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# Oceans of feeling: An emotional history of Caribbean migrants in postwar Britain

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*For Anabel, and the flowers which never grew*

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

## Abstract

This thesis is set to analyse the emotional experiences and expressions of Caribbean migrants to Britain in the postwar period, from their motivations to emigrate through to the strategies of affective attainment, adjustment, and resistance which they practised once arrived. In so doing, it works within the paradigm of E. P. Thompson's "history from below" and utilises the conceptual approaches and theoretical tools of the history of emotions. It has laboured under the belief that, in working on an extensively-researched topic in such a way, we can uncover novel and meaningful insights – insights into how feelings were at the core of historical change here, and how they shaped and transformed the historical narrative at every turn. This ranged from the ways in which emotions acted as the fundamental generative principle for motivations to migrate, resided at the core of the racist practices which they experienced upon arrival, and conditioned the spatial landscapes of refuge which they created in response to this. In accomplishing this, this thesis makes use of a wide range of different source material – including original oral history interviews conducted by the author – arguing that the cultural and artistic output of historical actors are critical in understanding their emotional experiences. Ultimately, this thesis presents an emotional history of Caribbean migrants in postwar by injecting emotions and felt experience, for the first time, into this historical narrative through five thematically-structured chapters.

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## Introduction

The years between 1945 and 1970 were a period of radical social change in Britain.

Unprecedented economic prosperity and labour shortages redefined expectations about material wealth and the nature of work.<sup>1</sup> The Education Act 1944 – better known as the Butler Act – codified free secondary education, while the rise of the welfare state, which centralised and universalised health and unemployment benefits, altered the socio-economic fabric of the nation.<sup>2</sup> Female participation in the labour force rose dramatically in this period, and women gained a measure of control over their fertility with the availability of the contraceptive pill.<sup>3</sup> Chris Harris asserts these changes were ‘part of a post war mentalité which perceived there to be a sea-change taking place in social life which involved loss as well as gain’.<sup>4</sup> But where is Harris’ loss in this narrative?

In 1945, the British Empire exercised its sovereignty over 700 million foreign people; by 1965, just twenty years later, this figure was 5 million.<sup>5</sup> This was a rapid process of decolonization – one which contrasted sharply with the longstanding economic, political, and moral untenability of imperialism. And introduced into this brave new world were a changing set of migration dynamics built upon a unique set of historical circumstances:

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<sup>1</sup> Between 1950 and 1970, British unemployment did not rise above 2.2 per cent. See Mary O’Mahony, ‘Employment, Education and Human Capital’, in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*, ed. Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson, vol. 3 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 116. In addition, average weekly wages rose from £7.50 in 1950 to over £18 in 1964 – rising double that of inflation. See Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000* (London: Penguin, 2004), 255. Finally, while 7.2 per cent of adults owned a car in 1949, this had passed 50 per cent by 1966. See Albert Henry Halsey, *Trends In British Society Since 1900: A Guide To The Changing Social Structure* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1972), 551.

<sup>2</sup> On the Butler Act, Kevin Jeffereys argues that ‘historians have usually regarded the measure as a major landmark and a triumph for progressive reform’. See Kevin Jeffereys, ‘R. A. Butler, The Board of Education and the 1944 Education Act’, *History* 69, no. 227 (1984): 416. On the growth of the welfare state, Christopher Pierson has argued it constituted ‘one of the most remarkable social transformations of the twentieth century world’. See Christopher Pierson, *The Modern State* (London: Routledge, 2004), 83. For an excellent historical account of its development in Britain, see David Gladstone, *The Twentieth-Century Welfare State, British History In Perspective* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1999), esp. 32-51.

<sup>3</sup> On the ‘prolonged boom after the Second World War’, Freeman notes that ‘female participation rates rose to much higher levels’. See C. Freeman, ‘Structural Unemployment’, in *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), 2. As an aside, the same text notes that, in industrial OECD countries, ‘unemployment fell to historically low levels’ and that ‘there was substantial net immigration’. See Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Harris, ‘The Family In Post-War Britain’, in *Understanding Post-War British Society*, ed. James Obelkevich and Peter Catterall (London: Routledge, 1994), 50.

<sup>5</sup> For figures, see William Roger Louis, ‘The Dissolution of the British Empire’, in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. William Roger Louis et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 330.

Economic growth in the metropole, labour shortages, and government policies to redress them; economic stagnation in many colonies; imperial ties which inculcated in subjects an affinity with the metropole and also led to massive participation by the colonies in both World Wars; and, up to 1962, a permissive legislative environment which granted all British subjects the right to live and work in Britain. All of these factors transformed colonial bindings into neocolonial networks and created new migration patterns which saw – if not a massive, then at least an unprecedented – influx of migrants to Britain, eager primarily to achieve upward social mobility.

Along with Irish and South Asian migrants, Caribbeans residing within the British West Indies formed the backbone of the influx into Britain in the postwar period: Between 1951 and 1971, the population of Caribbean-born migrants in Britain rose by 290,000, or 2026 percent;<sup>6</sup> in those same years, 12 percent of Barbados' population, 7 percent of Jamaica's population, and 1.5 percent of Trinidad and Tobago's population migrated to Britain.<sup>7</sup> Many of these were demobilised veterans of the Second World War already familiar with Britain; all were conditioned in an emotional and ideological climate which repeatedly stressed the special bond between the Crown and its colonies, between periphery and metropole. Indeed, after the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, successive generations were inculcated with this specific belief system, created by and for the metropole, and disseminated through the proselytising apparatuses of school curricula, Anglican churches, and local administrative and bureaucratic structures. The results were that, by the twentieth century, an affective link with the metropole had been created, and many West Indians conceived of Britain as the "motherland".

All this represents well-trodden historiographical ground. The following thesis, however, approaches such well-tilled soil from a new perspective, one which aims to extract from the historical record the emotional experiences of those who made the journey across the Atlantic: in short, what did it feel like, as a Caribbean, to migrate to postwar Britain? The hypothesis is that by approaching an old subject with a fresh conceptual toolkit and a new vector of approach, we can say original and significant things about an extensively researched topic. There is certainly an element of truth in

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<sup>6</sup> See Ceri Peach, 'Patterns of Afro-Caribbean Migration and Settlement in Great Britain: 1945-1981', in *The Caribbean in Europe: Aspects of the West Indian Experience in Britain, France, and the Netherlands*, ed. Colin Brock (London: Psychology Press, 1986), 65.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile and Return* (London: Palgrave, 1997).

locating this thesis within the domain of revisionist history, but it is as much about augmenting the historical record, adding depth and dimension to it, as it is about reorienting established narratives. Moreover, in many ways this study represents not the genealogical or archeological approaches privileged by most histories of emotion, tracing emotion concepts over time and space or analysing particular emotional communities in situated contexts, but a concerted effort to revivify a mature historiographical subject by injecting questions of felt experience into the analytical equation. Putting emotions back into their rightful place as a fundamental constituent of human experience, and thus an obligation of consideration for anyone wishing to understand and comprehend this significant moment in the making of modern Britain.

It does so by making use of a diverse range of source material. Historiographical practice has incessantly evolved since the 1970s: who history is for and about has dramatically changed in tandem with the blossoming of subdisciplinary approaches and its commensurate cultural histories, histories of the body, women's history, and histories of the senses, emotions, and experience; how to do history has been repeatedly reimagined as it has rolled with the punches of the linguistic, poststructural, spatial, and bodily turns. Relatively absent from these seething and surging transformations has been a corresponding diversification of the source material historical practice makes use of. Classicists and medievalists may well be saddled with a *fait accompli*, but modernists need not be so constrained. What I attempt to do in this study is draw into the analysis poetry and prose, theatre productions, and works of music, using these in tandem with the bread and butter of the historian's toolkit: newspaper articles, autobiographies, oral histories, and the like. If Raymond Williams' cultural materialism argued that a historical society's cultural forms and output are partly a product of its given material context, we can say that cultural emotionalism – to coin an ugly phrase – argues that an emotional community's cultural forms and output are partly an expression of its emotional experiences.<sup>8</sup> To understand these emotional experiences, we need to turn greedily to *all* of these cultural forms. The common denominator amongst the majority of the source

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<sup>8</sup> For the development of cultural materialism, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1977), esp. 75-82, 108-114, 121-127. Barbara Rosenwein was the first to define an emotional community, and did so in terms which made them coterminous with social communities such as families, neighbourhoods, guilds, or monasteries. The conceptual distinction is present only in the approach of the researcher, who when studying them 'seeks above all to uncover systems of feeling'. See Rosenwein, 'Worrying About Emotions', 842.

materials this study utilises is their authorship by Caribbean migrants. It is by turning to first-hand sources produced by these historical actors themselves – in their own words, so to speak – that we can best parse their emotional experiences and understand what it was like to be there, then.

Historical analysis, like any scholarly pursuit, is an exercise in standing upon the shoulders of giants. As such, it becomes important to situate this thesis within its proper intellectual orbit. In studying a group of marginalised persons structurally pushed into an underclass, this thesis represents an obvious refutation of the Carlylean “great man” model of historical change and possesses a debt to E. P. Thompson’s history from below, that great window of analytical realignment in historiography beginning in the 1970s.<sup>9</sup> Although it was Thompson’s publications in the 1960s and 1970s which set these particular gears of historiographical change in motion,<sup>10</sup> the conceptual roots of a history from below are often traced back to Lucien Febvre’s programmatic calls of the 1930s.<sup>11</sup> In point of fact, these roots stretch far further back, and also contains an important, if neglected, touchstone for the history of emotions: in the eighteenth century, Voltaire expressed – and subsequently acted on – a ‘wish to write a history not of wars, but of society ... how men lived in the interior of their families ... the arts commonly cultivated ... my object is the history of the human mind, not petty facts; nor am I concerned with the history of great lords ... I want to know what were the steps by which men passed from barbarism to civilisation’.<sup>12</sup> In a similar vein – albeit with a very different conceptual approach – Michel Foucault’s publications beginning in the 1960s assumed a keen interest in analysing marginalised groups, or those beyond the pale of normativity, in historical context.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> On the great man theory of history, see Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: James Fraser, 1841).

<sup>10</sup> See E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963); E. P. Thompson, ‘History from Below’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 April 1966.

<sup>11</sup> See Lucien Febvre, ‘Albert Mathiez: Un Tempérament, Une Éducation’, *Annales d’histoire Économique et Sociale* 4, no. 18 (1932): 576.

<sup>12</sup> Translation from the French in Henry Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, vol. 3, 5 vols (London: Brockhaus, 1865), 180. For the end product stemming from this desire, see Voltaire, *La Philosophie de l’Histoire, Par Feu l’abbé Bazin* (Paris: Amsterdam Changuion, 1765).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Michel Foucault, *Histoire de La Folie à l’âge Classique: Folie et Dérailson* (Paris: Plon, 1961); Michel Foucault, *Histoire de La Sexualité*, 4 vols (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976-2018).

The scholarly landscape which arose in response to and in tandem with this migratory movement is also important to note. The unprecedented scale of black bodies moving toward the metropole in the 1950s led to an environment of heightened racial awareness in Britain, and from this a paradigm of integration and racial harmony which would inform researchers' motivations, presuppositions, and evaluative outputs for the next two decades. Sociological studies were the first to respond to this new environment, and were coloured by their focus on integration, settlement, and harmony.<sup>14</sup> In the scramble to enumerate patterns of settlement, cultural differences, housing and working conditions, and employment opportunities, little if any first-hand testimony by Caribbean migrants found its way into these publications, less so any accounts of their emotional experiences. As the 1960s rolled into the 1970s, the Caribbean diaspora in Britain was increasingly joined by a growing south Asian community, and consequently "coloured" migrants could no longer stand as a synonym for Caribbean persons. It was at this time that integrationism was replaced by multiculturalism, a paradigm shift which would become increasingly seized upon by successive governments for its ideological potential and its ability to refashion Britain's presentation of its national identity toward a state supposedly characterised by its tolerance and liberality.<sup>15</sup>

Arising in conjunction with the ethnic diversification of British society came more nuanced scholarly analyses which pursued a comparative approach toward the social conditions affecting Britain's various migrant communities. These studies found that different migrant groups faced different sets of issues which defined their experiences of settlement and their daily lives, and sought to specify the historical and socio-cultural determinants of their distinct circumstances.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, social geographers began to

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Joyce Eggington, *They Seek a Living: The Story of West Indian Migration to Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1957); Ruth Glass, *Newcomers: The West Indians in London* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960); Sheila Patterson, *Dark Strangers: A Sociological Study of a Recent West Indian Group in Brixton, South London* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963); Ceri Peach, *West Indian Migration to Britain: A Social Geography* (London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations, 1968).

<sup>15</sup> Panikos Panayi, 'The Evolution of Multiculturalism in Britain and Germany: An Historical Survey', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 25, no. 5–6 (2004): 472.

<sup>16</sup> John Rex and Sally Tomlinson, *Colonial Immigrants in a British City: A Class Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1979); John Rex, 'The Heritage of Slavery and Social Disadvantage', in *The Caribbean in Europe: Aspects of the West Indian Experience in Britain, France, and the Netherlands*, ed. Colin Brock, Cass Series on Politics & Military Affairs in the Twentieth Century (London: Frank Cass, 1986), 111–36.

track the patterns of settlement of different ethnic communities to ask how questions of dispersion and “ethnic clustering” impacted lived realities.<sup>17</sup> In the domain of political science, Harry Goulbourne’s output remains inimitable in its investigation of the way ethnicity has impacted the domain of politics and identity construction for both migrants and the receiving country’s national identity.<sup>18</sup> It was this concern with identity that a new generation of scholars took up as the integrationist paradigm grew increasingly outmoded, abandoned in favour of a postcolonial approach which sought to focus on questions of diaspora, discursivity, and historical positioning which strikingly reworked traditional conceptions of identity. Ethnic identity was no longer seen as immutable, biologically-located and genetically transmitted; its fixed and stable core was substituted for an emphasis on process, historical contingency, and an always-ongoing construction. It was in this conceptual vein that Stuart Hall would call race, in 1981, a ‘floating signifier’,<sup>19</sup> and Paul Gilroy would beseech scholars and Afrocentrists alike to focus not on “roots”, but on its homonym “routes”.<sup>20</sup>

With its investigative thrust being animated by a desire to, as Thomas Dixon terms it, ‘recover the emotional experiences of historical actors’, this thesis naturally falls within the remit of the history of emotions.<sup>21</sup> One of the most pressing methodological problems the nascent subdiscipline has faced is in locating an adequate source base, especially as this intersects with those wishing to study the emotions of, broadly speaking, the dispossessed: the enslaved, the poor, the working classes, and those generally outside of the domain of literacy or access to its means of production.<sup>22</sup> This

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<sup>17</sup> Although slightly misleading in its title, Ceri Peach’s 1986 book chapter sought to do exactly this. See Peach, ‘Patterns’. Ethnic clustering is a concept used in migration studies to describe the relative propensity for migrants of a certain ethnic group to settle in the vicinity of one another. See Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas, and Mark Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 5th ed. (London: Palgrave, 2013), 274-5.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Harry Goulbourne, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Post-Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Harry Goulbourne, *Race Relations in Britain Since 1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Stuart Hall, ‘Race, the Floating Signifier: What More Is There to Say about “Race”?’, in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, ed. Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 359–73.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 19.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Dixon, ‘Patients and Passions: Languages of Medicine and Emotion, 1789-1850’, in *Medicine: Emotion and Disease, 1700-1950*, ed. Bound Alberti F. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), 25.

<sup>22</sup> Susan Matt and Peter Stearns, ‘Introduction’, in *Doing Emotions History*, by Susan Matt and Peter Stearns (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2014), 6.

provides a powerful justification for the diversity of source material which this study uses, and also forces us to recognise the dispensation of historical practitioners studying the past at this particular moment – something Rob Boddice has called ‘the privilege of the modernist’<sup>23</sup> – as the radical levelling of the representational means of production in the cultural domain has made it easier than ever to directly access the testimony and expression of the oppressed.<sup>24</sup>

Since Peter and Carol Stearns first set in motion the history of emotions project in the 1980s, largely as a reaction against psychohistory – the melding of psychoanalysis and history – the ongoing maturity of the field has seen a number of theoretical innovations and conceptual tools spring up to aid researchers in their quest to understand and describe past emotional experience.<sup>25</sup> Even if it does not make it explicitly into the analysis, there are echoes of the Stearns’ idea of ‘emotional style’ when this thesis looks at the ways in which British society’s conventions of expression regarding racism – conceptualised here as an amalgamation of certain emotions – exist in the fabric of its social and cultural life.<sup>26</sup> In a similar vein, Barbara Rosenwein’s concept of ‘emotional communities’ has helped the analytical structure of this chapter by staying sensitive to the different ‘systems of feeling’ that inhere to different social configurations, helping to inform the disjunctions between Caribbean and British socio-emotional cultures.<sup>27</sup> Regarding these disjunctions there exists, perhaps surprisingly, very little of them – undoubtedly conditioned by the perceived cultural congruity Caribbean migrants felt with metropolitan British culture. This has made it very difficult to find an appropriate place in this narrative for two interpretative tools which, at first blush, seem wholly

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<sup>23</sup> Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 141.

<sup>24</sup> It is for precisely this reason that this study cannot contribute to the conversation started by Xine Yao regarding the seemingly unfeeling nature of black lives as recorded by white sources, and how this contributes to and provokes resistance against a form of colonialism which operates through emotional representation. See Xine Yao, *Disaffected: The Cultural Politics of Unfeeling in Nineteenth-Century America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), esp. 1-28.

<sup>25</sup> Early exemplars include Peter Stearns and Carol Stearns, ‘Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards’, *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985): 813–36; Carol Stearns and Peter Stearns, *Anger: The Struggle for Emotional Control in America’s History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Carol Stearns and Peter Stearns, eds., *Emotion and Social Change: Toward a New Psychohistory* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> Stearns and Stearns, ‘Emotionology’, 821.

<sup>27</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, ‘Worrying About Emotions in History’, *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 842.



befitting for this story: ‘emotional frontiers’ and ‘emotional formations’, developed by the historians of childhood Stephanie Olsen, Kristine Alexander and Karen Vallgård. The word “formation” is deployed by these authors in both its nominal and verbal forms, meant to designate both a pattern and process. As a pattern, an emotional formation is a collection of emotional structures – affective norms, mores, and prescriptions – existing ‘at an overarching societal, national or even regional level’.<sup>28</sup> An emotional formation is also a process – one which is constituted by, and mutable through, ‘the reiterated everyday emotional practices of individuals and collectives ... that depends on each individual learning the imparted codes of feeling’.<sup>29</sup> Emotional frontiers, meanwhile, are the interstitial demarcations between different emotional formations. There is some evidence of migrants crossing over an emotional frontier with regards to conventions of social interaction, a point we will touch on in Chapter Two, but in the main the cultural-emotional environments within which they were raised were characterised by a close proximity to Britain’s – a fact which has its own emotional consequences down the line as migrants were confronted with exclusion and negation.

A scholar within the history of emotions canon – although herself not an historian of emotion – who has helped in parsing the emotional experiences and behaviour of Caribbean migrants when confronted with white violence has been the sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild. First beginning with a 1979 article, her work has shown the extent to which we have cognitive control over our feelings – what she terms “emotion work” – and is revealed in common parlance by such expressions as “I *tried* not to feel upset” and “I *made* myself have a good time”.<sup>30</sup> For Hochschild, emotions are inseparably tied to the social domain, and it was within this domain that Caribbean migrants were both faced with, and formulated their reactions to, racist violence. The control we have over our emotional experiences also surfaces indirectly in Monique Scheer’s landmark article of 2012, which draws into its reformulation of emotion questions of the body and of

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<sup>28</sup> Karen Vallgård, Kristine Alexander, and Stephanie Olsen, ‘Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood’, in *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives*, ed. Stephanie Olsen, Palgrave Studies in the History of Emotions (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 22.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, ‘Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure’, *American Journal of Sociology* 85, no. 3 (1979): 551–75.

practice, finding that emotions can themselves be conceptualised as practice itself.<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere, the works of Gernot Böhme and Andreas Reckwitz are used to help interpret those parts of this thesis which deal with the intersection between space and emotional experience: namely, the transatlantic space of the ship during these migrants' journeys to Britain. Böhme looms large here, as his conception of "atmospheres" builds a dynamic relationship between space and the construction of sensory-affective experience – both how these spaces impact human subjectivities, and how humans contribute to the production of atmospheres through the manipulation of objects, the practices enacted in such spaces, and the intersubjective ties that bind within them.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, the work of William Reddy has been a great help in making sense of the autonomous migrant leisure spaces which Caribbean migrants constructed in the wake of their exclusion from Britain's social domain. In a 1997 article and a later 2001 monograph, Reddy outlined his framework for the history of emotions by introducing a number of interpretative tools.<sup>33</sup> Central to all of these was his concept of the "emotive", which drew on speech act theory to highlight the performative dimension of emotional expression; when a society's given repertoire of normative emotional expressions – emotives – cannot fully enunciate an individual or a group of individuals' emotional experiences, "emotional suffering" arises proportionate to the magnitude of this discrepancy. In such cases, historical actors begin constructing "emotional refuges" within which they may more freely emote and express according to their proclivities. It is through a slight reformulation of the emotional refuge – as a space constructed as shelter from the racist emotional expressions of others – that this thesis reads the growth and change in Caribbean migrant house parties from the 1950s through the 1980s.

This study does not pretend to stand as a comprehensive history of Caribbean migrants' emotional experiences in Britain since 1945; instead, it provides five substantial portals through which we can come to terms with certain aspects of it. As the

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<sup>31</sup> Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 193–220.

<sup>32</sup> Gernot Böhme, 'Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics', *Thesis Eleven* 36 (1993): 113–26.

<sup>33</sup> William Reddy, 'Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions', *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 3 (1997): 327–51; William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

first study of its kind dealing explicitly with this topic, it is hoped that it will function as a proverbial opening of a sluice gate, providing impetus for further work to be completed in this important arena. Chapter 1 stays within the domain of the Caribbean, looking at how motivations to migrate to Britain were produced. Here, negative emotional experiences are conceptualised as the motivations to migrate themselves, experiences which arise from interaction with situated social, cultural, and economic contexts. Once this decision had been made, Chapter 2 traces these migrants as they went through the departure, journey, and arrival processes, focusing in particular on the intersubjective space of the transatlantic ship journey, their first impressions of Britain and its people upon arrival, and the feelings generated from the void between expectations and reality. Chapter 3 concerns itself with the tripartite themes of romance, family, and childhood, focusing not only on how the process of migration led to an affective restructuring of Caribbean migrant households, but also on the experiences of those engaged in interracial relationships and on children as they made their way through the British school system. Being that interracial relationships were often the site *par excellence* for the hatred and jealousy of some white Britons to coalesce around, Chapter 4 delves into the history of racist violence in Britain in the postwar period, conceptualising xenophobia and racism as historically-contingent emotional concepts and racist violence as emotional expression. Finally, rounding off the narrative is Chapter 5, which looks at the autonomous leisure spaces that Caribbean migrants constructed in Britain in the form of house and “blues” parties, finding that not only were they the product of exclusion in the social domain and a disconnect between modes of social comportment between Britain and the Caribbean, but that they have distinct emotional histories in themselves – a changing landscape of emotional experience buried lightly under their surfaces.

## 1: Migrant motivations

They didn't go because they wanted to be rid of their wives and children. They didn't go because they wanted an easy life. They didn't go for a spree. They went because their souls cried out for better opportunities and better breaks. And just like them, I'm going for the same thing.

Karl Sealey, *My Fathers Before Me*

In the 1880s, British-German geographer E. G. Ravenstein formulated his so-called “laws” of migration – the first attempt to schematise the dynamics of voluntary human mobility. Training his analytic unit almost exclusively upon the migration of labour, Ravenstein highlighted ‘the desire inherent in most men to “better” themselves in material respects’.<sup>34</sup> Compare this with the epigraph above, taken from a short story written by a Caribbean author resident in 1950s Britain, and one finds very little dissonance in their evaluative frames. During the opening salvo of migration studies, then, Ravenstein was on the cusp of a powerful postulation which might have utterly reshaped the field’s evolution. Migrant motives (even those driving “economic migration”, the taxonomic label pasted on to postwar Caribbean movements) reside within the domain of felt experience. The binary between logic and emotion, thought and feeling, casts a veil of cold and rational economic calculation over migrant motivational patterns, and it is a veil which few researchers in the intervening 150 years have seemed willing to penetrate. This has masked the emotional dynamics which work in tandem with such material concerns to produce human movement.<sup>35</sup>

This interplay between context and feeling is the fundamental premise which animates the following chapter. The interplay between a decision – a *desire* – to migrate and felt experience is so mutually constitutive that it becomes analytically rudderless to

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<sup>34</sup> Ernst Georg Ravenstein, ‘The Laws of Migration’, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 52, no. 2 (1889): 286.

<sup>35</sup> We have begun to see in recent years, however, something of a rapprochement between migration studies and affect studies. A 2015 special issue of *Emotion, Space and Society* was devoted to precisely this, hoping to partially fill the scholarly lacuna pertaining to ‘the emotional side of the migrant condition’ which is ‘relatively understudied’. See Loretta Baldassar and Paolo Boccagni, eds., ‘Moving Feelings: Emotions and the Process of Migration’, special issue, *Emotion, Space and Society* 16 (2015). Quote from Paolo Boccagni and Loretta Baldassar, ‘Emotions on the Move: Mapping the Emergent Field of Emotion and Migration’, *Emotion, Space and Society* 16 (2015): 1.

isolate them. Migrant motives are emotional, indeed *are* emotions. As should be obvious, motion is inherent to the act of migration, just as a measure of motivational substance is inherent to voluntary human mobility. Emotion, meanwhile – what I suggest *is* that motivational substance – is e-motion: a movement, an outward projection. Migration, motivation, and emotion are intricately, rhizomatically linked, and in order to highlight this I employ a linguistic bridge between them: we do not have migrant motivations, we have migrant *emotivations*. This portmanteau term helps retain a measure of sensitivity to these linkages, and by extension keeps the main propositional thrust of this chapter close to hand.

Experiences of emotion cannot, of course, be dissociated from their contexts of production, and so the following bears heavily upon the historical conditions at play within the Caribbean – the region within which these emotions were felt, practised, and expressed. In itself, asking why these migrants came to Britain – inquiring into the emotional experiences which drove them across the Atlantic – is one of the most profound historical questions we can ask of this movement, yet we can also stake out a claim for these emotions as possessing a significance which lay beyond the impetus to migrate. Emotivational patterns came to condition conceptions, perceptions, and receptions of Britain, and of their migratory experiences more generally. In other words, the emotivations that migrants alighted with helped to shape future evaluation of experience, and therefore played a critical role in subsequent emotional output. Even before their arrival in Britain this held true: each migrant's personal emotivations influenced how the affective experiences and evaluations of their departure and journey, undermining any attempt to historically reconstruct these formative moments without reference to the feelings which drove them to migrate. Richly affective content in themselves, emotivations stem from *past* contextual experience and play a role in determining *future* emotional experience, as well as the evaluation of it.

### 1.1: Feeling Britain

The obvious first move here concerns Caribbean self-definitions of Britain as the “mother country”. That “Britishness” was a defining trait of these migrants' identities has become somewhat an historical cliché, but it should not detract from its broad truth value.

Pre-independence, Caribbean societies and their collective identities were awash with British representational forms and cultural symbolism. Aside from its regular features on British history, Barbados' largest newspaper referred to the island as "Little England" and liberally splashed the "Mother Country" moniker throughout its column inches;<sup>36</sup> Jamaica's *Gleaner*, meanwhile, often ran successful donation appeals to finance the local celebrations held on royal occasions.<sup>37</sup> These occasions – funerals, coronations, and royal visits – were a central feature of Caribbean social and cultural life: Residents festooned homes and local businesses with bunting;<sup>38</sup> processions thousands-strong formed in local communities upon the death of a monarch;<sup>39</sup> and local businesses – doubtless with a finger on the pulse of what would sell – marketed special products such as 'Coronation Pop ... the drink of all Loyal Subjects'.<sup>40</sup> This was not merely the trite gloss of mass media or commodity-peddlers. Guyanese Elma Seymour remembered that in preparation for The Prince of Wales' visit to Georgetown, Guyana in 1902 her mother 'sat up for nights' making dresses the colour of the Union Jack,<sup>41</sup> whilst much of Jamaican James Berry's literary output can be read as a poignant attempt to articulate how the "Britishness" of these Caribbean cultural spaces calibrated historical subjectivities, reference points, and felt experiences.<sup>42</sup>

These themes possess the capaciousness of monographs, and indeed exist as such.<sup>43</sup> But rather than retreat into historiographical roads well-travelled regarding the emergence of Caribbean Britishness and its locations within colonial frameworks or

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<sup>36</sup> *Barbados Advocate*, 24 August 1952; *Barbados Advocate*, 2 April 1950; *Barbados Advocate*, 13 July 1950.

<sup>37</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, 19 April 1902; *Daily Gleaner*, 10 May 1902; *Daily Gleaner*, 24 April 1953; *Daily Gleaner*, 14 May 1953; *Daily Gleaner*, 15 May 1953.

<sup>38</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, 2 February 1901. See also Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 57, 65.

<sup>39</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, 2 February 1901; *Daily Gleaner*, 4 February 1901.

<sup>40</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, 15 April 1902; *Daily Gleaner*, 19 April 1902.

<sup>41</sup> Elma E. Seymour, *A Goodly Heritage: The Autobiography of Elma E. Seymour* (Georgetown: Guyana National Printers, 1987), 15–16.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, James Berry, *Windrush Songs* (Hexham: Bloodaxe, 2007); James Berry, *Fractured Circles* (London: New Beacon Books, 1979).

<sup>43</sup> The touchstone here is Rush, *Bonds of Empire*. Brian Moore and Michele Johnson take a particularly notable evaluative stance, highlighting 'the efforts of the Jamaican social elites and their British imperial masters to impose a new sociocultural religious and moral order, based on British imperial ideologies and middle-class Victorian ideas, ideals, values and precepts, on the Jamaican people'. See Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865-1920* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), xiii.

cultural forms and practices, I wish to press forward. Doing so involves the presupposition that many contemporary Caribbeans identified as British and held positively-charged associations of Britain – its political and judicial structures, its literary history, the perceived principles embedded within its national identity – and that this was produced and replicated through the region’s cultural landscapes and societal configurations. Many of these are necessarily fleshed out as the narrative progresses, but by using the above as a ‘simple predicate for any historical investigation’ rather than a conclusion to be proved *in extenso*, we are able to ask productive questions about how these collective identities operated upon historical subjectivities, and what this meant for affective migratory motivations.<sup>44</sup>

The key takeaway here is that whatever their contextual processes of production, these identities existed within the orbit of felt experience. Through an engagement with and an internalisation of their civic status along with certain, perceived British values, histories, cultural forms, social structures, and notions of class, these identities begat a certain position, a certain referential frame from which Caribbeans could interpret the world and their place within it. As the perceived relation between subject and group, always contingent on historical context, these identities were, as Stuart Hall would say, positionings.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, they were identities first and foremost *felt and experienced*. Suspend an important discussion of how such identities are transmitted through the vehicle of the familial unit, and it becomes hard to deny in Connie Mark’s account how their ultimate location lay on this plane of felt experience: ‘We were British! England was our mother country. We were brought up to respect the royal family ... We grew up as British’.<sup>46</sup> Likewise in the memories of Randolph Beresford, from British Guiana: ‘We were told—we understood—we were part of Britain, we were British. We weren’t

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<sup>44</sup> The quotation, formulated around a different issue of historical practice and interpretation, is taken from Walter Johnson, ‘On Agency’, *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 114.

<sup>45</sup> Much of Stuart Hall’s theoretical work on identity can be read as an attempt to disentangle any residue of essentialism from its conceptualisation, and inject a measure of historicism and dynamism into its operation. For Hall, a historical subject is placed or positioned through identity, so that identity *itself* becomes a positioning in wider historical context and its modes of discourse. Paul Gilroy would later build on this mutable and historical foundation in his call for black identity to focus not on essentialised “roots”, but on the changing “routes” through which blackness is constituted over time. See Stuart Hall, ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’, in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 225-7; Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 12, 133.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Connie Mark: Community Activist and Caribbean Champion’, *Guardian*, 15 June 2007.

anything else. We were British'.<sup>47</sup> No doubt Frantz Fanon would say that such affectively-located identities mask a more fundamental kernel, that they are psychoanalytical sublimations of a deeper and more *primaeval* desire for the whiteness associated with such identities.<sup>48</sup> But of equal value is to take these actors at their word when they say they had 'grown up British in every way'<sup>49</sup> and therefore 'felt ... a part of Britain'.<sup>50</sup> There was a critical domain of collective feeling in the Caribbean – before the representational tumult of independence – whereby individuals *felt* their state of *being* British. The ways in which they felt this defined how they understood their relationship to Britain and Empire, and partially how they understood themselves. By taking their expressions *as* expressions and not as overwrought psychological ciphers, we can use them to pose questions and posit answers about migratory motives from the standpoint of affective experience.

### 1.1.1: Belonging

We can go further than this, and the testimony of Jamaican poet James Berry allows us to do this. By saying that 'the idea of being British made us special; we were not African, not American, we were British', he casts a bright spotlight upon the ramifications of felt notions of identity.<sup>51</sup> Not only are identities produced and performed on the level of felt experience, but the summary output of such phenomena are affective states. Identities, in other words, produce emotion – feelings of belonging. Practices, cultural symbols, historical consciousnesses, and interactions with material worlds are all essential to this dynamic, and when one's cultural capital or historical consciousness is displaced through colonialist machinations, it produces a strange sundering or pluralisation of feelings of belonging. A Trinidadian, say, may have spent the majority of his life in Arima, his

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<sup>47</sup> Randolph Beresford, interview, 12 April 1988, tape 40, Oral History Collection, H & F.

<sup>48</sup> Under the burden of evidence, one could point to the pigmentocratic structure of Caribbean societies, which culturally and socio-economically privileged lighter skin tones.

<sup>49</sup> E. R. Braithwaite, *To Sir, With Love* (London: Bodley Head, 1959), 40.

<sup>50</sup> William Nalvey quoted in Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), 14. Indeed, Kennetta Perry has argued that for these Caribbean persons the state of "being British" did not contain overtly racialised notions, a mirror of their conception of Empire and Commonwealth as a multi-racial "family of nations". See Kennetta H. Perry, *London Is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>51</sup> Colin Grant, *Homecoming: Voices of the Windrush Generation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2019), 31.



lifeworld geographically dominated by bamboo groves and the rugged peaks of the Northern Range, socially rooted in the networks of support and commerce around him, but feel a coexistent sense of belonging to Britain, the “Mother Country”. Indeed, this was the experience of calypsonian Aldwyn Roberts, better known as Lord Kitchener. After travelling to Jamaica to work for two months, “Kitch” reported that he ‘started getting a kind of homesick’.<sup>52</sup> Curiously, this was not a permutation of homesickness familiar to those in postmodern Western societies, nor the epidemiological form of homesickness which prevailed in the United States during the nineteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Even to Roberts’ emotional register, the feeling was peculiar: ‘it was very funny, that it was a homesick, but not homesick for Trinidad’.<sup>54</sup> Shortly afterwards, he would migrate to England and pen that preeminent paean of belonging for the “Windrush generation”: “London Is The Place For Me”.<sup>55</sup>

Such is the motivational power of this rupture, this pluralisation of belonging – one which could only have been produced within this specific context, in this specific time and within this specific place, through its variant social, cultural, and political components. For many, migration to Britain was not a journey to a foreign locale but a kind of repatriation: Jamaica’s *Gleaner* noted of the migrants in 1962 that, along with their adoration of the royal family, they were raised ‘to think of England as the “Mother Country”’, accustomed to singing “God Save The Queen” ‘as fervently as any member of the League of Empire Loyalists’, and spoke of journeying to Britain as ““going home””.<sup>56</sup> This notion of return to places never visited, of the frictional energy generated from these migrants’ tensions of belonging, was given poignant expression by St. Lucia’s titanic figure of poetry, Derek Walcott, when he ruminated: ‘but never guessed you’d come / to know there are homecomings without home’.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Aldwyn Roberts quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 65.

<sup>53</sup> Susan J. Matt, *Homesickness: An American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>54</sup> Aldwyn Roberts quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 65.

<sup>55</sup> Lord Kitchener, ‘London is the Place for Me’, track 2 on *Festival of Britain / London Is the Place for Me*, Melodisc, 1951, 10" record.

<sup>56</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, 21 October 1962. Emphasis mine.

<sup>57</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Gulf and Other Poems* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969).

Nevertheless, pluralised feelings of belonging did not trigger the journey *per se* – they merely motivated the choice of destination.<sup>58</sup> As a social phenomenon in the Caribbean, migration was decidedly *on* in this period – just as it had been in earlier periods. We will explore these periods and their contextual drivers shortly. Irrespective of the “mother country”, many instead made the journey to America – at least until the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 effectively slammed the door to Caribbean migration.<sup>59</sup> But once migration presented itself as a viable practice in one’s consciousness, for those who felt themselves British and who felt the affective pinch of belonging inherent to this identity, Britain was the unequivocal port of call.

### 1.1.2: Maternal metaphors and affective bonds

Splintered feelings of belonging may have shaped the end destination and not the mobilisation itself, but other currents within the mother country ideology did furnish powerful emotivational impetuses. Within the Caribbean, colonialist practices relied on the maintenance of *status quo* by attending to the felt experiences of subalterns; social, cultural, political, discursive, and material contexts were all carefully geared toward the production of feelings of belonging. One of the most important ways in which this worked – and as a result, reinforcing British domination as a coherent, legitimate model – was by employing familial imagery and symbolism.

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<sup>58</sup> By helping to determine the choice of destination, these feelings of belonging are strikingly befitting of Ronald de Sousa’s argument that emotions are evolutionary solutions to problem-solving. We can choose to discard the overtly Darwinian approach implicit here, and even so are left with a sophisticated account of the relationship between reason and emotion and a compelling collapse of the reason-emotion dualism – approaches which fit well with this historical example, where feelings of belonging have shaped the choice of destination. De Sousa argues that emotions ‘determine the salience of things noticed and of live inferential options, and so control the parameters of rationality’. See Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987), 257.

<sup>59</sup> See “David” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 194. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, better known as the McCarran-Walter Act, imposed a regime of immigration control for the United States based on national quotas, and by so doing limited the number of eligible migrants from the British Caribbean to just 100 per territory. Before this, an estimated 2,600 migrants were moving to the United States annually. See Letter from B. A. B. Burrows of the British Embassy in Washington, DC to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 February 1952, CO 936/189, The National Archives. For sociological treatment of Caribbean migration to the United States, see Ransford W. Palmer, ‘In Search of a Better Life: Caribbean Migration to America’, in *U.S.-Caribbean Relations: Their Impact on Peoples and Culture*, ed. Ransford W. Palmer (Westport: Praeger, 1998); Roy Simon Bryce-Laporte, ‘New York City and the New Caribbean Immigration: A Contextual Statement’, *International Migration Review* 13, no. 2 (1979): 214–34; Constance R. Sutton and Elsa M. Chaney, eds., *Caribbean Life in New York City: Sociocultural Dimensions* (New York: Center for Migration Studies of New York, 1987).

This was not a novel development, and it is possible to track the way such cultural representations were mobilised and modified over time. For previous Caribbean generations, the reception and reputation of Queen Victoria rested on her presentation as a matriarch, head of a “family” of nations.<sup>60</sup> This was always more pronounced on regal occasions. During Victoria’s diamond jubilee in 1897, Anglican and Baptist congregations in Jamaica or their Catholic counterparts in Trinidad listened to glowing screeds by the clergy which folded Victoria’s motherhood, womanhood, piousness, and sovereignty into one neat, morality-laden package.<sup>61</sup> Colonial officials and dignitaries from around the Empire offered up similar panegyrics, which Caribbean newspapers eagerly covered.<sup>62</sup> This fusion of the body politic and body natural bounced off of apposite representations of the kindred Empire, a global multi-ethnic family characterised by a fraternity and consanguinity bequeathed it by dint of a shared ancestry which found its ultimate location in Victoria.<sup>63</sup> This reached an almost histrionic apotheosis through the eulogies commemorating Victoria in the wake of her death in 1901. One poem submitted to a Trinidadian newspaper waxed lyrical over a ‘feeling’ that ‘comes from birth to us / Of Reverence for a mother’ – her ‘children’ left with ‘grief heartfelt / and weeping / Bid thee a last farewell’.<sup>64</sup> As reported in the Caribbean, First Lord of the Treasury Arthur Balfour spoke of “the person of the sovereign, who was a symbol of unity of the Empire”, while Lord Salisbury spoke of her reigning “by her hold on the hearts of her subjects” and emphasised her “brilliant qualities as a wife, mother and woman”.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Rush, *Bonds of Empire*, 53-56.

<sup>61</sup> *The Daily Gleaner* reported a speech made by Reverend Father Mulry in St. Catherine parish, Jamaica, for Victoria’s diamond jubilee: “she was a type of the noblest of women, as a maiden, pure and perfect in character, as a wife filling her station as only a true woman can, as a mother faithful to her trust and the discharge of her maternal duties ... The Queen governed her subjects for their own welfare”. See *Daily Gleaner*, 28 April 1897. Meanwhile, Father Sadoc Silvester at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Trinidad said all were “bound to be grateful to Almighty God that he had given them so model a Queen, Wife, and Mother”. See *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, 22 June 1897.

<sup>62</sup> Reported in the *Gleaner*, C. B. Berry, a colonial official in Jamaica, stated in a council debate that “Queen Victoria is a woman and that means a great deal to all who are not hardened sinners; Queen Victoria is a good woman ... Queen Victoria is a mother ... As a Queen, as a woman, as a wife and as a mother Queen Victoria is inferior to none”. See *Daily Gleaner*, 23 April 1897.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Her sons to-day were found everywhere, occupying positions in the vanguard of civilisation and progress’. See *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, 22 June 1897.

<sup>64</sup> *Port-of-Spain Gazette*, 27 January 1901.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, 1 February 1901.

Bafflingly, what has been overlooked in imperial historiography is the central mechanic upon which the efficacy of these colonial optics relied: their inherent emotionality.<sup>66</sup> The emotional concepts and prescriptions embedded within contemporary notions of motherhood and the family provided the lubricant for these gears to bite; by trussing up Victoria and the Commonwealth in maternal and familial garb they became, by association, representative of the archetypal emotions and dynamics tethered to them. Victoria was the benevolent, begetting, yet stern matron from afar, equally capable of compassion or correction, cod liver oil in one hand and the cane in the other. The imperial “family” were ancestrally bound to each other in loyalty, care, and mutual aid. The mutual prescriptivism inherent to such dynamics amplifies the political potency of such imagery: Just as a maternal and fraternal love is supposedly unconditional, so you are *expected* to love your mother and brothers. There is a hard kernel of obligation veiled behind such feelings and gestures which cannot be circumvented without a measure of emotional suffering. This instrumentalisation of affective entanglements for the purposes of social and political control represents an historical intersection between emotion, power, and regulation in an imperial context: Emopower becomes the counterpart to Foucauldian biopower.<sup>67</sup>

In the wake of the Queen’s death her imperial motherhood was transferred, more or less wholesale, from Victoria the person onto Britain the nation.<sup>68</sup> The metropole

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<sup>66</sup> Anne Spry Rush has conducted pioneering work on the reception and reputation of Victoria in the Caribbean and the conflation of her image with mother- and womanhood. She follows, however, an analysis rooted in its gendered undercurrents, and not the intersection between gender and its embedded emotional qualities. See Rush, *Bonds of Empire*, 49-56, 67. This is different from, but not mutually exclusive with the representational operations of imperialists in British India which David Cannadine has dubbed “ornamentalism” and which relied on a certain projection of pomp and grandeur, with imperial officials functioning as “ceremonial impresarios”. See David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); David Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain* (London: Penguin, 1995), 37.

