to the place! They treat you like a guest and that is really important. And it's the diversity of people from the African diaspora there. The tumba francesa, the conga and the different music that you hear, like reggaeton which entered through the eastern part of the country and is influenced by Jamaican radio stations. And then of course it was embraced immediately because they had all these musical rhythms that are repeated, and you can hear all over the Caribbean like soca, habaneras and reggae. All the dresses, the aesthetic, it feels that it doesn't come from there. I realised that it was disconnected from the image they want to give in Cuba about Blackness, that we have no history and come from nowhere, only slavery. But you can see the traditions and the images and the beautiful crowns and headdresses and the way of moving. And if you look at carnivals in the Caribbean and the people, you see the same thing. It tells you that we are here, that we survived, and this is our ancestry. It's that we can communicate with each other in carnival, and you can discover so

much, just by making this possible. Even if you are disconnected from the culture, you feel it and can live a fuller life in knowing where you come from. Carnival is the essence of humanity and the power of being human.

NALR September 2022

Appendix fifteen

Yvonne's story – Santiago stories

My story of my lived experience in relation to the SdCC: Ephraim Glasford Spence:

One day in the late 1960s, I sat with my father as he composed a letter using his beautiful turquoise and gold fountain pen in response to a tax office demand. He turned and read a part of it to me, his captive audience: "My father, Ephraim Glasford Spence travelled from Kingston, Jamaica to Liverpool, England, where he was stationed, and from there went on to fight for King and country in Flanders. It is an affront that a tax demand has been sent to me and is, with respect, also incorrect…" I didn't listen to the rest of my father's response, as I was more interested in this mystery figure and his adventures in Flanders in the First World War. A war that I had been taught about in primary school. But I didn't perceive it as a real event, it was just a story that had happened far away, as far as my seven years old self was concerned, until that moment of my father writing his letter and sharing some of the details with me. I then knew it was real because I had a grandfather who was in that First World War, *over there, in history*, *long ago, in ancient times*, *just like the Romans and Henry the Eighth and all of his wives* (whose names I could recite by heart, with no small amount of obvious pride, because that was really important historical information to know). I asked my father to tell me more about him and not so much about the tax office. My father recalled a family story, told several times over the years, that after the end of the war my grandfather, Mr Spence (that is how he was addressed and is recalled in the entire family – even by his children who are all now in their late seventies and eighties) travelled back to Jamaica from Flanders, after surviving the ravages of conflict, racial discrimination(Smith, 2004) and the constant threat of death. He was 15 years old.

I was fascinated by these events which consisted of sheaves of creamy coloured, luxurious vellum, or pale blue flimsy *'par avion'* letters with blue and red striped

borders, ready for me to lick and seal if dad was ‘writing home’. I watched him closely with the pen, as he sat at our mahogany stained dining table, given to us by Mrs Stooley, the old English woman, and our tenant upstairs. She told us she was going to live in sheltered accommodation: “the neighbours said you coloureds would throw me out when you moved in. You’ve shown me nothing but kindness, Mrs Spence and I know you said you were looking for a bigger table, now that you’ve got the little ‘uns. I hope you don’t mind – it was my mother’s wedding present to me and Dennis. My old legs can’t take the stairs anymore and I can see you need the room now. I’m going to a place in Broadstairs, near to me nephew, and I’ll be by the sea. Which is nice.” The table didn’t have a tablecloth on it because it wasn’t Sunday. This was the first and only time that my father read out a portion of a letter to me that he had written; he needed me to make the theatre of his indignation real and acknowledged. So, I nodded, with a serious look on my face, just like he did when he was listening to and debating with his friends talking loud and hard about politics and liberation movements in the Caribbean and Africa.

I do not know how long my grandfather spent back in Lucea, Jamaica but when he returned from Liverpool at the end of the war, he, like many soldiers of the British West India Regiment came back to very little prospect of employment on the island (Smith, 2004). Like many, he worked the land, cultivating bananas and cutting cane which he sold at market, but this was seasonal and insufficient. Many Jamaicans, men and women seeking work, looked to the United States, Panama, and Cuba as places where opportunities were numerous: agricultural work in Florida, working on the railroads and canal in Panama and sugar production in Cuba. He knew how to cut cane, so he decided on Cuba, and it was also the closest to home on the boat. The focus of the sugar industry at the time was in Oriente province (now Santiago de Cuba) and owned by the Americans. The factory owners were reluctant to employ domestic workers, as they wanted to continue to manage operations in their own language, English, therefore they advertised for English speaking workers (Whitney and Lafitta, 2013; Carr, B. 1998). My grandfather responded to this. The rest of my family do not know, so we guess, speculate, and imagine what he was likely to have experienced. Like most British Caribbean migrants, he would have been going to church on a Sunday, all day, every Sunday. Attending church as Witney and Lafitta have pointed out, was central to British Caribbean migrants’ lives in Cuba, offering

both a solid sense of community and identity (2013). He may well have been found playing dominoes with friends and fellow ‘braceros’ (cane cutters), exchanging Anancy tales and proverbs, singing folk songs and reminiscing about home with equal amounts of longing, liquor and laughter. This would all happen in British Caribbean owned bars and each other’s front rooms or verandas and the activities would have been understood as leisure and respite time, but also as opportunities to maintain that sense of kinship and community support (Whitney and Laffita, 2013). Perhaps he would be strolling along the streets of Santiago, Banes or Guantanamo after a lodge meeting (fellowship societies) which still has a presence in the Caribbean today (Ramsay, 2011). I have no way of knowing whether he witnessed or even took part in the spectacle of the Santiago de Cuba carnival, but I want to imagine that he did and how his multiple subjectivities – migrant, Jamaican, bracero (cane cutter/field worker/labourer) colonial subject played out in this part of the Caribbean diaspora and how it links to my own inherited diasporic Caribbean identity.

Since hearing about my grandfather, his time in Cuba and the island itself have become a phantasmagorical story hovering around and tucked into nooks and crannies of the Spence family home that I would need to ask about from time to time to satisfy my curiosity, eliciting different versions from my father at each retelling. Books and pamphlets about Cuba, Castro and the Revolution stand on the bookshelves, next to speeches by Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, and Lenin. For me the idea of Cuba and my grandfather living there was an exotic, ethereal thing that over the years would come into view and then out again and still fascinates me now. From time to time, I would pick up a book or a pamphlet, flick the pages so that I could inhale the fine dusty smell of them because this was my connection to my imaginary of the Caribbean and of Cuba. It may not have been a conscious thought at that time, but my grandfather’s stay on the island and the books on the shelves at home provided me with the motivation to carry out this research.