<sup>67</sup> Biopower was a term which Michel Foucault employed to describe the growth of medical and statistical mechanisms deployed by the nation-state to control the bodies and populations of their residents. See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College De France, 1977-78*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave, 2007), 16-38.

<sup>68</sup> The personification of the nation state, its deployment within metaphor for mother or father, and the emotional content on which semantic connection rests, is a common political technique, from fascists to imperialists to nationalists. Moreover, it is largely a history which has yet to have been written. Aside from the obvious fascist examples of the 1930s, which formulated familial and gendered metaphors of nation along consanguineous fault lines for the purposes of exclusion, one immediately thinks of Jawaharlal Nehru’s speech on the eve of Indian independence, imploring the nation to ‘build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell’. See Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Tryst with Destiny’, 14 August 1947, accessed 19 May 2021, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1947nehru1.asp>.

became not simply the “mother country” – it was reified, personified, anthropomorphised into a literal mother, bringing with it all the emotional valences contained therein.<sup>69</sup> Prewar Caribbean children were, as one migrant said, ‘brought up to regard and respect Britain as our “Mother”’.<sup>70</sup> As Eric Wolf would say, a name was turned into a thing.<sup>71</sup> The ways in which these representational gymnastics shaped migrant motivations is contained within a non-question: You would come to your mother’s aid in her time of need, wouldn’t you? For those whom the mother country ideology had moulded their feelings of being and belonging, coming to Britain meant fulfilling an almost familial obligation to aid the nation. In many ways this was an extension of an identical affective dynamic present during wartime, adapted now to serve Britain’s new needs. By being ‘made to understand that we were British’,<sup>72</sup> many of the approximately 16,000 Caribbeans who served in the Second World War felt ‘compelled ... to defend Britain’,<sup>73</sup> felt it ‘only right that we came over and did our bit’.<sup>74</sup> Jamaican Connie Mark laid bare the power of these emotional prescriptions to produce feelings of obligation – tangible *motivations* – to migrate, admitting: ‘when your mother has problems you’ve got to come and help. So we all felt obliged to come and everybody was very happy to come’.<sup>75</sup>

For some, these feelings were translated into the postwar context of reconstruction as Britain felt the birth pangs of a new era in the squeeze of an acute labour shortage.<sup>76</sup> Wilmoth George Brown, passenger on the *Windrush*, remembered that ‘one of the reasons for coming was that those who did not serve in the war wanted to play their part

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<sup>69</sup> “Mother country” was a term in use in the Caribbean since at least the nineteenth century. See *Barbados Advocate*, 20 June 1884. What I am tracking here is how this was transformed into a literal or metaphorical mother.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher Woodley quoted in Sav Kyriacou, ed., *The Motherland Calls: African-Caribbean Experiences*, 2nd ed. (London: The Ethnic Communities Oral History Project, 1992).

<sup>71</sup> Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 6.

<sup>72</sup> William Naltery quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 14.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Cecil Holness quoted in Vivienne Francis, *With Hope in Their Eyes: The Compelling Stories of the Windrush Generation* (London: Nia, 1998), 195.

<sup>75</sup> Connie Mark quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 3.

<sup>76</sup> A labour shortage amplified in these years by a growing flow of native Britons to the white Dominions – so much so that Churchill in 1947 decried the emigration trend and beseeched would-be emigrants to delay their journeys until such a time as Britain’s labour woes had passed. See *Times*, 29 August 1947.

in providing the labour which was needed for rebuilding'.<sup>77</sup> Writing in support of emigration from the Caribbean, the *Barbados Advocate* spoke of the fact that 'West Indians could be of help' to the 'Mother Country'.<sup>78</sup> Many of these early trailblazers, then, were captured by a feeling that they 'were doing a service',<sup>79</sup> and these feelings were stimulated by a commensurate discursive environment in the Caribbean. No doubt aware of the way these feelings of belonging could be instrumentalised, an assortment of organisations with vested interests in driving this migration flow manipulated the region's pre-existing cultural value system to create a symbolic landscape rich with the familial allegorisation of Empire and its requisite notions of service. Britain's public sector – British Railways, London Transport, and local hospital boards – were the main impresarios here.<sup>80</sup> It was perhaps one of these organisations that was responsible for the film vans Alfred Williams saw traipsing rural Jamaica, employing relatively new media technologies to implore people to 'Come to England. Come to Mother Country'.<sup>81</sup> 'There were adverts everywhere', one woman remembered, the key takeaway from them being that 'the mother country needs you!'.<sup>82</sup> This deafening injunctive climate, characterised by its skilful manipulation of the affective resonance inhering to the mother country ideology, was also recalled by Jamaicans Jimmy Ellis<sup>83</sup> and Charlie Phillips.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, it seems to have worked. In light of these campaigns, Phillips 'saw people selling their goats, pigs, cows, and their land' to drum up the capital needed for the voyage, interpreting it as 'sacrifice[s] we made as British citizens'.<sup>85</sup>

These migrants were not, however, single-minded misty-eyed philanthropists. Even those driven to Britain by the brightest flames of familial service and sacrifice did so

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<sup>77</sup> W. George Brown, *Windrush to Lewisham: Memoirs of 'Uncle George'* (London: Mango Publishing, 1999), 15.

<sup>78</sup> *Barbados Advocate*, 13 July 1950.

<sup>79</sup> Sharon Frazer-Carroll quoted in Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff, ed., *Mother Country: Real Stories of the Windrush Children* (London: Headline, 2018), 83.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, *Daily Gleaner*, 2 March 1955.

<sup>81</sup> Alfred Williams and Ray Brown, *To Live It Is to Know It: From Jamaica to Yorkshire – the Life Story of Alfred Williams*, People's History of Yorkshire (Leeds: Yorkshire Art Circus, 1987), 66.

<sup>82</sup> Anonymous interviewee quoted in Elyse Dodgson, *Motherland: West Indian Women to Britain in the 1950s* (London: Heinemann, 1984).

<sup>83</sup> Jimmy Ellis quoted in David Matthews, *Voices of the Windrush Generation: The Real Story Told by the People Themselves* (London: Blink Publishing, 2018).

<sup>84</sup> Charlie Phillips quoted in Matthews, *Voices*, 49-50.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

under certain assumptions regarding their occupational aspirations and material welfare, formed against the foil of the contextual situations within Caribbean societies. One unnamed “West Indian” in the *Manchester Guardian* perfectly highlighted this parallelism when he stated that ‘we are all one family. Britain is helping us by giving us work and we are doing jobs that help Britain’s industries’.<sup>86</sup> Others driven by notions of service expressed apposite thoughts.<sup>87</sup> There was always an element of transactional thinking within these emotivations, so that they become not emotional practices based on a specious pure kernel of familial self-sacrifice, but practices undergone based on feelings, experience, and knowledge formed within the messy tumult of historical context. It is toward components of this context that we turn now.

## 1.2: Transnationalism in Caribbean cultures

“Mother country” or not, Caribbean cultures have historically been typified by transfer and movement. In some ways it is possible to see these cultural figurations as localised expressions of a wider Black Atlantic culture which has always been characterised by mobility, from the brutal demographic remodelling and diasporic formation of the Atlantic slave trade, through the United States’ “great migrations” of the twentieth century, to the Côte d'Ivoire’s status as a regional destination hub in the twenty-first.<sup>88</sup> However it is the Caribbean which has the strands of transnationalism and mobility most ineffably woven into its cultural fabrics. Jamaicans began migrating to Panama in 1850 to construct the Panama Railroad just twelve years after the neo-slavery system of apprenticeship was abolished, a corridor which emerged with renewed vigour a few decades later as “colón men” broke Panamanian earth in pursuit of a transoceanic canal both during the ill-fated French attempt (1881-1898) and the United States’ successful

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<sup>86</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 31 January 1955.

<sup>87</sup> Brown, *Windrush to Lewisham*, 15.

<sup>88</sup> For the Black Atlantic, see Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*. For the “great migrations”, see Stewart E. Tolnay, ‘The African American “Great Migration” and Beyond’, *Annual Review of Sociology* 29, no. 1 (2003): 209–32; James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). For the Côte d'Ivoire, see ‘International Migrant Stock 2020’ (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population, 2020).

one (1904-1914).<sup>89</sup> Later Caribbean migrants radiated out of their respective islands to cut sugar cane and harvest fruit in the US, develop the nascent oil industries of Cuba and Venezuela, and lay the sleepers of Costa Rica's railway lines.<sup>90</sup>

All this is to say nothing of the tangled web of inter-regional Caribbean migration, movements which produced new networks of social and romantic connections and replicated, in microcosm, the cultural configurations and practices of local islands all across the basin.<sup>91</sup> Barbadians are self-stylised 'great migrators' within the Caribbean;<sup>92</sup> Guyanese E. R. Braithwaite put his engineering degree to use in an Aruban oil refinery in the 1950s;<sup>93</sup> and working-class Caribbeans have been described as 'a travelling salesman, and his ware has been his labour'.<sup>94</sup> News of Britain's postwar labour shortages fell thus not onto a sedent region, but onto one where migration and movement were defining features of its cultural footprints, social practices historically integral to its societal formations. These contexts enable better situation of subtexts: affective tugs of belonging, international legal landscapes, and strategic knowledge of imperial processes (to which we will return) determined direction, not causation.

### 1.3: The British Caribbean and its discontents

There is a scene in George Lamming's novel *The Emigrants* in which migrants, on board a vessel journeying to England, are discussing their motivations for emigrating. In the din

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<sup>89</sup> For the Panama Railroad, see: Boukman Barima Kofi, 'Caribbean Migrants in Panama and Cuba, 1851-1927: The Struggles, Opposition and Resistance of Jamaicans of African Ancestry', *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 5, no. 9 (2013): 45. For the Panama Canal, see: Rhonda D. Frederick, '*Colón Man a Come*': *Mythographies of Panamá Canal Migration* (Washington: Lexington Books, 2005); Velma Newton, *The Silver Men: West Indian Labour Migration to Panama, 1850-1914* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2004). Jamaicans also migrated en masse to pick fruit in California. See Newton, *The Silver Men*, 20-6.

<sup>90</sup> For Venezuela, see Mary Chamberlain, ed., *Caribbean Migration: Globalized Identities* (London: Routledge, 1998), 200. For Cuba and Aruba, see Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 26-7, 33, 52-4, 62, 86-7, 96-7, 121. Lara Putnam's research constitutes the touchstone for understanding Caribbean migration to central America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Lara Putnam, 'To Study the Fragments Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World', *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (2006): 615-30; Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>91</sup> See especially Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, in which almost every family interviewed had direct experience of inter-regional Caribbean migration, and highlights the cultural differences and dislocations that Barbadians experienced in doing so.

<sup>92</sup> "Vernon" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 182.

<sup>93</sup> Braithwaite, *To Sir, With Love*, 175.

<sup>94</sup> Donald Hinds, *Journey to an Illusion: West Indian Migrants in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1966), 28.



of conversation, all participants pause to reflect on one Trinidadian's assertion: "'Trinidad ain't no place for a man to live; an' that's why you see I clearin' out'". Once all are finished speaking, the narrator adds that 'whatever the difference in their past experience they seemed to agree on one thing. They were taking flight from something they no longer wanted. It was their last chance to recover what might have been wasted'.<sup>95</sup> Thus, those who did not share feelings of zeal or the affective compulsion to serve the "mother country" nevertheless possessed other emotivations, ones which cleaved far closer to migratory engines, not rudders. Of this migration flow, what little emotional representation that exists has, slipshod and *en passant*, depicted it as a movement of hope.<sup>96</sup> Migrants came "with hope in their eyes" searching for a better future, a better break. We will soon see that there is a measure of substance to such hasty generalisations. However, they work to ignore and obscure the contextual conditions of the generation of hope, and, like so many matryoshka dolls, the emotional experiences which generate hope itself. Social, economic, and cultural infirmities within the region worked on the level of individual experience to produce negatively-conceived emotional outputs, and it was these which translated into tangible motivations to migrate. The decision to migrate stemmed not principally from hope – it stemmed from feelings of disillusionment, disappointment, hopelessness, and frustration with the constraints of one's own environment.

### 1.3.1: Economics, unemployment, and felt experience

Reconstructing these constraints begins with the economic context. The British Caribbean possessions of the mid-twentieth century represented an assemblage of fragile, anaemic, and predominantly monocultural economies, the system of land ownership – consisting of a hybrid mixture of smallholdings and vast corporate-owned plantations – unable to generate enough agricultural employment to mitigate chronic labour surpluses and growing populations.<sup>97</sup> Unemployment in the region vacillated

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<sup>95</sup> George Lamming, *The Emigrants* (London: Michael Joseph, 1954), 34.

<sup>96</sup> Vivienne Francis, *With Hope in Their Eyes: The Compelling Stories of the Windrush Generation* (London: Nia, 1998); 'Our Jamaican Problem', 17 January 1955, British Pathé newsreel footage, (*British Pathé*, 1955).

<sup>97</sup> Regarding the reliance of individual economies in the British Caribbean on monocultural agriculture, the winds of change were in the air at this point. Trinidad's oil industry was beginning to roar into life, as was Jamaica's bauxite industry, which would come to dominate the Jamaican economy in the following

between 15 and 20 percent, its explosive swings triggered by each island's reliance on agricultural exports whose production and processing are by nature seasonal.<sup>98</sup> Between 1935 and 1945 the radical economic historian William Macmillan visited the Caribbean, and so shocked was he by the poverty, malnutrition, and unemployment that he wrote *Warning from the West Indies*. In the year following its publication, Macmillan's foreboding found concrete vindication: The first stirrings of labour unrest in 1934-5 now erupted, in 1937, with a fever and fret. These disturbances, 'unprecedented in their scope and scale',<sup>99</sup> provided a socio-political climate within which the nationalist leaders and political movements who came to dominate twentieth-century Caribbean politics cut their teeth.<sup>100</sup>

The depression-era labour unrest proved that little by way of socio-economic improvement had come to the region since Lloyd George allegedly dismissed it as the "slums of the Empire" – and yet little by way of it came after.<sup>101</sup> Made fidgety by the spectre of colonial rebellion, and as a result of recommendations made by The Report of the West India Royal Commission – issued in 1939 as a direct imperial response to the unrest, and better known as the Moyne Report – Westminster passed The Colonial Welfare Development Acts of 1940 and 1945. They proved, however, wholly ineffective in tackling the labour issues which had grown into the defining issue of Caribbean social

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decades. This is all tied to the growth of nationalist politics on the island, political independence, and the efforts of nationalist politicians to strengthen, diversify, and industrialise their respective economies.

<sup>98</sup> Douglas Manley, 'Migration Past and Present', in *The West Indian Comes to England: A Report Prepared for the Trustees of the London Parochial Charities by the Family Welfare Association*, ed. S. K. Ruck (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), 14.

<sup>99</sup> Howard Johnson, 'The British Caribbean from Demobilization to Constitutional Decolonization', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV: The Twentieth Century*, ed. W. M. Roger Louis and Judith Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 604. For an exhaustive historiographical overview, see O. Nigel Bolland, *On the March: Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean, 1934-39* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1995). For a work which focuses in on the political dimensions of these upheavals, see O. Nigel Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement* (Oxford: James Currey, 2001). For a work concentrating specifically on the Jamaican context in the late 1930s, see Ken Post, *Arise Ye Starvelings: The Jamaican Labour Rebellion of 1938 and Its Aftermath* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978).

<sup>100</sup> In Jamaica the politicians who most reflected this trend were Alexander Bustamante and to a lesser extent Norman Manley. In Trinidad and Tobago, this was T. U. B. Butler. In Barbados, Grantley Adams.

<sup>101</sup> This is a quote often ascribed to Lloyd-George, but no work points to the original source, instead circularly referencing one another. It could well be false – like Voltaire's famous but apocryphal quote 'I disagree with everything you have said, but I defend your right to say it' – but it accurately reflects the disdain and neglect of the British political establishment toward the region. For examples of the ascription, see Chad Varah, 'Islands of Hardship', *Picture Post*, 14 June 1956; W. M. Roger Louis, 'Prophets of Colonial Strife', *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 February 1990.

and political life.<sup>102</sup> In interwar Jamaica, for example, Alfred Williams remembers dense presses of men, 100 yards long and as ‘broad as a road’, queuing outside sugar plantations rumoured to have vacancies.<sup>103</sup> Compare Williams’ experience with an incident in Kingston in December 1947, when two labour recruitment centres were opened intended to serve a maximum of 400 people. When a combined 18,000 jobseekers arrived, many saw the futility of their efforts and crowds began tearing down the premises before being dispersed by tear gas.<sup>104</sup> For the majority of Jamaicans, the only substantial change to their lived realities which occurred between these two events was the doubled cost of living during the war.<sup>105</sup> Compounding such dire straits, a 1944 hurricane wrought devastation on the north of the island, destroying around 90 percent of banana trees along with homes and local businesses.<sup>106</sup> One Jamaican migrant to England stated it bluntly: ‘there were no jobs’.<sup>107</sup>

The situation in Barbados was akin. Here, ‘one had to wait quite a little while before you could pick up a job’,<sup>108</sup> and the London Transport recruitment scheme set up on the island in 1956 was interpreted by both the colonial and newly-minted independent governments merely as a “safety valve” to ‘assist people who are willing to work but who cannot readily find employment’.<sup>109</sup> Trinidad’s socio-economic story, though slightly more diversified than its neighbours, was written in the same ink. When the People’s National

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<sup>102</sup> The first Act provided for a wholly inadequate total of £5 million to be spent on colonial development, which included British colonies outside of the Caribbean. It is, however, important to read such imperial parsimony within the context of the wartime economy within which the bill was drafted. The Colonial Development and Welfare Act 1945 extended this to a total of £120 million over a ten-year period, but even this massively upwardly revised figure was ineffectual. See E. R. Wicker, ‘Colonial Development and Welfare, 1929-1957: The Evolution of a Policy’, *Social and Economic Studies* 7, no. 4 (1958): 183-91.

<sup>103</sup> Williams and Brown, *To Live It*, 27.

<sup>104</sup> Charles Wilton Wood, letter to the editor, *Times*, 24 June 1948.

<sup>105</sup> Eggington, *Living*, 55.

<sup>106</sup> For statistics, see H. C. Sumner, ‘North Atlantic Hurricanes and Tropical Disturbances of 1944’, *Monthly Weather Review* 72, no. 12 (1944): 238. See also Sam King quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 75.

<sup>107</sup> Cecil Holness quoted in Francis, *Hope*, 195. See also Ethlyn Adams quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 64: ‘in Jamaica at the time there was high unemployment and no work’.

<sup>108</sup> “Vernon” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 182.

<sup>109</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 31. The safety valve is a common concept in migration studies, whereby emigration becomes a political tool to mitigate civil unrest generated by unemployment, poverty, and political dissidence. See Stephen Castles and Raúl Delgado Wise, eds., *Migration and Development: Perspectives from the South* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2008), 10, 19; Hein de Haas and Simona Vezzoli, ‘Migration and Development: Lessons from the Mexico-US and Morocco-EU Experiences’, IMI Working Paper No 24., (Oxford: International Migration Institute 2010).

Movement began contesting elections within the colonial political framework in 1956, its leader Eric Williams was aware of the ‘existence of substantial unemployment and considerable underemployment’, a problem not yet solved by 1981, when the nation’s greatest calypsonian Mighty Sparrow railed against ‘the unemployment levy murdering everybody’.<sup>110</sup> Three years later, Sparrow again turned his caustic pen to the same subject in *Capitalism Gone Mad*, intoning that ‘with unemployment and high inflation/some ah we go dead, before the end of this recession’.<sup>111</sup>

The inquisitional thrust of most histories of emotions hinges on the varied routes through which the cultural is historically translated into emotional experience, and how this experience feeds back into cultural norms, values, and practices. Much less historiographical attention has been paid to how the *economic* conditions translate into emotional experience. Yet felt experiences of poverty and precarity, of ennui, of hunger and hurdles to upward social mobility – these are derived principally from economic contexts and go on to generate a spectrum of negatively-conceived, historically-specific feelings; it was, after all, in a fury of disappointment’ that the Jamaican unemployed dismantled the labour recruitment offices in 1947.<sup>112</sup> This bridge between economic context and situated feeling is clearly articulated in the following, highly moving anonymous letter submitted to Jamaica’s *Gleaner* in 1948:

My experiences since I am unemployed are awful. My sufferings are terrible. I have absolutely no money, because my savings are exhausted and as I have not been employed for seven months. I cannot pay rental. I cannot buy enough food and live at the expense of my friends. Sometimes, I go to bed so hungry that I have no guarantees I will be alive the next morning. I have to sacrifice personal belongings. My worries are enough to drive me mad.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> The Williams quote is from Eric Eustace Williams, *Forged from the Love of Liberty: Selected Speeches of Dr. Eric Williams*, ed. Paul K. Sutton (Port-of-Spain: Longman Caribbean, 1981), 13. Mighty Sparrow sang this line on his 1981 calypso “We Like It So”. See Mighty Sparrow, ‘We Like It So’, track 2 on *Caribbean Express*, Charlie’s Records, 1981, 12" record.

<sup>111</sup> Mighty Sparrow, ‘Capitalism Gone Mad’, track 2 on *Margarita*, Charlie’s Records, 1984, 12" record.

<sup>112</sup> Wood, letter to the editor, *Times*, 24 June 1948.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Letter to the Editor’, *Daily Gleaner*, 23 February 1948.

Through experiences like these, suffering and its associative affective states – hunger, stress, pain – become potent migratory drivers. Alfred Williams, a poor agricultural labourer from Jamaica who migrated to Britain, had his toenails regularly ripped off for want of a pair of shoes but knew that ‘in the Mother Country there is no bare-foot, no more torn away off nail’. By coming to Britain, he would ‘be away from Jamaica where we had know so much Hell’.<sup>114</sup>

These were not the only emotivational outputs tied to economic context: Unemployment and lack of opportunity produced feelings of frustration, disillusionment, or ennui. One migrant remembered losing his job in 1952 and, remaining unemployed for over a year, was unable to ‘invent anything else but to migrate’,<sup>115</sup> whilst Tornado – the virulently Anglophobic RAF veteran returning to Britain in George Lamming’s *The Emigrants* – rages: “‘this blasted world ... is a hell of a place. Why the hell a man got to leave where he born when he ain’t thief not’in, nor kill nobody’”.<sup>116</sup> Ethlyn Adams surmised the general listless tone or atmosphere among many, and revealed the linkages between felt experience and migratory motives when she admitted that ‘there was no future in Jamaica at that time. It’s not a nice feeling. So I was glad to get away and try somewhere else’.<sup>117</sup> It was an economic environment writing the obituaries of their futures before they were even realised, and it employed the built environment to do so. Jamaican Alfred Harvey recalled that ‘they were building a prison in Jamaica ... no work, nothing to do. When you stand up and you look in it, and you say that’s the prison Bustamante is building for us. We got to find somehow to counteract it’.<sup>118</sup> A desire to migrate becomes the affective and defiant product of the intersections between political and economic contexts and their architectural projections.

Into this tumult came, after 1945, thousands of newly-demobilised Caribbean veterans. As if returning to oversaturated labour markets within societies suffocated of possibility was insufficient, on a psychological level the cultural knowledge acquired of

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<sup>114</sup> Williams and Brown, *To Live It*, 78.

<sup>115</sup> Wallace Barrymore Collins, *Jamaican Migrant* (London: Routledge, 1965), 51.

<sup>116</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 39.

<sup>117</sup> Ethlyn Adams quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 64.

<sup>118</sup> Alfred Harvey quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 114. Alexander Bustamante was the leader of the Jamaica Labour Party, the second of Jamaica’s main nationalist political parties next to Norman Manley’s People’s National Party. Bustamante rose to prominence as a labour leader championing working-class causes during the unrest of the 1930s.

Britain and their experience of mechanised total warfare meant a discovery for many 'that they did not fit in'.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, instances of colonial mismanagement helped underwrite the disappointment and disillusionment which coloured their experiences of return. In Jamaica, the island which had contributed the lion's share of personnel to the war effort, veterans were 'assured that jobs would be awaiting us' only to find 'nothing at all',<sup>120</sup> and even promised tracts of land to cultivate in Greenhill. This worked roughly as well as it had for the Roman Empire two millennia before, with veterans finding that Greenhill's land was 'fit for nothing but maybe a few goat'; many simply glimpsed their parcel only to 'turn round and walk away'.<sup>121</sup> Jamaican veteran Norman Hamilton said that he and his comrades were 'completely disillusioned' after being demobilised in Jamaica, deciding to migrate anew and 'look to Britain for a brighter future'.<sup>122</sup>

### 1.3.2: Pigmentocracies and their affects

These envisaged brighter futures were not only bankrolled by poverty, so to speak, but also by certain socio-cultural practices. In this period, complicated attitudes toward skin shade constituted one of the central cultural value systems and form of social hierarchicalisation in the Caribbean.<sup>123</sup> Historically-specific conceptions of race, shade, and whiteness which had traditionally provided the moral and epistemological underpinnings of colonialist practices became the primary mechanism of social delineation, resulting in a clutch of pigmentocratic societies which revered and privileged lighter skin tones and which translated these values into organisational principles around which they arranged their social compositions.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 52.

<sup>120</sup> Norman Hamilton, letter to the Editor, *South London Press*, 25 June 1948.

<sup>121</sup> Williams and Brown, *To Live It*, 66.

<sup>122</sup> Hamilton, letter to the Editor, *South London Press*, 25 June 1948.

<sup>123</sup> Stuart Hall's grandmother, for instance, could 'differentiate about fifteen different shades between light brown and dark brown'. See Stuart Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 49.

<sup>124</sup> For a first-hand account of how this functioned in Trinidad, see Alton Watkins, 'Interview with Alton Watkins', *Caribbean Takeaway Takeover*, 12 February 2018, [caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/alton-watkins](http://caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/alton-watkins). The roots of this undoubtedly lay in the monopolisation, by white colonialists in the Caribbean, of power, status, and wealth. Whiteness became synonymous with these concepts, and by association became a culturally desirable attribute. The basic tenets of this dynamic were not unique to Caribbean societies, although specific localised configurations

On the ground this became a powerful tool of exclusion and negation, denying to darker-skinned Caribbeans the educational and occupational opportunities of their lighter counterparts who would generally 'fare better'.<sup>125</sup> 'It is no secret', Donald Hinds wrote, 'that West Indian families have at times spent more money on the education of their children with the lightest complexion'.<sup>126</sup> The reason for this perhaps came down to a question of pragmatics: Caribbean parents with limited resources would undoubtedly have possessed situated knowledge of the interaction between these cultural values and their environment's economic landscape. Employers, already possessing a muscular ascendancy within a superabundant labour market, could afford to tailor their recruitment practices toward those with desirable lighter skin. This was certainly the case in Barbados, where jobs 'were very selective, and they had this thing about not employing too dark a person ... you had to be very fair to really get through'.<sup>127</sup> The same held true for Jamaica, where one migrant in Britain spoke of having to be 'fair of colour to get the jobs you wanted'.<sup>128</sup> In Trinidad and Tobago, where racial composition mirrored its more diversified economy, things were more complicated. There, the significant population of those with South Asian ethnicity experienced not so much the privations of exclusion along pigmentocratic fault lines, but along more well-known racial ones. But in the accompanying foreclosure of social and economic opportunities, the ultimate outcome was the same. Racial exclusion became a push factor in migrating to Britain.<sup>129</sup>

For darker-skinned Caribbeans, these were environments which sounded the death knell of their ambition. One migrant to Britain remembered that back in Guyana she aspired to be a typist 'but never dared to tell anyone, for working in an office meant pale skin', and living and emoting in contexts so culturally constrictive to one's own being meant that migration offered an avenue of escape, escape from 'the frustration of a colonial society' – paradoxically by migrating to the very place responsible for

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and permutations of this existed there, just as it did in Latin America. See Edward Telles, *Pigmentocracies: Ethnicity, Race, and Color in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

<sup>125</sup> Don Sydney, 'Interview with Don Sydney', *Caribbean Takeaway Takeover*, 5 December 2017, [caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/don-sydney](http://caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/don-sydney).

<sup>126</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 103.

<sup>127</sup> "Beryl" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 189.

<sup>128</sup> "Devon" quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 20.

<sup>129</sup> Jerome Teelucksingh, 'A Global Diaspora: The Indo-Trinidadian Diaspora in Canada, the United States, and England — 1967–2007', *Diaspora Studies* 4, no. 2 (2011): 140–41.

entrenching such cultural values.<sup>130</sup> One remarkable account comes from a woman writing to the editor of a British black community newspaper in 1962. She admitted that she had ‘never regretted’ coming to Britain, and that she had left the Caribbean because she ‘was made to feel inferior at home. I am dark ... and I would not mention the names I was called by even my own cousin ... Until I came here I always had an inferiority complex ... Sometimes I even tried to bleach myself’.<sup>131</sup> For these migrants, there existed a curious transnational interplay between localised cultural values of colour and race, interplays whose locus resided within individual felt experience. The fact that one would be considered “merely” black in Britain became an attractive prospect – ideas of race so rigid and calcified there that the excluded and shunned became the social equals of their lighter-skinned peers. And significantly, this woman’s account highlights the ways in which the evaluative hierarchies embedded within notions of race and shade, of whiteness and lightness, worked to produce negatively-ascribed emotional experiences which became motivations to migrate.

The feeling historical subject’s navigation of these economic and socio-cultural contexts thus produced a gamut of unwanted feelings. Hopelessness or worthlessness, frustration or exasperation, disappointment or disillusionment – these were to be pared away through the practice of migration, attenuated through sheer kinetic force, exorcised by forcibly changing the cultural and economic configurations which shape lived realities and situated experience. It was as much about escaping the limitations of their environment and the emotional consequences of these limitations as it was about hope, ambition, or a breast-beating sense of duty. One can rightly point to the historical role of colonialism in laying the foundations for the limitations within these environments: the peripheral role of the Caribbean in the world system, and Britain’s vested interest in fostering underdevelopment so that it might better pin down their roles as suppliers of raw materials to the centre;<sup>132</sup> the white monopolisation of key

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<sup>130</sup> “Veronica” quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 170. “Devon” quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 25.

<sup>131</sup> W. Alexis, letter to the editor, *Flamingo*, January 1962. Her testimony hints at migration’s role in the creation, within diaspora, of a black identity in Britain, and a pan-Caribbean identity, which transcended notions of shade and pigment.

<sup>132</sup> The framework briefly enumerated above comes from Latin American dependency theory. See Andre Gunder Frank, *The Underdevelopment of Development* (Boston: New England Free Press, 1966). This theoretical approach was crucial for Emmanuel Wallerstein’s later formulation of world-systems theory. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, 4 vols (New York: Academic Press, 1974-2011).



cultural and political positions within the colonial framework so that lighter skin came to possess a certain mystique, a certain cachet, certain associations of social status.<sup>133</sup> To read Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, or Gayatri Spivak is an exercise in how colonialism contributes to the production of, on the level of subjectivity, certain psychological and psychoanalytical effects within the subaltern, and it then becomes possible to view the emotional outputs of such interactions as driving one to migrate to the very country responsible for the production of these dynamics. These are consequences which George Lamming in *The Pleasures of Exile* extends past motivational impetus when he writes that ‘when the chosen residence is the country which colonised his own history, then there are certain complications’.<sup>134</sup> Britain’s colonial chickens were coming home to roost.

## 1.4: Hope and ambition

### 1.4.1: Hope

Nevertheless, these situated feelings of frustration, disillusionment, hopelessness, and inferiority only give us a fragment of the story. On its own, suffering is not enough to impel movement away from a certain place in a certain time – it must be hitched to a belief that one’s destination will provide some measure of improvement upon previous experiential content. This is precisely where hope and ambition interceded.

Many journeyed to Britain because they saw it as ‘a golden opportunity for a better life’, and it was this word – “better” – which surfaces and resurfaces in otherwise enormously distinct migrant accounts, providing a common comparative denominator woven into this flow’s emotivational fabric.<sup>135</sup> Migrants hoped for a ‘better financial opportunity’,<sup>136</sup> a ‘better break’,<sup>137</sup> a ‘better life’,<sup>138</sup> and a ‘better future’;<sup>139</sup> migration was

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<sup>133</sup> Watkins, ‘Interview with Alton Watkins’; Lenore Marcano and Pearl Marcano, interview by author, London, 12 November 2021 (see Appendix B).

<sup>134</sup> George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (London: Allison and Busby, 1984), 24.

<sup>135</sup> Lee Arbouin, *The Nottingham Connection* (Birmingham: AuthorHouse, 2012), xii.

<sup>136</sup> Dubes 52, *Black & Confused in the UK 53/60* (London: Xlibris, 2011), 19.

<sup>137</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 50-1, 74.

<sup>138</sup> Carol Sydney, ‘Interview with Carol Sydney’, *Caribbean Takeaway Takeover*, 11 January 2018, [caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/carole-sydney/](http://caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/carole-sydney/); “King Dick” quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 114.

<sup>139</sup> Sydney, ‘Interview with Don Sydney’.

an opportunity to 'better'<sup>140</sup> one's self or 'better' one's position.<sup>141</sup> George Lamming, perennially sensitive to questions of the body and of embodied experience, spoke of 'the cage' within which his migrant characters in *The Emigrants* 'were born and would die'; for them, the narrator states, 'the only tolerable climate of experience was the reality which was simply an irreversible instinct to make things better'.<sup>142</sup> After all, Higgins admits, "'tis why we all here on this boat. In search o' some way to make the future better'".<sup>143</sup> The contextual conditions of the Caribbean and the emotional experiences which flowed from them provided would-be migrants with the raw experiential material to imagine better futures *through* hope and ambition, and the act of migration became a means of furnishing them with these futures.

But these were not conceptualised as *immediate* futures. Almost to a person, these migrants envisaged their relocation as a temporary measure, a stopgap with a determinate lifespan, a practical measure which involved raising enough financial or occupational capital to return to the Caribbean and realise the diverse objects to which their hope and ambition were attached. 'Their dream', British-Jamaican Lee Arbouin explains, 'was to work in Britain for five or so years and then return to their homeland'.<sup>144</sup> Back in Guyana, Victor Waldron realised that migration 'was the only way of fulfilling my ambition', but explained to his acquaintances that such a measure was temporary and he would soon be back.<sup>145</sup> Chiming with Arbouin's assertion, five years was how long Alford Gardner had hoped to spend in Britain – enough time to accumulate the capital to return, 'raise five children, and watch my vineyards grow'.<sup>146</sup> For Ben Bousquet, the Caribbean community never came to Britain with any intention other than 'to save some money, educate our children and return home',<sup>147</sup> money which would enable Tornado in

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<sup>140</sup> Ethlyn Adams quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 64.

<sup>141</sup> Roger Waite quoted in Stephen Bourne and Sav Kyriacou, eds., *A Ship and a Prayer: Celebrating a Hundred Years of the Black Presence in Hammersmith and Fulham*, Hammersmith & Fulham Community History Series (London: Ethnic Communities Oral History Project, 1999), 36.

<sup>142</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 105.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>144</sup> Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, xii.

<sup>145</sup> Victor Waldron, *The Undiminished Link: Forty Years and Beyond* (London: Hansib, 2007), 17.

<sup>146</sup> Alford Gardner quoted in BBC News, *Windrush Generation: Three Stories - BBC News*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NME-9ot2Lqw>.

<sup>147</sup> Ben Bousquet quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 140.

*The Emigrants* to realise his hope of going ‘right back to Trinidad’ and building ‘a little parlour an’ set up some kind o’ business’.<sup>148</sup> The imagined objects of the hope which drove some 330,000 bodies across the Atlantic to “colonise England in reverse” were temporally deferred and geographically located from whence they came.<sup>149</sup> It was for a better life, in the future, *back in the Caribbean*. Moreover, their hope and the delayed gratification inherent within it straddled both sides of the migratory act, existing before as an emotivation and after as an affective coping mechanism allowing them to bear the privations and challenges they faced. Belief in an eventual, triumphant return to the Caribbean – whether realised or not – helped migrants emotionally and psychologically deal with the cultural dislocation, attacks, abuse, humiliations and rebuffs that were to come.<sup>150</sup>

Just as their hope was not necessarily tied to notions of immediate improvement, it was not necessarily tied to notions of *personal* improvement. In 1948, Harold Wilmot was standing deckside on a docked SS *Empire Windrush* before the gaze of Pathé newsreel cameras. In the telling exchange that followed, the reporter asked Wilmot: ‘are you a single man?’. The question both alluded to the hypersexualised motif of race embedded within colonial cultural structures and surmised, in encoded form, the nation’s own emotional dispositions toward this migration flow. But Wilmot’s answer is as instructive as the enquiry: ‘I’m trying to help myself and also help my mum’.<sup>151</sup> This was not only a reconfiguration of imperial notions of blackness – with its exclusion from normative familial values and essentialised linkages to voracious sexual hunger – it was also a remarkable historical signpost toward a specific way that hope was experienced and articulated by these migrants and the motivational power it possessed. Lee Arbouin, who migrated to Britain from Jamaica in the late 1950s, reminds us that Jamaican migrants ‘*hoped* that their hard-earned money would improve the lives of their

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<sup>148</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 68. See also the account of “Devon” in *Journey to an Illusion*, in which one of his cabinmates wanted to ‘save enough money to buy machinery for a cabinet workshop he intended setting up when he returned to Jamaica’: “Devon” quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 35.

<sup>149</sup> The allusion is to Louise Bennett Coverley’s poem “Colonization in Reverse”. See Louise Bennett Coverley, *Jamaica Labrish* (Kingston: Sangster’s, 1966), 54. For figures see Ceri Peach, *The Caribbean in Europe: Contrasting Patterns of Migration and Settlement in Britain, France and the Netherlands*, Research Papers in Ethnic Relations 15 (Warwick: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick, 1991), 13.

<sup>150</sup> See the account of Connie Mark in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 4.

<sup>151</sup> ‘Pathé Reporter Meets’, 24 June 1948, British Pathé newsreel footage (*British Pathé*, 1948).

families'.<sup>152</sup> It becomes a weighty reminder of the role the social plays in emotional experience, and its intersections with notions of love, care, and the familial unit. Attending to these thus, the remittances generated by migrants – Jamaica's second-largest source of GDP in 1966 – can be read as material expressions of these emotions, capital infused with affective value.<sup>153</sup> Just as colonialist practices and epistemologies sought to disperse, deny, fracture, or undermine the black Caribbean family unit, so the family unit strikes back as a site whose affective bonds generated emotivations of hope, projected onto others, which transported breadwinners to the heart of Empire.

#### 1.4.2: Ambition

Not easily separable from these permutations of hope was an ambition most commonly manifesting itself in a desire for occupational or educational advancement, for as Guyanese Sybil Phoenix remembered 'lots of people took that opportunity to come and be trained'.<sup>154</sup> Journeying to Britain became a practical method of attaining objectives to which one was orienting their life, and the hunger or desire underlying these objectives represents another emotional force in these migrants' motivational patterns. From cabinet making<sup>155</sup> and tailoring<sup>156</sup> to nursing,<sup>157</sup> professional cricket,<sup>158</sup> and locomotive driving,<sup>159</sup> Caribbean men and women alighted in Britain fired by specific vocational ambitions, imagined futures of their working lives, shaped by their individual peculiarities and preferences, backgrounds and contexts, and relative access to previous opportunities. The fact that Britain represented a space for them more conducive to the realisation of these ambitions returns us to historical contexts of colonialism. In order to realise her nursing ambition, Barbadian Irene's first choice of destination was not the

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<sup>152</sup> Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, xii. Emphasis added

<sup>153</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 147.

<sup>154</sup> Sybil Phoenix quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 122.

<sup>155</sup> 'Pathé Reporter Meets', 24 June 1948, British Pathé newsreel footage (*British Pathé*, 1948); "Devon" quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 35.

<sup>156</sup> Clifford Fullerton quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 8-9.

<sup>157</sup> "Irene" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 146-51; Marciano and Marciano, interview by author (see Appendix B); Majorie Rennie, interview by author, London, 27 September 2021 (see Appendix A).

<sup>158</sup> Connie Mark quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 3-7.

<sup>159</sup> Sybil Phoenix quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 122-23.

“mother country”, but Canada. It was only after being told by her headmaster that a Canadian nursing certificate would not permit her to work abroad that she migrated to Britain.<sup>160</sup> Migration to Britain became a functional decision: ‘being under the English’, Lenore Marciano explains, ‘they did not really provide a lot of facilities for us to move on. The only way you could have got to where you wanted to be was to move out, do it and come back home’.<sup>161</sup> Migrants employed situated knowledge of their historical environments to satisfy emotional goals; cogmotion stimulated motion.<sup>162</sup>

Opportunities for education comprised the second main flavour of motivational ambition. The primary cause of Alton Watkins’ migration to Britain ‘was because I wanted an education. I wanted to educate myself’,<sup>163</sup> an ambition which Don Sydney extends to the whole Caribbean diaspora in Britain: ‘we hoped to improve ourselves, go and get a better education, that’s why we came’.<sup>164</sup> In his 2011 memoir, Alphonso Roberts from Tobago strikes a similar chord. He and his wife’s ‘ultimate goal’ was education, and this became the cardinal purpose for their migration to the West Midlands in 1957. This shared ambition for educational advancement even served as the unifying spark which ignited the Roberts’ relationship. Such are the intersections between love, companionship, and ambition.<sup>165</sup>

In many ways, migrants’ educational ambitions were even more extensively the product of transnational historical contexts. Unlike in Britain, where elementary education had been *gratis* since the end of the nineteenth century – secondary following suit from 1945 – the Caribbean’s educational structures comprised a complex mixture of fee-paying institutions, controlled by either a one of a number of religious organisations (who had assumed responsibility for mass public education since the abolition of

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<sup>160</sup> “Irene” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 148.

<sup>161</sup> Marciano and Marciano, interview by author (see Appendix B).

<sup>162</sup> “Cogmotion” was coined by the psychologists Douglas Barnett and Hilary Horn Ratner in a 1997 paper to better articulate the ‘interactive and inseparable nature of cognition and emotion’. See Douglas Barnett and Hilary Horn Ratner, ‘The Organization and Integration of Cognition and Emotion in Development’, *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 67, no. 3 (1997): 303.

<sup>163</sup> Watkins, ‘Interview with Alton Watkins’.

<sup>164</sup> Sydney, ‘Interview with Don Sydney’.

<sup>165</sup> Alphonso Roberts, *The Great Partnership of Vesta Malvina Irvine and Alphonso Irenius Roberts, 1954-2004* (Brighton: Book Guild Publishing, 2011), 67.

slavery), or increasingly the colonial government.<sup>166</sup> The limited number of scholarships available could not meaningfully alter either the huge number of Caribbeans who could not afford school fees, or problems of access for those in rural areas. One Barbadian remembered that for his mother, providing the single penny per week for his elementary education 'was as hard as going up the hill Golgotha where Jesus travel',<sup>167</sup> whilst Alfred Williams recalled that in interwar Jamaica 'some kids live so far away from school (which is in a church) that they just never ever go'.<sup>168</sup> This meant that, in Jamaica for instance, a large minority of adults were without an elementary education and less than 1 percent a secondary.<sup>169</sup>

Such lack of opportunity combined with lived experiences of poverty to establish education – particularly secondary – as a Caribbean cultural value of inordinate import, creating successive generations fuelled by an intense, single-minded ambition to school themselves and their children. Growing up, Majorie Rennie was never given chores around her home in mid-twentieth-century Trinidad – the categorical imperative was to study and complete small investigative projects set by her father.<sup>170</sup> Never receiving an opportunity for secondary education himself, one Barbadian migrant 'made an oath, if I walk the road, pick paper bag ... my children got to get a secondary education ... I will do every kind of work to see my children ... get a secondary education'.<sup>171</sup> What the above makes clear is that educational ambition mirrored the format of hope in that they did not necessarily possess a subject-oriented intentionality. Toward this end, postwar Caribbean parents went to painstaking lengths to guarantee or underwrite their children's education, uprooting or splitting cohesive family units into transnational cells. These actions also complicate received notions of agency, traditionally seen as the locus of decision-making and motivational processes: children often had little choice in

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<sup>166</sup> Austin Clarke, *Growing Up Stupid Under the Union Jack: A Memoir* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980), 31-8; Rush, *Bonds of Empire*, 21-46; Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, 205-44; Ruby King, 'Introduction', in *Education in the Caribbean: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Ruby King (Mona: University of the West Indies Faculty of Education, 1987).

<sup>167</sup> "Herman" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 179.

<sup>168</sup> Williams and Brown, *To Live It*, 40.

<sup>169</sup> Rush, *Bonds of Empire*, 25; Charles C. Hauch, *Educational Trends in the Caribbean: European Affiliated Areas* (Washington: US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, 1960), 34.

<sup>170</sup> Rennie, interview by author (see Appendix A).

<sup>171</sup> "Charles" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 143.

migratory practices, being driven largely by the emotions of parents. And yet these emotions loop back, for they are felt *for* and *through* these children, directed toward those who possess little say in the decision-making process.

Moreover, concrete mechanisms and cultural legacies of colonialism helped shape how these experiences of educational ambition were felt and acted upon.<sup>172</sup> This was, in the first instance, a question of directionality. The cracked representational spyglass within colonial societies through which knowledge of Britain was filtered led to the metropole's acquisition of a certain level of cultural clout in the Caribbean, and a privileging of metropolitan methods and structures. In no social arena was this truer than in education. Caribbean schools were based around similar pedagogical practices, taught an Anglocentric curriculum by Anglophilic educationalists, utilised the same Cambridge examination framework (subsequently shipped to Britain to be marked), and modelled themselves in structure and practice off of elite British institutions. Whilst those who could afford higher education had the option, from 1948, of studying at the newly-minted University of the West Indies, it was Britain's universities – particularly Oxford and Cambridge – which were revered. At all rungs on the educational ladder, then, the prestige of the nation's educational credentials was widely accepted. One migrant remembered that in Barbados, 'you always heard of England, the education and the universities they have here'.<sup>173</sup> Britain was a 'seat of learning' for contemporary Caribbeans,<sup>174</sup> a place chosen by parents who sought a 'good education' for their children.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> This both worked alongside and buttressed the cultural clout Britain possessed in the Caribbean at the time: more's the better, Irene's father thought of her predicament, for if she was going to train as a nurse she 'might as well go to England and do it properly'. See "Irene" in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 149. It was a sentiment shared by the parents of another woman who came to train as a nurse, Majorie from Trinidad. When Majorie informed them of her decision to come to Britain she encountered no pushback, for 'England was seen as the be-it of all, you're going to England, you're going to the motherland'. See Rennie, interview by author (Appendix A). Colonial structures blanket and colour patterns of feeling, and by extension patterns of migration.

<sup>173</sup> "Beryl" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 192.

<sup>174</sup> "Oswald 'Columbus' Denniston" quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 62.

<sup>175</sup> Esther Bruce's cousin and his wife migrated from Guyana because they 'wanted their four children to have a good education'. See Stephen Bourne and Esther Bruce, *The Sun Shone on Our Side of the Street: Aunt Esther's Story*, Hammersmith & Fulham Community History Series (London: Ethnic Communities Oral History Project, 1991), 32.

Aside from controlling the topical content of Caribbean education and outsourcing its assessment to the metropole, the colonial system possessed other concrete mechanisms for entrenching the pedagogical cachet of Britain. The Barbados Island Scholarship and University of Oxford's Rhodes Scholarship – the latter founded by arch-imperialist Cecil Rhodes – brought some of the Caribbean's most dazzling intellectual lights to Britain, simultaneously entrenching the conflation of the metropole with élite achievement and stymieing the growth of the region's local artistic and scholarly spheres in a remarkable historical instance of “brain drain”.<sup>176</sup> Those who came under these schemes were also drawing upon cultural precedent, for it was during the interwar years that CLR James, Learie Constantine, Harold Moody, George Padmore, Amy Garvey, and Marcus Garvey broke bread in Britain. Little wonder, then, that Stuart Hall's mother saw the University of Oxford as a place ‘where she thought a son of hers had always belonged’.<sup>177</sup> Similar apparatuses were in play for the Caribbean Anglophone literati. Driven in no small measure by the platform the BBC's World Service provided with its *Caribbean Voices* programme, writers such as George Lamming, V. S. Naipaul, Samuel Selvon, Andrew Salkey, and Edward Kamau Brathwaite migrated en masse to Britain in the postwar period, sparking a *belle époque* of Caribbean diasporic literary output in 1950s London. For any Caribbean feeling the affective thrust of ambition, Britain was the place to be. Not only because such migrants lived and emoted within specific colonial contexts of signification, but because seeking personal improvement or achievement within colonialism's confines often meant running with the centripetal forces inherent to its structures, if only to disassemble those structures. Edward Said characterises the intellectual migration from colony to metropole as a “voyage in”, a destabilising process whereby thinkers were able to address ‘that world from within it, and on cultural grounds they disputed and challenged its authority by presenting alternative versions of

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<sup>176</sup> Norman Manley came under its auspices in 1913. See ‘The Rt. Hon. Norman Washington Manley (1893 – 1969)’, *The National Library of Jamaica* (blog), accessed 21 May 2021, <https://nlj.gov.jm/project/rt-hon-norman-washington-manley-1893-1969/>; Stuart Hall in 1951: see Stuart Hall and Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), 20; Rex Nettleford in 1957: see ‘Nettleford, Rex — Choreography, Education (1933 – 2010)’, *The National Library of Jamaica* (blog), accessed 21 May 2021, <https://nlj.gov.jm/project/nettleford-rex-choreography-education-1933-2010/>.

<sup>177</sup> Stuart Hall, *Personally Speaking: A Long Conversation with Stuart Hall* (London: Media Education Foundation, 2009), 7. It is a phenomenon one also sees in that other major – and disintegrating – colonial empire of the twentieth century, France's, with Frantz Fanon, Albert Camus, and Jacques Derrida all making the journey to the metropole.



it'.<sup>178</sup> Whether from educational or vocational ambition or a visceral sense of injustice, the so-called "brain drain" is here grounded in filtered cultural knowledge of the metropole, ordered around a set of concrete contextual mechanisms, and driven by emotion.

Yet for all the talk of colonial societies riven by epistemological distortion, these migrants had a point. This was a practical application of transnational knowledge of Britain to satisfy a certain emotional state: shelve the "mother country" ideology, shelve the reverence for Britain's educational systems – British education was still free, and they were still British citizens with unhindered freedom of movement.<sup>179</sup> Although some families used remittances from Britain to fund secondary education locally,<sup>180</sup> the majority saw migration to Britain as a bridging mechanism between educational ambition and the financial difficulties they faced in paying for it. Such migrations increased exponentially once the Caribbean community had established a bridgehead in Britain by the early 1950s. Not only did this allow information of British educational fees (or lack thereof) to flow more readily back to the region through transnational knowledge networks, it provided systems of support for those – usually children – who arrived to exercise their imperial birthrights. Both of these upshots were present in the experience of thirteen-year-old Olga, from Jamaica. Her mother, anxious for but unable to afford education for all three of her children, appealed to Olga's father, already in Britain, for assistance. He suggested that 'it would be cheaper for me to live with him, as secondary education was free in England'.<sup>181</sup> Similarly, Barbadian Beryl 'badly wanted' a secondary education, which her family couldn't afford – it was only by coming to Britain that she 'felt' that she 'had the opportunity ... of the education that I wanted'.<sup>182</sup> The consequences of these emotivations would, in time, produce their own emotional issues as Caribbean children encountered the realities of British schooling – a point to which we

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<sup>178</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 248.

<sup>179</sup> Until, of course, the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 which imposed a stratified voucher system corresponding to level of occupational skill upon immigration. This will be dealt with more extensively in the following chapter. For other historiographical treatment, see Perry, *London*, 137-62; Rieko Karatani, *Defining British Citizenship: Empire, Commonwealth and Modern Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 106-78.

<sup>180</sup> See, for example, the story of "Louise" in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 188: 'My son went to secondary school. His father used to give me money every month'.

<sup>181</sup> "Olga" quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 20.

<sup>182</sup> "Beryl" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 189.

shall return in the final chapter. But here, suffice it to say that this contextual knowledge, functionally applied to serve emotional states, reveals the limits of postcolonial postulations on cultural systems and the self.

These hopes and ambitions existed as emotivations which coexisted with, buffered, and ran parallel to the negative emotional states produced within certain contextual domains of the Caribbean. Through the objective- or object-oriented emotions of hope and ambition, Caribbean migrants were able to remap negative feelings onto a broader canvas of meaning, attenuate or transmute suffering into ephemera. Emotions *do* things, but humans *do things with emotions*. Hope and ambition were used as much as felt, and in this regard migration became a vehicle through which to attenuate, alter or attain emotional experiences, both a neutralising agent for negatively-experienced feelings and a springboard to achieve imagined futures of prosperity, fulfilment, satisfaction, and stability. This entails an enormous scholarly reconceptualisation of so-called “economic migration” by situating the inordinate focus on wage differentials or relative deprivation within historical contexts, and revealing the ways in which affectivity underpins such seemingly transactional thinking.

### 1.5: Emotivations and migrant demographics

This chapter has sought to explicate and contextualise the emotional experiences which motivated these migrants to relocate to Britain. Thus far, however, we have a relatively static historical image. One key element is missing: change over time. Over the course of this migration flow emotivational drivers shifted and changed, both in their qualitative makeup and their proportional configurations. The most effective way of historically sketching these emotional changes comes by approaching them through the frame of *demographic* change – particularly age. As a central structuring instrument of culture and social life, one’s position in the life cycle – and the values which cultures ascribe to it – is intimately related to experiences and expressions of emotion. This is a relationship which has hitherto been largely overlooked by historians of emotion, save for a handful of trailblazers working toward histories of childhood.<sup>183</sup> But by tracking the demographic

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<sup>183</sup> See, for example, Karen Vallgård, Kristine Alexander, and Stephanie Olsen, ‘Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood’, in *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives*, ed. Stephanie Olsen (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2015); Karen Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: Education and Emotions in South India and Denmark* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2014); Ute

composition of this migration flow over time, we can reveal clear changes in the patterns of feelings involved in its motivational impetuses.

Let us start at the beginning. From the end of the Second World War, until at least the middle of the 1950s, this was a migration flow dominated by the young. The average age of passengers on board the SS *Ormonde* listing a location in the Caribbean as their “Country of Last Permanent Residence” was just 28 when it docked in 1947.<sup>184</sup> On the *Windrush* the following year, this was 26 – the same average age as those alighting from the *Bayano* on a winter’s day in 1954.<sup>185</sup> How did this influence emotivational patterns? Foremost, it offers a compelling explanation as to why expressions of hope or ambition are so prevalent in early source material. There are several reasons for this. One road leads us into phenomenological territory: there is a specific temporal directionality inhering to most understandings of hope and ambition. In other words, both are said to possess – with varying degrees of invasibility – a certain future-orientedness. A philosopher would doubtless point to the fact that young adults inherently have less experiential content to draw upon, both from an empirical standpoint and in terms of “worldly” knowledge.<sup>186</sup> From a sociological perspective, they are less established in their respective vocations and perhaps more concerned with escaping ‘the frustration of a colonial society’ in an age of neocolonialism, mass communication, and breathtaking changes in international travel technologies.<sup>187</sup> If the young are said to be more inclined toward future states, of what is to be and what is to come, then the demographic interacts here with context to produce these transatlantic voyages initially propelled by hope and ambition.

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Frevert et al., *Learning How to Feel: Children’s Literature and Emotional Socialization, 1870-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>184</sup> Averages calculated from Incoming Passenger List for SS *Ormonde* Travelling from Kingston to Liverpool, 31 March 1947, BT 26/1223/130, The National Archives.

<sup>185</sup> Calculated from Incoming Passenger List for SS *Empire Windrush* Travelling from Kingston to Tilbury, 22 June 1948, BT 26/1237/91, The National Archives; Incoming Passenger List for SS *Bayano* Travelling from Kingston to Bristol, 12 January 1954, BT 26/1306/1, The National Archives. For further statistics confirming this trend, see Glass, *Newcomers*, 19-20. Of the 782 men in her “London sample” 62 percent of those who migrated before 1954 were under 30. In 1959, this was just 42 percent.

<sup>186</sup> By “empirical” I mean knowledge derived from sense-experience, not its – perhaps now more common – usage as a vague synonym for “objective”.

<sup>187</sup> “Devon” quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 25.

The fact that these early migrants were in the spring of their lives produced other emotivational drivers, and in truth these require cultural exposition, and little philosophical wrangling, to explicate. When Philippe Ariès published *Centuries of Childhood* in 1960, he threw down a foundational historiographical gauntlet: by arguing that European notions of childhood were vastly different in the medieval period from their contemporary counterparts, Ariès highlighted the ways in which different cultures in different times formulate and encode specific values into distinct stages of the life cycle; notions of childhood changed over time, and thus had a history.<sup>188</sup> Once this is understood, it becomes possible to track the supposed “world-hungriness” of the young through its European historical footprints. From the *Wanderjahre* of Germanic craftspeople, to the Grand Tour of the bourgeoisie in early-modern Europe, through the emotion of “wanderlust” driving modern backpackers, cultures have historically injected a desire for travel into their conceptions of youth; to be young is to *seemingly* harbour an innate hunger for exploration and discovery, and this is affirmatively reinforced through the descriptors of being “well-travelled” or “cosmopolitan” which contain implicit positive valences.

This was the cultural context given also to young Caribbeans standing astride the postwar era; for those who journeyed to Britain young, the inquisitiveness or world-hungriness supposedly innate to youth was common recourse used to vindicate their migratory decision. St. Vincentian Agnes DeAbreu underscored how these age-based emotional prescriptions operated to drive migration when she explained that ‘when you’re young you just want to go; it’s to explore’,<sup>189</sup> while Cliff Walker revealed these prescriptions’ intersections with gendered ideals when he admitted that ‘as a young boy I had to venture out, I had to have an adventure to see’.<sup>190</sup> A desire to experience what was “out there”<sup>191</sup> – a ‘curiosity about other parts of the world’, as one

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<sup>188</sup> Philippe Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1960). Indeed, he argued that medieval notions of childhood were different from their modern counterparts by arguing precisely for their absence. Children were seen as “young adults” with no exclusion from the “adult” worlds of sexual jokes or alcohol: For Ariès, ‘the idea of childhood ... did not exist at all in the eleventh century’. See Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Knopf, 1962), 36. Cf. Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1990).

<sup>189</sup> Agnes DeAbreu quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 80.

<sup>190</sup> Cliff Walker quoted in Channel 4 News, ‘Britain’s Windrush Veterans: The Battle to Be British’, 2018, [https://youtube.com/watch?v=\\_UwLep9KEfk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=_UwLep9KEfk).

<sup>191</sup> Pauline Wiltshire, *Now I Live in England* (London: Centerprise Trust, 1980), 10.

26-year-old migrant explained – was partly what it *meant* to be young for Caribbean migrants. Culture designates the values ascribed to age and gender, and these both include and influence cognitive patterns, emotional predilections, embodied practices, and decision-making. Biology, phenomenology, the cultural, and the social – all are active variables swirling around the locus of the life cycle, interacting with each other to produce emotivations.

## 1.6: Love

Such were the outlines of the emotivational landscape early in this corridor’s lifespan. Beginning in the second half of the 1950s, however, this began to change, and migrants became increasingly driven by a different emotivational experience – love. The loves which drove Caribbeans to migrate to Britain came in many forms, and in truth several of these are less strictly bound to questions of chronology and demographics. Some, prompted by the sting of heartbreak or the tragedy of bereavement, looked to emigration as a means to redraw the topography of a lifeworld suffused with painful memories and associations.<sup>192</sup> Some children were encouraged to migrate by parents hoping to distance them from romances of which they didn’t approve – their disapprobation perhaps rooted in pigmentocratic shadism.<sup>193</sup> What this section will focus on, however, is the most prevalent form of emotivational love – reunification. This is where the interpretative vehicle of demographics helps us once more, for as this migration flow matured, its demographics changed. And tied to those demographic changes are corresponding changes in emotivational patterns.

By the second half of the 1950s the Caribbean community was firmly – if contentiously – established in Britain. The first trailblazers had settled down, secured jobs, and struggled through the almost insurmountable task of securing accommodation in a racist housing market. By this time, many had scraped together a measure of savings, and began to turn their minds toward “sending for” romantic partners, dependents, or other relatives back home: they were, as Cecilia Wade remembers,

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<sup>192</sup> Olive Gordon quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 118; Albertha Blackman-Thomas quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 17.

<sup>193</sup> “Beryl” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 190.

‘sending back for their families’.<sup>194</sup> These lovers and relatives now formed the rump of the second wave of Caribbean migration, particularly after the passage of the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 which imposed stringent restrictions on arrivals from the colonies but exempted those who were ‘the wife, or a child under sixteen years of age, of a Commonwealth citizen who is resident in the United Kingdom’.<sup>195</sup> The swirling historical forces of culture and economics which produced emotivational impetuses to migrate had, by so doing, split families, relatives, and romantic partners dramatically asunder. In many ways, the latter stages of this migration flow can be read as a mosaic of attempts to suture these affective divides.

Consequently, emotivational source material becomes increasingly dominated by the theme of reunification and the feelings of love, care, or familial duty that it encapsulates. Typical was the story repeated in *Journey to an Illusion*, where one ‘expectant mother’ was journeying to her husband in Birmingham.<sup>196</sup> Eva, from Trinidad, remembered the day her boyfriend left for Britain: ‘I said “why you go to England? You find a girlfriend up there, you won’t remember me!” He keep writing. Then he say he missed me and ask me if I would like to join him. I was all excited’.<sup>197</sup> Likewise for Connie Mark, for whom the act of migration was motivated less by ambition and hope and more by feelings of familial duty: ‘I did not come here to better myself, I just came here because I just got married and I had this young baby and my husband want to see his child’.<sup>198</sup> This was an affective dynamic that straddled the Atlantic with a distinct dialogic and reciprocal flavour: lines of communication were essential to the successful performance of the emotional expressions they carried, and those already in Britain contributed to and participated equally in these emotivational generations.

The elephant in the room here is the way in which the above narrative smothers women’s experiences in a sweeping shroud, forcing their emotional experiences into the clichéd, predefined master tropes which the history of emotions labours to dissemble. Womanhood – subservient, selfless, secondary – is juxtaposed with the “masculine”

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<sup>194</sup> Cecilia Wade quoted in Bourne and Kyriacou, *A Ship and a Prayer*, 37.

<sup>195</sup> Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1962, 10 & 11 Eliz. 2, c. 21.

<sup>196</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 37.

<sup>197</sup> “Eva” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 159.

<sup>198</sup> Connie Mark quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 4.

sense of ambition, adventure, and initiative, by the calculating logic of economic providence. Indeed, migration itself is representationally wedded to masculinity, traditionally conceptualised as a male, masculine act. When women are said merely to “follow their heart” across the Atlantic, this entrenches emotional stereotypes inscribed into notions of gender and womanhood.

There are several ways we can reorient this narrative. We can highlight women who were driven to migrate because of hope and ambition entirely independent of romantic or familial ties,<sup>199</sup> point to those women who preceded their menfolk in coming to Britain,<sup>200</sup> and attend to the experiences of those who did follow male partners in a more granular way. These were not doughy-eyed lemmings but, to a woman, agents who brought with them their own hopes and ambitions, their own skills and career plans, visions of the shapes of *their* futures. Love, or a desire for reunification, often formed but one minor part of a nexus of motivational decisions by the thinking, feeling historical actor, and it was often the interaction between these emotions that produced an amplification of the motivation to migrate. Beryl’s boyfriend might have migrated to Britain before her, but it was only once she placed this fact within a broader horizon of her life’s purpose that emotivational drive took concrete form: ‘I felt I had the opportunity then, of the education that I wanted. Then I suppose, my boyfriend was there, I thought “well, there’s an ideal opportunity”’.<sup>201</sup> Women were not simply mothers and wives, although cultural structures both in Britain and the Caribbean sought to pigeon-hole them thus. They were – inexplicably – capable of doing and feeling multiple things at once.

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<sup>199</sup> Majorie Rennie and Lenore and Pearl Marcano all migrated to train as nurses, none “following” partners. See Rennie, interview by author (Appendix A); Marcano and Marcano, interview by author (Appendix B). In a similar vein, both Bert Williams’ sisters, and “Irene” came independently to train as nurses. See Bert Williams quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 38; “Irene” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 146-51. Louise Shore also came of her own volition, as did Cecilia Wade. See Louise Shore, *Pure Running: A Life Story* (London: Hackney Reading Centre at Centerprise, 1982), 28-34; Cecilia Wade quoted in Bourne and Kyriacou, *A Ship and a Prayer*, 22, 37.

<sup>200</sup> Cliff Walker migrated to England to join his wife, who had left before him. See Cliff Walker, ‘Where Is Home?’, in *From There to Here: 16 True Tales of Immigration to Britain* (London: Penguin, 2007), 160. Thomas Joseph migrated a full four years after his wife had made the journey, a wife who ‘laid the foundations’ for his smooth arrival and adjustment. See Thomas Joseph quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 14.

<sup>201</sup> “Beryl” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 189.

Finally, we can loosen the representational grip of this narrative by adding context. This returns us to questions of demographic composition, for the fact remains that this migratory flow was disproportionately male during its early years, with gender parity only achieved in the late 1950s partly as a result of women and dependents coming to join males who came before.<sup>202</sup> The fact that more women began migrating in the late 1950s to join male partners, and the corollary that love surfaces as a prominent emotivational driver, is more a product of historical circumstance (the early, disproportionately male composition) than any essentialist notions of emotion and the framework of gender within which they are embedded. This mirrors the production of emotional experience through and within historical circumstance more generally.

This raises the question: *why* was this early demographic composition structured thus? Answering this opens us out onto several planes. Without wishing to whitewash the ways that gendered forms of oppression have differed and mutated over time, or deprecate the specific play of localised gender dynamics within the Caribbean, the region shared a rough cultural consensus with the rest of the world about the value, purposes, and function of women: objects to be palmed off father to the husband. It is an ideal most succinctly expressed in *The Emigrants*, when Higgins begs the question of justifying male primacy by including this very system in his premise: 'course in a way you gotto see 'bout the boys first, 'cause the girl can get marry off when she ready'.<sup>203</sup> This dovetails with the way "economic" migration has been historically symbolised as an inherently masculine practice, buttressing the oppressive notion of the male breadwinner. All this was compounded by the Second World War which initially pushed many more male migrants to Britain thus furnishing them with the cultural capital to return. For all these reasons, the many women who migrated later and were motivated by affective bonds and notions of love is a product of historical circumstance. Should the recruitment drive of Caribbean nurses been a more exacting British policy, should Caribbean wartime contribution have been negligible, then it is perfectly conceivable

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<sup>202</sup> In Ruth Glass' sociological study *Newcomers*, just 24 per cent of Jamaican migrants living in London were women in 1954. Four years later, in 1958, this was 49 per cent. See Glass, *Newcomers*, 241. For similar figures, see also G. W. Roberts and D. O. Mills, 'Study of External Migration Affecting Jamaica', *Social and Economic Studies* 7, no. 2 (1958): 37.

<sup>203</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 60.



that the demographic chronology of this migration flow – and thus the emotivational patterns which underlay it – would have been reversed.<sup>204</sup>

## 1.7: Shame

Duty, disillusionment, hope, ambition, curiosity, and love – these comprised the central emotivational themes of this movement. They were not, however, the only ones, and the dénouement of this chapter will focus on supplementing these by teasing out several additional emotivational drivers.

In 1955, Corinne Skinner-Carter found herself at a proverbial crossroads in her native Trinidad. She had just given birth to her daughter, and although the father was keen to marry, his jealousy and possessiveness scuttled any reciprocatory feelings. For women in Corinne’s situation, remaining in Trinidad meant enduring ‘a lot of difficulty and embarrassment in trying to raise a baby as a single mother’. And so she was left with a “choice”: abide this, or ‘go to England’.<sup>205</sup> She chose the latter.

Corinne’s story strikes to the core of how emotions can be used to enforce historically-specific social codes and culturally-seated moral prescriptions. William Reddy defines an “emotional regime” – a key conceptual tool for historians of emotions – as a ‘set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them’.<sup>206</sup> Yet what is lacking in Reddy’s definition is precisely the inverse. Namely, the ways in which emotional experience can be used to enforce sets of normative behaviours and practices, and the systems of morality which scaffold them. Emotional suffering – which Reddy interprets as stemming from the disjunction between a feeling and its modes of conventional expression – might be reconceptualised as a punitive tool, the imposition of negative socio-affective experiences by the group on to the “deviant” individual who deigns not to follow prescribed societal scripts. Just as the social and cultural regulate emotions, so emotions regulate the socio-cultural. This

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<sup>204</sup> In 1965, there were between 3000 and 5000 Jamaican nurses working in British hospitals. It is safe to assume smaller figures for nurses hailing from other Caribbean islands. On this subject, see Karen Fog Olwig, ‘Female Immigration and the Ambivalence of Dirty Care Work: Caribbean Nurses in Imperial Britain’, *Ethnography* 19, no. 1 (2018): 44–62.

<sup>205</sup> Corinne Skinner Carter and Z. Nia Reynolds, *Why Not Me? From Trinidad to Albert Square via Empire Road: A Memoir* (London: Black Stock Books, 2011), 80.

<sup>206</sup> William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 129.

becomes particularly compelling when thought through historical notions of gender and gender roles. By raising a child out of wedlock, Skinner-Carter transgressed the socially and culturally demarcated bounds of womanhood in 1950s Trinidad, and by so doing refused to enter into the values ascribed to this: propriety, blind devotion to a jealous husband, silent suffering. The emotional price for such transgressions was, in Skinner-Carter's words, 'embarrassment'.<sup>207</sup>

And so feelings of shame and embarrassment, fear of social stigma or the scorn of the group, became for some women the emotions which drove them to migrate. In all these accounts one is struck by how patriarchal forms of gendered values are buttressed and mutually reinforced by notions of class and race. One year after Skinner-Carter arrived in London, another migrant, "Miss Thelma", came to Britain. In her native Jamaica she was betrothed to a wealthy man who 'withdrew his offer' after she became pregnant, and thus migrated 'to avoid social embarrassment'.<sup>208</sup> It is no coincidence that, just as with Skinner-Carter, Thelma was from a prosperous middle-class background. It is within such divisions of class that notions of propriety and "womanhood" survive and thrive: 'in those days it was taboo to have a child out of wedlock, especially if you were supposed to be middle-class'.<sup>209</sup> A similar story emerges in George Lamming's *The Emigrants*. Miss Bis, courted by an Englishman in Trinidad, 'maintained her defences until there was a suggestion of marriage'. When the man subsequently fled, and news of their liaison became 'public property' – seized upon by an enterprising calypsonian for ribald lyrical content – Miss Bis fled, driven into 'exile'.<sup>210</sup> There is a clear relationship between migration, emotion, and the cultural configurations of the time, particularly as they related gender, love, sex, scandal and propriety. Gendered values and social values, embedded within historically-specific cultures, influence emotional experience; emotional experience can be used in conjunction with historical notions of gender and gender roles to enforce and reinforce vectors of power along patriarchal fault lines.

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<sup>207</sup> Skinner Carter and Reynolds, *Why Not Me?*, 80.

<sup>208</sup> Patterson, *Dark Strangers*, 310.

<sup>209</sup> Skinner Carter and Reynolds, *Why Not Me?*, 78.

<sup>210</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 72.

## 1.8: Second chances

These women's experiences were particular actualisations of a broader psycho-sociological capacity inherent to migratory movement: its power of reinvention, its power to jettison or modulate established identities. With these come linkages to the concept of a fresh start, a new life, a second chance, and the opportunity to distance one's self from previous negative associations and experiences and the emotional consequences of them.

Aside from the machinations of gendered ideals, we can pinpoint other specific ways in which this operated. In her memoir, Pauline Wiltshire – a disabled Jamaican woman who migrated to Britain – highlights one of these: 'though I had some happy memories of my life in Jamaica, most of my life has been very hard for me to bear. I wanted to leave this life and its memories behind ... those sad times and scenes. I wanted new faces and places'.<sup>211</sup> Wiltshire's account reveals the bonds between negative emotional experience, memory, and migration's capacity for a *tabula rasa*. These bonds were part of the experience of an unnamed migrant in Donald Hinds' *Journey to an Illusion*. After launching into a lengthy diatribe against the Anglophilic orientation of his schooling ('the masters ... knew no more about colonialism than the boys in the front row'), they relate how, in their final history examination, they rebuked John Hawkins and Francis Drake and gainsaid the charitable portrayals of Elizabeth I.<sup>212</sup> The result of such revisionist historiography? No school certificate, and by extension 'guilt' over their parents' wasted school fees and a measure of 'social ostracism'.<sup>213</sup> It was, after all, 'dangerous to be a failure in the West Indies'.<sup>214</sup> There were tangible social and emotional consequences for not engaging with the dominant historical narrative in the colonies, and these became motivations to migrate: this migrant alighted in Britain shortly after their educational misadventure. Whatever the diverse causes of their strife, these migrants 'knew [that in] coming to England, you could start from scratch'.<sup>215</sup> But before they could begin such reincarnations, they had to journey to the place which promised the possibility of them.

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<sup>211</sup> Wiltshire, *Now I Live*, 5.

<sup>212</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 25-8.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-7.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>215</sup> Watkins, 'Interview with Alton Watkins'.

## 2: Departures, Journeys, Arrivals

The chapter that follows possesses a distinct narrative drive. Contained within the minutiae of hundreds of individual stories, it is possible to identify and reconstruct an overarching thematic pattern of Caribbean migrants' emotional experiences during their departures, journeys, and arrivals, and one which flows through distinct changes throughout the processes of relocation and settlement. From the preparations for departure through to the experiences of their journeys, migrant source material expresses a nebulous configuration of positively-valenced excitement, anticipation, eagerness, and animation. These feelings were often located alongside other, negatively-evaluated emotional configurations, making for complex and ambivalent affective states. As we trace these experiences and expressions to their final destination, the second section of this chapter describes and contextualises the ultimate calcification, fracturing, or transformation of their excitement and anticipation – based around acquired preconceptions of Britain – into the feelings of disappointment, disillusionment, and disorientation. The key takeaway here is that, once alighted, migrants experienced a certain affective comedown, a dampening or fracturing of excitement and hope, and bound up with this broad emotional shift are specific cultural and historical configurations which made it possible.

### 2.1: Departures

Once the necessary emotivational framework was in place for a migrant to leave for Britain, a startling array of emotional experiences was generated in the historical subject. These represented highly individuated composites, taking into account the subject's specific emotivational processes; personal dispositions; material and climatic environments; social relations; and preconceptions of Britain. Yet within the seemingly disparate array of affective accounts during the departure process there exists something of an emotional spectrum, and it is toward a description of this that we now turn.

#### 2.1.1: "The gaiety of reprieve"

At either end of this spectrum there stands two distinct poles. For some like Majorie Rennie, there were no 'sad feelings at all' – separation from family and homeland held

no trauma, and the departure became coloured primarily by an excitement, a sense of adventure, a future-orientedness, and the thrill of the new.<sup>216</sup> Not only were positively-evaluated experiences of the departure heavily predicated on the pervasive belief in a temporary stay – it becomes less emotionally and psychologically distressing to say goodbye to one’s family in the knowledge that one will return in four years – it was also extenuated by the near-universal positive preconceptions of Britain that migrants held before their arrival.<sup>217</sup> Itself a product of localised colonial cultures, a belief in the grandeur, wealth, and equanimity of Britain helped fuel a ‘sense of excitement’ which only grew as the departure date crept closer, while belief in an ultimate cultural congruity between their Caribbean birthplace and the metropole helped allay any sense of immensity in their undertakings.<sup>218</sup> Viv Adams – who characterised her departure as feeling like a ‘wonderful adventure’ – said that upon arrival she ‘felt like I was home, because we had been used to England through images’.<sup>219</sup> Going to the “mother country” was, for these migrants, like hopping between their islands’ parishes – there was ‘no conception of it being any different’.<sup>220</sup> This strikes at the heart of one of this chapter’s central claims: the specific preconceptions migrants possessed of Britain, Empire, and their place within it, which they brought with them across the Atlantic as the cultural baggage accompanying their portmanteaus, shaped emotional experience and expression throughout the departure, journey, and arrival.

This cluster of migrants – those who evaluated their emotional experiences of departure positively – also possessed another important reason for doing so, one which returns us to the economic contexts of the Caribbean responsible for the generation of migratory emotivations. Conscious of the constrictive economic climates from which they were escaping, the knowledge of their impending decampment (to a putatively familiar and welcoming place, with bountiful employment) became a source of relief and anticipation which crowded out the pain of separation from loved ones. One migrant

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<sup>216</sup> Rennie, interview by author (see Appendix A).

<sup>217</sup> See the anonymous interviewees quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 10-17.

<sup>218</sup> Edrick Lawman quoted in Z. Nia Reynolds, ed., *When I Came to England: An Oral History of Life in 1950s and 1960s Britain* (London: Black Stock-Photo Press, 2001), 45.

<sup>219</sup> Viv Adams quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 111.

<sup>220</sup> Walter Lothen quoted in *Forty Winters On: Memories of Britain’s Post War Caribbean Immigrants* (London: South London Press and The Voice, 1988), 23.

remembers 'being grateful that we were leaving, relieved. I just felt that some miracle had caused us to escape'.<sup>221</sup> George Lamming, moreover, mentions the 'gaiety of reprieve which we felt on our departure'.<sup>222</sup> Colin Grant admits that there was a 'tremendous excitement at the possibility of starting over',<sup>223</sup> while Vince Reid describes a dockside atmosphere of 'general excitement and optimism' which he attributed to migrants 'looking forward to work, because, of course, in Jamaica there was not a great deal of work for people'.<sup>224</sup> Resuscitating past experiences of emotion is often an exercise in plotting out stretching chains of historical causation, and the colonialist framework which led to dire economic straits in the Caribbean came, however inadvertently, to influence future migratory flows and the affective evaluations of them.

### 2.1.2: "An emotional turmoil which ranked above any"

Lying at the other end of the spectrum were those for whom the departure was a wholly traumatic affair, a separation from familiar faces and places which could not be sated or soothed. Pain, suffering, and a sense of loss feature prominently in these accounts. Trinidadian Corinne Skinner Carter described her departure as 'traumatic' not only because she was 'leaving Trinidad', but also 'my family, friends and all I had ever known'.<sup>225</sup> Skinner Carter's compatriot, Albertina Aparicio, found herself deckside staring down at her family on the docks as the ship slipped its moorings and pulled out of the harbour: 'there was an orchestra playing on the shore as the ship sailed playing "I Love To Go A-Wandering"'. Slowly and slowly, and you see your family and suddenly they disappear. It was really sad'.<sup>226</sup> For these migrants, the departure constituted a painful rupture, an 'emotional turmoil which ranked above any that I can remember in my entire lifetime'.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Viv Adams quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 111.

<sup>222</sup> Lamming, *Pleasures*, 212.

<sup>223</sup> Grant, *Homecoming*, 61.

<sup>224</sup> Vince Reid quoted in David Upshal, 'Arrival', *Windrush* (BBC Two, 30 May 1998).

<sup>225</sup> Skinner Carter and Reynolds, *Why Not Me?*, 78.

<sup>226</sup> Albertina Aparicio, 'Interview with Albertina Aparicio', *Caribbean Takeaway Takeover*, 29 January 2018, [caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/portfolio/tina-marceline-aporicio/](http://caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/portfolio/tina-marceline-aporicio/).

<sup>227</sup> Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 18.

One of the principal groups to whom this applied was children initially left behind in the Caribbean. Parents who had migrated to Britain drew upon the region's more decentralised and distributed familial structures, entrusting children to relatives until such a time as they could "send for" them.<sup>228</sup> Emotionally, this cut two ways. For many children, these extended family kinship networks helped mitigate any negative emotional experiences arising from separation with their parents. One woman remembers that in the Caribbean, one 'always lived in an extended family', the consequence being that 'when my parents left for England, I merely lived with my grandmother'.<sup>229</sup> Similarly, Edrick Lawman's account of his parents' migration – and his subsequent entrustment to grandparents – is devoid of sharp emotional pangs or heightened affective states. A cool matter-of-factness permeated his account when he spoke of living 'with my grandparents and some other cousins ... it felt normal to have all your family around'.<sup>230</sup> The upshot of such diffuse networks of childrearing support was that children often developed deep attachments to their guardians, complicating received notions of parenthood, childhood, and familial belonging: 'At times', mused one migrant who had entrusted her daughter to her mother, 'I wonder if she was mine or granny's'.<sup>231</sup> Children, likewise, were disorientated by such shifts.<sup>232</sup>

This meant that when the time came for children to join their biological parents, their departures were coloured by a whole host of negative emotional responses thrown up by these situated social contexts and scattered feelings of belonging. By viewing their guardians *as* their parents, departing meant not only travelling to a strange and foreign country, but travelling there to be entrusted to, essentially, strange and foreign people – people whom they barely remembered. For these children, departure became a frightening and traumatic experience. It was with 'great resentment' that Barbadian Beulah prepared for her departure to England, unwilling to leave her grandmother and

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<sup>228</sup> For anthropological studies which highlight this different approach to familial conception and organisation, see Fernando Henriques, *Family and Colour in Jamaica* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953); Sidney M. Greenfield, 'Socio-Economic Factors and Family Form: A Barbadian Case Study', *Social and Economic Studies* 10, no. 1 (1961): 72–85.

<sup>229</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 15.

<sup>230</sup> Edrick Lawman quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 44.

<sup>231</sup> "Estelle 'Sweetgirl'" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 202.

<sup>232</sup> Paul Dash's younger brother, raised by relatives from a young age, began to view them as his *de jure*, not just *de facto*, parents. See Paul Dash, *Foreday Morning* (London: BlackAmber Books, 2002), 97. See also "Samantha", 'BSP0004 - Samantha', *Barrel Stories Project*, audio, <http://barrelstories.org/sam/>.

regularly weeping as the date crept closer. When it came time to part, it was 'devastating ... at times in my life when I've been vulnerable, I still dream about her'.<sup>233</sup> Jamaican Olga remembers that she was 'so frightened' around the time of departure that she 'felt like killing' herself: 'I didn't feel close to my father and knew no other family in England'.<sup>234</sup> Paul Dash's brother was so young when his parents migrated that he 'knew no family' but his guardians; when it came time to leave them, he was 'traumatized' by the separation.<sup>235</sup> Migration both produced and reflected certain Caribbean familial structures, and ineffably complexified the internal emotional relationships inhering to them. At no other time was this more salient than during the departure process.

### 2.1.3: "Mixed emotions"

Between these two valenced poles stands a large bloc of migrants who expressed a curious composite of positive and negative emotions surrounding their departures. It was an affective composite which came usually from the coexistence of excitement or anticipation with the pangs and pains of separation, producing a sense of ambivalence that muddled the waters of their attempts to make sense of their departure and assign it an ultimate, definitive meaning.

Nowhere was this ambivalence more present than in the "goodbye parties" held on the eve of departure. By creating occasions that simultaneously commemorated and acknowledged a separation from a loved one, Caribbean social units partook in events which straddled mourning and celebration, producing distinct affective atmospheres characterised by a bittersweet mixture of melancholy and excitement. In these spaces, conventional barriers to emotional expression were subverted, becoming sites permitting the most free and impassioned expressions of feeling and affection, a site where memory and the future conjoined, and a site where certain sets of social rituals and practices were performed with the aid of particular objects. Archippus Joseph admits that his goodbye party was indeed 'a party', although with 'more tears than anything

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<sup>233</sup> "Beulah" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 206.

<sup>234</sup> "Olga" quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 11.

<sup>235</sup> Dash, *Foreday Morning*, 113.



else’;<sup>236</sup> Victor Waldron, meanwhile, found himself surrounded by ‘relatives, colleagues, and well-wishers who had gathered to celebrate my departure’, describing the event as ‘an evening full of laughter and tears. One that was unequalled for its mixed emotions’.<sup>237</sup> Tryphena Anderson, meanwhile, gives us a real insight into how these parties played out on a practical level, and the ambivalence they contained:

Everybody gathers, we didn’t have cars and such to take everybody, so they get the trucks and they put the lot in, and everybody’s going to come. My friend from school, she came down from the north side of the island and stayed with us. And everybody come, they bring you gifts, gifts of money. And then they do a lot of cooking, things they can eat on the way. And they bring large handkerchiefs, because they’re going to cry, you know. And I was glad, I was sad, and it was an excruciating pain.<sup>238</sup>

Anderson’s account also reveals how these events possessed a crucial element of performativity, and how they contained certain sets of rituals to be enacted. Aside from the local cuisine prepared<sup>239</sup> religious hymns were often sung – emotional practices which helped loved ones come to terms with the trauma of separation.<sup>240</sup> Betraying a part of the complex of emotional practices inhering to certain Caribbean cultures, one Barbadian asserted that ‘we do hymn-singing when we’re upset’.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, the performativity of these goodbye parties had a distinct material dimension. Objects with particular emotional resonance such as photographs were exchanged, mementos that strengthened the emotional bond between the giver and receiver and which were hoped would remind the migrant of the connection they shared.<sup>242</sup> This chimes with Sara

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<sup>236</sup> Archippus Joseph quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 63.

<sup>237</sup> Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 18.

<sup>238</sup> Tryphena Anderson quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 119.

<sup>239</sup> Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 18.

<sup>240</sup> “Vernon” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 183.

<sup>241</sup> “Beulah” quoted in *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>242</sup> Dodgson, *Motherland*, 14-17. Margaret Prescod-Roberts’ writing on these departure parties also helps us read these exchange of objects in a more functional, economic, and transactional way. When those left behind implored migrants to remember them, she says that this ‘meant two things: “Remember that we still have between us all the things we’ve shared”, but also the other side of that was “When you get to that money, remember me, ‘cause I’m still here”’. Such polysemy also helped to underscore the inherent

Ahmed's concept of the "stickiness" of emotion. By taking an approach which privileges materiality and object orientedness, Ahmed highlights the social and interpersonal dimensions of feeling and the ways in which emotions can "circulate" between or "stick" to certain images, bodies, or objects.<sup>243</sup> The relevance here, within this historical example, is the capacity for these photographs and other mementos to both circulate *and* possess a remarkable stickiness. Indeed, the circulation of these objects – in other words, emotional expression – was predicated on the degree of their stickiness: on the memories and emotions stuck to these objects, and their power to emotionally stick together the giver and receiver. In this way, objects became simultaneously imbued with emotion and interpersonal connection, and important emotional expressions in themselves.

These groups were taking traditional conceptions of a party – what it is and what it does – and melding them to situated historical circumstance to produce unique emotional atmospheres. The mixed emotions experienced during these parties often carried over to – or were localised reflections of – the whole departure process. Soon-to-be migrants' emotional states were flitting between the trauma of separation and the thrill of the new: Agnes DeAbreu, whose excitement over seeing Britain – a land so ostensibly familiar to these migrants – leavened the sadness of departure. It was, in her words, 'sad and joyous',<sup>244</sup> an ambivalence expressed in near-identical words by Jamaican Jennifer Campbell.<sup>245</sup> This polyvalence found its way to the docks and airports across the Caribbean basin in the 1950s and 1960s. Lenore Marciano's send-off at the airport, with the whole extended family present, 'was sad when I had to leave them' but nevertheless 'very, very exciting'.<sup>246</sup>

Departure meant for these migrants both an ending and a beginning and, as we have seen, for many this meant a strange concatenation of differently-valenced affective states which many found difficult to express or evaluate. Such circumstances set the stage for the singular phenomenon of goodbye parties, where the interpersonal

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ambivalence of these parties' emotional atmospheres. See Margaret Prescod-Roberts and Norma Steele, *Black Women: Bringing It All Back Home* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 25.

<sup>243</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

<sup>244</sup> Agnes DeAbreu quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 80.

<sup>245</sup> Jennifer Campbell quoted in *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>246</sup> Marciano and Marciano, interview by author (see Appendix B).

operability of feeling gave rise to atmospheres which mirrored the ambivalence these migrants felt, and by so doing drew into these events dimensions of materiality and performativity which entailed unique sets of social rituals and conventions of expression. What emerges from the source material is an inability to finalise emotional evaluation and meaning, a not knowing how to feel. But on deck or in departure lounges across the Caribbean, migrants inevitably turned away from their waving relatives. What they were turning toward was their journey, their future, and a heightened sense of what-is-to-come. By doing so, pain over separation began to recede, and anticipation grow.

## 2.2: Journeys

Once embarked onto their respective vehicles, these actors had become migrants; from here onwards it is possible to think their experiences through in terms of an historically-contingent “migrant condition”. The section that follows will focus, in the main, on journeys via sea and the experiential particularities associated with them. Source material concerning this mode of voyage is far more abundant: not only did the majority of migrants in the 1950s travel to Britain on ocean liners, it was also – sensorially, bodily, emotionally – a more substantial and noteworthy experience. Speaking in terms of a material environment and the specificities inhering to technological forms of travel, the ship offers a far denser and broader spatio-temporal expanse within which these migrants interacted, emoted, and expressed. Here in the dining rooms, dormitories and decks cutting across the Atlantic Ocean over an expanse of roughly three weeks, en route to “the place for them”, Caribbean migrants participated in and responded to unique configurations of emotional experiences which the material-technological environment of the aircraft could not hope to match. By focusing on these oceanic journeys, this section highlights how interaction with the prevailing technologies and materialities of a given historical period influences emotional experience. The medium, it will soon become clear, is partly the emotional message.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> The allusion is to one of the central theoretical approaches in media studies, made by Marshall McLuhan in 1964. By arguing that “the medium is the message”, McLuhan sought to reorient media and communications studies to focus more explicitly on the available communication media of a given society, arguing that each possessed distinct characteristics which influence communication, reception, and

### 2.2.1: Intersubjectivity

A focus on experiences as ship-bound and ship-mediated opens up a discussion of how historical technologies, spaces, and materialities influence emotional experience and expression. In this distinct historical moment – the swan song of ship travel as the principal mode of transcontinental travel – Caribbean migrants constructed and participated in unique affective atmospheres which were experienced intersubjectively and evaluated in strikingly similar ways. At first blush Andreas Reckwitz' praxeological approach to "affective spaces" seems important here. However, he jettisons a definition of sociality as comprising intersubjectivity, focusing instead on 'the partly reproductive, partly ever-evolving network comprising human bodies as well as artefacts'.<sup>248</sup> It is a needless limitation of an otherwise important approach. Reckwitz feels that materiality needs to be injected into our conceptions of sociality in order to avoid its 'reduction' to intersubjectivity, but nothing precludes an approach to sociality and space that is both sensitive to the material and technological environments of historical actors and comprehends a level of intersubjective experience to these affective spaces. Instead, another theorist helps us read these transitional Atlantic spaces in a more compelling fashion.

Since its translation into an academic landscape dominated by the English language, Gernot Böhme's oeuvre has become the scholarly touchstone for how materiality and aesthetics interact through sensory experience and space to produce and modify felt experience. He calls the output of such dynamics – ineffably tied to the space itself – "atmospheres". An atmosphere is what 'affects human beings in their environment', and can both impart affective experience from its material and social arrangements, and modify existing moods.<sup>249</sup> Although it is the composition and manipulation of space and its enclosed material objects that produce an atmosphere, atmospheres do not exist

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experience independent of the meaning and content it carries. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), esp. 7-23.

<sup>248</sup> Andreas Reckwitz, 'Affective Spaces: A Praxeological Outlook', *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 248. Despite his protestations to the contrary, this brings Reckwitz extremely close to Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, and allows him to see affective spaces as places where human bodies engage 'complex[es] of social practices', practices necessarily involving artefacts, and which are 'experienced through perceptions and sensations' contingent on the structuration of the space and the artefacts and practices inhering to it. See Reckwitz, 'Affective Spaces', 252, 254.

<sup>249</sup> Gernot Böhme, *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*, ed. Jean-Paul Thibaud (New York: Routledge, 2017), 1.

without the thinking, feeling, evaluating subject – they are ‘perceived as the emotional response to the presence of something or someone’.<sup>250</sup> For Böhme, the atmosphere of a space is personal and subjective, yet there is a crucial component of intersubjectivity to them.<sup>251</sup> As noted, the source of atmospheres derive from the structuration of space and the manipulation of objects within them to produce sensory and affective experience – yet we can augment this insight in several ways to produce a theoretical approach best suited to reading our transatlantic ship spaces. Combining Böhme’s acknowledgement of the intersubjectivity of atmospheres with Reckwitz’ sensitivity to how the arrangement and density of bodies can alter affective spaces is a good start.<sup>252</sup> But as will become clear, the cultural knowledge, preconceptions, prior emotional states, and specific life narratives of these bodies also modulates the tone and timbre of these atmospheres. Cultural bodies, with historical relevance and individual sensibilities, in material spaces – these create intersubjective atmospheres.

On board these ships, distinct emotional atmospheres were not merely experienced intersubjectively – the notion of intersubjectivity *itself* became more tightly constituted. The broad spatio-temporal expanse of the ocean liner doubtless helped here, allowing space and time for it to flourish. But it primarily came from a dense concentration of bodies, each with an explicit knowledge that others shared the same present – and future – emotional states and experiential fates. Decks, dormitories, and dining rooms – notwithstanding their observation of gendered and class divisions<sup>253</sup> – produced an ‘attitude of comradeship’,<sup>254</sup> an acknowledgement that others were embarking on the

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<sup>250</sup> Böhme, *Aesthetics*, 26. It is a point very similar to Jean-Paul Sartre’s phenomenological conceptualisation of emotions, which cannot exist without the evaluating subject: emotion ‘does not exist, considered as a physical phenomenon, for a body cannot be emotional, not being able to attribute a meaning to its own manifestations’. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Methuen & Company, 1962), 29.

<sup>251</sup> Böhme, *Aesthetics*, 2, 30.

<sup>252</sup> See Reckwitz, ‘Affective Spaces’, 254.

<sup>253</sup> In *The Emigrants*, George Lamming is perennially sensitive to how the space of the ship is divided by notions of class. See, for example, Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 37, 45, 92. See also the experience of George Mangar, who regularly transgressed these divisions to make friends in second- and steerage-class quarters. See George Mangar quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 82. The experience of Armet Francis, meanwhile, underscored the gendered divisions within these oceanic spaces, and the inviolability of them. A seven-year-old boy, Francis was separated from his female chaperone and ‘thrown in with all these men. I was a child and had never really known the world of men at all, so it was a bit of a shock’. See Armet Francis quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 70.

<sup>254</sup> Sam King quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 60.

same journey, that they had their own stake in this adventure and its strange, exciting, and unknown future. 'We were all in the same boat, so to speak', wrote Corinne Skinner Carter, 'because all of us were embarking on a journey of discovery and none of us knew first-hand what England would be like and what the future held for us there'.<sup>255</sup> In this moment, in these confines, the intersubjective power of feeling could be enacted in full force, creating shared emotional atmospheres and a heightened sense of togetherness which coloured the journey.

### 2.2.2: Sensory spaces

The technological medium of the ship and its specific spatio-material conditions also meant that journeys were awash with novel configurations of sensory experiences, configurations which could both heighten the mechanism of intersubjectivity and contribute particular affective components to the atmosphere on board. E. A. Samuels described these vessels as having 'a unique smell and ambience, not altogether unpleasant, a smell of things foreign and of people of diverse cultures; the aroma of cooked food, body odour, stale liquor, the sound of foreign languages, all intermingled with the scent of ocean brine and fresh paint'.<sup>256</sup> The food on board was universally disdained, unamenable to each island's palette; it was 'not the kind of food that we're used to'.<sup>257</sup> A byproduct of the near-monopoly that Italian shipping lines possessed over these routes was the dry wine served with every meal, some enterprising souls mixing it with sugar for them and their comrades.<sup>258</sup> And, in a point that would no doubt interest Norbert Elias, even the culinary customs were different: 'we were not used to eating

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<sup>255</sup> Skinner Carter and Reynolds, *Why Not Me?*, 87. Conversely, the arrangement and density of bodies from multiple Caribbean islands that this technology generated led to the first fizzing of inter-island rivalries and animosities: Jamaicans were viewed as the 'proudest group' who fought between themselves and with other Caribbeans, whom they diminutively referred to as "small islanders". See Ferron, 'Man, You've Mixed': *A Jamaican Comes to Britain*, 1-4. Donald Hinds reflected on his cabinmates by saying that 'they had become suspicious of all Jamaicans. They resented being called "small island people" and wrote off Jamaicans as bullies ... we listened to a big Jamaican describe Barbadians as a nation of liars'. See Hinds, *Journey*, 36. See also Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 49-50.

<sup>256</sup> E. A. Samuels, *The Triangle Route: The Extraordinary Odyssey of an Ordinary Man* (Bognor Regis: Woodfield, 2009), 3.

<sup>257</sup> George Mangar quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 82. See also Maria Dalrymple and Nefertiti Gayle quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 56; Ferron, 'Man, You've Mixed', 2; Skinner Carter and Reynolds, *Why Not Me?*, 86; "Vernon" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 183; Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 25.

<sup>258</sup> Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 25-6.

formally with large groups of people at the table, and the formality of it, with white men ladling out soup and laying the table, was something I was wholly unprepared for'.<sup>259</sup>

Whilst not necessarily ascribed positive meanings, or perhaps because of this, such social and sensory experiences led to a heightened consciousness of intersubjectivity, a feeling of comradeship, precisely because they were shared and inescapable experiences. All this helped construct atmospheres which underscored the foreignness, the newness, and the very voyage-ness of their odyssey.

Other aspects of the journey were more positively received, and contributed different affective flavours to the atmospheres on board. The broadness of space and the wideness of time inhering to this particular technology of travel created an environment rich for the practice of leisure and entertainment activities, meaning that journeys became a cornucopia replete with boxing matches,<sup>260</sup> film showings,<sup>261</sup> swimming,<sup>262</sup> lotteries,<sup>263</sup> and evening dances – arenas where love, sex, and romance bubbled up to the surface through practices of courtship very different to the present day.<sup>264</sup> These were critical in producing positive evaluations of the journey, atmospheres coloured by a certain *joie de vivre* and described as 'good',<sup>265</sup> 'total fun',<sup>266</sup> a 'really happy time'<sup>267</sup>. One could revel in a state of leisure not often afforded to those coming from such historical-economic contexts. The ship journey – in its initial stages at least – was a moment in space and time within which to breath, relax, and *feel*. The material and leisurely splendour which migrants experienced on the ship would, however, serve for an

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<sup>259</sup> Dash, *Foreday Morning*, 113. Elias analysed changing European dining habits in 1939's seminal *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, which tracked the growing regulation and refinement of social practices and behaviour in Europe from the medieval to the modern periods, and the commensurate change and growth of the concepts of civilisation and civility. See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, ed. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Revised Edition (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 72-108.

<sup>260</sup> Sam King quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 60.

<sup>261</sup> Rennie, interview by author (see Appendix A).

<sup>262</sup> William Henry quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 25.

<sup>263</sup> Brown, *Windrush to Lewisham*, 10.

<sup>264</sup> For examples of these transatlantic activities and the practices of courtship inhering to them, see Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 92-6; Brown, *Windrush to Lewisham*, 7-12; Sam King quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 60.

<sup>265</sup> William Henry quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 25.

<sup>266</sup> Rennie, interview by author (see Appendix A).

<sup>267</sup> Alford Gardner quoted in BBC News, *Windrush Generation: Three Stories - BBC News*.

even harsher affective counterpoint once they had encountered the realities of the metropole.

### 2.2.3: Excitement, anticipation, and time

With such space and time migrants' thoughts and feelings turned to the future, and it was this peculiar asymmetry of time-perception that served as a foundation for the prevailing emotional feature of ship-bound affective atmospheres: a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation. This was assisted not only by the spatial structuring of the ship – imposing as it did an organisation and concentration of similarly emotional bodies – it was also assisted, as we have seen, by the specific culturally-embedded preconceptions of the metropole that migrants brought with them on board. But here we can extend the work of Reckwitz and Böhme by attending to the particularities which these bodies *brought with them* into this space, rather than simple affective evaluation *in situ*. These were *emotional* bodies, bringing with them similar emotivations – cultural and emotional baggage – and a similar intensity and consciousness of their hopes and ambitions for the shapes of their futures. The beginning of this migration corridor was marked by a predisposition of young bodies, with all the demographically-situated cultural prescriptions that this entailed. They were bodies which, through migration, now shared a new and identical fate. Whilst for some the spectres of historical memory haunted this “middle passage”,<sup>268</sup> most envisaged themselves as ‘pioneers’<sup>269</sup> on the cusp of a new and electrifying future, pioneers possessing a ‘kind of hope’.<sup>270</sup> In this stark reversal of the Columbus mythology the colonised had become the colonisers, eager and animated and emoting within a context of acquired knowledge of Britain, direct knowledge of Empire, and specific conceptualisations of their relationships to both. Implicated within this are certain ship-situated practices which helped construct these effervescent atmospheres, practices which point us to the intersection between religion, sociality, practices, and sensory-affective experience. One migrant, for example, remembered attending the worship session convened every Sunday in one of the ship's dining room halls and found that ‘the beat of tambourines and lusty singing’ created ‘an

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<sup>268</sup> Maria Dalrymple and Nefertiti Gayle quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 54; Hinds, *Journey*, 45.

<sup>269</sup> “Vernon” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 183.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.



atmosphere of excitement'.<sup>271</sup> Hope and excitement, so intersubjectively felt, thrust these migrants forward and caused them to abandon the pain of separation during departure; it triggered a process on board which saw pain and sadness evaporate and their hope, excitement, and anticipation begin to metastasise – as Victor Waldron admitted, after his painful departure his sadness had evaporated for his focus by now was totally in another direction'.<sup>272</sup> For now, at least, their emotional experiences were ambivalent no more.

Ships contained atmospheres which reflected this evaporation of sadness and metastatisation of hope and excitement. Clusters of people spent the initial phase of the journey 'anticipating the novelty of ports the ship would call at',<sup>273</sup> and after this feeling 'very excited' to reach Britain.<sup>274</sup> These were, then, atmospheres which contained specific perceptions of and relationships to time, a future-orientedness derived in part from the migrant journey itself, throwing up an acute consciousness of future life and future plans in a way not ordinarily experienced. Time itself became a zone and object of emotional experience, and ships became 'an intimate exposure of lives arranging their death'.<sup>275</sup>

#### 2.2.4: Nervousness, anxiety, self-doubt

Earlier I wrote of the evaporation of the pain and sadness of departure – affectively crowded out by the metastases of excitement and ambition – and a commensurate collapse of ambivalence. However, roughly a week into the journey, a curious shift in these ship-bound emotional atmospheres came to pass.<sup>276</sup> The dissipation of pain and sadness and an atmosphere laden with a sense of anticipation opened up a critical space for other feelings to rise to the surface. Migrants no longer simply felt excited but now possessed a distinct current of nervousness and fear in their affective complexes. Ambivalence, temporarily halted, began to emerge anew.

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<sup>271</sup> Samuels, *The Triangle Route*, 5.

<sup>272</sup> Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 25.

<sup>273</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 32.

<sup>274</sup> Rennie, interview by author (see Appendix A).

<sup>275</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 73.

<sup>276</sup> Sam King quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 61. See also Hinds, *Journey*, 44; Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 81-107.

It is again migrant literary expression – and again George Lamming – which helps us begin here. When one reads the account of the journey in *The Emigrants*, there is a distinct and palpable change of tone as the journey wears on, from the ‘gaiety of reprieve’ to an uncertainty that was ‘the feeling everyone experienced as the ship got nearer’.<sup>277</sup> It was not just through narrative exposition – ‘they seemed a little uneasy about the future’ – that Lamming brought this to bear; the behaviour, mannerisms, and thoughts of his characters begin to express a nervousness and tension which crept like a pall over the ship.<sup>278</sup> Characters become stiffer, more brittle, less inclined to debate history or bicker over stereotyped island identities. The content of the dialogue almost exclusively turns around future plans and the practicalities of settlement, and this is expressed with an increasingly nervous energy.

The ‘mood on the ship’, as Euton Christian explains, was marked by travellers imaginatively wondering: “‘I wonder what is going to happen, I wonder if so-and-so is going to happen to me’”,<sup>279</sup> it was a ‘mixture of anticipation, excitement, and fear’.<sup>280</sup> This new atmosphere of nervousness and self-doubt grew as the ship crawled closer to its destination and stemmed not just from the daunting unknowns, but from a lack of concreteness in their immediate plans: In terms of employment, ‘not many people on board had such a clear idea of what they were going to’ wrote Donald Hinds.<sup>281</sup> Another remembered that ‘it take me sixteen days on the sea ... I don’t know where I am going, but I am going to England’,<sup>282</sup> while still another admitted that they ‘didn’t know where I was going, who I was going to see, or what life would be like’.<sup>283</sup> Here again demographics cut across emotional experience, for returning servicepeople and ex-servicepeople were largely shielded from the worst excesses of this uncertainty and its emotional consequences, possessing as they did first-hand knowledge of Britain and usually an established occupation.<sup>284</sup> And, in a curious twist, these new emotional

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<sup>277</sup> Lamming, *Pleasures*, 212; Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 73.

<sup>278</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 73, esp. 95-106.

<sup>279</sup> Euton Christian quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 71.

<sup>280</sup> Edrick Lawman quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 45.

<sup>281</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 34.

<sup>282</sup> Linette Sims quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 68.

<sup>283</sup> Sydney, ‘Interview with Don Sydney’.

<sup>284</sup> Sam King, for example, asserts that ‘I was never apprehensive ... because I’d lived in England, in the Royal Air Force’. See Sam King quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 60. Euton Christian struck a similar

atmospheres led in turn to a restructuring of onboard social configurations. Newcomers, with an ever-growing fever and fret over their arrival, began to gravitate towards those with first-hand knowledge of Britain in order to mine their experiences for veins of wisdom and advice. Tornado in Lamming's *Emigrants*, for instance, becomes the loquacious centre of hushed and anxious semi-circles on deck as he tries to impart all he can to the newcomers, and Sam King – a returning RAF serviceman – remembers nervous newcomers beginning to ask him questions as the ship journey wore on, and him trying to explain the practicalities of adjustment such as ration cards and National Insurance numbers.<sup>285</sup>

Many acquired critical pieces of information this way, but it did nothing to sate the component of nervousness within a given vessel's atmosphere. Along with the excitement, anticipation, and joviality on board, the latter part of the journey also became 'a strange period of waiting, expectancy and nervous tension'.<sup>286</sup> Newcomers described themselves as 'frill on my own anxieties of what I was about to experience'<sup>287</sup> – so much so that the eve of their arrivals were often marked by sleepless nights 'thinking of what was in store for them'.<sup>288</sup> Succinctly expressing the affective atmosphere of ambivalence on board, Jamaican Sam King said 'there was hope. People were concerned, especially those who had never been out of Jamaica before'.<sup>289</sup>

Soon they would find out what Britain – their Britain – held for them, and whether it really was "the place for them".

### 2.3: Arrivals

If, as we have seen, migrants possessed a great deal of excitement and anticipation during their journeys, then this final section tracks the calcification of these feelings into disappointment and disillusionment as migrants began to confront the immediate and

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tone. See Euton Christian quoted in *Ibid.*, 71. It is a point Lamming also picks up in *The Emigrants*: The Governor, an RAF serviceman returning to Britain, is the ship's pillar of support, security, and self-assurance. See Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 76.

<sup>285</sup> Sam King quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 60-2.

<sup>286</sup> Dash, *Foreday Morning*, 115.

<sup>287</sup> Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 23.

<sup>288</sup> Brown, *Windrush to Lewisham*, 12.

<sup>289</sup> Sam King quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 60.

often unexpected realities of postwar Britain. Toward this end, what will be emphasised in this section is how preconceptions of migrants' destination, acquired within the context of specific colonial cultures, undergirds and accentuates the emotional responses to this new context upon arrival. Britain and its symbolisms, so dominant in these migrants' cultural fields of vision, co-drivers of their transnational feelings of belonging, was now to be touched, smelt, seen, navigated, negotiated, and felt. From the panoptical vantage point of the present, it seems inevitable that the lofty ideals dispensed to these migrants presented an insurmountable rift between expectation and reality. But it was these actors who, in context, had to confront this rift. This section focuses on the formative encounters with these realities, *their* realities, and the emotional consequences which flowed from the fault lines between these and their expectations.

It is not, however, a simplistic case of expectation colliding with reality. As we have seen, there were distinct emotional experiences built *from* these expectations, most commonly expressed as excitement and anticipation. This is a case where expectations and its commensurate emotional experiences – magnified during the departure and journey – collided with realities to produce *new* emotional experiences and configurations. In this regard, source material bears out a distinct sense of comedown, a feeling of disappointment, and a dampening of excitement as soon as they began to alight. This is the broad narrative arc that this final section will trace.

### 2.2.1: First impressions

It should come as unsurprising that sources of the arrival, to a migrant, deal with that intimate moment of first contact and the consequent evaluation of its sensations often termed “first impressions”. It is also something that we, as contemporary observers, have a measure of experiential access to. One always remembers their first experiences and evaluations of a significant event: the first steps in a new city, the atmosphere and timbre of music performed live, the unfolding of a cavernous sports stadium. These things seem to have a sharper, more poignant taste to them – they have experiential and emotional stickiness, as Sara Ahmed would doubtless say.<sup>290</sup> Psychological studies point

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<sup>290</sup> Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*.

to the rapidity of first impression formation within digital media landscapes,<sup>291</sup> and their staying – *sticking* – power within interpersonal ones.<sup>292</sup> Migrant-produced source material is replete with expressions of their first affective, sensory, and cultural first impressions of Britain, and in almost all cases they exist parallel to expressions of their preconceptions of it in order to articulate the disjunction between them. Their first impressions instigated the first rear-guard action which their excitement and anticipation were forced to enact, and the specific aspects of the country toward which their first impressions were drawn are critically significant in understanding the experiential states of these migrants as they alighted.

### 2.3.2: Anxiety and disorientation

Before migrants could devote their full cognitive attention to evaluative tasks, however, they had to negotiate the termini. Sources from migrants speak of an uproarious tumult of hundreds or thousands of bodies: native Britons pinging across the foyers on their commute; relatives and friends craning their necks perusing the newly-arrived; porters, streetcleaners, newspaper sellers, and bootblacks plying their trade; and predators working for unscrupulous landlords or their own sexual appetites trying to identify victims. Donald Hinds talks of twelve people turning out to meet a single migrant being commonplace, some going merely on the off-chance of meeting an old acquaintance.<sup>293</sup> In such a din migrants spoke of acute feelings of anxiety and disorientation; they had, after all, been thrust into a maelstrom, in a new land, usually alone, and with all the precarity and uncertainty that the migrant condition entails. ‘The train station was absolutely heaving ... I was in a desperate state’ admitted Cliff Walker who arrived in 1958.<sup>294</sup> Paul Dash spoke of his mind being in ‘such turmoil’ when he arrived that he couldn’t properly take stock of his environment.<sup>295</sup> In the midst of such seething masses one could rarely see those who had promised to meet them, and expectation and

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<sup>291</sup> Gitte Lindgaard et al., ‘Attention Web Designers: You Have 50 Milliseconds to Make a Good First Impression!’, *Behaviour & Information Technology* 25, no. 2 (2006): 115–26.

<sup>292</sup> Philip E. Tetlock, ‘Accountability and the Perseverance of First Impressions’, *Social Psychology Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (1983): 285–92; Moshe Bar, Mital Neta, and Heather Linz, ‘Very First Impressions’, *Emotion* 6, no. 2 (2006): 269–78.

<sup>293</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 48.

<sup>294</sup> Cliff Walker, Channel 4 News, *Britain’s Windrush Veterans*.

<sup>295</sup> Dash, *Foreday Morn*, 117.

excitement quickly collapsed into ‘panic’ and ‘fear’.<sup>296</sup> Pearl Marcano called her affective experience upon arrival an ‘anxiety state’, and this chaos, indeterminacy, agitation, and entropy were captured by both Sam Selvon and George Lamming in *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Emigrants* respectively.<sup>297</sup> In typical fashion, Lamming’s experimental prose of the arrival takes a stream-of-consciousness approach, progressively dissolving into near-incoherence:

Here pavement. Over there luggage. Beyond crowds. Vague and ragged waiting to greet friends. You can’t see them clearly because things get thicker like a blacksmith’s shop after something has gone wrong. No blaze. No fire. Just a thick choking mass of cloud. The men bend to read the names. Beyond the people crowd like refugees. As though something had happened outside to frighten them into hiding! Only these voices speak clearly. The strange ones. The men working on the platform. The others talk as though they were choked. Weak. Frightened. They said it wouldn’t be so cold. So cold ... so frightened ... so frightened ... home ... go ... to go back ... home ... only because ..., this like ... no ... home ... other reason ... because ... like this ... frightened ... alone ... the whole place ... goes up up up and over up and over curling falling ... up ... over to heaven ... down to ... hell up an over ... thick ... sick ... thick ... sick ... up ... cold ... so ... frightened ... no ... don’t... don’t tremble ... no ... not... frightened ... no ... alone ... No.<sup>298</sup>

There were at least two key contextual conditions at play here. First, many of these migrants were arriving from rural environments and thus possessed a socio-cultural frame of reference which could not be mapped onto this milieu – its built environment, its human density, its modes of production. This made for a highly disconcerting and disorientating experience when thrust into the transport hubs of a large industrialised society. Second, the belief in their familiarity with British culture and society was insufficient in bridging the inescapable difference and newness one had to encounter. Migrants began almost immediately to feel a strangeness, an out-of-placeness, a

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<sup>296</sup> Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 19-20.

<sup>297</sup> Marcano and Marcano, interview by author (see Appendix B). See Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (London: Longman, 1952), 6-13; Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 107-25.

<sup>298</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 123-4. The ellipses are Lamming’s.

disjunction no doubt sharpened by the social and cultural preparedness that they believed they were bringing with them. 'The place was very strange, the people talking very posh', remembered Loleta White Davis, admitting she felt like an 'alien'.<sup>299</sup> Cliff Walker, meanwhile, spoke of being a young boy amidst 'strangers in a strange place ... For the first time in my life, I was afraid'.<sup>300</sup> In his memoir, Stuart Hall describes this particular affective moment as being 'in unfamiliar territory, puzzled about what the future held, fearful about whether we would survive, unsettled by how different everything seemed and worried by how much the experience would change us'.<sup>301</sup> This disorientation, anxiety, fear, and out-of-placeness constituted the first stage of the long retreat of these migrants' anticipation and excitement, their critical readjustments and radical reconfigurations. But it was a stage that also involved more explicitly evaluative faculties, as migrants began turning their attention to the places, spaces, and climate around them.

In this regard, one of the first things which struck the migrants was the weather, a point which draws toward it important concerns for the history of the senses and of the body. In a rare example of cohesion between preconception and reality, migrants knew Britain to be a comparatively cold place, but none had an accurate grasp of the gulf between their previous experiences and this new climactic reality. From an historical perspective, the most riveting accounts come from those who, as Cliff Walker said, 'had never known anything like it before'.<sup>302</sup> These migrants had been reared in tropical climes and had thus only ever known equatorial dry and rainy seasons; experiencing hemispheric winters for the first time was not merely a case of orders of magnitude, but a qualitative leap in sensory experience. Echoing Cliff Walker, Linda Price asserts that she had 'never felt cold like that in my life';<sup>303</sup> Edrick Lawman expresses the same sentiment in almost identical words before going on to ask 'how could a place be so cold?'.<sup>304</sup> There

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<sup>299</sup> Loleta White Davis, *My Life in Britain: An Autobiography* (Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse, 2006), 17.

<sup>300</sup> Walker, 'Where Is Home?', 162.

<sup>301</sup> Stuart Hall and Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), 154.

<sup>302</sup> Walker, 'Where Is Home?', 163.

<sup>303</sup> Linda Price quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 157.

<sup>304</sup> Edrick Lawman quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 47.

are many more accounts.<sup>305</sup> This confrontation with new sensory experience drew from it new bodily effects: Cliff Walker remembered that he ‘had never experienced winter. I had never felt the cold or seen snow. I did not know what it was like not to have feeling in my fingers or toes, what it was like to have my teeth chatter without direction from my brain’.<sup>306</sup> Walker soon found his ‘face was burning. My ears and my nose were sore’;<sup>307</sup> in another interview, he remembered his ‘nose was expelling juices that I didn’t even have control over’.<sup>308</sup> Some expressed bemusement over the ‘smoke coming out of our noses and mouths, like when you see people smoking cigarettes’.<sup>309</sup> Relationships between the climate and historical bodies had changed, and this threw up new emotional states. Gus Gill remembers ‘shivering, the tears rolling down my cheek. I said to myself “why did I leave my beautiful ... homeland to come to face this misery?”’.<sup>310</sup> This feeling of an instant regret in the face of new and unwanted sensory and bodily sensations quickly became a motif as this movement flowed into the 1960s, and represented a Copernican turn from their fitful, sleepless last nights full of promise during the journey.<sup>311</sup>

### 2.3.3: Built environments

Migrants’ climactic woes dovetailed with what constituted that other primary domain which their first impressions became stuck to: the built environment. Evaluation of these two were never far apart, and in reality often combined to produce a single evaluative output; the weather and Britain’s built environment were taken together to produce, in brains and bodies, affective states which apprehended “Britain” – that abstract web of interconnected processes, objects, and people – as a single concrete entity in the

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<sup>305</sup> Tom Morgan quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 135; Gloria Evans quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 80; Skinner Carter and Reynolds, *Why Not Me?*, 88.

<sup>306</sup> Walker, ‘Where Is Home?’, 161.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>308</sup> Cliff Walker quoted in Channel 4 News, *Britain’s Windrush Veterans*.

<sup>309</sup> Edrick Lawman quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 46-7.

<sup>310</sup> Gus Gill quoted in John Ingram, ‘One British Family’ (ITV, 16 June 1974).

<sup>311</sup> In George Lamming’s famous account of his arrival to Britain with fellow writer Sam Selvon, Selvon turns to Lamming and asks: ‘is who send we up in this place?’. See Lamming, *Pleasures*, 212. Thomas Joseph states that in light of these sensations, ‘if it was possible I would have turned back immediately’. See Thomas Joseph quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 14. Another admitted that as soon as she ‘felt the cold I wanted to go straight back to Jamaica’. See Linda Price quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 158. Cliff Walker mused that he ‘wished I had never left my home – my island in the sun’. See Walker, ‘Where Is Home?’, 153.



cumulative way so common in the migrant condition. The constitutive interaction and evaluation of Britain's spaces and places was wholly negative and, like its atmospheric counterpart, this was predicated on context.

This returns us to the Caribbean, because for many of these migrants – coming as they did from rural and agricultural backgrounds – this was their first experience of urban spaces. In other words, Britain's spaces and places were vastly different from their erstwhile experiential reckonings with space and place, and consequently different from their notions of how these were built or used. Residential dwellings in the Caribbean were usually freestanding with neighbours some distance away, and their spatial designs and layouts mirrored these particularities. British dwellings, by contrast, 'looked the same, all made of red brick, without front verandas or a front yard, things that I thought all houses should have'.<sup>312</sup> Alfred Williams remembers being able to 'shout to the man next door and he can't hear me. There was space. Things were clean'.<sup>313</sup> Furthermore, notions of Caribbean childhood were in part shaped by such spatial ordering, making the transition to Britain's constricted and dense urban environments particularly disconcerting: 'My heart skipped a beat; I saw no front yard ... there in the back seat of that car I began to cry silently'.<sup>314</sup>

This means that migrants' affective evaluations of Britain's built environment turn critically on an important interplay between one's first experience of urban environments, the preconceptions of Britain that were brought across the Atlantic, and the historical specificities of it in reality. Almost every migrant was 'shock[ed]' over the vastness, density, and similitude of the architecture,<sup>315</sup> how houses were stacked 'on top of one another', and how they 'looked like ... factories'.<sup>316</sup> E. A. Samuels found that 'the streets all looked the same' which 'created confusion in my young mind', feelings of

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<sup>312</sup> Samuels, *The Triangle Route*, 10.

<sup>313</sup> Williams and Brown, *To Live It*, 10. See also Wiltshire, *Now I Live in England*, 15-17; unnamed interviewee quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 23. Such arrangements of space would contribute certain cultural approaches to socialisation which would later influence migrant house parties in Britain and natives' baptism of these as "noisy parties".

<sup>314</sup> "Olga" quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 12.

<sup>315</sup> Gloria Browne quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 33. See also Gloria Browne quoted in *Ibid.*, 126-7; Wiltshire, *Now I Live in England*, 9.

<sup>316</sup> "Edna" quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 66.

confusion or puzzlement expressed by others.<sup>317</sup> Michelle Charlery thought that they would ‘be like back home streets’, but the traffic lights, the crowds, and the need to look left and right before crossing meant that she found it all ‘strange’.<sup>318</sup> This built environment spoke to them of another spatial and material world, one never before experienced. ‘The size, the vastness of the place, was all so strange and different. The houses, the buildings, everything. I don’t think anything in my imagination had prepared me for that’.<sup>319</sup> In an echo of their experiential sentiments over the weather, they had ‘never seen anything like’ it.<sup>320</sup> Chimneys and the smoke from coal fires were a universal source of shock or confusion, and – in an example of perception being influenced by the emotivations that brought them to Britain – regularly mistaken for the employment opportunities of bakeries and factories.<sup>321</sup> Emotivations became stuck to the built environment.

Another area of shock and disappointment for these migrants was the *condition* of the built environment itself. Here, as always, context reigns supreme. In the 1950s and through into the 1960s, Britain’s urbanised centres – the destination for all Caribbean migrants – remained scarred and deformed from the bombing campaigns of the Second World War or otherwise dilapidated from ongoing policies of austerity and the mass postwar suburbanisation of the middle classes. Arriving in London in the 1950s, Stuart Hall called the city an assemblage of ‘bombed-out sites, rubble and gaping spaces like missing teeth’.<sup>322</sup> These were the urban spaces that migrants were interacting with. This was a level of pollution, uncleanliness, and decrepitude that migrants were wholly unprepared for. Alfred Williams likened the industrial towns and cities of Yorkshire to a

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<sup>317</sup> Samuels, *The Triangle Route*, 10. For a similar affective sentiment, see “Olga” quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 12.

<sup>318</sup> Michelle Charlery quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 131.

<sup>319</sup> “Irene” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 147.

<sup>320</sup> Gloria Browne quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 32.

<sup>321</sup> See Marcano and Marcano, interview by author (Appendix B); “Olga” quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 12; “Eunice” quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 110; Gloria Browne quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 33; “Edna” quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 66; Mildred Deacon quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 94; unnamed migrant quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 23; “Estelle ‘Sweetgirl’” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 200; Davis, *My Life*, 16; Gloria Whyte, ‘Interview with Gloria Whyte’, Caribbean Takeaway Takeover, 29 January 2018, [caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/portfolio/gloria-whyte/](http://caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/portfolio/gloria-whyte/).

<sup>322</sup> Hall and Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger*, 150.

‘slum’ – ‘everywhere I look I see mucky, dirty buildings’;<sup>323</sup> Southampton was likewise a ‘damned terrible sight’ to him.<sup>324</sup> Migrants thought these spaces ‘busy but grubby’;<sup>325</sup> buildings that were, as a character in a 1982 theatre production based on migrant interviews expressed, ‘dirty, mash up and old’.<sup>326</sup> Barbadian Beryl thought London ‘horrible. The buildings were dirty, and the streets with all the dog mess’.<sup>327</sup> Britain, a land of ‘milk and honey’ to many, was merely a collection of biting cold sites of urban decay.<sup>328</sup>

This was all in stark contrast to the lifelong images and preconceptions of Britain that migrants had been raised with, and it was now that the great fracturing of their excitement and anticipation began in full, to be replaced by feelings of disappointment and despair. Paul Dash highlights this perfectly when he wrote that London’s idealised spaces and places were found to be ‘at odds with the mental picture I had built up of the great city’.<sup>329</sup> In a similar vein, St. Lucian Michelle Charlery ‘thought England would be a beautiful place, like a palace ... but while I was on the train I was looking around and I saw a lot of houses with chimney tops sending out smoke’.<sup>330</sup> Some clung to a vague hope that these spaces and places would improve as they found their feet and ventured out into new areas,<sup>331</sup> but in general impressions quickly became ‘lousy’ and – quite literally – an ocean apart from what they ‘had expected it to be’.<sup>332</sup> Alfred Williams writes that it was around this time he ‘really start to regret that I did scrap everything I have in Jamaica and come to this place’,<sup>333</sup> while Rennie Miller, coming in 1960 from Jamaica, found that ‘with what I had heard about England, I was disappointed; very much disappointed’.<sup>334</sup> Tom Evans admitted that he was ‘really disappointed because the things

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<sup>323</sup> Williams and Brown, *To Live It*, 81.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> Maria Dalrymple and Nefertiti Gayle quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 56.

<sup>326</sup> *Motherland*, script by Elyse Dodgson, Oval House Theatre, London, 9 July 1982.

<sup>327</sup> “Beryl” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 190.

<sup>328</sup> Williams and Brown, *To Live It*, 66. See “David” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives*, 194.

<sup>329</sup> Dash, *Foreday Morning*, 117.

<sup>330</sup> Michelle Charlery quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 130.

<sup>331</sup> “Roy” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 214.

<sup>332</sup> Ken Corbin quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 143.

<sup>333</sup> Williams and Brown, *To Live It*, 83.

<sup>334</sup> Rennie Miller quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 69.

that I had learned about England, I didn't see them'.<sup>335</sup> Edwin Myers shared the sentiment, stating that he 'couldn't believe this was the England, the Mother Country I had envisaged'.<sup>336</sup> At times, it feels like the source material containing this emotional trend is limited only by the number of migrants who made the journey. Corinne Skinner Carter said that she found London to be:

big, gloomy, busy, dirty, grey and a lot less glamorous and exciting than I had imagined it could be. We used to hear about this big Great Britain and the monarchy, Parliament and the seat of the British Empire, so we had high expectation and grand, fanciful ideas about what this Motherland was all about ... it wasn't until after arriving that every single illusion was shattered and the cold, hard reality became clear.<sup>337</sup>

The "journey to an illusion", as Donald Hinds once termed it, was over; the emotional consequences of this illusion's dispellment had begun.

#### 2.3.4: Cultural difference

The lofty ideals which newcomers possessed were not merely directed toward Britain's spaces and structures; the cultural and discursive environments of the Caribbean also meant that they held British *people* up to the same exacting standards.

On one level, this functioned to tangle or reposition their Caribbean-situated ideas of the intersection between class and race, ideas which hinged on an equation of whiteness to wealth and power, forged in environments where one's experiential access to these concepts found them always bolted deterministically together. 'In Trinidad', Alton Watkins explains, 'there are no poor whites. If you're white ... you're on top of the heap'.<sup>338</sup> Received notions of class and race therefore had to be reconfigured, reconfigured quickly, and this produced certain and distinct emotional states. Many expressed shock and confusion upon seeing white people engaged in manual labour, service occupations, or simply carrying their luggage as they alighted in Britain's

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<sup>335</sup> Tom Evans quoted in *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>336</sup> Edwin Myers quoted in *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>337</sup> Skinner Carter and Reynolds, *Why Not Me?*, 88.

<sup>338</sup> Watkins, 'Interview with Alton Watkins'. See also, for example, Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 29: 'The Europeans I knew back in my country were always in charge - riding horses and living in fabulous homes. The films we saw always portrayed whites as rich, powerful and successful human beings'.

termini.<sup>339</sup> These feelings were always felt in relation to their preconceptions of Britain, that heart of Empire. One woman admitted that seeing English people engaged in manual labour ‘seemed so depressing, the picture that I had built up in my mind’;<sup>340</sup> Donald Hinds called it ‘yet another blow to romance’ and he ‘began to dread the coming of the next morning when I would look from my window and see a white man sweeping the streets’.<sup>341</sup> These were phenomena their colonial upbringings had left them floundering in trying to make sense of, and became part of the great emotional comedown which characterised their arrivals.

On another level, migrants were left disappointed and disillusioned with the chasm between British socio-cultural mores and practices and their erstwhile expectations of these. Barbadian Roy says that the notion ‘instilled’ into them about Britain was that ‘everybody in it was nice, virtually angels’.<sup>342</sup> A critical part of this colonialist mythology was an acquired sense of British “justice”, “fair play”, and “sportsmanship”. C. L. R. James, educated in a Trinidadian secondary school based heavily around the British public school model, found that the values of “sportsmanship” and honesty – ineffably tied to Britishness – became the ‘moral framework of my existence’.<sup>343</sup> Byron Lawrence, likewise, says that in the Caribbean ‘we thought the greatest of the English people. We thought they were the greatest sportsmen’ – only after coming did migrants realise that ‘that was a farce. If they don’t win they’re mean and nasty’.<sup>344</sup> As James’ testimony highlights, these concepts radiated out from the sports field, permeating and overlapping wider British society: British sportsmanship and “fair play” became metonymies for its social policies, its judiciary, and its national character – the emotional temperament of the country was taken to be suffused with these concepts. Lenore Marciano, having no conception of ‘English people ... being dishonest’, hung her brooch on the door of the wardrobe in her hotel, only to find it missing when she returned.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Marciano and Marciano, interview by author (see Appendix B); “Jasper” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 171; Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 29.

<sup>340</sup> Unnamed interviewee quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 23.

<sup>341</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 47.

<sup>342</sup> “Roy” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 213.

<sup>343</sup> C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 26.

<sup>344</sup> Byron Lawrence quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 109.

<sup>345</sup> Marciano and Marciano, interview by author (see Appendix B).

The emotional effects of the discrimination, violence, and negation they met – which I shall explore in detail soon – must be read within this context of Caribbean perceptions and preconceptions of British people. Underscoring this point, a Caribbean reverend in Britain was quoted in 1969 in Jamaica's largest newspaper, admitting that 'newcomers come with their concepts of British fair play and justice and they are numbed by this display of rejection'.<sup>346</sup>

Natives' racism and rejection – driven by their own emotional states – also dovetailed with a general inexpressiveness, insularity, and 'grim stoicism' stemming from the late Victorian period but accelerated during the existential struggle and human losses of the Second World War.<sup>347</sup> Mores governing social interaction were wildly different from these migrants' Caribbean cultures and led to the perception of Britons as 'cold'<sup>348</sup> and unfriendly.<sup>349</sup> This frigid indifference that they perceived in Britons became the social counterpart to their evaluations of the frigid climate and the dull, gloomy built environment, all cohering to produce a single evaluative output and a range of feelings from it. 'It was a cold, cold November day' one woman remembered of her arrival. 'People were so cold. I wanted to turn around and go back; it had all been a horrible mistake'.<sup>350</sup> Another remembered that Britain was 'so gloomy. It was strange leaving behind the sunshine and calypso ... people were moving so fast and they weren't friendly at all'.<sup>351</sup> Migrants had found that when they crossed the frontier into Britain, they had in so doing crossed over into an "emotional frontier" of their own making – that is, places, spaces, and contexts where different affective repertoires and conventions of expression meet and compete.<sup>352</sup> Moreover, it was the assumed continuity of Caribbean and British emotional formations that amplified the disconcertment and disillusionment felt upon

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<sup>346</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, 16 August 1969.

<sup>347</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 88. For historiographical treatment of this emotional trend, see Thomas Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). This is similar to, though not identical with, an eighteenth-century emotional judgement by Frenchman Jean Froissart that 'the English take their pleasures sadly after the fashion of their country'. Quoted in William Hone, *The Every-day Book and Table Book*, (London: T. Tegg, 1838), 17.

<sup>348</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 77.

<sup>349</sup> Susan Ricketts quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 109, 42.

<sup>350</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 77.

<sup>351</sup> Daphne Cover quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 118.

<sup>352</sup> For information on the emotional frontier, see Vallgård, Alexander, and Olsen, 'Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood', 22-6.

arrival. In the 1980s theatre production *Motherland*, characters join in chorus to state that 'I wanted to come / England streets paved with gold / Fascination stagnation / England people have no soul'.<sup>353</sup>

Another critical part of Caribbeans' expectations of Britons – and thus another critical part of the attenuation of their excitement – was their putative knowledge of Empire. It is hard to overstate the role and significance of Empire in the Caribbean: the conduit through which power flowed and was shaped; the cultural and historical saturation of Empire as concept through its modes and channels of discourse; the referential cornerstone and gateway through which British Caribbeans understood their relation to the wider world. We have already mentioned Caribbeans' possession of a deep historical consciousness of Britain, and it was perfectly rational to expect Britons – the metropolitans at the denotative heart of Empire – to possess a commensurate knowledge of *their* sprawling imperial possessions. Caribbean migrants came with a rote-memorised lineage of British monarchs, and the names of Nelson and Wellington and the defeat of the Spanish Armada ringing in their ears; when they arrived, they found that most thought the Caribbean either a part of Africa or simply a synonym for Jamaica.<sup>354</sup> Britons complimented Caribbean migrants on their English, musing over how they could have achieved such fluency in a foreign tongue.<sup>355</sup> Some asked, with complete sincerity, if they lived in houses back home.<sup>356</sup> Little wonder, then, that an enduring motif in migrant source material speaks of the disappointment, anger, and resentment they felt when confronted with such historical and imperial ignorance. 'We expected them to know their own history', Eric Ferron admits. 'When they showed us they didn't, we felt disappointed in them, and angry to be asked such stupid questions'. They 'knew nothing' about the Caribbean, 'yet we knew so much about England'.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> *Motherland*, script by Elyse Dodgson, Oval House Theatre, London, 9 July 1982.

<sup>354</sup> Ferron, 'Man, You've Mixed', 15; unnamed migrant quoted at 'Listening to the Windrush Generation', Museum of London, accessed 24 May 2022, [museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/windrush-stories/listening-to-the-windrush-generation](https://museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/windrush-stories/listening-to-the-windrush-generation).

<sup>355</sup> Marcano and Marcano, interview by author (see Appendix B).

<sup>356</sup> Lenore Sykes, 'Interview with Lenore Sykes', *Caribbean Takeaway Takeover*, 6 November 2017, [caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/lenore-sykes/](https://caribbeantakeawaytakeover.wordpress.com/lenore-sykes/)

<sup>357</sup> Ferron, 'Man, You've Mixed', 16. See also the 1959 pamphlet produced by the BBC Caribbean service for prospective migrants, a valuable piece of source material for the fact it was written by Caribbean migrants already resident in Britain, and thus was created within a perspective which most directly articulated the salient social and cultural difficulties of migration to Britain as these historical actors themselves saw them.

Furthermore, as the Second World War receded in the rear-view mirror, ignorance over Caribbean wartime sacrifice became a standing vexation of veterans who had returned to Britain. Connie Mark, in a passage rich with emotional expression, ties together the intersection of Caribbean context and British reality marvellously: 'I get very annoyed that people don't want to accept and remain ignorant of the fact of how very much the West Indies were involved in the war ... and how very much we were brought up to love the King, love the Queen, to love England and to respect England ... that hurt, that really used to hurt'.<sup>358</sup> If the history of emotions project is concerned with explicating the changing landscape of emotional experience and expression throughout different historical cultures, then it must attend also to the emotional consequences of differing historical consciousnesses, or lack thereof, and the practices of commemorating the past which are embedded within these cultures.

### 2.3.5: Experiences of precarity

In addition, the context around which these affective and evaluative processes were enacted was characterised, in the main, by a high degree of precarity and a low standard of living. It should be noted, however, how such experiential conditions differed over the course of this migration flow. As we have seen, a large portion of early trailblazers were returning veterans still in the employ of the armed forces and as such largely shielded from the worst excesses of precarity, poverty, anxiety and suffering; even those who had been demobilised and were returning as civilians found the transition far easier, either possessing a certain amount of social capital from their previous stay or else being attended to by the centralised, bureaucratised early postwar state. E. R. Braithwaite, for instance, managed to secure initial accommodation with an elderly English couple with whom he had made acquaintances during his wartime service, soon developing into an almost familial relationship.<sup>359</sup> Those who came from the late 1950s onwards were likewise able to draw upon webs of Caribbean support networks which insulated them

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The pamphlet entreated future migrants to 'always keep in mind ... that their knowledge of your country is much less than your knowledge of theirs. Whenever you are inclined to get angry or fly off the handle ... remember that English people are ignorant of your ways and habits'. See 'Going to Britain?' (BBC Caribbean Service, 1959), 31.

<sup>358</sup> Connie Mark quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 4.

<sup>359</sup> Braithwaite, *To Sir, With Love*, 35.



from the worst excesses of precarity: One Barbadian admitted that, had he not been put into contact with his parents' friends in Britain, he 'could have suffered immensely. You had nothing. I knew no one'.<sup>360</sup> Note how the affective reception of Britain changed based on the existence of these support networks: 'I really landed on my feet because everything was in place for me when I came. My first impression of England was that it was going to be great'.<sup>361</sup> Evaluation of experience is contingent on the social contexts, practices, and compositions which surround it.

The most poignant and vociferous stories of precarity and suffering during arrival come from the intermittent period between these two phases. With no contacts and no accommodation upon arrival, many spent nights sleeping rough on benches<sup>362</sup> or in telephone booths and cemeteries.<sup>363</sup> Predatory men circled train terminals in search of gratification: one woman, with no one to meet her and nowhere to go, was 'picked up at the station by a "dark" Jamaican who offered her a bed ... within weeks he "made her a baby" and then left her. When the landlord discovered that she was pregnant, he told her to go'.<sup>364</sup> As these examples illustrate, the struggle for accommodation lay at the heart of this precarity and suffering, and intersects with the fear, hatred, and racism on the part of British landlords that made such a situation possible. Alfred Williams recounts his long trudges through Ashton-under-Lyne in search of accommodation, and the emotions he felt when doing so:

I tell you, I walk up every house door in that town, half the time they look through the window and see it a coloured and don't even answer when I did knock. And them that answer, they say "sorry, we have no room for you today". And I know they have room. They have no room for me because I am coloured. I am black. The day goes by and I walking and walking, knock this door, knock that door, walking, walking. I near wearout my boots. Every time I am turned away I feel a little bit smaller. In the end I

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<sup>360</sup> "Vernon" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 183.

<sup>361</sup> Skinner Carter and Reynolds, *Why Not Me?*, 89.

<sup>362</sup> Patterson, *Dark Strangers*, 314.

<sup>363</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 53, 75, 87, 158.

<sup>364</sup> Patterson, *Dark Strangers*, 322.

no bigger than an insect... and I'm still knocking on doors ... This no lie: by the end of day I even begin to think maybe it better if I do myself in.<sup>365</sup>

When migrants did manage to secure accommodation, the racism they encountered still managed to seep its way into their experiences of precarity, intersecting with memories of the previous relationships they held between spaces, bodies, and social practices. Barbadian Jasper remembers that, due to the racist attacks perpetuated by the nascent youth subculture of “Teddy Boys”, his mother confined him, upon arrival, to the attic within which they lived. Life in a garret within the frigid centre of London was a far cry from the warm and flat agricultural expanses of Barbados: it was not what he was ‘accustomed to’. Jasper started ‘crying and crying ... I felt so constricted, so restricted’.<sup>366</sup> Jasper’s example serves as a reminder of the confluence of emotional streams at work when examining bodily precarity and its intersection with space and place in historical context. A mother’s love, a mother’s fear over her son’s embodied precarity becomes enmeshed with the jarring change in Jasper’s socio-spatial frame of reference, and the racist emotional practices which both caused his confinement and designated the spatial zone *of* this confinement.

Once secured, the conditions within these spaces became another essential component of this mass fracturing of hope and excitement. In an increasing rush of desperation in the face of a racist housing market, migrants turned to disreputable landlords owning dilapidated housing who, sensing an opportunity, charged migrants breathtaking fees. Susan Ricketts remembers her first accommodation in Britain as a small room shared with six other people and only a bucket to wash one’s self in; Jamaicans, she said, ‘were used to space and clean conditions’, and as a result ‘every day I had tears in my eyes’.<sup>367</sup> Migrants had not expected to ‘leave all that space at home, to come and live in one room, to do everything in this room’.<sup>368</sup> For them it was shocking,<sup>369</sup> and ‘could hardly be anything but depressing’.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Williams and Brown, *To Live It*, 78-9.

<sup>366</sup> “Jasper” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 172. See also Walker, ‘Where Is Home?’, 165.

<sup>367</sup> Susan Ricketts quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 39.

<sup>368</sup> “Eva” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 160.

<sup>369</sup> “Beulah” quoted in *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>370</sup> Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 28.

## 2.4: Disillusionment, homesickness, and belonging

This chapter's structure and direction has sought to outline a prevailing emotional narrative found within migrant-produced sources concerning their departures, journeys, and arrivals, charting the ways in which several important avenues coalesced to produce a critical emotional realignment within migrants over the course of their transatlantic relocations. Gone were the hope and excitement – perforated nonetheless by the pain of separation – of the departure, gone were the halcyon days of the journey just a few days or weeks prior. Migrants were now living and emoting under the weight of a disappointment and disillusionment made all the more oppressive because of the grand preconceptions of their destination with which they had arrived: 'armed with so much of the colonial past', they thought it would be 'relatively easy ... making the transition'. Instead, they found the reality of their experience 'as disappointing as it is unfortunate'.<sup>371</sup> Working generalisations are not universalisations, and such a narrative can never presume to account for the enormous multiplicity of human experience; there were outliers, anomalies, and persons whose emotional arcs plotted strikingly different vectors.<sup>372</sup> But the one contained herein did speak to many, if not the majority of migrants: as Victor Waldron wrote, migrants' 'breathless expectancy and nervous anticipation' became quickly 'extinguished'.<sup>373</sup> For Stuart Hall, meanwhile, grappling with the divergent reality of the metropole inaugurated 'a process of protracted disenchantment'.<sup>374</sup>

This disenchantment, this repositioning, opened up a space for feelings of homesickness to take root. One woman quickly came to the conclusion it 'had all been a horrible mistake',<sup>375</sup> Irene from Barbados explicitly links these two emotional states when she admitted 'a number of us got disillusioned. I think we were homesick'.<sup>376</sup> Weeping and epistolary practices became expressions and practices associated with such

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>372</sup> See Rennie, interview by author (Appendix A); Alford Gardner quoted in BBC News, *Windrush Generation: Three Stories - BBC News*.

<sup>373</sup> Waldron, *Undiminished Link*, 16, 27.

<sup>374</sup> Hall and Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger*, 149.

<sup>375</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 22.

<sup>376</sup> "Irene" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 149.

states.<sup>377</sup> This reorientation also entailed a radical restructuring of erstwhile felt experiences of identity and belonging: the gulf between expectation and reality meant that, for the Caribbean migrant, 'the sense of belonging is not there' anymore.<sup>378</sup> The Jamaican High Commissioner in London admitted in 1969 that "'in the old days it was part of the education policy to convey that in the mother country everything in the garden was rosy. Now the situation has changed and the young people don't think of Britain as the mother country anymore'".<sup>379</sup> In a different context, in a different time, Langston Hughes famously asked what happens to a dream deferred. These migrants, together, had provided one historical answer.

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<sup>377</sup> "Roy" quoted in Ibid., 212.

<sup>378</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 53.

<sup>379</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, 16 August 1969.

### 3: Romance, family, childhood

The following chapter explores the emotional configurations which swirled around the notions and experiences of romance, family, and childhood. Although divided into three discrete sections, what will soon become clear in this chapter is that there exists a significant thematic overlap between them, and as such this tripartite division be taken not as a muscular separation of romance, family, and childhood, but as a loose structuring device which stays sensitive to the mutual implication of this chapters' overarching themes. In my exploration of romance, sex, and love I have chosen to focus on interracial relationships, not only for the historically-significant and singular emotional experiences generated by these lovers, but also because it leads into a discussion of these relationships' power to change wider patterns of feeling in the host society. Indeed, it is this dynamic interaction between two persons' romantic and erotic feelings, and the wider historical-emotional context which it both altered and was felt within, that constitutes this as a highly significant emotional moment, and one which sets a large part of the affective terms of engagement for the following chapter when I will investigate emotional practices of racist violence and the feelings generated from them. The second part of this chapter incorporates the experiences of historical actors involved in interracial romances but widens the analytical goalposts to include Caribbean migrant *couples*, asking how historical conditions played out on the level of affective experience with respect to the vehicle of the family. Finally, turning toward Caribbean migrant children, I discuss two important areas where felt experience was at its most powerful and poignant: the phenomenon of "barrel children", and also the practices of emotional racism that migrant children encountered throughout all levels of the British school system.

#### 3.1 Romance, sex, and love

One of the most crucial things we can grasp about the Caribbean migration flow to Britain in the postwar period is the ways in which it radically reconfigured the emotional concepts of love, romance, and sex – both on the societal level and on the level of individual, felt experience. It was in this moment that the meanings and rights to these terms became a key site where the politics of race and feeling were contested, and one

of the front lines in the postwar battle between exclusion and belonging. These issues, so central to the racial history of Britain, had perhaps the largest stake in determining the changing face of national identity throughout the rest of the twentieth century – and yet underneath these grand swirling currents lay the felt experience of individual historical actors, in context. This section attempts to stay sensitive to both, the linkages between, and the specific points of significance that these linkages generated.

When discussing interracial relationships, what this section deals with, in the main, are relationships between black men and white women. There are several important reasons for this. Foremost, it was a more statistically prevalent coupling than its sexual opposite – a reason itself possessing certain contextual groundings. Attending to the demographic composition of this flow, highlighted in the first chapter, helps us here again. By understanding this as a migration flow characterised in its early stages by male imbalance, it becomes patently clear how such a demographic trend influenced emotional and sociological patterns of love, sex, and romance between Caribbeans and Britons. Notwithstanding the notable undercurrent of contingency and compromise in his words, Fred Ellis bluntly stakes out the significance of migrant gender compositions for the dynamics of sexual attraction in early postwar Britain: ‘as far as fancying English girls went, well, anyone would fancy them because there were so few black women around; very few compared to the men’.<sup>380</sup>

When black women did begin to arrive in significant numbers, and when gender parity was achieved in the late 1950s, many found themselves spurned by white and black men alike. Whilst a general white male disinterest in sexually partnering with black women can be attributed to black femininity’s exclusion from the dominant regime of westernised beauty ideals,<sup>381</sup> some contemporary black women commentators attributed black men’s seeming disinterest to the cultural and economic legacies of colonialism and slavery. Black Caribbean bachelors, raised in an environment where the values of whiteness and power were monosemic, where lighter skin shades were socially and sexually desirable, were now allegedly drawn to white female partners. ‘At the dance’, Connie Mark wrote back to her friend in Jamaica, ‘if you are a coloured woman

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<sup>380</sup> Fred Ellis quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 10.

<sup>381</sup> Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie, and Suzanne Scafe, *The Heart of the Race: Black Women’s Lives in Britain* (London: Verso, 2018), 145. See also Hinds, *Journey*, 105.

you stand there like a wallflower, the coloured men just ignore you and dance with all the white women', identifying this new practice as a product of slavery.<sup>382</sup> Historical conditions come to regulate feelings of lust and desire in the present.

### 3.1.1: Love, sex, and masculinity in Caribbean cultures

Caribbean men were also, seemingly, exercising their sexuality according to cultural grids which had plotted on them certain ideas concerning sex and masculinity. Beluah from Barbados described his father as the 'village ram', a handsome man who had multiple sexual partners and used to 'strut' around his town.<sup>383</sup> Another Barbadian, Jasper, asserts such practices were part of a wider cultural phenomenon in the Caribbean: 'most West Indian men believe that they should have more than one woman in their lives'.<sup>384</sup> Such archetypes form the basis of many male characters in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. Yet for every Caribbean male who took a *laissez-faire* attitude toward entertaining multiple sexual and romantic partners, or became caught up in the pursuit of white women, there are examples representing the quintessentially diligent and devoted family man, men whose lives and actions acted as tangible resistance from blackness' exclusion from domesticity and respectability. Kennetta Perry highlights the ways in which black families used the technological medium of the photographic family portrait toward this end, seizing the representational means of production to combat assertions of blackness' inherent incompatibility with the nuclear family unit.<sup>385</sup> Sharmaine Lovegrove admits that whilst her father was a 'real rude boy who loved women, music and cars and always had multiple girlfriends', other males in her family were 'righteous and committed', and points to the plethora of Caribbean men who 'worked hard, raised their children right and who have been strong and stable role models'.<sup>386</sup> E. A. Samuels describes his father as a 'real family man',<sup>387</sup> and Gus –

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<sup>382</sup> Connie Mark quoted in Francis, *Hope*, 148-9.

<sup>383</sup> "Beulah" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 206.

<sup>384</sup> "Jasper" quoted in Ibid., 168. Cecil Wilson's account of maintaining multiple relationships before he 'sent for my proper girlfriend in Jamaica' also reflects this. See Cecil Wilson quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 16-7.

<sup>385</sup> Perry, *London*, 79.

<sup>386</sup> Sharmaine Lovegrove quoted in Brinkhurst-Cuff, *Mother Country*, 174.

<sup>387</sup> Samuels, *The Triangle Route*, 25.

interviewed by John Pilger in 1974 – was the main breadwinner of a functional and devout family in Newcastle.<sup>388</sup>

### 3.1.2: The emotional politicisation of love and sex

Historical socio-cultural practices, inescapably, invalidate sweeping generalisations – and yet it was an enormous sweeping generalisation which blanketed Britons’ own emotional dispositions toward these relationships. Almost as soon as Caribbean men alighted, sectors of British society began to seize on the alleged sexual mores of Caribbean culture as fuel for their own distinct emotional processes and practices, and the politicisation of them thereof. Part of the discursive and representational programme here was a kind of emotional pathologisation of race; a portrayal of black men as hypersexualised deviants outside the bounds of British propriety, and thus society. A common theme was the association of Caribbean men with the organisation of prostitution rings, an association which can be partly traced to Rachmanism – the letting of squalid accommodation at exorbitant fees to what was perceived as the “dregs” of society, which included migrants and prostitutes.<sup>389</sup> Not only did this lead to feelings of resentment, feelings of being ‘fed up with being made the scapegoat whenever the British needed an excuse’,<sup>390</sup> racism here becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, a chain of circular reasoning: the structural racism of the housing market which pushed migrants into poor accommodation with other “outliers” of society became discursive ammunition in the battle to normalise a belief in Caribbean sexual deviance. This was one of the great emotional stories of this historical moment: a heightened politicisation, even a radicalisation, on the part of the host society, of love and sex and its intersection with race. Normative emotional concepts of love and lust were mobilised as political tools for exclusion, and the specific ways in which they were mobilised involved the emotional generation, within the host society, of hatred and fear: hatred of blackness corrupting white feminine innocence; fear of miscegenation.<sup>391</sup> Nowhere was this more obvious than in Colin Jordan’s

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<sup>388</sup> Ingram, ‘One British Family’.

<sup>389</sup> For the racial conflation of “West Indians” with prostitution, see, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 16 May 1956; *Times*, 17 March 1961; *Times*, 26 February 1962.

<sup>390</sup> Frances Ezzrecco quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 129.

<sup>391</sup> Here, salacious news stories of older West Indian men pushing innocent teenage British girls into prostitution were the key drivers of this trend. See, for example, *Times*, January 23 1982; *Daily Mirror*, 16



interview for British Pathé in the heart of Notting Hill shortly after the racial attacks. By conjuring up the spectre of a 'mulatto Britain' resulting from 'mass interbreeding', Jordan was reflecting and amplifying feelings of British fear on a national scale, which also placed him within a distinct emotional-populist lineage of racial fear reaching back to Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color* and forward to Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood". This was a politicisation of a new type of fear, a fear absent in Britain before the twentieth century, of miscegenation, white dilution of social and political power, and of an existential threat to the racial "purity" of the nation.

Whether emotional populists such as Jordan and Powell constituted the wellspring of this emotional style in British society, or whether they were mere opportunists striving to act as the mouthpiece for certain latent emotional currents, is immaterial here. What matters is that British cultural discourse had seized upon a sporadic cultural undercurrent in Caribbean sexual life, histrionically over-exaggerated it, and most importantly *racialised* it. Universalisation, being the handmaiden of racialisation, helped to transform this dynamic into both an effective political tool of exclusion and a site for the generation of a configuration of emotions. Aside from fear over a "mulatto Britain", other Britons expressed a different type of fear, a fear over what "the neighbours" would think of their white female relative dating a black Caribbean migrant, returning us to the point made in Chapter 1 about how the threat of social ostracism and the negative emotional experiences generated from it help to regulate normative social behaviour. One white grandmother-to-be lamented to the black Jamaican social worker Eric Ferron: 'My daughter is pregnant by a coloured man! A coloured man, Mr. Ferron! ... what about the people in the street?'.<sup>392</sup> White parents across the country demanded, for the same reason, that interracial relationships be called off immediately.<sup>393</sup> It was this particular, historically-situated British sensitivity to the perception and judgements of others, and the fear thrown up from the spectre of these judgements being unfavourable, that formed yet another aversion to these relationships – usually from a very different cross

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May 1956. Regarding this motif, Paul Gilroy has argued that the 'supposed predation by black men on white women was another staple image recycled from the ancient lexicon of colonial racism. Those men were linked to the image of the pimp, and whether they were black or white, the women with whom they associated were marked by the taint of prostitution'. See Paul Gilroy, *Black Britain: A Photographic Essay* (London: Saqi/Getty Images, 2011), 95.

<sup>392</sup> Ferron, 'Man, You've Mixed', 85.

<sup>393</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 102.

section of the population to those jealously decrying black men ‘taking our women’.<sup>394</sup> There were, for these people, historically-situated notions of propriety and respectability at stake, with all its attendant intersections of race and class.

Importantly, the emotions felt and expressed by the British concerning interracial relationships did not stop at fear. As we will see shortly, white male jealousy acted as a *casus belli* for the racist attacks of the 1950s, itself linked to gendered notions of possession and domination. ‘Sexual jealousy—the site of coloured men walking along with white women’<sup>395</sup> was how the *Times* described it, while one police officer admitted to a group of Caribbean migrants that he ‘hated seeing black men going out with white women’.<sup>396</sup> As a teenager, Mike Phillips was invited on a date by white schoolfriend, only to be attacked later by a white boy who also harboured a romantic interest in her. We might, from our own perspectives, condemn the white teenager’s feelings and actions as morally reprehensible – but there is no denying the existence of an intense constellation of emotional experiences smouldering within his behaviour: anger, hatred, confusion, jealousy, fear, and even self-consciousness. This is what Mike Phillips had to say of the encounter:

They held me up against the wall while Newman punched me. He kept talking to me, using the most obscene words he could think of: “I bet she loved it, you black bastard” .... I haven’t forgotten the look of his tormented eyes staring out at me while he punched and slapped my face ... I had the sense that the reactions of the English people we met were moved and shaped by the feelings about themselves which they brought to the experience.<sup>397</sup>

In the same passage, Phillips asserts his belief that ‘the most important part of what we learned wasn’t so much about unfamiliar cultures and manners, it was about ourselves’.<sup>398</sup> For no group was this truer than for certain white relatives of women romantically involved with black men. In *To Sir, With Love*, E. R. Braithwaite recounts his

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<sup>394</sup> See, for example, the Teddy Boy quoted in ‘News Headlines’, (BBC Television, 1 September 1958).

<sup>395</sup> *Times*, 27 August 1958.

<sup>396</sup> Frances Ezzrecco quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 130.

<sup>397</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 147.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

first meeting with the parents of his white partner, Gillian, dramatically revealing the ways in which felt experiences of racism can hide themselves even from one's own consciousness. Gillian's father, a well-educated and cosmopolitan businessman, admitted that before his daughter's liaison with Braithwaite 'I would have unhesitatingly asserted that I was without prejudice, racial or otherwise, but now that it has reached me to become a personal, intimate issue, I know that I would do anything in my power to break this up'.<sup>399</sup> It was a common theme – certain Britons who prided themselves on their liberality and progressiveness, who thought themselves above the acidic vitriol of racism which surrounded them, were forced to confront their own latent racist emotions once these issues held personal import for them. One migrant mused that 'this is a funny country ... people up round here say they like coloured folks but they don't really. You marry one and suddenly they don't like you any more'.<sup>400</sup> As Donald Hinds once remarked, many people were 'prepared to be integrationists in theory only'.<sup>401</sup> All this contributed to the duplicitousness and obfuscation of feeling that migrants perceived in the British emotional style, a point to which I will return in the final chapter.

Notwithstanding the latent racism present in their thinking, and in a perverse type of logic, the white families who virulently opposed their womenfolk dating black men had certain valid reasons to oppose these relationships. Part of the politicisation of interracial love and sex involved a representation of these white women as socially base and morally suspect, a representation saturated with classist overtones: 'You were considered the lowest of the low if you went with a black man in the 50s, you couldn't go lower than that'.<sup>402</sup> It was a process evident – with an undercurrent of jealousy – when a white hospital patient angrily decried to a black man that 'no decent white girl would go to bed with a black man',<sup>403</sup> or when a group of English women described black men as merely taking 'up the trash'.<sup>404</sup> Postwar British communities, as we have seen, possessed an ordinally high sensitivity to households' presentation and perception by others, meaning that the white relatives opposed to interracial relationships were acting upon

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<sup>399</sup> Braithwaite, *To Sir*, 178.

<sup>400</sup> Ferron, *'Man, You've Mixed'*, 82.

<sup>401</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 95.

<sup>402</sup> Chris Stredder quoted in Linda Pressly, 'Sleeping With The Enemy' (BBC Radio 4, 21 May 2007).

<sup>403</sup> Unnamed Grenadian quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 94.

<sup>404</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 100.

situated knowledge of national cultural and discursive attitudes toward these relationships, and so were in part vested in preserving the reputation and propriety of both their relative and, by extension, the wider family. Relatives were engaging in a reading of Britain's contemporary emotional patterns toward these relationships – fear, anxiety, disdain, jealousy – and forming their opposition to these relationships based on how they would affect the family's proprietorial standings.

Finally, what has been little noted is the fact that many in the Caribbean community also felt an aversion to these interracial couplings. Michael from Barbados, for instance, admits that 'deep down, my parents wanted me to marry a black girl'.<sup>405</sup> Black women, in particular, often expressed a resentment toward these partnerships. Caribbean migrant Louise Lange says that white women were 'easy. Easy like a bird. You know you just got to buy them a glass of ... lager, and that's alright for them'.<sup>406</sup> White Briton Dorothy Leigh remembers that black women were 'very jealous, because I suppose they felt threatened when they came here'.<sup>407</sup> Interracial couples were fighting on two fronts, from two communities, for their right to love and lust. In a 1958 Gallup poll, 71% of those interviewed expressed opposition to these partnerships.<sup>408</sup>

### 3.1.3: Interracial relationships and felt experience

What of the felt experience of those involved in these partnerships? In the discursive tumult generated by these relationships, in the emotions that they provoked in others, and in their enormous politicisation, there was little room for love and romance to be experienced in relation to its commensurate contemporary normative ideas. Instead, they became forcibly bound to other emotional processes, processes which looped back into them and, by so doing, changed the experience of love and romance itself.

As a teenager, black Caribbean migrant Mike Phillips remembers dating a white schoolfriend: 'it was obvious to me that sooner or later some big Ted would be sitting behind us and take it into his head to grab me off the bus and give me a good kicking. So

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<sup>405</sup> "Michael" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 176.

<sup>406</sup> Louise Lange quoted in Pressly, 'Sleeping With The Enemy'.

<sup>407</sup> Dorothy Leigh quoted in Ibid.

<sup>408</sup> *Daily Express*, 13 September 1958.

she was scary'.<sup>409</sup> What Phillips' account highlights is the ways in which romantic attraction became fused to experiences of fear, and fused to the built environment and the emotional-political context within which they were courting. Fear of physical violence, fear of pain, uneasily coexisted with feelings of romantic attraction. It was a fear that another Caribbean migrant, George, felt on his wedding day as he exited the registry office. Coming out onto the street, George saw over 200 white people gawking at the interracial newlyweds, and his wedding day – a day heavily concentrated with feeling rules prescribing joy, happiness, euphoria – also became a day measured emotionally in terms of the threat of racial violence: 'yes [I was nervous]. I came out there and I said "what they gonna do, are they gonna lynch me?"'.<sup>410</sup> Another man remembers abandoning his white date on the street, sprinting off at the sight of a police car, 'scared' that they were 'going to strangle' him for accompanying a white woman.<sup>411</sup> The invasion of fear into these emotional processes formed the migrants' counterpoint to the fear of miscegenation felt in certain white British circles.

In the streets, white women in interracial partnerships were confronted with verbal and physical abuse – emotional practices and expressions tied to perpetrators' feelings of hatred, fear, jealousy, or disgust – and social ostracism within their local communities and families. Spitting on these women was common practice, as was calling them "black man's meat" or "black man's whore".<sup>412</sup> Some women expressed a resolute courage and resistance against these acts, seeing clearly that they were designed within a framework of emopower – to provoke negative emotions in order to regulate normative social practices. Writing in to the black community magazine *Flamingo* in 1967, one white woman said that 'I know what a responsibility it will be marrying a coloured man, but we will put up with it because I love my boyfriend and I wouldn't put off my wedding to please the people who call after me in the street ... I myself have been called everything'.<sup>413</sup> Others, however, felt their general emotional constitution changing in response to such abuse. After being disowned by her family and forced to leave her

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<sup>409</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 147.

<sup>410</sup> "George" quoted in Pressly, 'Sleeping With The Enemy'.

<sup>411</sup> "Les" quoted in Pressly, 'Sleeping With The Enemy'.

<sup>412</sup> Chris Stredder quoted in Pressly, 'Sleeping With The Enemy'.

<sup>413</sup> Ann Heard, letter to the editor, *Flamingo*, March 1962.

home – aged seventeen – for daring to date a Caribbean migrant, white woman Marge felt herself becoming embittered: ‘it really made me hard, you know ... It really made me hard ... they never used to speak to you, and it made your life very uncomfortable’.<sup>414</sup> Eric Ferron, a Caribbean social worker who witnessed the first meeting between a white family and a Caribbean boyfriend, noted how ‘in one evening, in one hour, in just a word or two, happiness could be destroyed. All they needed was for someone close to them to say “I wish you well”’.<sup>415</sup> This great politicisation of the emotions of love and lust forced interracial couples to become overt signifiers of wider social processes, processes which were viewed with fear, anxiety, and disdain. Love and romance, at least since the Renaissance taken in the West to be a highly individualised experience, a singular bond to another, became more forcefully drawn into the social and political realms. In so doing, this helped regulate the boundaries of exclusion by representing such relationships as deviant aberrations – a point that holds wider significance for emotional histories of other forms of romantic attraction deemed abhorrent in certain historical times and places.

To close this section, I wish to mention two additional and important aspects of love and sex in this period. The first relates to how white myths over black sexuality – always vacillating between demonisation and fetishisation – impacted the felt experience for black men involved. Black Caribbean E. Martin Noble, during his wartime service, dismissed white jokes over his “black virility” as light ribbing.<sup>416</sup> Noble’s account highlights the ways in which codes of masculine social conduct played out in Britain’s mid-century armed services, and how they can be evaluated based on feelings of togetherness and contexts of comradeship. Not so for John Prince, who found in the communal shower of his British factory ‘twenty white men looking to see what my sexual organs were like’. Like Noble’s comrades these were also ‘passing remarks’, but Prince instead felt ‘really annoyed ... this was all about that myth’.<sup>417</sup> Still others bought into – or else deployed for their own ends – the myths surrounding black male sexuality. This is obvious in the account of “King Dick”: ‘yes, I think good sex was the thing that really

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<sup>414</sup> “Marge” quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 155.

<sup>415</sup> Ferron, *Man, You’ve Mixed*, 86.

<sup>416</sup> E. Martin Noble, *Jamaica Airman: A Black Airman in Britain 1943 and After* (London: New Beacon Books, 1984), 45.

<sup>417</sup> John Prince quoted in Pressly, ‘Sleeping With The Enemy’.

attract them to us ... I think sex played a great part in it. Stamina'.<sup>418</sup> The evaluations and emotional responses thrown up by these cultural representations were often highly individualised, and depended on the wider social contexts within which they were enacted.

Finally, the very conditions that migrants faced in Britain – and their evaluations of them – helped to dictate patterns of love and romance. Some black migrants expressed a determination to never marry a white Briton out of a fear they might be affectively compelled to remain in the country, shattering the inverted form of hope first directed, pre-migration, toward Britain, and now directed back toward the Caribbean. These ideologies of return – the “two-way dreams”, as Donald Hinds termed it – were powerful emotional coping mechanisms for Caribbean migrants faced with the unexpected realities of Britain, that previously sublime object: as a child, Colin Grant remembers eavesdropping on ‘the dreamers who were given to nostalgia’ over a ‘vague commitment’ to return home.<sup>419</sup> Trinidadian Sheila vowed in 1966 that she would never marry a white Briton, only for the thought that she ‘might have to spend the rest of my life here in Birmingham, or anywhere else in Britain’. Such a prospect, she said, ‘scares the hell out of me. If I marry a boy from back home, I am sure that we will eventually get home’.<sup>420</sup> Against the backdrop of nostalgic dreams of return and the situated context of present environments, love and courtship were modified and regulated.

### 3.2: Family, parenthood, marriage

The vicissitudes of migration also brought to bear changes within the internal dynamics of Caribbean migrant families, changes which entailed a reformulation of their internal *affective* dynamics. At the very core of these familial transformations lay the shifting status of Caribbean migrant women. A product of the structural racism of Britain’s employment and housing markets was the pressurisation of black migrants into a racially-designated underclass where economic conditions necessitated the full-time

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<sup>418</sup> Alfred Harvey quoted in Upshal, ‘Intolerance’.

<sup>419</sup> Grant, *Homecoming*, 8. For the two-way dream, see Donald Hinds, ‘Two-Way Dream’, *Observer*, 26 April 1964.

<sup>420</sup> “Sheila” quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 169.

employment of both partners.<sup>421</sup> Against the backdrop of a Caribbean region strikingly similar to Britain in regards to its gendered conceptions of the public and private spheres, migrant women had suddenly become wage-earners in a complex, urban, industrialised economy. In terms of its significance for shifting the affective structure of the familial unit, this development cut two ways.

### 3.2.1: The economic-affective repositioning of migrant women

On the one hand, the newfound economic importance of migrant women to their households gave them a measure of financial and occupational independence which altered the affective evaluations, power distributions, and gendered divisions of labour between partners. Their status as women, of course, still meant that they earned roughly half of what their male counterparts took home,<sup>422</sup> but such modest means was enough to precipitate these reallocations within migrant households – a process which Sheila Patterson, somewhat optimistically, termed ‘female emancipation’.<sup>423</sup> Migrant men recognised the indispensability of women’s contributions to the household budget, and because of this – and because unlike in the Caribbean, they could not draw on a pool of female relatives for domestic labour<sup>424</sup> – they acknowledged the possibility of their partner leaving as a real threat.<sup>425</sup> As Nancy Foner’s study of Jamaican migrants in Britain indicates, women felt that they now had ‘added leverage in relations with their husbands’,<sup>426</sup> and this provoked a change in the affective dynamics within households and families. The gendered division of labour, whilst never close to being abolished, became more blurred and fluid in households containing a working woman, and men

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<sup>421</sup> In the mid-1970s, 75 percent of Caribbean migrant women were working, compared with the national female average of just 55 per cent. See David John Smith, *Racial Disadvantage in Britain: The PEP Report* (London: Penguin, 1977), 65. There can be no clearer example of this socio-economic shift along the axis of race than the experience of one Trinidadian woman who, migrating from a comfortably middle-class family, found that in Britain she was forced to take up full-time, unskilled labour in order to make ends meet. See Bryan, Dadzie, and Scafe, *Heart of the Race*, 31.

<sup>422</sup> For gendered examples of migrant wage-earning potential, see Hinds, *Journey*, 59.

<sup>423</sup> Patterson, *Dark Strangers*, 304.

<sup>424</sup> Katrin Fitzherbert, *West Indian Children in London* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1967) 34.

<sup>425</sup> Nancy Foner, *Jamaica Farewell: Jamaican Migrants in London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 73.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*



spent proportionately more of their leisure time within the family.<sup>427</sup> Bound up with this shift of the power dynamics within families was a changing repertoire of emotional responses. Women 'felt freer to express dissatisfaction and make demands', and 'felt a new sense of power in relation to their men'.<sup>428</sup> Reflecting on her new status as an independent wage-earner, one woman stated bluntly that 'we do as we like. I have my own pay packet and don't wait on my husband for money'.<sup>429</sup> Another, expressing her newfound feelings of enfranchisement, admitted that 'if you're not working, man take liberty ... go and come when he feel like. When the wife is independent, she doesn't have to put up with it. Man more quiet when you go to work, behave themselves more; when them go out, them take you out'.<sup>430</sup>

However, not all men's social, affective, and practical responses to this new situation accorded in the ways outlined above. Instead, some began to feel a growing resentment against their partners' newfound senses of economic independence, agency, and clout.<sup>431</sup> This stemmed in part from some men's begrudging adoption of household duties in lieu of women's employment,<sup>432</sup> but also from the new occupational and financial status of women more generally, which they perceived as a threat to the domestic order of things. One interviewee admitted that women were 'more independent' and that this creates 'conflict 'cause some ladies work more than their husbands and the husbands resent that'.<sup>433</sup> In one extreme example, a Caribbean man was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in 1957 for attacking his former partner, a partner whom he had grown 'jealous' of for being self-sufficient and realising a house purchase independently of him.<sup>434</sup>

Important to recognise here is the fact that the feelings of jealousy of resentment that some Caribbean men felt toward these socio-affective displacements were contingent on certain gendered notions inhering to the contemporary cultural landscape, the social

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid., 73-80.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>429</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Ibid., 67.

<sup>430</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Ibid., 79.

<sup>431</sup> It was a dichotomy within the affective structure of migrant households that Sheila Patterson identified as early as 1963 in her study of Caribbean migrants in Brixton, London. See Patterson, *Dark Strangers*, 304.

<sup>432</sup> Foner, *Jamaica Farewell*, 61.

<sup>433</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland* 46.

<sup>434</sup> *South London Press*, 14 May 1957.

practices formed around them, and their inherent asymmetries of power that these men were now being forced to recognise and ameliorate. This feeds into the lively debate over the gendered roles of women within Caribbean familial structures, roles which have been the subject of breathtakingly different interpretations. Whilst some (almost exclusively male) authors have sought to highlight the matriarchal composition and practices of these family units, pointing to the region's cultural trend of male economic transnationalism and mobility as the constitutive factor,<sup>435</sup> the assertions and evidence borne out by women scholars and historical agents have often disputed this. As one woman asserted, 'we come from a society where men were always the providers',<sup>436</sup> the result being that Caribbean women, as Beverly Bryan, Stella Dadzie, and Suzanne Scafe assert, 'suffer some of the worst exploitation, and this was true throughout the West Indies'.<sup>437</sup> This was certainly true in Guyana, where one migrant asserted that women were 'second-class citizens'.<sup>438</sup> Norma Steele, meanwhile, pointed out the 'poverty' and 'drudgery' and 'the kind of housework mapped out for West Indian women'.<sup>439</sup> Gender, as has been the case to varying extents in the vast majority of historical cultures and societies, serves as a foundation upon which to construct profound inequalities.

Specific Caribbean attitudes toward gender, and the practices and divisions of labour that grew around them, thus cleaved close to their contemporary British counterparts, and it becomes germane here to view migration as a fractious process that transforms socio-cultural congruity across societies into difference and disjunction. Here, migrants' interaction with the historical conditions thrown up as a consequence of their migration – economic precarity codified along the axis of race – modify their socio-cultural and affective behaviour *in ways that depart* from normativity in both the sending and receiving societies. Contrary to the global superseding the local, or Stjepan Meštrović's "McDonaldization of emotion", both of which warn of increasing cultural assimilation in

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<sup>435</sup> See, for example, Hinds, *Journey*, 59; Phillips and Phillips *Windrush*, 118; Raymond T. Smith, 'Caribbean Kinship and Family Structure' (Continuities and Discontinuities in Afro-American Societies and Cultures, Kingston, 1970).

<sup>436</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 46.

<sup>437</sup> Bryan, Dadzie, and Scafe, *Heart of the Race*, 29.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>439</sup> Norma Steele, 'We're in Britain for the Money', in *Black Women: Bringing It All Back Home*, by Margaret Prescod-Roberts and Norma Steele (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 8.

an interconnected world, migration here acts as a force for diversification.<sup>440</sup> This becomes clearer when we examine contemporary British notions surrounding childcare and familial structure. Childhood experts such as John Bowlby elevated the mother-child relationship to a sovereign, biologically-immutable status, *sine qua non* for a child's healthy psychological and emotional development, causing a pervasive belief in the 1950s and beyond of the 'dangers of "maternal deprivation"'.<sup>441</sup> The implication taken from such research was that it provided strong empirical support for longstanding notions of social composition: successful childrearing practices could come only from stay-at-home mothers situated inside a nuclear, patriarchally-ordered family unit. Labouring under such assumptions, local authorities began in the 1950s to curtail the generous wartime grants for nurseries, and severely restricted the funding of daycare provisions for families; there was a widespread belief in policymaking circles that 'the child's best interests were served both physically and mentally by being in its own home, looked after by its own parents'.<sup>442</sup>

Thus, migrants' economic marginalisation – and the consequent necessity of the mother in full-time employment – produced social structures of the family and practices of childrearing which ran contrary to both the Caribbean region's cultural attitudes toward gender and Britain's ideological policymaking based on similar attitudes. Caribbean families were forced, then, into positions which went against the grain of the host society, helping to underscore the deviant nature of Caribbean familyhood, ergo situating it outside the boundaries of belonging in Britain. This had knock-on effects for Caribbean migrants in other areas of social life: betraying a breathtaking ignorance into the root causes of such a dynamic, and inadvertently underscoring how exclusion riven along the lines of socio-cultural incompatibility can affect the experience of Caribbean children in British schools, one white headteacher asserted that 'the West Indian men expect the women to work *and* bring up a family'.<sup>443</sup> As we have already seen, had he

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<sup>440</sup> Stjepan G. Meštrović, *Postemotional Society* (London: Sage, 1997), xi.

<sup>441</sup> Vicky Randall, 'The Irresponsible State? The Politics of Child Daycare Provision in Britain', *British Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 3 (1995): 334. See, for example, John Bowlby, *Child Care and the Growth of Love* (London: Penguin, 1953); John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 3 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1969-1970).

<sup>442</sup> Hilda Menzies, 'The Day Care of Children Apart From Their Parents', *Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute* 71, no. 3 (1951): 247.

<sup>443</sup> Unnamed headteacher quoted in Rex and Tomlinson, *Colonial Immigrants*, 301.

dug a little deeper he would have found an emotional trend of resentment and jealousy among Caribbean men with spouses in employment, commensurate with the former's attitudes toward gender and the family. Nevertheless, the racist double bind was picked up by those affected by it: as black feminist scholars remind us, black women were 'viewed simultaneously as worker and as wives and mothers ... the state reproduced commonsense notions of its inherent pathology: black women were seen to fail as mothers precisely because of their position as workers'.<sup>444</sup>

### 3.2.2: The new emotional politics of childcare

Earlier on, I spoke of how women's new status as wage earners cut in two important affective ways. By focusing solely on the affective reorganisation of power within Caribbean migrant families and women's feelings of liberation and autonomy that flowed from it, there is a real danger, as Hazel Carby reminds us, of labouring under the assumption that 'it is only through the development of a Western-style industrial capitalism and the resultant entry of woman into waged labor that the potential for the liberation of women can increase'.<sup>445</sup> Toward this end, I now wish to highlight one of the ways that the mobilisation of the Caribbean female labour force in Britain instead precipitated a clutch of negative-experienced feelings in these women: the fear and anxiety they experienced surrounding childcare.

We have already seen how Britain's wider notions of childhood, parenthood, and the family played itself out in the politico-judicial sphere, translating itself into ideologically-driven postwar austerity measures surrounding daycare facilities. The result of this radical curtailment of resources was the blossoming of a cottage industry of unlicensed childminders, something which the Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948 attempted to curb. The lack of daycare provision, poor enforcement, and the need for working mothers to secure care for their children meant ultimately, however, that unlicensed nurseries continued to thrive, and were often guilty of negligence and unsanitary conditions. One migrant remembered discovering her baby unattended on a

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<sup>444</sup> Hazel V. Carby, 'White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood', in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*, by Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (London: Routledge, 1982), 116.

<sup>445</sup> Carby, 'White Women Listen!', 221.

childminder's basement floor, while another finished work early and found her baby still in the pushchair and coat with which she had dropped them off.<sup>446</sup> Mothers spoke of collecting their children hungry,<sup>447</sup> with soiled diapers,<sup>448</sup> and other such 'really bad experiences'.<sup>449</sup> Scenes like this were such a significant part of the collective experience of migrant mothers that they became objects of their literary representations.<sup>450</sup>

Unlike the general continuity in the gendered-affective structure of the family, these experiences of childminding were painfully distinct from those they had known in the Caribbean. There, strong kinship networks and a more distributed sense of communal responsibility meant that childminding was both a more integral part of the duties of wider social life, and devolved to other members of a support network who had a strong emotional investment in the child to be minded. Margaret Prescod-Roberts highlighted this when she wrote that 'if you live in a village in an extended family you know that if your child's outside somewhere, someone will be looking out for them. If your child is out in the street and the neighbour down the road sees your child in some mess, that woman is going to take the responsibility of dealing with that child'.<sup>451</sup> The compulsion to work, the absence of childcare practices based around mutually-responsible kinship networks, and the neglect that their children faced in unlicensed British nurseries all led to mothers' feelings of worry and anxiety on the factory floor or ward. Elyse Dodgson, who interviewed many Caribbean mothers for the book *Motherland*, said that these women 'were very anxious about the care their children were receiving: some spoke of how they worried at work all day'.<sup>452</sup> Others reported being 'very upset',<sup>453</sup> or finding it a 'great strain'.<sup>454</sup> Historical change is completely divorced from teleological drive of whiggish interpretation or classical Marxism; the conditions of this historical moment

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<sup>446</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Dodgson, *Motherland*, 40.

<sup>447</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Bryan, Dadzie, and Scafe, *Heart of the Race*, 35.

<sup>448</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Ibid., 37. See also Foner, *Jamaica Farewell*, 81.

<sup>450</sup> Buchi Emecheta, *Second-Class Citizen* (London: Allison and Busby, 1974), 57.

<sup>451</sup> Margaret Prescod-Roberts, 'Bringing It All Back Home', in *Black Women: Bringing It All Back Home*, by Margaret Prescod-Roberts and Norma Steele (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1980), 28. See also unnamed migrant quoted in Foner, *Jamaica Farewell*, 82.

<sup>452</sup> Dodgson, *Motherland*, 38.

<sup>453</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Bryan, Dadzie, and Scafe, *Heart of the Race*, 35.

<sup>454</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Ibid., 36-7.

caused Caribbean migrant women to feel both a sense of liberty and independence, and real fear and anxiety over how the contextual accommodations of their new economic positions affected their children.

### 3.2.3: Creation and adaptation

Gendered roles, affective structures within the family, and feelings hitched to the relationship between new economic status and a perceived incompatibility between this and adequate childcare – these were all ways that British society and the process of migration reordered the emotional landscape of the Caribbean family unit and those within it. Dynamics were not simply reordered by the changes that migration brought to bear on them, however. Instead, relationships and family units were themselves *created* by the very fact of migration itself – or, better, by the fact of migration into a context possessing a specific racist emotional style. It was this racist emotional style that was responsible for the precarity and exclusion that migrants were confronted with in almost every area of social, economic, and political life, and it was this precarity and exclusion that changed or amplified the emotional needs of migrants – needs which they saw as located within familial structures. Nancy Foner’s study of Jamaican migrants in London emphasised how men ‘seek emotional security in the insecure, migrant situation’,<sup>455</sup> a point present also in Sheila Patterson’s<sup>456</sup> and Sydney Collins’ studies.<sup>457</sup> The power of this historically-situated migrant condition to produce or accelerate a desire to marry or form a family was, moreover, not limited to men. In her autobiography, Corinne Skinner-Carter mentioned her sudden realisation that she had ‘better think seriously’ about her boyfriend of six months’ proposal, ‘otherwise I would be on my own. It was a frightening prospect to be alone in a strange country’.<sup>458</sup> Courtship, companionship, love, and familyhood: these are never unalloyed, unmediated, or timeless processes driven simply by a projection outward onto and into another human being – a Western metaphysical view driven in large part from Renaissance humanism and the

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<sup>455</sup> Foner, *Jamaica Farewell*, 80.

<sup>456</sup> Patterson, *Dark Strangers*, 306.

<sup>457</sup> Sydney Collins, *Coloured Minorities in Britain: Studies in British Race Relations Based on African, West Indian and Asiatic Immigrants* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), 25.

<sup>458</sup> Skinner Carter and Reynolds, *Why Not Me?*, 97.

nineteenth-century romanticist movement. Instead, these processes always have implicated within them the political, sociological, and economic landscapes within which they are enacted. Montaigne's famous justification of love, 'because he was he and I was I', might make for a certain amount of poetic punch or quotability, but seems to exist in some timeless, amorphous, materially and politically bereft plane of being. A "he" and an "I" are always historical subjects, are always both implicated in a context, are always both conscious of how their own material and emotional states might be affected by such feelings.

So for many migrants, partnerships and family units were formed not against the backdrop of some "pure" interpersonal connection, but against the backdrop of precarity, fear, and a desire for emotional support. Moreover, once these were established, they also became both sites for the negation of feelings, or at least the grounds upon which to deny acting upon them. The creation of family units meant a burrowing of roots deeper into British soil, and it was often the existence of these units that prevented or negated the hope which they had inverted toward a spectacular return to the Caribbean. Oswald Dennison remembers how, once he began building a family in Britain, he never gave 'any more thought' toward this kind of return – instead, he felt himself 'get closer and closer to England'.<sup>459</sup> Alford Gardner strikes a similar tone, talking about how his hope of returning 'wasn't to be. Within five years I started a family, married, bought my house, working hard and settled down'.<sup>460</sup> Furthermore, the hope of returning and the desire to stay were often co-present within individual families, meaning that critical to this dynamic was the reconciliation of the family unit to a certain amount of emotional politics involving the processes of negotiation, bargain, and compromise. One migrant remembers weeping as he received his first British wage, so disappointed was he by the working conditions and remuneration. Deciding to go home, he started packing his things – until he found out his wife was pregnant: 'I couldn't leave her. So, I couldn't go ... I had to decide to stay'.<sup>461</sup> Notions of responsible parenthood were usually crucial to this process. Barbadian Irene remembers the desire to return as a constant emotional theme of her life in Britain, thwarted by a succession of extenuating

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<sup>459</sup> Oswald "Columbus" Denniston quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 138.

<sup>460</sup> Alford Gardner quoted in BBC News, *Windrush Generation: Three Stories - BBC News*.

<sup>461</sup> Tom Evans quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 75.

circumstances. As a young mother, she felt that she could not return to her elderly parents in Barbados and say “‘here I am with five children, look after me’”; as she aged and the children progressed through Britain’s education system, she was always possessed by a feeling that ‘it wasn’t the right time’ to move her children merely ‘because I wanted to go back to Barbados’.<sup>462</sup> Aside from the clear dynamics of emotional compromise within familial structures, Irene’s account also underscores the limits of the Caribbean’s extended networks of support – they are still subject to perceived – and transnational – feelings of guilt.

### 3.3: Childhood

#### 3.3.1: “Barrel children” and the materiality of emotional expression

We now turn to an enumeration of some important elements in children’s emotional experiences surrounding this migration flow – and for this, we make a return to the Caribbean. Family units wishing to migrate to Britain were often fractured across the Atlantic for simple reasons of household economics: very few Caribbean families could afford the fare (roughly £75 in 1955) for all members simultaneously, meaning that the primary wage-earner would migrate first and save enough capital to progressively send for each member, starting with the spouse.<sup>463</sup> With such expediencies it was inevitably the children who were the last of a specific family to migrate, parents usually taking advantage of the more diffuse kinship networks of support to secure care for their child *in absentia* – indeed, 98 percent of Jamaican children remained in the Caribbean when their parents initially migrated to Britain.<sup>464</sup> As we have seen in a previous chapter, this dynamic both helped to mitigate the emotional pain of separation at the time of the parents’ departure, and amplified emotional pain, confusion, and feelings of familial belonging at the time of the children’s arrival. It is now time to delve deeper into the affective dynamics of this separation in ways that go beyond the remit of departures, journeys, or arrivals *per se*.

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<sup>462</sup> “Irene” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives*, 151.

<sup>463</sup> For figures, see the advertisements in *Daily Gleaner*, 8 October 1955.

<sup>464</sup> ‘Caribbean Women & The Black Community’, *Race Today*, April 1975.



One of the most interesting facets of this transatlantic separation of parent and child were the ways in which objects and materiality were employed in the pursuit of emotional expression. In 1999, Claudette Crawford-Brown published *Who will save our children? The plight of the Jamaican child in the 1990s* in which she outlined the concept of “barrel children”. Highlighting the radical rollback of social welfare policies by the Jamaica Labour Party beginning in the 1980s and the impetus to migrate this gave to a new generation of low-income families, Crawford-Brown designated barrel children as those who were initially left behind after their parents’ migration and received from them barrels of material goods in lieu of physical presence or emotional support.<sup>465</sup> Whilst noting that parents were ‘forced to make a choice between satisfying their children’s material needs or their emotional needs’,<sup>466</sup> she paid close attention to how a child’s emotional constitution often comprised feelings of rejection, abandonment, grief, and loss, among other ‘deep psychological reactions’ that ‘revolve around feelings of worthlessness and sadness’.<sup>467</sup> Indeed, in the clinical studies which have evolved out of Crawford-Brown’s analytical frame, these are emotional themes which have been borne out time and again.<sup>468</sup>

In reality, the neologism of the “barrel child” finds a large part of its contemporary significance by tapping into a decades-old historical current: the transnational exchange of barrels of material goods was a phenomenon well-known to Caribbean children of the 1950s, and indeed a compelling case can be made for its emergence in this postwar historical moment, insofar as it was contingent on a specific permutation of globalised consumer capitalism and robust, easily-accessible logistics networks. Just as Caribbean children of the 1990s were reckoning with the emotions thrown up by absentee

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<sup>465</sup> Claudette P. J. Crawford-Brown, *Who Will Save Our Children? The Plight of the Jamaican Child in the 1990s* (Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 1999), 53-4. See also Claudette Crawford-Brown and Melrose Rattray, *The ‘Barrel Children’ of the Caribbean: The Socio-Cultural Context of the Migrant Caribbean Family* (Kingston: Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of the West Indies, 1994).

<sup>466</sup> Claudette Crawford-Brown quoted in Brook Larmer, ‘The “Barrel Children”’, *Newsweek*, 18 February 1996, <https://www.newsweek.com/barrel-children-179978>.

<sup>467</sup> Claudette Crawford-Brown quoted in Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Godfrey F. Glasgow and Janice Gouse-Sheese, ‘Themes of Rejection and Abandonment in Group Work with Caribbean Adolescents’, *Social Work with Groups* 17, no. 4 (1995): 3–27; Mona Dillon and Christine A. Walsh, ‘Left Behind: The Experiences of Children of the Caribbean Whose Parents Have Migrated’, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 43, no. 6 (2012): 871–902; Audrey M. Pottinger, ‘Children’s Experience of Loss by Parental Migration in Inner-City Jamaica’, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 75, no. 4 (2005): 485–96.

biological parents and the arrival of parcels of material goods, so too were children left behind during their parents' initial relocation to Britain in the postwar period. What is more, one finds very little difference between their psychological and affective experiences. E. A. Samuels, a child in 1950s Jamaica, talks of learning 'to accept the fact that I was going to live a life experienced by many children my age, the proverbial barrel child, sustained by parcels and money from parents living overseas'. Watches and high-quality clothing were often present in the packages Samuels received, but could nevertheless 'not fully compensate for the agony of loneliness' – instead, he 'longed and hoped for the day when I would return to England to be with my parents', so much so that he suffered a longstanding affliction of nocturnal enuresis.<sup>469</sup> In similar fashion, Everine Shand admits to being 'always excited' when parcels of clothes, shoes, or hair ribbons came, but in the same breath talks of sitting on the coastal hills of Jamaica watching the ships roll in, ruminating on whether her parents were on board or if it would be the vessel to take her to them in Britain.<sup>470</sup>

From the perspective of migrant parents, the most compelling way to interpret the act of sending barrels is through the paradigms of emotional expression and emotional practice, ones which necessarily entail a high degree of materiality and are contingent on the manipulation of objects. In lieu of a parent's physical presence or words of affirmation, barrels became emotional practices intended to, however inadequately, express their love and remind the child of the parents' continued care and concern, or else act as a recognition of the emotional consequences of separation and a palliative band-aid. British-Guyanese child Samantha believes that there was a belief from her mother 'that once she sent this barrel that it would right all the wrongs'.<sup>471</sup> Furthermore, Samantha's account also highlights the ways in which these emotional practices, these material and object-invested emotional expressions, were enacted to enforce or sustain the emotional bonds of parent-child relationships transnationally: remembering a phone call to check if she had received the barrel, she remembers her mother immediately

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<sup>469</sup> Samuels, *The Triangle Route*, 85-91.

<sup>470</sup> Everine Shand quoted in Kuba Shand-Baptiste, 'My Mother Became a "Barrel Child" of 1960s Jamaica. This Is Her Story', *Medium* (blog), 21 August 2019, <https://medium.com/@kshandbaptiste/my-mother-became-a-barrel-child-of-1960s-jamaica-this-is-her-story-78a7a9b44fc7>.

<sup>471</sup> "Samantha", 'BSP0004 - Samantha', *Barrel Stories Project*.

asking “do you love me as a mother?”<sup>472</sup> However, the practice of barrel-sending did not only pertain to the emotional connection between parent and child – sometimes it was about provoking desired affective responses in the self. Highlighting the interaction between felt experience and the values we culturally embed into objects, one child remembers his mother sending him penny loafers because ‘I was supposed to be a smart kid, so she tried *to make me feel* like I had something going on’.<sup>473</sup>

When reading these accounts, it is important to remember that Caribbean migrant parents were striving toward emotional expression and the preservation of affective bonds within the familial unit simultaneously within the limitations of their historical environment, but also within the facilitations of it. Emotional experiences of migration as it pertains to the transnational affective relations of kinship has doubtless changed since the advent of internet-driven communications networks, the new psychological and sensory experiences of live video calling, and the progressive race to the bottom of budget airlines – elements of our neo-globalised culture not available to migrant parents within the broad sweep of human history. They were, however, able to draw upon the growth of consumer capitalism, the postwar explosion of commodity culture, and the expansion of oceanic logistics networks in the second half of the twentieth century.

In much of the source material that has come down to us, there exists a theme of a certain amount of affective centrifugal force. This was most apparent in the reported reactions of Caribbean children to their peers receiving material goods from parents in Britain, reactions that were most commonly described as envy or jealousy. Merlyn Rhone and Burchell Davidson, “barrel children” themselves, talk of the impression amongst their peers that they were ‘supposed to be well off’.<sup>474</sup> Another spoke of the envy his childhood friends expressed when he received new items of clothing from his parents in Britain: ‘I’m six years old ... I’m not envious of nobody. Why are you envious of me? As I got older, I understood what envy meant. “Oh, so that’s what they were talking

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> “C. H.”, ‘BSP0005 - C.H.’, *Barrel Stories Project*, audio, <http://barrelstories.org/c-h/>.

<sup>474</sup> Merlyn Rhone and Burchell Davidson quoted in ‘Windrush Families and the Emotional Burden of Migration’, *Independent*, 27 January 2022, [independent.co.uk/independentpremium/long-reads/barrel-children-windrush-black-families-b1958518.html](https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/long-reads/barrel-children-windrush-black-families-b1958518.html).

about”’.<sup>475</sup> Toys provoked the same reaction; Barbadian Beulah received a London Transport bus ‘which was the envy of the whole village’.<sup>476</sup> The emotional experiences surrounding the act of sending a barrel radiated outward in unexpected ways, provoking emotions in others not integrally involved in the practice and thereby changing the affective composition of social relationships.

Sending barrels of material goods was an expression of a parent’s love and care in lieu of their physical presence and emotional support. Toward this end, the practice by all accounts failed to meet its desired goal, although it is doubtful that parents ever believed it truly could – it was merely an emotional expression worked out within specific contextual constrictions, and which drew upon the available resources of consumerism and logistic networks. By failing to achieve its emotional objectives, the affective and psychological structures of both the child in themselves and parent-child relationships more generally underwent profound and longstanding changes. Just as E. A. Samuels admitted that barrels of goods could ‘not fully compensate for the agony of loneliness’, Jennifer Pringle said that, regardless of what she received, she ‘never truly felt wanted’ by her parents and that she is ‘still working through the trauma’.<sup>477</sup> In a story that would have psychoanalysts clamouring to interpret, one Barbadian child remembered her mother ‘sent me the biggest, prettiest doll England had to offer’, only for her to intentionally damage it over a period of time until ‘you couldn’t recognise it’.<sup>478</sup> British-Guyanese woman Samantha describes her parents’ migration as ‘having my stability and foundation pulled from under my feet’, and developing the urge well into adult life to ‘control situations around me and to protect myself so it didn’t happen again’.<sup>479</sup> Another migrant remembered that when he finally met his mother ‘I knew who she was ... but I never embraced her, or nothing like that’.<sup>480</sup> Others spoke of their every subsequent interaction with parents as coloured by a fraughtness and tension,<sup>481</sup> or

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<sup>475</sup> “C. H.”, ‘BSP0005 - C.H.’, *Barrel Stories Project*.

<sup>476</sup> “Beulah” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 207.

<sup>477</sup> Jennifer Pringle quoted in ‘Windrush Families’, *Independent*, 27 January 2022.

<sup>478</sup> “Beulah” quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 207.

<sup>479</sup> “Samantha”, ‘BSP0004 - Samantha’, *Barrel Stories Project*.

<sup>480</sup> “C. H.”, ‘BSP0005 - C.H.’, *Barrel Stories Project*.

<sup>481</sup> “Samantha”, ‘BSP0004 - Samantha’, *Barrel Stories Project*.

having to *learn* the emotional expression “I love you, mum”.<sup>482</sup> As we have already touched upon in Chapter 2, the affective restructuring of Caribbean families often involved an emotional gravitation toward their primary caregivers. Samantha’s testimony highlights the singular connection she possesses with her aunt, and the fact that ‘my mum finds this difficult’. When all three are present together, she talks of seeing ‘slight tensions playing out with my aunt, between the two of them. Not necessarily from my aunt, but my aunt wanting to make sure that my mum is comfortable and doesn’t feel that she’s wanting to take me over, because it’s quite obvious and apparent that we have a very close relationship. And my mum sometimes feels excluded’.<sup>483</sup> The practice of barrel-sending could not surmount, and sometimes exacerbated, the emotional politics embedded within individual families that the act of migration threw up.

To close this section, I wish to highlight one of the important limitations of barrel-sending and what this means for emotional expression more generally. Everine Shand, left in the care of an aunt who disliked her mother, remembered her saying “‘Look at that ugly dress your mum sent, and look at [your cousin’s] beautiful dress’”, leaving her with a childhood impression that she ‘never thought my things were good enough’.<sup>484</sup> Another migrant in receipt of barrels during his childhood in the Caribbean had an aunt who ‘never said “OK, this is a bunch of stuff that your mother sent” ... we just got what they gave us, and I never really thought about it’.<sup>485</sup> As we have seen, parcels of material goods were largely ineffectual in maintaining a desired affective relationship between parent and child, but as expressions of love or care, what little communicable force they possessed was wholly contingent on a child’s knowledge of the emotions invested into these material objects, on the context behind the practice. Here, guardians often acted as the omnipotent gatekeeper of this knowledge, a power they used at their discretion. When this power was abused by guardians withholding or distorting such knowledge, it highlights the corruptibility and fallible nature of such mediated emotional expression.

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<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> Everine Shand quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 272.

<sup>485</sup> “C. H.”, ‘BSP0005 - C.H.’, *Barrel Stories Project*.

### 3.3.2: Schooling, “educational sub-normality”, and the roots of emotional stereotyping

In 1971 Bernard Coard, a Grenadian schoolteacher resident in Britain, published *How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Sub-normal in the British School System* – a blistering sociological analysis and critique of Caribbean children’s disproportionate representation in British “educationally subnormal” (ESN) schools.<sup>486</sup> Arguing that Britain’s education system was institutionally racist, employed methods of testing which possessed a cultural and linguistic bias toward the white middle-class, and was motivated by a desire to preserve the racio-economic social hierarchy of the country by preparing Caribbean children for the lowest-paid job roles, Coard found that Caribbean children accounted for almost 34 per cent of the population of ESN schools, despite comprising just 15 per cent of the wider school population.<sup>487</sup> The seminal pamphlet served as a rallying point for Caribbean parents and activists throughout the 1970s, led to the growth of the supplementary school movement in the Caribbean community, and ignited a fiery debate about the nature and meaning of British education and its pedagogical practices which still persists to this day. In many ways, 1985’s report by the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups (better known as the Swann Report), an exhaustive study into the plight of Caribbean children in British schools and which identified teachers’ racism as a critical component of this, can be traced back to Coard’s study and the landscape of debate and resistance that it generated.<sup>488</sup>

Although Bernard Coard’s work and the plethora of reports, studies, and commentaries that blossomed in its wake were all scrambling to answer the same question – why were Caribbean children underperforming in British schools? – they

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<sup>486</sup> Bernard Coard, *How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System: The Scandal of the Black Child in Schools in Britain* (London: New Beacon Books, 1971). “Educationally subnormal” was a term first used in the Education Act 1944, which stipulated that each Local Education Authority must ascertain, and provide appropriate educational facilities for, all “educationally subnormal” children within their jurisdiction. By 1962, there were over 36,000 children in ESN schools. See Phillip Williams, ‘The Ascertainment of Educationally Subnormal Children’, *Educational Research* 7, no. 2 (1965): 136–46.

<sup>487</sup> Coard, *West Indian Child*, 5.

<sup>488</sup> DES (Department of Education and Science), *Education for All: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups (The Swann Report)*, Cmnd. 9543, London: HMSO, 1985.

arrived at a range of different answers.<sup>489</sup> Some attempted to account for the discrepancy by appealing to the purported behavioural problems of Caribbean children in British schools, ultimately locating this issue within questions of a reaction to cultural difference: as the Caribbean child moved from the regimented and draconian schools of their homeland to the more permissive, liberal, (dare say *enlightened*) educational facilities of Britain, ‘the West Indian child sets out to exploit his new-found freedom’.<sup>490</sup> Others, drawing upon the discursive motif of the “black broken home” which sought to racially demarcate the boundaries of British domesticity, respectability, and propriety, sought to defer the issue of Caribbean children’s academic underperformance to issues of parenting and housing within the black community. How could a child be expected to be behaviourally well-adjusted, or excel academically, if their parents ‘beat their daughters’<sup>491</sup> or wanted to ‘give him to the government’?<sup>492</sup> Others still situated Caribbean children’s underperformance within universal biological – and thus immutable – racial characteristics. It was within this social darwinist framework that Maurice Down, headteacher of Featherstone County Secondary School in Middlesex, flatly denied any possible influence of culture feeding into these putatively biological mechanisms: when asked whether a child of Caribbean parents raised their entire life in Britain would still perform worse than their white peers, he answered in the affirmative, adding ‘I don’t think they have the determination for one thing’.<sup>493</sup> Within educationalist circles this was not a leftfield opinion. Another headteacher stated matter-of-factly that ‘they are bound to be slower. It’s their personalities. They lack concentration’,<sup>494</sup> while still another – John Freeman of Earlham Primary School – told the *Stratford Express* that Caribbean children naturally possessed a lower IQ than their peers.<sup>495</sup> Such headteachers were placing

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<sup>489</sup> In 1968 Alan Little, director of the Inner London Education Authority’s Research Unit, surveyed 52 schools in the London area. He found that 32 percent of immigrant children were placed within the lowest bracket of academic achievement for mathematics, judged on the Eleven Plus criteria, compared with 11 percent of the student body as a whole. Just 2 percent of immigrant children, meanwhile, were placed within the highest bracket of academic achievement, compared to 12 percent of the student body. Similar statistics held true for both verbal reasoning and English. See *Financial Times*, 10 May 1968.

<sup>490</sup> *Times*, 8 November 1965. See also *Times*, 22 March 1968.

<sup>491</sup> *Daily Express*, 29 September 1976.

<sup>492</sup> *Times*, 22 March 1968.

<sup>493</sup> *Daily Mail*, 13 March 1969.

<sup>494</sup> Rex and Tomlinson, *Colonial Immigrants*, 199.

<sup>495</sup> Newham Monitoring Project, *Newham: The Forging of a Black Community* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1991), 13.

themselves within the intellectual tradition of indexing intelligence to biological conceptions of race stretching back at least to the nineteenth-century eugenics movement, and forward to the present age of *The Bell Curve*.<sup>496</sup>

These were, then, the main arguments put forward for Caribbean academic underachievement by white commentators and practitioners. Bernard Coard's work, meanwhile, can be seen as representing the condensation of Caribbean parents and activists' elucidation of its underlying causes. And whilst the issues raised by the Caribbean community hit the mark on a number of critical and painful truths regarding the British educational establishment and the treatment of their children within it, both sides of this interpretative divide ignored how emotional experience and emotional politics played a crucial role in the development of academic underachievement and the funnelling of Caribbean children into ESN schools. In focusing on the very real issue of British pedagoges' racism, Coard overlooked the racism Caribbean children faced from their peers, the interaction between this and its institutional counterpart, and the feelings and processes of emotional stereotyping that flowed from them. It is by turning to first-hand accounts of Caribbean children's affective experiences and evaluations of their schooling in Britain that we can more fully fill in this historical picture. What will be revealed is the ways in which emotional experience and emotional health simultaneously impact the ability to learn and circumscribe the boundaries beyond which resistance must be practised at whatever cost.

Such accounts are, unsurprisingly, saturated with negative evaluations. This began on their very first day in a new school – a nervous time for any child, but transformed and magnified for the Caribbean child by the cultural and racial alienation specific to their experience in Britain. One adult spoke of his first day in a British school as 'rather daunting, to say the least' because of the fact he and his brother would be the only two black children in the school.<sup>497</sup> 'I was very nervous and apprehensive as I entered the school gates', remembered Jamaican Olga, who migrated to Britain aged thirteen in 1965: 'I had still not got used to seeing so many white people. I did not know what it was

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<sup>496</sup> Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles A. Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 269-340.

<sup>497</sup> Dubes 52, *Black & Confused*, 31-2.



going to be like in an English school'.<sup>498</sup> Others admitted feeling they 'stuck out like a sore thumb' and consequently 'hated the school', yearning for the day they could leave.<sup>499</sup> Paul Stephenson spoke of his school life as a 'very hard time' because he 'was the only black child in the school'.<sup>500</sup> So in the first instance, there is a sense of isolation, of loneliness – felt experiences inconsistent with the flourishing of academic ability. Moreover, the pervasiveness of such feelings was amplified by the structural racism within Britain's labour market which prevented many qualified Caribbean educationalists from obtaining teaching posts, and which would have provided the alienated Caribbean schoolchild with a cultural and emotional point of reference.<sup>501</sup>

Although their formative experiences were also registered against the backdrop of the institutional racism Coard and the Swann Report were so careful to highlight – with Caribbean children often placed in the lowest academic set due to educationalists' interpretations of the illegitimacy of patois and in lieu of any formal test<sup>502</sup> – it was the racist abuse, attacks, and ostracism by their peers that served as the real index of their earliest emotional experiences. Far from the rosy portrayal of schoolground race relations depicted in contemporary sociological studies such as Ruth Glass' *Newcomers*, confrontation with racist emotional expressions and practices were a daily reality for Caribbean children from the off.<sup>503</sup> It was on Kenny Pryce's first day in a British school that he was 'standing alone in the playground when I was attacked by a gang of four white kids'.<sup>504</sup> Spitting, kicking, and shoving were commonplace.<sup>505</sup> Touring secondary schools in Liverpool, researchers working on the Swann Report heard from a Caribbean schoolgirl who had twice been hospitalised, once with a broken nose and once with a broken arm.<sup>506</sup> And where violence was absent, verbal abuse was present. One of the

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<sup>498</sup> "Olga" quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 14-5.

<sup>499</sup> "Elizabeth" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 152.

<sup>500</sup> Paul Stephenson quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 174.

<sup>501</sup> See Derek Foley, 'Pleas to Recruit More', *The Times Educational Supplement*, 14 May 1965.

<sup>502</sup> See Joe Aldred, *From Top Mountain: An Autobiography* (Hertford: Hansib, 2015), 36; "Beulah" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 209; Vince Reid quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 92; Valerie Amos quoted in Upshal, 'Intolerance'; "Eunice" quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 111.

<sup>503</sup> Ruth Glass reported that there was not 'the slightest uneasiness in relation to coloured children' on her research visits to several London primary schools. See Glass, *Newcomers*, 63.

<sup>504</sup> Newham Monitoring Project, *Newham*, 17.

<sup>505</sup> Dubs 52, *Black & Confused*, 34; "Olga" quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 16-7.

<sup>506</sup> DES (Department of Education and Science), *Swann Report*, 737.

favourite slurs in the schoolchild's repository was "wog", to be wheeled out at the earliest opportunity in response to imagined slights, or in the absence of a slight altogether.<sup>507</sup> 'Without any provocation', remembered Jamaican migrant Olga, 'we were verbally abused on a regular basis in the classroom, the cloakroom and on the playground. Common taunts such as "nigger, "golliwog" and "black bastard, go back to your jungle" were hurled at us'.<sup>508</sup> In Andrea Levy's novel *Fruit of the Lemon*, the protagonist – a Caribbean schoolgirl in Britain – comes in for contempt and ridicule from her fellow classmates who brand her a 'darkie' and scorn her 'banana boat' parents,<sup>509</sup> while Joan Riley's haunting story of Jamaican girlhood in a British school brims with racist invective.<sup>510</sup>

One of the most important things to note about the racist violence faced by Caribbean schoolchildren in Britain's schools is the way in which it reflected the broader social currents present in Britain. This, of course, draws into it important questions of cultural and emotional transmission. Notions, concepts, slurs, and practices seen or overheard within the home or within wider society percolated down into the playground, such that these institutions acted as the key vehicle of transmission for racist expression. Political discourse and practice in the forms of Powellism and Oswald Moseley's neo-fascism were enacted, in microcosm, in the playground, where 'Enoch Powell was trumpeted as a hero by white kids; making all sorts of jokes about coons, niggers, and wogs',<sup>511</sup> and 'the white guys above were NF [National Front]'.<sup>512</sup> Moreover, the racism of white parents translated easily over to children within the family, or at the very least fractured interracial friendships when they were formed. Diane Abbott was left wondering for years why she was the only girl not invited to her white friend's birthday party,<sup>513</sup> while another child remembers asking their white friend why they were no longer invited for dinner in the family home: "'because my dad says you are black'".<sup>514</sup> It

<sup>507</sup> See the experiences of "Johnnie" quoted in Hinds, 'Two-Way Dream'; Sandra Knight quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 30.

<sup>508</sup> "Olga" quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 16.

<sup>509</sup> Andrea Levy, *Fruit of the Lemon* (London: Hachette, 2011), 16.

<sup>510</sup> Joan Riley, *The Unbelonging* (London: The Women's Press, 1985), 20, 16, 68, 83.

<sup>511</sup> Lee Jasper quoted in David Upshal, 'Intolerance', *Windrush* (BBC Two, 6 June 1998).

<sup>512</sup> "David" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 194.

<sup>513</sup> Diane Abbott quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 212.

<sup>514</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 51.

was within the situated contexts of the family and society that white children learnt the racist expressions and practices appropriate to the emotional regime within which they were situated, and in this regard the schoolground acted as a scaled-down model of contemporary British currents.

The emotional experiences of Caribbean children which flowed from these environments represented a mixture of fear, anger, apprehension, and frustration. Lee Jasper described the school playground as a 'climate of fear',<sup>515</sup> a place within which these children felt the constant, oppressive threat of 'latent violence'.<sup>516</sup> Fear was Hyacinth's 'constant companion' in Joan Riley's novel *The Unbelonging*; breaks were 'to be approached with apprehension, and then endured when they finally arrived', Hyacinth always manoeuvring her back to the wall in fear of ambush.<sup>517</sup> Olga reminds us that 'it was not normal to live under such continuous stress', and as a result some Caribbean children began to resist the emotional pressure they were forced to live under. This point is crucial, for it reveals the linkages and negative feedback loop between intra-student and institutional forms of racism, the way it produced a disproportionate Caribbean representation in ESN schools, and how processes of emotional experience and emotional stereotyping are at the very core of these interactions. It was children's 'frustration' with the racist emotional expressions and practices of their white peers, with the emotional climate of the schoolground, that 'led us inevitably to display hostile behaviour'.<sup>518</sup> Sandra Knight, for instance, remembers chasing a girl who had racially abused her into the foyer of the school where a board meeting was taking place, where she 'laid into her'.<sup>519</sup> Another child remembers attacking a gang of white children who had spat at him, one of 'a number of conflicts' which led to him coming 'exceedingly close' to being permanently excluded.<sup>520</sup> It was in the schoolground that we can locate the roots of children's resistance to racism, guided as it was by the negative emotional experiences they felt from interaction with their prevailing context.

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<sup>515</sup> Lee Jasper quoted in Upshal, 'Intolerance'.

<sup>516</sup> Vince Reid quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 92.

<sup>517</sup> Riley, *Unbelonging*, 12.

<sup>518</sup> "Olga" quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 18.

<sup>519</sup> Sandra Knight quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 30.

<sup>520</sup> Dubs 52, *Black & Confused*, 34.

As intimated above, the interaction between these events and the institutionally racist backdrop within which they took place is critical. Caribbean schoolchildren felt that teachers brought to bear their own racism on proceedings, albeit through different means. Their acts of aggressive retaliation to their peers were predicated on the knowledge that they would find little recourse or justice if they were to register their discontent through more conventional means,<sup>521</sup> or else encounter mere lip service when teachers did rebuke the racist practices of white children.<sup>522</sup> Moreover, they quickly found that they were asymmetrically punished for violent infractions with little heed paid to the extenuating circumstances.<sup>523</sup> In these ways it is possible to identify a pattern of white provocation leading to negative Caribbean emotional experiences and practices of resistance, followed by an emotional stereotyping of Caribbean children as aggressive and unruly. Such stigmatisation 'contributed to the stereotype of them as having behavioural problems and only being fit for ESN schools'.<sup>524</sup> It is with an historical approach which remains sensitive to emotional experience that one can more fully grasp the interlocking elements of this context which produced the 1970s designation of Caribbean children as "educationally sub-normal".

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<sup>521</sup> "David" quoted in Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile*, 195; unnamed migrant quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 51.

<sup>522</sup> "Sam" quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, xxi.

<sup>523</sup> "Olga" quoted in Arbouin, *Nottingham Connection*, 16.

<sup>524</sup> Newham Monitoring Project, *Newham*, 125.

## 4: Violence, fear, hate

The following chapter, loosely mobilised around the concept of violence, explores the emotional experiences of Caribbean migrants as they were confronted with racist attacks in postwar Britain. By utilising this conceptual frame, we are able to provide a structuring device and stable referent upon which to build an historical analysis of the extraordinarily complex and convoluted emotional landscape which swirls around such anti-black practices. In doing so, it pays particular attention to three critical events, examining the emotional dynamics at play in each and approaching and historicising them from a position which privileges the experiences of Caribbean migrants: the racist attacks in government-run hostels in the late 1940s; the so-called “race riots” of 1958 in Nottingham and London; and the murder and funeral of Kelso Cochrane in 1959.<sup>525</sup> We must, however, stay aware of the tendency in historiographical interpretation to marshal analysis around seemingly momentous events or critical dates: this represents an often inadequate approach for historians of emotion, failing as it does to reliably mirror historically situated experiences. And so whilst the structure of this chapter leaves itself open to the criticism that it is simply reproducing this emphatic bias – if only because of the disproportionate representations of these events within the source material – it also seeks to ask and answer crucial questions about how violence was experienced in a more diachronic way, paying attention to emotional experience outside the remit of these isolated events. The fundamental premise upon which this chapter rests is a forceful call to view violence as an emotional expression and practice, which in turn entails a need to historicise and “emotionalise” the concept of xenophobia, often construed as possessing neither emotional content nor a distinct history. This in itself entails elucidating the political, cultural, and socio-economic contexts within which these white Britons were emoting. Not only does historicising xenophobia have profound consequences for the study of racism and identity more generally, but it serves an important function within this research by helping to situate the wider emotional contexts which Caribbean migrants were interacting with.

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<sup>525</sup> I prefer employing the term “attacks” in this chapter, rather than the traditionally-used descriptor “riots”, to better indicate the linearity of instigation by white Britons, but which also stays sensitive to violence practised by Caribbean migrants, whether in self-defence or motivated by revenge. When I do deploy the term “race riots”, I do so using double inverted commas to point to its problematic connotations.

## 4.1: Hostel violence, 1946-1949

Historical narratives of race relations in postwar Britain often take as their point of departure the so-called “race riots” during the later summer of 1958, centred upon the locales of Notting Hill in London and the district of St Ann’s in Nottingham.<sup>526</sup> These instances of anti-black violence and black resistance have become the archetypal portal through which to begin any discussion of the postwar black presence in Britain and white metropolitan attitudes toward it; within popular memory, it misses out on being labelled *the* defining event of postwar black British history only to the top-seeded docking of the HMS *Empire Windrush*. More so than any others, these events work in conjunction to produce a fitful and pitted history, blind to both the postwar, pre-Windrush years and the intervening decade between these two canonical events. The centrality accorded to the “riots” of 1958 also operates separately to obscure preceding instances of anti-black violence, both in the first half of the twentieth century and in the thirteen preceding years of the postwar period – in particular, racist attacks within government-run hostels in the late 1940s.<sup>527</sup> Whilst they may separately stand as discrete – if disjointed – events and thus function as focused sites of inquiry into the black experience in Britain in particular moments, what is lost with such an analytical frame of reference is both the historical context of preceding instances of violence, and a relational approach which tracks the historical genealogies of anti-black violence Britain and black emotional experiences hitched to them. Any approach circumventing such issues necessarily sacrifices answers about how these evolved or differed, context-to-context. We will first turn, therefore, to the oft-neglected racial violence in labour hostels in the late 1940s.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>526</sup> See, for example, Tessa Blackstone, Bhikhu Parekh, and Peter Sanders, eds., *Race Relations in Britain: A Developing Agenda* (London: Routledge, 2005); Harry Goulbourne, *Race Relations in Britain Since 1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British: A History of Race Relations in Britain* (London: Grafton Books, 1991).

<sup>527</sup> Between January and August 1919, intermittent “race riots” broke out in a number of Britain’s port cities, with white Britons attacking black workers and families and vandalising their homes and businesses. The seaport cities of Liverpool and Cardiff saw the worst violence, but other urban centres such as Newport, Barry, Glasgow, and London also witnessed attacks. There were five fatalities, and at least 250 arrested – the majority of those arrested being black. See Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009). There is also an important transnational context to consider when discussing these attacks, with contemporaneous attacks in East St. Louis, US, which left a minimum of 48 dead. See Charles L. Lumpkins, *American Pogrom: The East St. Louis Race Riot and Black Politics* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008).

<sup>528</sup> These events are neglected in otherwise important historical works such as Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips’ *Windrush*, Peter Fryer’s *Staying Power*, Dilip Hiro’s *Black British, White British*, and John Solomos’ *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain*. See Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*; Peter Fryer, *Staying Power*:

In the late 1940s the Ministry of Labour was, like many government departments, still enjoying a wartime hangover of extensive interventionist powers and prerogatives. For the department, the most pressing item on the docket was narrowing the yawning void between Britain's labour demands and its current available pool, the shortage estimated at some 1.3 million persons at the close of 1946.<sup>529</sup> To this end, the Ministry operated a number of migrant labour schemes between 1946 and 1951, importing workers from refugee and prisoner of war camps on the continent. These migrants – initially known as “displaced persons” and later as “European Voluntary Workers” (EVWs) – hailed primarily from Eastern Europe and came to Britain under the sponsorship of a variety of official initiatives, the three largest being the demobilisation and resettlement organisation “Polish Resettlement Corps” along with the “Balt Cygnet” and “Westward Ho!” labour schemes.<sup>530</sup> These were highly regulated, centralised affairs: the Ministry interviewed, selected, and medically examined applicants within camps and typically pre-assigned them roles in critically understaffed sectors of the economy. Overseeing the administration of the hostels in which EVWs would be accommodated was the National Service Hostels Corporation (NSHC), a company established in 1941 by the Ministry to organise the housing of munitions workers close to their factories, and whose organisation and hostels were now repurposed.

Eastern Europeans were not, of course, the only ethnic group in NSHC hostels. People from across the British Caribbean, mostly men, had either elected to remain in Britain after their demobilisation or begun to trickle across the Atlantic in ocean liners, either as

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*The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984); Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British: A History of Race Relations in Britain* (London: Grafton Books, 1991); and John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

<sup>529</sup> ‘Cabinet Man-Power Working Party Memo’, 30 November 1945, CAB 134/510, The National Archives. See also Shirley Joshi and Bob Carter, ‘The Role of Labour in the Creation of a Racist Britain’, *Race & Class* 25, no. 3 (1984): 60.

<sup>530</sup> The Balt Cygnet scheme ran from 1946 to 1947 and recruited 2600 Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian women refugees from European Displaced Persons camps to work in British textile mills and tuberculosis hospitals. After Balt Cygnet's initial success, a far larger initiative, Westward Ho!, brought to Britain roughly 74,510 displaced persons of varying east European nationalities and genders. For figures, see Ministry of Labour and National Service, *Report for the Year 1950*, 1951, Cmd. 8338, London: HMSO, 21. For historiographical treatment, see Elizabeth Stadulis, ‘The Resettlement of Displaced Persons in the United Kingdom’, *Population Studies* 5, no. 3 (1952): 207–37; Diana Kay, ‘Westward Ho! The Recruitment of Displaced Persons for British Industry’, in *European Immigrants in Britain 1933–1950*, ed. Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2003), 151–70; and especially Diana Kay and Robert Miles, *Refugees Or Migrant Workers?: European Volunteer Workers in Britain, 1946–1951* (London: Routledge, 1992).

returning veterans disillusioned with job prospects at home – emotivations directly correlated with the colonial underdevelopment of the region – or otherwise as complete newcomers to Britain. Being British citizens with unrestricted right of entry, residence, and work, these transatlantic migrations were less regulated (and less desired), however this early phase of the migration is still characterised by a relatively high level of control and direction by the Ministry once they arrived on British soil. Arriving with little cash and no support network, most migrants were content with taking advantage of the optional offer by Ministry officials for initial shelter and recruitment, who inserted them into the department's vast bureaucratic machinery through interviews, skill categorisations, and connecting them to desperate employers.

Thus, as the postwar migration corridor from the Caribbean began to form, young Caribbean men, many veterans of the British armed forces, found accommodation in NSHC hostels alongside Polish, Ukrainian, and Irish workers. And from 1946, multiple incidents of racially-motivated violence of varying scale and severity began to surface.<sup>531</sup> In December 1946, West Bromwich Hostel witnessed a series of brawls between Caribbean and Irish residents, police being summoned by management multiple times.<sup>532</sup> In February 1947, Hertfordshire's Letchworth Hostel was the site of 'trouble ... between black and white in the Canteen ... followed by a "round-robin" signed by 350 white trainees demanding the instant removal of all black personnel from the Centre'.<sup>533</sup> That year saw similar disturbances at Greenbanks Hostel in Leeds (September and December), and Sherburn-in-Elmet Hostel in Yorkshire (November).<sup>534</sup> The following year, 1948, continued in this vein, with incidents at Pontefract Hostel in Yorkshire, Weston-on-Trent Hostel in Derbyshire, and Castle Donnington Hostel in Nottingham.<sup>535</sup> The worst incident, however, occurred on 8 August 1949 at Causeway Green Hostel following several days of smaller-scale interracial violence between Polish and Jamaican workers.<sup>536</sup> That evening,

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<sup>531</sup> For an extensive overview of these disturbances, see Kevin Searle, "'Mixing of the Unmixables": The 1949 Causeway Green "Riots" in Birmingham', *Race & Class* 54, no. 3 (2013): 44–64.

<sup>532</sup> NSHC correspondence, 31 December 1946, LAB 26/198, The National Archives.

<sup>533</sup> NSHC correspondence, 26 February 1947, LAB 26/198, The National Archives.

<sup>534</sup> NSHC correspondence, 26 January 1948, LAB 26/198, The National Archives; NSHC correspondence, 9 December 1947, LAB 26/198, The National Archives.

<sup>535</sup> NSHC correspondence, 9 August 1948, LAB 26/198, The National Archives.

<sup>536</sup> Many white Britons in the postwar period conflated Jamaica for the entire British Caribbean, calling all Caribbean residents in Britain "Jamaican" – much to the chagrin of those from other islands. Here, though,



a group of Poles ‘armed with sticks, stones, razors and chairs’ assaulted the Jamaican sleeping quarters – segregated from white workers’ accommodation since the beginning of the year.<sup>537</sup> When Jamaicans began arming and defending themselves, a mass brawl erupted which caused significant damage to hostel property and spilled out into the road. Some Jamaicans took shelter in private houses. The fighting required fifty police officers to restore order, and left two Jamaicans and two Poles hospitalised.<sup>538</sup>

Present in the primary source material of these attacks are two common themes. First, there is a broad unity of opinion that the Caribbean contingent in each hostel did not act as the aggressor, although they armed and defended themselves and, on occasion, instigated retaliatory acts of violence.<sup>539</sup> The second is an attribution of this white violence as stemming from an intense ‘resent[ment]’<sup>540</sup> of ‘black men associating with white women’.<sup>541</sup> This resentment or ‘jealousy’, historical iterations of emotion concepts worthy in themselves of analysis, simultaneously affirms how emoting lies at the very core of racial violence, and circles back to a crucial theme touched on in the previous chapter: the sexual politics of race, and its underemphasised emotional properties. The trope of the hypersexualised black male dovetails with white “resentment” or “jealousy” over competing with black men for sexual partners in a way where these white emotions become inseparable from the practices of violence and exclusion which they are expressed through and within.<sup>542</sup> And for all the hot air blown by some white Britons over “taking *our* women” which grows in vigour through the 1950s, this historically-specific, emotionally-laden sexual politics of race was not firmly bolted to ideas of community and nation. The hostel attacks of the 1940s were initiated

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records indicate that all Caribbean residents at the Causeway Green Hostel were in fact Jamaican; 65 are listed in all. See Searle, “‘Mixing of the Unmixables’”, 48.

<sup>537</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 9 August 1949.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>539</sup> See ‘NSHC correspondence’, 26 February 1947; Searle, “‘Mixing of the Unmixables’”. Cf. W. H. Hardman, Ministry of Labour internal memorandum, 7 August 1949, LAB 26/198, The National Archives: ‘we must be realistic and face the fact that however charming they may be individually, these West Indians do tend to get cross, and then to start fighting with other residents, in particular the Irish and the Poles’.

<sup>540</sup> Hardman, ‘Ministry of Labour internal memorandum’, 7 August 1949. See also Richard Strauss’ assertion that Polish residents were ‘insanely jealous of the Jamaicans’ in *Birmingham Gazette*, 10 August 1949.

<sup>541</sup> ‘NSHC correspondence’, 26 January 1948.

<sup>542</sup> Fanon argued that the black man is simultaneously viewed through the paradoxical lenses of the childlike “negroe” and the hyper-masculinised, hyper-sexualised threat to white virginity. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1952), 16, 19, 121-32, 136-7.

by fellow migrants – usually Irish and Polish – with shared experiences of class and the migrant condition not able to temper the more primaevial rationales behind sexualised racial thinking and feeling. However, they remain crucial bellwethers for understanding the later violence inflicted on black communities by the host society, and the emotional experiences of Caribbean migrants as they were confronted with this violence, driven as it was by similar affective motives.

Although sources from white perspectives, either officialdom or hostel residents, are predictably more prevalent, some allow us to reconstruct the experiential details of Caribbean migrants' circumstances. Richard Strauss, resident at the Causeway Green hostel, declared that 'the Poles won't leave them alone. Apart from calling them names and openly insulting them in the camp, they take offence when local girls dance with Jamaicans'.<sup>543</sup> Archival evidence of official correspondence reproduces a similar narrative: 'as soon as a coloured man was seen in company with a white woman much resentment was in evidence and insults relating to their colour and parentage were shouted around'.<sup>544</sup> Emotions feed into and come to constitute situated behaviour, and thus history.

These statements are both consonant and conflicting with one of the few Caribbean voices surviving in the historical record regarding these incidents. Writing in the *Birmingham Gazette*, Jamaican and Causeway Green resident Horace Halliburton stated that 'what really annoys my countrymen is the constant baiting and jeering which is directed at the coloured man', indicating both the veracity of the reports of verbal abuse and also their efficacy in producing negative affective processes.<sup>545</sup> However, Halliburton's article departs from other sources in important ways. The most striking of these is the manner in which it jettisons white narratives which attributed these attacks to the sexual politics of race and its emotional foundation, focusing instead on the 'considerable resentment' generated *amongst Caribbeans* by a wholly different practice: the racial segregation implemented at Causeway Green since early 1949.<sup>546</sup> For Halliburton, this resentment led each group to 'shun' the other, with tensions fomenting

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<sup>543</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 10 August 1949.

<sup>544</sup> W. L. Swan, 'Racial disturbances at Causeway Green hostel: Jamaicans and Poles', n.d., LAB 26/198, The National Archives.

<sup>545</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 11 August 1949.

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*

throughout the year; ‘splitting the races’, he believes, ‘leads to suspicion and estrangement’, a powerful statement on how emotions operate within history which will resonate with emotional historians of apartheid South Africa or Jim Crow United States.<sup>547</sup> Jealousies over women were, meanwhile, ‘only a very minor cause of dissension’.<sup>548</sup> Both parties in these attacks offer different interpretations over their causes, each of which is structured around a perception of their group’s collective emotional process of “resentment”. This highlights the limits of emotional interpretation *between* in-groups and across a constructed racial divide, reinforces the privileging of the subject position, and offers a relativist historical interpretation of emotional dynamics where cultural contacts and encounters contain a multitude of affective meanings even within a singular event and singular emotional concepts.

The subtext of Halliburton’s piece reveals another layer to these emotional encounters which, as we have seen, emerges as a critical theme shot through the postwar emotional landscape of Caribbeans in Britain: the capacity for Caribbeans’ feelings of Britishness and imperial belonging to enter into, magnify, or otherwise modulate emotive processes. Although trafficking in the familiar “childlike” racialised trope, a Ministry of Labour memorandum states that Caribbeans at the Castle Donnington hostel ‘showed a childish pride in their British citizenship and arrogantly claimed all sorts of privileges on the strength of it’.<sup>549</sup> Stripping the statement of its trite racial overtones and reading it against Horace Halliburton’s following claim, though, affirms both the importance of this citizenship and belonging to Caribbean migrants, and the affective weight it holds: ‘although [the Caribbean is] a British subject, he is made to feel an interloper in English life, in this case by non-British subjects’.<sup>550</sup> In this way, the resentment generated by practices of harassment, segregation, verbal abuse, and violence come to possess a direct bearing on feelings of belonging (“made to feel an interloper”), amplified by the aggressors’ perceived status outside the boundaries of such belonging. To be abused or attacked (and thus made to feel excluded) by native Britons would, for these early migrants, undoubtedly be reprehensible. But to feel the

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<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> S. D. Morton, Ministry of Labour internal memorandum, 9 August 1948, LAB 26/198, The National Archives.

<sup>550</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 11 August 1949.

sting of exclusion and non-belonging in *your* empire's metropole, and by those outside the imperial "family"? This rankled deeper still. Aside from their status as British citizens, other historical and cultural contexts further condition emotional processes: the wartime service of many of the Caribbean hostel residents, along with their cultural consonance with the cultural value system of respectability. In his piece, Halliburton consistently invokes his compatriots' wartime service and his own educational credentials in order to protest against hostel segregation and discrimination, and it is possible to read such expressions of military service and cultural congruity as exacerbating the resentment of Caribbean migrants when segregated, harassed, and attacked by those without these shared experiences. Thus, whilst it is predictable that feelings of resentment are generated where racialised exclusionary practices are enacted, the specific cultural and historical contexts condition the scale and qualitative nature of such resentment, along with furnishing multiple readings of these emotional processes' conditions of production.

Metropolitan society does not escape unscathed from the indignation of these Caribbean voices, however. One striking aspect of Halliburton's article – and two other *Birmingham Gazette* articles by Caribbean authors – are the extent to which they are used as springboards to express dissatisfaction and indignation with the racism and discrimination practiced by wider British society.<sup>551</sup> The fact that these three articles – written in the wake of racial violence practised on their companions by other migrant groups, undoubtedly still fresh in their memory – all individually recourse to issues located within the host society indicates they possessed a certain primacy in Caribbean migrants' grievances and emotional experiences, and carried particular affective weight. It is important to be aware of the existence of these key themes of native discrimination, abuse, and ostracisation even in the formative years of this migration corridor, and signals the inseparability of racist violence from other exclusionary practices.

What emerges here is an early postwar historical landscape laden with emotional richness and complexity on both sides of a constructed racial divide. From a Caribbean perspective, no accounts of a culturally- and contextually-situated concept of "fear" is present – a theme which emerges with vigour when these migrants are confronted with

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<sup>551</sup> Both further articles appeared in *Birmingham Gazette*, 17 August 1949.

racist violence a decade later. Instead, we have accounts of “resentment” and “annoyance” – which, to be decoded properly, need to be inserted into their applicable context. To experience the humiliation of segregation, or the barbs or racially-motivated harassment, verbal abuse, and violence, must be placed within the spatial bounds of what they perceived as their *own* empire, a place where their colonial environments asserted that they knew and belonged, with their wartime service barely in the rear-view mirror, and under an invitation to come and “rebuild Britain”. To them, it was ‘unfair’ – and thus contrary to received wisdom about British justice and “fair play” – that ‘though we are British, we are the people to suffer’.<sup>552</sup>

#### 4.2: Attacks and affect in 1958

We now make a chronological leap of nine years, when anti-black racist violence again resurfaces as a salient issue in political discourse and the public imagination. Although it is important to appreciate that for Caribbean migrants, there is no experiential gap which mirrors that of historiography, the racist violence encountered by Caribbeans in hostels in the late 1940s does thematically presage the “race riots” of 1958, when attacks on Caribbeans in the streets of West London and Nottingham catapulted the issue of racism and race relations into public consciousness. “Race relations”, of course, had not yet entered the lexicons of officialdom and the commentariat, who instead decried Britain’s “colour problem” – a term which accurately encapsulates the ways in which black bodies were problematised in postwar Britain. These attacks ignited a discursive firestorm whose fallout was felt not only nationally, but internationally and *transnationally* – Britain and the world debating the attacks’ implications for the nation’s dominant identity-narrative of tolerance, liberalism, and urbanity.<sup>553</sup> Contemporary commentators scrambled to parse the event through a very specific reading which explained away the violence as isolated incidents of white working-class violence; a lawless fringe bound to the imagery of youthful “Teddy boys” – a subcultural current to which we shall return. In doing so, these narratives relegated the aggressors to an anomalous and wholly

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<sup>552</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 10 August 1949.

<sup>553</sup> Kennetta Perry has done important work parsing the narratives which swirled around this event, arguing that they buttressed what she calls “the mystique of British anti-racism”. See Perry, *London*, 87-115.

unrepresentative fringe of Britain's decent, decorous society, and thus contained a disavowal and repudiation of the nation's "race problem".<sup>554</sup> And despite their predominance in contemporary historiographical accounts, the attacks of 1958 remain important sites of inquiry into how contending with racist violence and the culturally-situated emotion concepts and practices fused to it – xenophobia, hatred, fear, resentment, jealousy – are a significant part of the postwar Caribbean experience. However, little work has been done on the emotional experiences *of Caribbeans* surrounding the attacks of 1958.

#### 4.2.1: Nottingham

On the evening of 23 August 1958, the St Ann's Well Inn public house and its environs witnessed scenes of mass interracial violence.<sup>555</sup> St Ann's, a working-class district of Nottingham, was known as a "tough" area with poor living conditions and a high crime rate; violence – racially motivated or otherwise – was relatively common. It was, however, the scale and severity of the attacks in August 1958 which made them exceptional. There are differing accounts about the incident which provoked a Caribbean response. Eric Irons, a black Caribbean man living in Nottingham at the time, says two competing accounts circulated at the time: 'One was that a West Indian was in the pub chatting up a white young lady and when he left the premises, he was assaulted. The other was that someone insulted a West Indian man out with his white girlfriend'.<sup>556</sup> Another story told of a Caribbean man being attacked whilst fetching medicine for his pregnant wife. Whether these stories are apocryphal matters little; what matters is that they held purchase and resonated with the experiences of some Caribbean men in Nottingham who, to put it bluntly, had had enough. The first phase of the incident, occurring roughly between 10:00 p.m. and 10:20 p.m., was marked by Caribbean men attacking white Britons.<sup>557</sup> Weapons such as bottles, knives and razors were employed in

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<sup>554</sup> Reflected by the sentences passed on the white instigators, widely viewed as an example of "exemplary sentencing". See Andrew Ashworth, *Sentencing and Criminal Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81.

<sup>555</sup> Cf. Roy Ramdin, who gives the name of the public house as The Chase. See Ron Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain* (London: Verso, 2017), 187.

<sup>556</sup> Eric Irons quoted in 'The "Forgotten" Race Riot', *BBC News*, 21 May 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6675793.stm>.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

the attacks, which ultimately left eight whites hospitalised and one requiring 37 stitches to a throat wound.<sup>558</sup> One migrant drove his car into a white crowd. This all happened in a matter of seconds, before the Caribbean men ‘immediately absconded up many dark alleyways’.<sup>559</sup> Knowledge of the attacks circulated quickly around St Ann’s, and later that night a crowd of some 1,500 white residents had gathered, attacking black people on sight in arbitrary reprisals. Police escorted several black men ‘with cuts and bruises’ to safety.<sup>560</sup> Two white men were later charged with robbery with violence against a black man.<sup>561</sup> The *Nottingham Evening Post* described the scene as a ‘slaughterhouse’.<sup>562</sup> Anticipating further violence, a larger white crowd of around 4,000 congregated the following Saturday, but St Ann’s black community elected to remain indoors.<sup>563</sup> In the absence of a black presence upon which to fixate their rage, the crowd began to fight amongst themselves.<sup>564</sup> Two weeks later, bus companies were offering trips to ‘the terror spots of Nottingham’, highlighting the commodification and submerged political economies behind emotional experience.<sup>565</sup>

#### 4.2.2: Notting Hill

News of the violence in Nottingham quickly filtered down to London. The very next morning, Sunday 24 August, cars of white youths prowled west London streets armed with iron bars, knives, and table legs searching for black people to attack. Police arrested a gang of white Britons after they had attacked black men in at least four separate incidents, stabbing one man in the chest.<sup>566</sup> The following week, on Saturday 30 August,

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<sup>558</sup> *Times*, 25 August 1958.

<sup>559</sup> Chief Constable A. Popkess quoted in *Ibid*.

<sup>560</sup> Ramdin, *Making*, 187.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>562</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 17 August 1958.

<sup>563</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 169; ‘The “Forgotten” Race Riot’, *BBC News*.

<sup>564</sup> Mike and Trevor Phillips have argued that this indicates the Nottingham riots ‘were as much about feelings of exclusion and deprivation ... as they were about the presence of black migrants’. Emotions make history for good or ill, and no racial group possesses a monopoly on this dynamic. See Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 169-70.

<sup>565</sup> *Times*, 15 September 1958.

<sup>566</sup> There are conflicting accounts about the number of assaults. The *Official Encyclopaedia of Scotland Yard* states that ten youths were arrested in four separate incidents. *Windrush* states that nine youths were arrested for ‘several’ incidents. Ed Pilkington, author of the only monograph on the Notting Hill “race riots”, says there were five separate incidents. See Martin Fido and Keith Skinner, *The Official Encyclopaedia of Scotland Yard* (London: Virgin, 1999), 142; Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 171; Ed

white Swedish woman Majbritt Morrison was assaulted by a gang of white youths who recognised her from the previous evening, when she had stood arguing with her Jamaican husband in Latimer Road Underground station.<sup>567</sup> She was chased to her home under a hail of milk bottles and chants of “black man’s trollop”, and “nigger lover! Kill her”.<sup>568</sup> At her doorstep, she stood defiantly and confronted the mob, but she – rather than the youths – was arrested by arriving police officers for refusing to go inside. Denied their victim, the mob departed – smashing windows en route to attack a house party organised by Wilbert Augustus Campbell, better known as Count Suckle, a Jamaican DJ who was instrumental in bringing sound system culture to Britain and popularising genres like ska and reggae in the country. To the tune of self-encouraging cries such as “burn the niggers, kill the niggers! Send them back to their own country”, the crowd began firebombing the party, setting the property alight. With a murderous mob outside and the property ablaze, partygoers were forced to seek refuge on the roof until the police arrived.<sup>569</sup> However, in what was by now becoming an established pattern, the police escorted the partygoers from the area rather than arresting or dispersing the mob – entrenching the attackers’ beliefs that they were performing a net social good and that their pursuits would remain unimpeded.

These incidents proved to be the opening salvos of five consecutive nights of mass racial violence in west London, as multiple white mobs numbering in the hundreds roamed Notting Hill, and its inner enclave Notting Dale, attacking black people on sight. As knowledge of each previous night’s attacks circulated around London – through television and radio reports, the next morning’s front pages, and social networks – carloads of white youths poured into the area from around the city, swelling each mob’s

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Pilkinson quoted in Amanda Reilly, ‘Time Shift: Notting Hill ‘58’ (BBC Four, 1 July 2003). See also *Kensington News and West London Times* 29 August 1958.

<sup>567</sup> Ashley Dawson, *Mongrel Nation: Diasporic Culture and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Detroit: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 27-9; Majbritt Morrison, *Jungle West 11* (London: Tandem Books, 1964), 34; Edward Pilkington, *Beyond the Mother Country: West Indians and the Notting Hill White Riots* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988), 57-8.

<sup>568</sup> Dawson, *Mongrel Nation*, 27; Pilkington, *Mother Country*, 41; Gary Younge, ‘The Politics of Partying’, *Guardian*, 17 August 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/aug/17/nottinghillcarnival2002.nottinghillcarnival>.

<sup>569</sup> Again, there are conflicting accounts regarding this incident. Dawson’s *Mongrel Nation* maintains that the police arrived in time to prevent the attack, and escorted Campbell and his companions out of the area. A direct interview with Campbell maintains the house was firebombed and they took shelter on the roof. See Dawson, *Mongrel Nation*, 29; Wilbert Augustus Campbell quoted in Reilly, ‘Time Shift’.



numbers and building a critical mass. Residents, including women and children, poured down from their multi-occupancy buildings and either joined the crowds or else crammed in doorways, variously inciting the mobs, identifying black homes and social spaces for attack, or else just to complicitly watch the spectacle unfold. Street-corner politicians and orators, such as those from Oswald Mosley's neo-fascist Union Movement, incited the crowd further, delivering incendiary street-side speeches exhorting the mob to "get rid of them"<sup>570</sup> and circulating leaflets containing injunctions like 'Protect your jobs—stop coloured invasion'.<sup>571</sup> Groups of men in public houses sung "Bye Bye Blackbird", peppering the song with racist slurs and the chant of "Keep Britain White", the de facto slogan of the crowds and a favourite recourse for graffiti.<sup>572</sup> Women leaned out from windows, laughing and shouting "go on boys, get yourself some blacks".<sup>573</sup> Black places and spaces were targeted with bricks and makeshift firebombs. Ivan Weekes poignantly describes the emotional atmosphere: 'each morning [after the attacks] you could cut the air with a knife – the air of prejudice, the air of hostility, the air almost of hate'.<sup>574</sup> During daylight hours on 1 September, three days into the "riots", Antiguan student Seymour Manning arrived at Latimer Road Underground station from Derby to visit a friend. Running into a crowd of white youths, Manning was kicked to the ground before managing to scramble to his feet and run. Pursued with cries of "lynch him", he eventually found refuge in a local greengrocer's shop.<sup>575</sup> Earlier that day, Jeffrey Hamm, secretary of the Union Movement, had addressed a crowd of 300 whites – including teenagers and children – outside the very same train station which Manning had alighted at, delivering an emotionally-charged racist and xenophobic speech and loudly pontificating that "'we are going to lay the blame for all this on the backs of those who deserve it'" and calling for all "coloured" criminals to be deported.<sup>576</sup> Tim O'Connor,

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<sup>570</sup> *Kensington News and West London Times*, 5 September 1958.

<sup>571</sup> *Observer*, 7 September 1958.

<sup>572</sup> *Times*, 2 September 1958.

<sup>573</sup> *Kensington News and West London Times*, 5 September 1958.

<sup>574</sup> Ivan Weekes quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'.

<sup>575</sup> "'Lynch Him!' Heard in London," *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 4 September 1958. See also Seymour Manning quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'; Perry, *London*, 87-9; Tom Vague, *Getting It Straight in Notting Hill Gate: A West London Psychogeography Report* (London: Bread and Circuses, 2012), 32.

<sup>576</sup> *Observer*, 7 September 1958. The *Daily Mail* reports this crowd as 2,000. See *Daily Mail*, 2 September 1958.

a white Notting Hill resident, watched a black woman being beaten by a crowd, subverting the largely mythological gendered ideals within British society of the inadmissability of violence against women.<sup>577</sup>

Later that evening, as dusk fell and the night's attacks began to ramp up, a mob numbering around 1,000 poured into Blenheim Crescent where Totobag's Café – a social hub for Caribbean migrants – was situated. Above the café, around 300 black men and women had mustered for a crisis meeting. During the day, they had purchased petrol and visited hardware shops to procure 'anything that could cut'.<sup>578</sup> According to one participant they also possessed guns and hand grenades.<sup>579</sup> There are conflicting accounts over how the "Battle of Blenheim Crescent" began.<sup>580</sup> Some reports suggest the black crowd loosed their missiles from their barricaded buildings once the crowd had entered the street, while Jamaican Hubert Baker maintains that they kept a low profile by remaining motionless in darkened rooms until overhearing "'let's burn the niggers! Let's lynch the niggers!'", which prompted a Caribbean response in the form of a hail of milk bottles and firebombs.<sup>581</sup> In practical terms the manner in which it began matters little. Instead, its (mostly *ex post facto*) significance resides in the symbolism inhered by being – on the third night of attacks – the first instance of collective organisation, defence, and retaliation by the black migrant community, who felt 'in for a penny, in for a pound. If they're going to kill us ... let's fight back'.<sup>582</sup> Thus, the "Battle of Blenheim Crescent" has not only come to be seen as the apogee of the week-long violence, but also lionised in some quarters as an exemplary account of black resistance and agency. Throughout the week, there were many other retaliatory attacks by young black men on their white counterparts. Tim O'Connor claims that during the "riots", black men would tour Notting Hill packed into vans seeking young men to attack in reprisals.<sup>583</sup> In one of the most shocking stories, journalist Colin Eales wrote that a white five-year-old child

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<sup>577</sup> Tim O'Connor quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'. Or, perhaps, that racialised frames cut across or nullify this apparent gendered barrier.

<sup>578</sup> Alfred Harvey quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 178.

<sup>579</sup> Hubert Baker quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 204.

<sup>580</sup> For the term "The Battle of Blenheim Crescent", see *Daily Mail*, 2 September 1958.

<sup>581</sup> Hubert Baker quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift: Notting Hill '58'. Baker repeats this account in Grant, *Homecoming*, 204-5. For other accounts, see *Kensington News and West London Times*, 5 September 1958.

<sup>582</sup> Ivan Weekes quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 26-7.

<sup>583</sup> Tim O'Connor quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'.

was dragged from his bicycle and beaten by black men.<sup>584</sup> We will return to the subject of black violence shortly.

Tuesday, 2 September saw further clashes, but these were of a more limited scale. White disinterest in racial attacks was growing in tandem with both black organisation and resistance and the police presence, whose reinforcements were by now swamping the area. By the next day, wholesale violence had ended. In total, police arrested over 140 people, charging 108. Of those charged, 72 were white.<sup>585</sup>

#### 4.2.3: Contexts of 1958

Such a dry, enumerative narrative might assist one in quickly coming to terms with the factual chronology of the events in west London and Nottingham, but it possesses several important complications. First, it strips the violence and vandalism from their contextual environment, ignoring the micro socio-economic conditions at the level of the community, and the wider, macro cultural configurations and political narratives at the level of society, which together furnish the conditions through which these events were both formed and enacted. Second, it proffers little in the way of black voices, and thus how these events were emotionally parsed and experienced. Third, it runs the serious risk of circumscribing racial violence within a strictly postwar historical narrative, transmuting instances of it into merely ephemeral and anomalous events; craggy islands jutting out of the tranquil sea of postwar British race relations. Historiographical writing reproduces this disassociation, which has long bestowed 1958's attacks with a primacy or singularity, no doubt because they represent the nadir of metropolitan racial hatred. The corollary to this is that, for historians of experience, it deforms our reading of the past by neglecting the full bandwidth of black peoples' experiences in this era. For although one may have lived through the attacks of Notting Hill as a black woman, the cluster of years which straddle 1958 are equally as significant in terms of the lived experience of blackness and the daily threat of racist violence and abuse. Regarding the attacks of 1958, the sources we have are unequivocal and univocal in their conveyance of a certain situatedness. For migrants recounting their experiences in 1958, there is frequent

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<sup>584</sup> *Kensington News and West London Times*, 5 September 1958.

<sup>585</sup> 'After 44 Years Secret Papers Reveal Truth about Five Nights of Violence in Notting Hill', *Guardian*, 24 August 2002.

recourse to “those times” – and it is these everyday realities of the period, collectively bundled together during the processes of experience-labelling and synaptic memory formation and retrieval, which weigh more heavily on their consciousness than those few days of amplified violence. Attending to these contextual elements makes for less sensationalist (and thus less attractive) material for headlines and histories, but more candid and true.

Thus, one cannot construct an accurate representation of 1958’s attacks by myopically examining them in isolation from their wider contextual positionings – and one critical positioning is the cultural superstructure. In the broader sweep of things, national attitudes toward the black presence in Britain had calcified by 1958; the relatively more congenial and grateful – or at the very least, reluctantly tolerant – emotional atmosphere of the Second World War had now dissolved in a wash of race-grounded xenophobia.<sup>586</sup> Bound up with Caribbeans’ contributions to Britain’s existential fight was a prescription of temporality to the black presence; a concrete timetable for their withdrawal.<sup>587</sup> As the 1950s progressed – and despite the exhortations to come and “rebuild Britain” by recruitment offices and travel agencies – in the eyes of native Britons there was no longer any service to render Britain and no convenient date whence they might return “home”. The introduction of National Assistance in 1948, a key plank in Labour’s postwar welfare state, inadvertently created the conditions for a key motif to emerge within British immigration debates, one which echoes down to the present day: the perception (and resentment) of migrants undeservingly appropriating the resources of the taxpayer-funded welfare safety net.<sup>588</sup> This was bundled with a gamut of other social issues – the dire state and availability of housing; and from 1970 onward, unemployment – which were rhetorically refashioned around the totem of migration. Reactionary politicians and populists across a spectrum of professionalism, from soapbox orators to Westminster denizens, both seized on and

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<sup>586</sup> E. Martin Noble’s memoir makes clear that, whilst wartime prejudice was not unknown, behaviour toward him was markedly more hostile following the war. See Noble, *Jamaica Airman*, 64-6. E. R. Braithwaite’s autobiographical novel *To Sir, With Love*, published in 1959, also contains this theme. See Braithwaite, *To Sir*, 37-8.

<sup>587</sup> Rudy Braithwaite remembers standing in a shop and hearing a woman say ‘these niggers are everywhere, everywhere. I mean you can’t get rid of them. Everywhere. We went through them with the war, and now we have them here, everywhere’. See Rudy Braithwaite quoted in Upshal, ‘Arrival’.

<sup>588</sup> The National Health Service was also established in 1948, but this did not emerge as a key site of resentment until far later on.

moulded this narrative. Oswald Mosley's neo-fascist Union Movement and Colin Jordan's White Defence League operated at the outer bounds of both the professional and political spectrums, using populist strategies to whip up fear and hatred, especially around racial miscegenation.<sup>589</sup> Politicians closer to the political establishment such as Sir Cyril Osbourne, a key precursor to Enoch Powell, also politicised and problematised immigration by raising the "issue" of "coloured" immigration – and what measures could be implemented to control it – repeatedly in Parliament.<sup>590</sup>

In addition, Britain was also contending with the rise of a subcultural trend in "Teddy Boys" – working-class young men marked out by their distinctive fashion choices (tight drain-pipe trousers were ubiquitous) and their rebellious, aggressive, and highly masculine conduct. "Teds" operated as gangs, controlling districts of London and fighting one another with knives and bicycle chains for credibility. Phillips and Phillips accurately capture the historically-specific emotional dynamics of this youth culture: 'the Teds belonged to a generation which ten years earlier would have been fully occupied trying to kill the enemy ... unlike their older brothers and their fathers, there was no institution within which they could test their courage and aggression'.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> Regarding membership of the Union Movement and the White Defence League: the Union Movement had a membership of around 1,500 and the 'inactive support' of around 15,000 in the early 1960s. Colin Jordan was notoriously tight-lipped on membership figures, but it would certainly have been below the figures for the Union Movement. For Union Movement figures, see Richard C. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts to the National Front* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998), 217-8. For White Defence League figures, see Paul Jackson, *Colin Jordan and Britain's Neo-Nazi Movement: Hitler's Echo* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 50.

<sup>590</sup> On at least two separate occasions in the months leading up to the mass attacks in 1958, Osbourne raised questions in Parliament which drew upon two of the key motifs of this historically-specific emotional process of xenophobia. On 17 April 1958 he drew attention to apparently high rates of "coloured" unemployment and usage of National Assistance in Yorkshire, yet paradoxically closed his Parliamentary contribution by calling for immigration controls to 'safeguard the jobs of workers already in this country'. See 587 Parl. Deb. H.C. (5th ser.) (1958) col. 419. On 15 May he asked if it was not 'urgent' that immigration controls should be implemented, raising the spectre of '3,000 of our best citizens [who] went to Australia' and bemoaning their replacement 'with Pakistanis who can live on our Public Assistance without working'. See 588 Parl. Deb. H.C. (5th ser.) (1958) col. 612. Between 1948 and 1970, UK unemployment hovered around record lows, never rising above 3 percent. See John Salt and Victoria Bauer, 'Managing Foreign Labour Immigration to the UK: Government Policy and Outcomes since 1945' (occasional paper, Migration Research Unit, University College London, London, n.d.), 14.

<sup>591</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 161.

### 4.3: Historicising and emotionalising xenophobia

What these contextual details amount to is a particular form of xenophobia, a form which needs to be extricated from ahistorical thinking and given its due significance as an emotional (and thus historical) process. Whilst much work has been done with other emotion concepts to deconstruct their timeless representations, xenophobia languishes far behind; it is still essentialised and portrayed as a static, atemporal, and pancultural phenomenon. Indeed, the semantics of the word has departed from its linguistic origins of *xeno* and *phobia* – fear of foreigners, or fear of the foreign – and has come to express something approaching an ideology or a mindset. We can begin “emotionalising” xenophobia by re-activating the etymological register of the suffix *-phobia* to demonstrate this a form of fear. And since fear is contextual, and thus historical, we can better understand that xenophobia exists in different permutations within changing historical contexts of migration and interaction with foreigners. It can also, depending on context, involve many other emotion concepts other than fear, such as anger or hatred, with xenophobia acting not so much as a composite of fear, anger, and hatred, but as a singular emotion and operating as a single entity.

What this means concretely is that xenophobia has changed and evolved in profound ways in throughout British history, and also within the twentieth century, becoming progressively hitched and detached to different concepts at different times: the political economics of the creation of the welfare state; its interaction with historical constructs of race; Euroscepticism; and Islamophobia. And the particular form of xenophobia in postwar Britain – bound to the welfare state, ideas of race, and sexual politics – form the emotional substrate through which racist violence against Caribbean migrants was practiced.

#### 4.3.1: Nottingham and Notting Hill: Localised atmospheres

The fact that Notting Hill was a regular stomping ground for Teds leads us into a discussion of how these political and cultural currents operated in profound ways within the localised spaces of St Ann’s and Notting Hill; on the level of encounter, interaction, and navigation. Just over one week before the Notting Hill attacks, a ‘pitched battle’ between rival Ted gangs was fought not 500 metres from Blenheim Crescent, and these

were a regular occurrence.<sup>592</sup> Moreover, Teddy Boys were not content to simply fight amongst themselves, but instead constituted the main driving force behind the events in London in August and September 1958 and the racist attacks which plagued Britain more generally in the postwar period. One Ted, appearing on BBC news in the aftermath of the attacks, accurately captured the flavour of the subculture's attitudes toward race and migration – and the broader particularities of this period's race-grounded xenophobia – by directly linking xenophobia to skin colour, underscoring the sexual politics of race contained therein, and trafficking in the familiar racist tropes of dirt and filth:

They shouldn't be allowed in. They should be kept out. They shouldn't be let in in the first place. I don't like them with white girls. I don't like them at all; they're too filthy. I don't mind Irish, Scotch, they all belong to the same country, don't they? We don't need a load of foreigners in here, especially black anyway. I think they ought to be shot; the whole lot of them.<sup>593</sup>

The socio-economic conditions of these spaces were also important factors in creating these localised atmospheres build from a specific historical permutation of xenophobia. Both St Ann's and Notting Hill were notorious for their hard living conditions and a disproportionate number of residents living below the poverty line. Native Britons, who had not the resources to join the rush to the suburbs, lived cheek-by-jowl, crammed into decaying multi-occupancy tenements with shared kitchens and no bathrooms. Tough working-class public houses overlooked rubble and debris-strewn streets inadequately lit by failing street lamps. Crime rates were high, and illegal gambling dens and prostitution were relatively common.<sup>594</sup> And as the Caribbean migrant population grew between 1945 and 1958, they clustered in working-class areas like St Ann's, Notting Hill, Brixton, and Bayswater to take advantage of the cheaper, dilapidated housing and less scrupulous landlords – and also, after the trailblazers, to tap into informal migrant networks to

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<sup>592</sup> *Kensington News and West London Times*, 22 August 1958.

<sup>593</sup> Teddy Boy quoted in 'News Headlines', (BBC Television, 1 September 1958).

<sup>594</sup> Kennetta Perry has argued that the "vice" and "criminality" of these areas, and decaying urban spaces more generally, functioned for British commentators as key motifs in a narrative which circumscribed the racial violence into unrepresentative fringes of British society. See Perry, *London*, 125-8. Nevertheless, Notting Hill did possess a certain reputation as a hotspot for criminals and gangs. Tim O'Connor, a white Notting Hill resident, described the district as a 'crime-ridden area' hosting a number of 'gangs fighting each other'. See Tim O'Connor quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'.

access jobs, shelter, and food.<sup>595</sup> Tensions at the level at the community began to mount in an incremental, imperceptible fashion. Slurs, snubs, insults, resentful gazes, and attacks became a daily occurrence across the country, but particularly so in these areas. Racist graffiti – usually “Keep Britain White” – began appearing on walls. Sensing an opportunity, neo-fascist groups like the Union Movement and the White Defence League began specifically targeting those areas possessing a relatively high Caribbean migrant population where tensions were rife to operate within. Mosley began holding regular street-side meetings in Notting Hill, and the White Defence League were actively organising in the area months before the attacks. This trend only continued in the wake of the “riots”, when the League, flush with success, set up their “National Headquarters” in the area.<sup>596</sup>

What this amounts to, on the ground, is a tense and hostile atmosphere. “Keep Britain White” graffiti festooned run-down streets of substandard housing which acted as the backdrop for bitter stares and racist remarks, punctuated only by physical attacks. Headlines which problematised immigration screamed from the roadside newsstands, and a clutch of right-wing politicians worked to sexually politicise the phenomenon and link it with a host of social issues. It is within this context that we should situate and read Caribbean migrants’ experiences. By so doing, we attend to the attacks of 1958 within a wider and more befitting frame of reference, consonant not only with its contextual backdrop but its embeddedness within a more generalised temporal plane of Caribbean experience.

#### 4.4: Caribbean voices of 1958

Thus, any discussion of the attacks of 1958 must be situated within a wider assemblage of contextual components, with a consummate awareness that these attacks were experienced by Caribbean migrants not as isolated events, but as intensified episodes within their everyday realities of confronting racial violence. The following source material emphatically blurs this sharp distinction artificially drawn between isolated historical event and lived quotidian experience, as Caribbean migrants, asked to reflect

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<sup>595</sup> A phenomenon known in contemporary migration studies as “ethnic clustering”. See Castles, de Haas, and Miller, *Age of Migration*, 274-5.

<sup>596</sup> Reilly, ‘Time Shift’.



on the events in St Ann's or Notting Hill, frequently began to position their experiences and opinions relative to a wider, unspecified timeline: "those times". This presents scholars with an imperative to revise their studies of lived experience, memory, and historical consciousness, and how these concepts relate to "historic" events.

#### 4.4.1: Fear and safety

Attempting to parse the relationship between racial violence and Caribbean emotional experience around 1958 requires attending to feelings of safety and fear. That we should have so many first-hand accounts pivoting around fear is unsurprising, given the latent threat of racial violence shot through these migrants' everyday existences. Waveney Bushell talks of her social group being 'apprehensive'.<sup>597</sup> Beverly Braithwaite remembers feeling 'very scared ... because in those days there were Teddy Boys'.<sup>598</sup> Joan Springer remembers exiting Ladbroke Grove Underground station in the summer of 1958 and being cornered by a white mob, stating that, thirty years on, she had 'never [been] so scared in all my life' and describing it as 'the worst experience I've ever had'.<sup>599</sup> Ivan Weekes chooses to describe the experiences and situations of Caribbeans at the time as 'fearful' and 'insecure'.<sup>600</sup> Tryphena Anderson says she was 'threatened, frightened inside'.<sup>601</sup>

One recurring motif in Caribbean expressions of fear is how the emotional process becomes tethered to immobilisation. Caribbean migrant Ivan Weekes remembers how some were 'too scared to go out' and would not leave their home even when in need of cigarettes or foodstuffs.<sup>602</sup> David Wheeler, a white resident of Notting Hill friendly with many Caribbean residents, stated that 'it got to the stage where a lot of West Indians would not come out', while Guyanese Rena Khublall would not leave her house unaccompanied in the evenings.<sup>603</sup> The most striking account, however, comes from

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<sup>597</sup> Waveney Bushell quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 206.

<sup>598</sup> Beverly Braithwaite quoted in John Western, *A Passage to England: Barbadian Londoners Speak of Home* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 93.

<sup>599</sup> Joan Springer quoted in *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>600</sup> Ivan Weekes quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift: Notting Hill '58'.

<sup>601</sup> Tryphena Anderson quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 166.

<sup>602</sup> Reilly, 'Time Shift'.

<sup>603</sup> Both quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 194, 198.

Connie Mark, who remembers that around the time of the Notting Hill attacks her husband was 'so scared' that 'as soon as he came in from work, in the bed, nobody would get him out'.<sup>604</sup> So what we find here is that emotional processes of fear, hitched to the threat of racist violence within a particular social, political, and cultural context, come to produce practices of immobilisation and self-preservation, migrants confining themselves to their bedsits in substandard housing. Simple acts of feeding oneself, washing (many multi-occupancy residences did not contain baths, residents having to use public bath houses), and commuting from work become inflected with a palpable sense of danger to the body, to the extent that these practices become modified, disregarded, or simply impossible. It is through this last sense – of impossibility – that the experience of Connie Mark's husband most clearly resonates, displaying most markedly and intensely the power of immobilisation this fear possessed.

In these ways, emotional processes of fear working in tandem with social and cultural contexts produce physical practices, always manifested at the level of the body, and force upon these migrants a self-isolation from the host society which parallels and reinforces the processes and practices of alienation felt in the social, political, and economic domains. Terror works in very real ways to circumscribe the limits of inclusion and exclusion, and more concretely, to modulate the navigation of bodies through space and the practices of everyday life.

Whilst fear experienced as an immobilising force relates to the navigation – or better, the *non-navigation* – of public space, there are wider implications of this relationship to consider. A critical strategy used by Caribbean migrants to stay the threat of violence was the meticulous logistical organisation employed when manoeuvring their bodies through the built environment. Jamaican Edwin Hilton Hall recalls that, after Caribbean men returned to his hostel with swollen eyes from being 'beaten in the street', he and his companions ensured they travelled together for simple, quotidian acts such as shopping or visiting a public house. In his words, 'we couldn't risk going back to the hostel on our own'.<sup>605</sup> Ainsley Grant's experience was almost identical. Describing the period as a 'terrible time', he relates how his social group would walk in groups of four, and admits

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<sup>604</sup> Connie Mark quoted in Bourne and Kyriacou, *A Ship and a Prayer*, 36.

<sup>605</sup> Edwin Hilton Hall quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 186.

he used to 'carry a long knife'.<sup>606</sup> In this way, simple and "unconscious" acts of socialisation, commuting, and grocery shopping become bound to the higher cognitive faculties of arranging logistics, and remaining permanently conscious of your navigation and body in public spaces in ways which will resonate particularly with women.<sup>607</sup> Under duress of the threat of violence, these simple acts become reinscribed to entail bodily politics, bodily danger, and ontological threat. And when the navigation of Caribbean men in groups is combined with the realities of discrimination in the labour market (meaning they were often navigating the streets in search of work *during* working hours) we have the constituent ingredients for "gang" stereotypes which will soon begin to emerge. Whilst these logistical politics are not *necessarily* connected to fear, there is a strong correlation between them in the source material. Explicitly connecting the two, Bert Williams explains: 'if there were two or three of you, you've got no fear because they're not going to challenge you, unless there's a bunch of them'.<sup>608</sup>

Furthermore, the threat of violence not only entails logistical politics within the navigation of public space, but *changes the act of navigation itself* – not only in practical terms, but in emotional and experiential terms. Williams remembers thinking "'oh God'" if he had to pass certain locations because of the *uncertainty* – and that is a key word – of not knowing who was there. Instead, 'you try and avoid it and you go the long way round'.<sup>609</sup> So the re-navigation, the changing of one's route through spaces and places, becomes implicated in the threat of violence and emotional processes of fear. In *The Pleasures of Exile*, George Lamming offers a profoundly moving account of the frantic cognitive-emotive processes experienced in what ought to be a mundane task: walking the street. Capturing the dizzying and convoluted flavour of the cognitive reasoning and judgement, fear, anxiety, uncertainty, immobilisation, and precarity whirling around these migrant's heads, he writes:

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<sup>606</sup> Ainsley Grant quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 197.

<sup>607</sup> See, for example, Laura Lee Downs, 'If "Woman" Is Just an Empty Category, Then Why Am I Afraid to Walk Alone at Night? Identity Politics Meets the Postmodern Subject', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 2 (1993): 414–37.

<sup>608</sup> Bert Williams quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 191–2.

<sup>609</sup> Bert Williams quoted in *Ibid.*

I am walking up the street, and three men are walking towards me. I do not think that they are the enemy from Notting Hill; nor do I think that they are not. I simply do not know, for there is no way of telling. It is my particular way of seeing which creates this doubt, in spite of all I have read about what was happening. And it is in this moment of doubt that my life is endangered, for while I wonder and watch and wait, the men and I are actually getting nearer. I begin with the grave disadvantage that if they are the enemy, then they have seen their target long ago. While I am working out the possibilities, they have already chosen unanimously the result. There it is. I am completely in their power by the fact that the experience has not trained me to strike without the certainty of the enemy's presence. I am completely immobilised by all my social and racial education as a West Indian.<sup>610</sup>

#### 4.4.2: Sensory experience

Alluded to in Lamming's passage above is the manner in which navigation and violence do not involve *only* cognitive-emotional processes, but entail unique sensory experiences. Mike Phillips makes this association more explicit, poignantly recalling that something as banal as patronising the cinema in the 1950s carried with it profound sensory alterations:

While they filed out I used to sit, nerving myself up for the dash home, which by that time of night was dangerous, a gauntlet. In the street I moved like a cat, every sense tuned up, taking a different route every time. One night a gang of boys erupted out of an alleyway, yelling and waving chains, but I was fast, some sixth sense warning me the moment before I saw them.<sup>611</sup>

It is through Phillips' account that we can see not only the precise ways that violence, sensory experience, and the navigation of public space interact in historical context, but how emotion and cognition are simultaneously implicated within these interactions. Cognitive attention is paid toward the mapping out of different routes through urban

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<sup>610</sup> Lamming, *Pleasures*, 81.

<sup>611</sup> Mike Phillips quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 145-6.

topography, and notions of “courage” or “bravery” exist within the process of “nerving himself up”, corroborating the research undertaken by Arlie Russell Hochschild on emotion work.<sup>612</sup> Further, other contextual experiences underscore this interaction between the cognition, the threat of violence, and the senses. Bert Williams argues that evaluation of others’ age was a crucial technique in the migrant’s toolkit for *sensing* danger, remembering that ‘if they were like twenty-nine, thirty years old they wouldn’t bother you; but if they were youngsters, sixteen, seventeen years old, they’d have a chase’.<sup>613</sup> What Phillips’ and Williams’ testimonies point to are highly tense, trained, and attuned sensory experiences which become difficult, but not impossible, for us to recreate in our mind’s eye. How often do we, when simply walking the street, devote sustained and intense cognitive and sensory attention to the evaluation of all visible pedestrians’ ages? Ascertaining a person’s age involves multiple sensory faculties, chief among these sight and its facilitation in the evaluation of visual stimuli. But it also involves a referential frame consisting of a whole host of contextual factors: What is a person wearing? Where are they standing? What is the tenor of their voice? What are the particularities of their style of comportment, body language, and use of gesture? These are always referred, *almost* instantaneously, to embedded social and cultural knowledge and their learned relationships to age as a constructed category within specific societies: the cultural or subcultural correlations of those garments, and the ages generally associated with those (sub)cultural configurations; the location of a person outside a secondary school or nightclub; the use of body language and gesture as it relates to particular age groups. In these ways, computing the age of all visible pedestrians, planning different routes home, and heightened sensory awareness become crucial tactics and practices of self-preservation for the navigation of public space in the face of racial violence, connected often, but not essentially, to processes of fear.

Given the public arena within which the attacks of 1958 were enacted, one might presume that any attendant feelings of fear and safety or insecurity are associated

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<sup>612</sup> In an influential 1979 article, Hochschild highlighted the ability of individuals to will into existence or otherwise shape their emotional states, pointing as evidence of this to both our deployment of emotional expression through language (“I *tried hard* not to feel sad”; “I killed the hope I had burning”) and the high reports of happiness and job satisfaction among workers required to smile, such as flight attendants. See Arlie Russell Hochschild, ‘Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure’, *American Journal of Sociology* 85, no. 3 (1979): 551–75.

<sup>613</sup> Bert Williams quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 191-2.

exclusively with communal places and spaces and the navigation thereof. This, however, was now always the case. Unable to find any black bodies to attack, white mobs often targeted black homes and social spaces with racial abuse, bricks, and firebombs, thus reinscribing black residences and social spaces, where migrants might have found comfort and security, as places experientially associated with vulnerability. The home, and especially the front room – a spatial zone of enormous social, cultural, and emotional significance for Caribbean migrants to which we will return – becomes materially and emotionally reconfigured under the threat of invasion, vandalism, and violence. Ainsley Grant, a Jamaican resident in Nottingham in 1958, remembers some Caribbeans sleeping beside bricks and milk bottles – objects which speak simultaneously to the ways in which the threat of violence percolated into domestic spaces, and to the extent which Caribbean migrants' lives were powerfully structured by fear and the compulsion toward self-defence. Velma Davis remembers that every night her friend would push her wardrobe to the door, in what Davis describes as an attempt to 'feel safe', again echoing Arlie Russell Hochschild's writings on emotion work.<sup>614</sup> So fear is not the determined outcome of the threat violence, and may instead accompany *quests* to feel safe. There is an interesting intersection here between the work of Hochschild and Monique Scheer, who reformulated what emotions are and do through a Bourdieuan reading which sees practices *themselves* as emotions, and not as external and world-oriented reactions *to* internal psycho-biological processes.<sup>615</sup> By pushing their wardrobe to block their door, Davis' friend was simultaneously undertaking a certain amount of emotion work *and* experiencing an emotion-as-practice.

Feelings of fear and safety are bound in complex, but not deterministic relation to one another. Experiencing an absence of feelings of safety – and this may be economic or bodily – *may* be accompanied by culturally-situated feelings of fear, but can also accompany other emotion concepts like exhilaration and anxiety. Furthermore, they may be associated with less emotionally-charged states, where physical practices are employed and material objects manipulated to *create* this feeling of safety, or with heightened sensory and cognitive experiences which are employed to minimise existential risk and thus feel safe: Waveney Bushell remembers that the atmosphere and

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<sup>614</sup> Velma Davis quoted in *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>615</sup> Scheer, 'Kind of Practice'.

risks around 1958 ‘made us concentrate on our safety’.<sup>616</sup> In concrete and contextual terms, these are practised when Mike Phillips walks home with “every sense tuned up”, when George Lamming frantically evaluates advancing pedestrians, and when Bert Williams re-routes his navigations to avoid certain locations. We can say that whilst fear was present in the emotional experiences of many Caribbean migrants, practices to create feelings of safety and security were more so, and that both rely on the contextual existence of the threat of racist violence.

#### 4.4.3: Fear, repression, and courage

Implicated within concerns of fear are disavowals of it, for we possess several accounts from Caribbean migrants who maintain that they did not experience fear resulting from the threat of violence. And where emotional patterns and expressions of fear are absent in situations culturally designated as “scary”, we deem this “fearless”, “brave”, or “courageous” – terms which operate simultaneously as an emotional state and a descriptor of someone’s general constitution; thick concepts. Connie Mark connects these two operational forms, stating that ‘I suppose I’m basically not a coward, so I went out but a lot of Black people just did not go out, they were so scared’.<sup>617</sup> Similarly, toward the end of the war, Jamaican RAF airman E. Martin Noble remembers attending a dance, mostly populated by US service personnel, as the only black man. Noble proceeded to dance with a white woman – a motif which we have seen stirred in many white men anger, jealousy, and hatred. Although aware of the potential affective (and thence, violent) consequences of his action, and aware of the precarity of his position as the only black man, Noble was not fazed, describing himself at the time as ‘as fearless as they come’.<sup>618</sup>

Both Mark and Noble’s accounts beg important questions about the extent to which these expressions of fearlessness, or these disavowals of fear, are hitched to the wider contextual features of this historical era. Considering Connie Mark’s comments, we cannot say that these emotional prescriptions neatly followed contemporaneous gendered and masculine fault lines, but we should consider how military training and

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<sup>616</sup> Waveney Bushell quoted in *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>617</sup> Connie Mark quoted in Kyriacou, *The Motherland Calls*, 36.

<sup>618</sup> Noble, *Jamaica Airman*, 54.

service influenced these dynamics, given that both Mark and Noble served in the British armed forces. Militaries are quintessential emotional communities containing highly specific emotional prescriptions, norms, and dynamics, deserving of scholarly attention in their own right. Military *training* works not only on the conditioning of the body, but on the conditioning of the mind and its emotional processes, thus operating as a liminal process whose end goal is to admit into the community those who demonstrate – express – the group’s dominant emotional patterns. Thus, military training is *emotional* training – it trains recruits to specifically suppress fear (or at least expressions of fear) and to promote courage, bravery, and fearlessness. We ought to think about how military service affected both Mark and Noble’s personal emotional patterns and processes, but also zoom out to ponder how this affected emotional dynamics on a wider, diasporic scale, and how this influenced emotional interactions with the threat of racist violence, given Caribbean migrants’ relatively high rates of military service. Moreover, it is possible to zoom out further still, asking what emotional consequences the mass mobilisation of this era had on emotional currents on the level of societies. Yet lest we conceptualise a deterministic or exclusive relationship between the suppression of fear and its expressions and military service, Guyanese George Mangar – who did not undertake military service – also spurns the experiencing of fear: Arriving in 1959 and being told of the Teddy boys, he remembers telling his interlocutor “‘I’m not afraid of people like that because I can take care of myself ... I don’t go with fear in my heart’”.<sup>619</sup>

#### 4.4.4: Obstinacy, determination, and resistance

It goes without saying that fear did not possess a monopoly on these migrants’ emotional experiences in the domain of racial violence. Physical danger and threats to bodies and homes often entrenched within Caribbean migrants an obstinacy and determination to go on living, loving, and labouring as they had before, keen to impress on certain xenophobic whites that violence did not affect their emotional processes or patterns of daily life. There are plenty of instances of determination, obstinacy, and expressions of “courage” when confronted with violence and abuse: On 2 September 1958, toward the tail-end of the Notting Hill attacks, PC Dennis Clifford encountered a

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<sup>619</sup> George Mangar quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 205.



group of black men on 2 September 1958 ‘surrounded by a large hostile crowd’. Asking Miguel Defreitas to leave the area quickly, Defreitas replied “‘I don’t need you to fucking protect me ... I’ll go when I’m ready’”.<sup>620</sup> Defreitas started walking slowly up the road, stopping to talk to a white woman – an act he would have known would enrage the crowd further, given the sexual politics of race which forms the kernel of this period’s anti-black racism and xenophobia. What this episode reveals is the determination, obstinacy, and expressions of “courage” at the heart of some migrants’ emotional experiences of the attacks, and their inextricable links to notions of performativity. Moreover, Defreitas’ slow walk and his stopping to talk to a white woman expose two important elements of these experiences of racial violence: first, how acts of retaliation, resistance, revenge, and subversion, which need not necessarily involve *violent* responses, are a part of this narrative; and second, how these are bound to astute understandings of white Britons’ emotional processes, displaying the capacity to understand the emotional dynamics of another group’s collective feelings. This is all often tied to particular iterations of black youthful masculinity: Edwin Hilton Hall, for instance, remembers that when he first migrated, ‘I was young, and I had a terrible temper’.<sup>621</sup> So we find that the specific demographics of the migration flow at this time, being majority young and majority male, contain within them emotional prescriptions of anger, obstinacy, resistance, and defence, centred around the constructed categories of gender and age, and thus intersect with the emotional histories of racist violence in the early postwar period. There are, also, localised demographics to consider: Phillips and Phillips maintain that Notting Hill ‘contained a higher proportion than any other district of bold, reckless young men ... [who] would not cross the road for anyone’.<sup>622</sup> Emotional microgeographies are a legitimate area of inquiry for historical practitioners.

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<sup>620</sup> ‘Report of P.C. Dennis Clifford’, 3 September 1958, MEPO 9838, The National Archives.

<sup>621</sup> Edwin Hilton Hall quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 186. Stuart Hall has also written about the fraught concept of black masculinity, blackness and masculinity being two “discourses” which he sees as ineffably tied to the subject’s positioning in class terms. See Hall, ‘New Identities’, 56-7. For an account of how these discourses and positionings worked in context, see Amina Mama’s pioneering study into women’s abuse in London’s black community: Amina Mama, ‘Woman Abuse in London’s Black Communities’, in *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain*, ed. Winston James and Clive Harris (London: Verso, 1993), 97–134.

<sup>622</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 173.

We also find, somewhat paradoxically, that confrontations with racist and xenophobic violence become part of emotional processes of obstinacy, determination and resistance by entrenching in migrants a desire to transform their temporary sojourns into permanent settlements. Expressions of racist violence designed to destroy migrants' feelings of belonging end up hardening resolve. Baron Baker says that 'it was definitely racism that has caused the riot. "Keep Britain White" ... I was determined that Britain will never be kept white because we are here now ... So to keep it white then you have to kill me, and carry me out on the bloody box'.<sup>623</sup> In this way, migrants like Baker exact an implicit revenge by their mere presence, which problematises simplistic historiographical accounts of "agency" and "resistance" by drawing on everyday living and mere presence as tools to subvert exclusionary practices.

As we have seen, Miguel Defreitas' slow walk and Baron Baker's firm resolution carry with them intentions of revenge or resistance in the face of racist abuse and violence. Others were more straightforward. The Caribbean man who drove his car into a white crowd during the attacks in Nottingham in 1958 admitted to Eric Irons that: 'It give me satisfaction, at least we can fight back, you know, at least we fight back, and the people will realise we're not prepared to sit and take this sort of thing any more. If they want to be nasty, we can be nasty as well'.<sup>624</sup> Thus, within this tense atmosphere of racial hatred, violence, and fear, other – perhaps surprising – emotions are felt and practised. The satisfaction attained by the driver when he attacked this white crowd stems directly from the exaction of a measure of revenge, from a perception that he was defending himself and his oppressed community, and from a signalling that his community would no longer tolerate regular abuse and violence. Ironically, there are some clear parallels here with the emotional dynamics of white youths guilty of racist attacks: operating within the particular, historically-contingent emotional formations of xenophobia and racism, they gained a measure of satisfaction from the perception they were defending their community, "their" jobs, and "their" women from 'the evils of the coloured invasion'.<sup>625</sup> From the perspective of historical analysis, it matters little that such acts and beliefs seem, to us, perverse and reprehensible; what matters is elucidating the emotional

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<sup>623</sup> Baron Baker quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'.

<sup>624</sup> Eric Irons quoted in Upshal, 'Arrival'.

<sup>625</sup> Colin Jordan quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'.

dynamics at play within this particular historical moment, and according to them their proper function in both major racial groupings in this narrative, making due allowance for the issues of instigation and incitement.<sup>626</sup>

The question of defence also brings into play considerations of emotional formations *within* the Caribbean, intra-island cultural politics, and questions of diasporic identity formation. Amongst Caribbeans who experienced the Notting Hill attacks there was a widespread perception that Jamaicans took the principal role in defending the black community. Ivan Weekes maintains that, during each successive night of violence, ‘convoys’ of men would arrive from Brixton – a district characterised in particular by Jamaican settlement – who would patrol the streets in groups.<sup>627</sup> These Jamaicans ‘took the brunt’ of the violence, and, Weekes says, ‘saved our skins from being mauled even more than they were’.<sup>628</sup>

This slots into a discussion of practices of emotional stereotyping between different Caribbean communities. For at least the first two decades of the postwar period, Jamaicans had among Caribbean migrants a reputation for being aggressive, along with other cultural stereotypes no doubt rooted in the island’s cultural and demographic dominance in the British Caribbean.<sup>629</sup> This emotional stereotype of aggression was now, in 1958, retooled as a virtue, with stories circulating among Caribbean migrants of Jamaicans “fighting back” and defending communities against white aggressors. Carlton Gaskin declares: ‘Thank God for the Jamaicans. Jamaicans didn’t always accept things as they were. I must say that. They did a hell of a lot to improve conditions for West Indians. All the West Indians thought they were aggressive but that was the only means of changing things’.<sup>630</sup> Rena Khublall admits she would ‘love to see the Jamaicans fighting the Teddy boys because it would make the place safer for people to walk around’, a statement which circles round to this chapter’s previous discussion of feelings of safety.

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<sup>626</sup> And lest we become swept up in a Whiggish interpretation of history, suffice it to say that racial violence still exists today, and satisfaction or pleasure – however differently they are expressed or experienced in context today – are still common attendant emotional outcomes for aggressors.

<sup>627</sup> Ivan Weekes quoted in Reilly, ‘Time Shift: Notting Hill ’58’.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Indeed, the emotional perception of Jamaicans as aggressive also existed amongst white officials where, as we have seen, officials from the NHSC argued that Jamaicans ‘do tend to get cross’. See W. H. Hardman, Ministry of Labour internal memorandum.

<sup>630</sup> Carlton Gaskin quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 198.

Speaking in consonance with Khublall's statement, George Mangar believes such retaliatory attacks or acts of self-defence were efficacious, with white Britons refraining from attacking 'people from Jamaica' after 1958, 'because those guys stood up for their rights ... they took no nonsense'.<sup>631</sup> Furthermore, if we say that emotion work regarding efforts to feel safe are a critical part of these migrants' emotional experiences of racist violence, and Khublall states that Jamaicans fighting Teddy Boys made "the place feel safer for people to walk around", we can say these practices point to a high degree of emotive success.

These sources point to several more important themes. First, they hint at either a) a particular emotional formation *within* the Caribbean – one in Jamaica which culturally encourages self-defence, violence, or aggression, or b), processes of emotional stereotyping within the Caribbean, which variegates a cultural and emotional landscape often represented as uniform and homogenous. Second, it speaks to a process whereby the very mechanisms through which racial violence is perpetuated – its blanket, indiscriminate targeting of all those who share particular phenotypic characteristics – becomes the very mechanism which serves as a tool of unification amongst otherwise different (and often fractious and antagonistic) communities. Sharing an existential threat coldly unconcerned with specific island particularities worked in very real ways within these migrants' collective psychology to produce identity formations and affiliations where otherwise they would not have existed. Thus, we can partly accord the forging of a communal identity – the black communal identity – to this shared experience of racial violence, which marshalled together different groups, communities, and Caribbean islands who had never conceived of themselves as a single community – nor black – before, all bound together by the shared experience of indiscriminate racist violence.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> George Mangar quoted in *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>632</sup> Stuart Hall talks of how, in interwar and early postwar Jamaica, "black" was not a concept deployed self-referentially, of how during his childhood and adolescence he had 'never thought of myself as black', and of how Jamaica 'did not really think itself a black society until the cultural revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s'. See Hall and Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger*, 99. Another migrant spoke of not knowing 'that I was coloured' until encountering racial exclusion in the schoolground. See unnamed migrant quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 51. See also Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 179. It was partly by encountering the absolutising positioning of racist emotional expression that black identity in postwar Britain was constituted.

#### 4.4.5: Alienation and loneliness

Another emotional theme emerging from these sources is that of distinct feelings of loneliness or alienation, which relates to the ways these attacks function explicitly as practices of exclusion – of clearly demarcating who did and did not belong. When Norman Manley, as Chief Minister of Jamaica, visited Notting Hill during the attacks, he acknowledged that local socio-economic factors such as competition over employment and housing, and subcultural currents like the Teddy Boys played an important role in determining these racist emotional expressions, yet he was unwavering in his conviction that these riots were a matter of racial prejudice – at a time when the official line from the Metropolitan Police and the political establishment was that these were matters of hooliganism with no “racial element”. Describing the visit, Ivan Weekes says that Manley was the only politician to ‘put himself on the line’, and that ‘we felt at last we were not alone’.<sup>633</sup> Seymour Manning – the black student chased by a white mob outside Latimer Road station – also raises the subject of feelings of isolation, contrasting his pursuit to his experiences of hurricanes in the Caribbean, ultimately concluding that ‘it [the pursuit] was not like that because ... if you was in a hurricane, you’re not alone’.<sup>634</sup> The intervention of Manley and the admission of Manning aptly expose the transnational networks of feeling circulating around the experience of racist violence, whilst Weekes’ statement points to the ways political rhetoric and practices have tangible effects on contextualised emotive dynamics. Most significantly, however, a paradox emerges in the source material whereby racial violence becomes embedded within processes of consolidating and forming collective black identity, whilst simultaneously producing feelings of loneliness, alienation, and isolation among some migrants.

The attacks of 1958 also significantly changed the perception, among Caribbean migrants, of British society’s emotional constitution regarding race, but in multiple and often contradictory ways which speak to the multiplicity of human experience. The narrative which British commentators, politicians, and judicial officials sought to propound was that these riots were the work of a youthful, lawless fringe, wholly incompatible with the emotional identity of British society as tolerant and liberal.<sup>635</sup> In

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<sup>633</sup> Ivan Weekes quoted in Reilly, ‘Time Shift’.

<sup>634</sup> Seymour Manning quoted in Reilly, ‘Time Shift’.

<sup>635</sup> See Perry, *London*, 87-115.

sentencing the nine white youths who committed the first attacks of the Notting Hill “riots” the judge delivered a damning admonition, operating more as a signifying practice which buttressed British emotional identity by disavowing the presence of racism in wider British society. Sprawled across the *Daily Mirror* in large typeface, he began with the claim: ‘you are a minute and insignificant section of the population’.<sup>636</sup> Ivan Weekes says that the sentences passed down on these “nigger hunting” youths – widely seen as harsh and an example of the judicial concept of exemplary sentencing – gave many in the black community ‘heart’.<sup>637</sup> From the perspective of Weekes and his acquaintances, then, this hints at a degree of emotive success; black men and women accepting the official narrative proposed. Others, however, could not help but draw inferences about British society’s emotional constitution: Viv Adams attempts to weigh the significance of the attacks by confining it to a minority, yet cannot help musing that ‘maybe they were giving a voice to sentiments that were felt generally in the population’.<sup>638</sup> Similarly, George Lamming writes that ‘the vast majority of the people in this country felt a deep sense of outrage ... but a large number of the people who felt so bitterly about the events of Notting Hill feel no less bitterly about the presence of black men in this overcrowded country’.<sup>639</sup> So while many Caribbean migrants believed that the racist violence was practiced by an extremist, youthful minority, many could not help questioning the extent to which these groups were the tip of the spear of popular consensus, using experience to extrapolate these actions as giving voice to the sentiments of wider British society. Daily abuse, ostracization, and discrimination underscored this. The attacks of 1958 functioned as critical lenses and experiential points of reference through which Caribbean migrants would emotionally interact with the host society in the following years. Less than nine months later, another act of racial violence would have similarly profound consequences for the emotional experience of these migrants, and further shape the form of their relationship with the “motherland”.

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<sup>636</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 16 September 1958.

<sup>637</sup> Ivan Weekes quoted in Reilly, ‘Time Shift: Notting Hill ’58’.

<sup>638</sup> Viv Adams quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 207.

<sup>639</sup> Lamming, *Pleasures*, 76.

## 4.5: Kelso Cochrane

At approximately 10:30 p.m. on 16 May 1959, Antiguan-born Kelso Cochrane left home for Paddington General Hospital to seek medical treatment for a thumb injury. Less than three hours later, his lifeless body was found on a London street. Returning home, Cochrane died from a stab wound to the chest inflicted by six white youths in Notting Hill who, according to one witness, shouted something resembling the phrase “Hey Jim Crow” before attacking him from behind.<sup>640</sup> Cochrane’s murderers were never definitively identified or charged by the Metropolitan Police.<sup>641</sup>

Kelso Cochrane’s murder represents one of the most significant events in British postwar race relations. Working in conjunction with the attacks of 1958 just nine months before, for which it functions almost as an abhorrent epilogue, the murder helped shape the form of black communities’ relationships to and criticisms of policing, their principal charges of ineffectiveness, discrimination, and institutional racism reverberating down to the present day. The murder cemented in black subjectivities the depths which racist violence in Britain could plumb, and laid bare the precarity of blackness and being in the places and spaces of postwar Britain. It provided the nucleus around which emerging black grassroots activists would mobilise around, acted as a catalyst for the emergence of the British Black Power movement in the 1960s, and brought further salience to issues of race and migration in British society. Most importantly for this study, however, it contributed to a shift in emotional atmosphere at the level of everyday interaction.

### 4.5.1: Political contexts in the wake of 1958

One of the most important consequences of Cochrane’s murder was the emotional politics which emerged in its immediate aftermath. In life Cochrane had lived conventionally – a carpenter with aspirations of further education, upward social mobility, becoming a lawyer. In death, he became a political and emotional martyr. His murder became a lightning rod for dialogues of racism and migration in Britain to

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<sup>640</sup> *Daily Express*, 18 May 1959; *Daily Mail*, 18 May 1959; *Daily Mirror*, 18 May 1959; Statement of George Isaacs, MEPO 2/9833, The National Archives; Metropolitan Police Report, 25 August 1959, MEPO 2/9833, The National Archives.

<sup>641</sup> A group of white youths, the prime suspects, were interviewed and later released. Mark Olden marshals an assemblage of circumstantial evidence to claim proof beyond reasonable doubt that these youths were guilty. See Mark Olden, *Murder in Notting Hill* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2011).

coalesce around, and it was in particular his funeral and memory which were consciously politicised by a coalition of anti-racist groups in order to make claims about the threat facing black bodies in Britain. Whilst the Metropolitan Police seized on a handful of Cochrane's last words ("they asked me for money. I told them I had none") to push the narrative that this was a financially-motivated robbery gone awry, elements of the national press – and most importantly, an assortment of grassroots black activist organisations – were under no illusions this was a racially-motivated attack.<sup>642</sup> Whereas the attacks of 1958 were read against wider, indeterminate timeframes by black migrants whereby they become metonyms for the experiential and emotional characteristics of "those times", the politics of race in Britain was affected in a more acute and synchronic manner by the violence, spurring a flurry of black political organisation which held at its heart certain emotional concepts and strategies. Claudia Jones, the Trinidad-born activist, Communist, feminist, and black rights advocate, provided a space for transnational black consciousness and dialogue through the founding of the *West Indian Gazette* (shortly thereafter the *West Indian Gazette And Afro-Asian Caribbean News*) in March 1958, which gathered momentum after the attacks by drawing on the newly-created cultural capital of a collective black identity and heightened political consciousness. Through its news reportage, editorials, and literary supplements, the *Gazette* became a crucial hub and catalyst for black diasporic culture and political organisation in Britain. The paper would also act as a conduit for the promotion of Britain's first carnival, the brainchild of Jones, devised in the wake of the 1958 attacks to mend interracial wounds and showcase and familiarise native Britons with Caribbean culture whilst simultaneously providing a safe space for the expression of Caribbean culture and identity. Jamaican pan-Africanist Amy Ashwood Garvey, meanwhile, co-founded the Association for the Advancement for Coloured People which established a legal defence fund for black people charged with crimes during the attacks in 1958.<sup>643</sup> Garvey's organisation and Jones' *Gazette* worked together with the West Indian Students' Union to organise a rally at St. Pancras Town Hall weeks after the attacks to protest against violence directed toward black people, attended by Jamaican Premier

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<sup>642</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 May 1959; Metropolitan Police Report, 25 August 1959, MEPO 2/9833, The National Archives.

<sup>643</sup> *Daily Worker*, 12 September 1958.



Norman Manley and David Pitt, a Grenadian doctor, black activist, and later Labour Party politician and life peer.<sup>644</sup>

Thus, the murder of Kelso Cochrane entered into an already fertile and effervescent black political context, and the political reactions to it were powerfully conditioned by the attacks of 1958. Cochrane's memory and his mourning were remodelled by a host of black activist organisations in order to invoke the physical threat of black bodies in the metropole and call on the British establishment, and British society writ large, to guarantee their safety and security.<sup>645</sup> The central element in this politicisation involved the transformation of his funeral and procession by the Interracial Friendship Co-ordinating Council – a committee formed by a coalition of black activist groups to defray the costs and assist with the organisation of the burial – from a private, solipsistic affair into a large collective event.<sup>646</sup> Crucially for this thesis, this inherently entails important emotional dynamics – specifically, the politics of collective mourning.

Commonly-cited theoretical expositions on mourning are dominated by psychoanalysis and philosophy, two fields which often make for uncomfortable bedfellows with historical analysis. Such theories – Sigmund Freud's distinction between normative, unconscious mourning and pathological, conscious melancholia; John Bowlby's attachment theory rooted in evolutionary biology and childhood determinism; Jacques Derrida's extension of mourning to pervade the conditions of possibility for a relationship with an other – different though they are, have woven within them the common threads of transcendentalism and ahistoricism, and as such should give us pause. None help us to grasp the particular emotional and expressive dynamics at work *in context* within the politicisation of collective mourning practices over Kelso Cochrane's death.

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<sup>644</sup> *Daily Worker*, 9 September 1958.

<sup>645</sup> Kennetta Perry has analysed the politicisation, and particularly the optics, of Cochrane's funeral, noting that its efficacy lay in presenting Cochrane not as a political figure, but as a domesticated, salt-of-the-earth man: respectable, hopes of self-improvement and upward social mobility, and with plans of marriage. See Perry, *London*, 116-136.

<sup>646</sup> Among the mourners were Sir Grantley Adams, Prime Minister of the Federation of the West Indies, and A. N. E. Machaffie, Mayor of Kensington. See *Daily Mirror*, 19 May 1959.

#### 4.5.2: Emotionally politicising mourning practices

Cochrane's funeral was held on the morning of 6 June 1959. Well before the hearse pulled up outside Saint Michael and All Angels church in Ladbroke Grove, a large, immaculately-dressed, and multi-racial crowd had gathered outside, dominating the opposite pavement and spilling out into the road,<sup>647</sup> some having come from as far afield as Birmingham and Southampton.<sup>648</sup> Over 500 attended the brief church service and, underscoring the political resonance of the event, the attendees included Sir Grantley Adams, Prime Minister of the Federation of the West Indies, and A. N. E. MacHaffie, Mayor of Kensington.<sup>649</sup> While the male chief mourners wore tuxedos, other men wore multi-coloured shirts and women wore colourful summer dresses 'all the colours of the rainbow', many complemented their attire with black armbands.<sup>650</sup> After the service, Cochrane's coffin was placed inside the final hearse of a cortege numbering three vehicles, all resplendent in wreaths. As the procession wound its way through the three-quarter miles of streets to Kensal Green Cemetery, its numbers swelled to around 1,200, with many more stopping to watch from pavements and open windows. Once beside the grave, a mourner began to sing *Abide With Me*, and the hymn soon spread amongst the mourners. Singing 'with quiet and deeply emotional emphasis', many remained an hour past the burial.<sup>651</sup> One verse of *Abide With Me* proclaims "I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless; Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness", which seemed to capture the affective atmosphere as a journalist from the *Observer* described it as 'a wonderfully unbitten occasion'.<sup>652</sup>

One of the most important emotional facets of Cochrane's funeral was the extent to which the collective emotional practice of mourning was reconfigured – or, better, used as a medium – for a conflated set of emotional expressions such as respect, anguish, sympathy, solidarity, disgust, and outrage, which transcended Cochrane's slain body to ask very real, searching, political questions about the boundaries of black safety and the

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<sup>647</sup> See 'Funeral Of Kelso Cochrane', 1959, British Pathé newsreel footage, (British Pathé, 1959).

<sup>648</sup> *Guardian*, 8 June 1959.

<sup>649</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 185-6.

<sup>650</sup> *Kensington Post*, 12 June 1959.

<sup>651</sup> *Times*, 8 June 1959.

<sup>652</sup> *Observer*, 7 June 1959.

everyday experience of black bodies and subjects. To be sure, for those who knew Cochrane, such questions formed a barely registerable subtext in May and June 1959 when faced with the irremediable loss of a loved one. But for the many attendees who did not know Cochrane personally, these collective emotional expressions possessed a far more pronounced political timbre rooted in practices of claim-making. One of the primary ways this was expressed on the day was through inscriptions accompanying wreaths: showing the conflation of sensory and emotional experience, one wreath contained a note which read 'Your death was by the hand of a blind man. His terrible deed has opened many eyes and drawn innumerable warm hearts to love towards you, and yours'. Another explicitly laid out the wider political stakes involved by bearing the inscription 'From the Martyrs and Victims of Oppression'.<sup>653</sup> Further highlighting the political currency of the murder, other black men distributed leaflets headed 'It Could be You !!! Kelso's Murder is Britain's Shame ... All Africans and Afro-Asians must make this Sunday a day of remembrance for a dear brother who was murdered because of the colour of his skin'.<sup>654</sup>

We ought also to think about how the emotional experiences and expressions of Cochrane's funeral followed patterns linked to racial identities: not from any essentialism contained therein, but from the constructedness of racial identities which proceeds from contextual experience. For black mourners, Cochrane's funeral concerned the expression not only of anger, disgust, or solidarity, but the expression of the ways in which racial violence profoundly structured their lives. For white attendees, historical iterations of sympathy or empathy take on a critical importance, being emotional concepts deployed to feel *with* the black community. Yet such affective patterns following racial identities are exactly that: patterns, and not incontrovertible laws. Sources attest to a mutual engagement with anger, although this does not dictate that this anger was necessarily experienced identically amongst white and black mourners. In particular, Rudy Braithwaite remembers many angry white people at the funeral, laying the responsibility for the act at Oswald Mosley's feet, 'openly shouting that this was a Mosley thing'.<sup>655</sup> Such collective emotional expressions became indicative of a wider emotional dynamic

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<sup>653</sup> *Kensington Post*, 12 June 1959.

<sup>654</sup> *Observer*, 7 June 1959; *Times*, 8 June 1959.

<sup>655</sup> Rudy Braithwaite quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'.

which the murder of Cochrane affected upon the host society: Tim O'Connor, a white resident of Notting Hill, says that the killing 'lessened feelings of hatred toward blacks ... because it was a step too far for the average person'.<sup>656</sup> On the Sunday after Cochrane's murder, a White Defence League rally in Trafalgar Square was subjected to sustained heckling.<sup>657</sup> Black St Lucian Ben Bousquet, meanwhile, describes his anger over murder, stating that he wanted to attend the funeral to 'show solidarity'. However, when he arrived and saw large numbers of white attendees, he left. He thought "'no, I'm not going to this funeral with all these white people there. Where were they when we wanted help? ... I'm not going to play that game" ... And for a long while I would have nothing to do with white people'.<sup>658</sup> This highlights that the murder and funeral paradoxically functioned as an expression of inter-racial solidarity and friendship, but also worked to entrench racist logics.

So we find that although migrants and natives both shared an engagement with a specific emotion concept, the terms of such an engagement differ markedly: for white attendees, this was an experience and expression of anger with overtly performative qualities; an act of signalling that they were *sympathetic* with black experiences of violence, filtered through the specific socio-political context of a Moseleyite "Keep Britain White" campaign of terror. Bousquet's anger, meanwhile, emerges from an identical socio-political contextual filter but carries within it particular structuring forces in regards to race, processes of identity designation, and exclusion. In his anger, Bousquet believed that white native Britons did not possess a legitimate right to participate in this collective expression of mourning, and therefore this offers a compelling insight into the dynamic functions of emotion in processes of identity formation and exclusion, in context.

The emotional experience for white natives was not limited to anger and its political and performative qualities, however. Rudy Braithwaite maintains that 'everybody turned out for that funeral. People were crying all over the place. There were white folks who, from their windows, were hailing the procession ... They were moved'.<sup>659</sup> One striking

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<sup>656</sup> Tim O'Connor quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'.

<sup>657</sup> *Times*, 25 May 1959.

<sup>658</sup> Ben Bousquet quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 209-10.

<sup>659</sup> Rudy Braithwaite quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift: Notting Hill '58'.

theme which emerges from the sources is the extent to which silence was used by these actors as an emotional expression. Silence reigned among the large crowd as the coffin was borne into the church.<sup>660</sup> Likewise, a ghostly silence pervaded as the procession wound its way through the streets to the cemetery, both from the 1,200-strong procession and from the thousands more lining the streets and watching from windows.<sup>661</sup> As the procession passed, white men stood watching with hats removed – a practice which, in this particular historical and cultural context, was a significant affective expression of profundity and respect.<sup>662</sup> White and black alike watched in silence from open windows, leaning out into the crowded streets and the warm summer morning air.<sup>663</sup> By all accounts, the emotional power of the scene was palpable. Mirroring the concept of agency, sometimes emotional expression and experience need not entail “doing” anything.

Cochrane’s murder also carried particular significance for black migrants’ feelings of vulnerability – not so much producing these affective processes as determining their scale, for as we have seen, even before the attacks of 1958 black migrants’ experiences were structured by the everyday presence of violence. Cochrane’s murder, however, accurately plumbed the depths of racial hatred and exposed in blinding light exactly what was at stake for these migrants. ‘It was a moment’, Rudy Braithwaite says, ‘when [black] people realised how vulnerable they were’.<sup>664</sup> Donald Hinds, meanwhile, credits the event with precipitating a wholesale reformulation of Caribbean migrants’ relationship to Britain: ‘After Cochrane’s death we had to rethink everything – we had to revise our faith in the Union Jack’.<sup>665</sup> His use of the emotional concept of “faith” is instructive, illuminating how this was principally an affective process of relational reorientation. It also marshals the emotional contexts of the British Caribbean, within which this faith was produced, the Union Jack functioning as a metonymy for British values in a way which speaks to the wider significance of the flag in the British Caribbean

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<sup>660</sup> *Kensington Post*, 12 June 1959.

<sup>661</sup> *Times*, 8 June 1959. See also Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 186.

<sup>662</sup> *Observer*, 7 June 1959.

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*; *Times*, 8 June 1959.

<sup>664</sup> Rudy Braithwaite quoted in Reilly, ‘Time Shift’.

<sup>665</sup> Donald Hinds quoted in Ian Thomson, ‘Scotland Yard: The Jamaican-British Encounter’, *The Nation*, 10 March 2011, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/scotland-yard-jamaican-british-encounter/>.

experience and imagination: one immediately recalls Isolyn Robinson's riposte to those Britons who sought to problematise her presence: 'all my life I've been drilling up and down in front of the Union Jack and I've got a right to be here'.<sup>666</sup> In a similar vein, E. R. Braithwaite, in his autobiographical novel *To Sir, With Love*, talks of the 'belief' – the *faith* – he had in 'the ideal of the British Way of Life', acerbically noting that 'it is wonderful to be British – until one comes to Britain'.<sup>667</sup> Thus, the context of the British Caribbean which encouraged cultural and affective affinity with the metropole – filtered always through on-the-ground colonial epistemological practices of production and interpretation – becomes for these migrants the central reference point within a re-engagement and reformulation of affective bonds in the wake of racist violence and murder. Hinds' pithy, evocatively-titled book *Journey to An Illusion* hints at this very process of reformulation.

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<sup>666</sup> Isolyn Robinson quoted in South London Press and The Voice, *Forty Winters On*, 27.

<sup>667</sup> Braithwaite, *To Sir*, 39-40.

## 5: “Balms to the aching souls”: Migrant parties as emotional refuge

On 13 July 1948, the docking of the SS *Empire Windrush* not four weeks gone, Mr. S. Bell – a 22-year-old Jamaican RAF veteran – attempted to visit the Acacia Ballroom in Liverpool. Upon arrival he and his companions were refused entry, being told by the venue’s security that ‘I have instructions not to pass any coloured people’.<sup>668</sup> The promoter did not seem to register the contradiction of having a ‘coloured band’<sup>669</sup> performing that night but denying entry to black would-be patrons, speaking to Paul Gilroy’s assertion that black people in Britain were permitted as cultural producers but not as consumers.<sup>670</sup> This paradox, embedded within a certain historical permutation of racialised and spatialised cultural politics, would become the defining feature of the leisure landscape in Britain during the postwar period.

Bell’s experience acted as a mordant foreshadowing of the following decade when, in addition to the housing and employment markets, black persons came to be routinely excluded from Britain’s leisure spaces and entertainment venues. It was not, however, the bellwether of a changing dynamic, but a mere continuation of an historical trend. In 1925, two Crown Colony subjects ‘of colour’ travelled to Britain for the British Empire Exhibition, only to be turned away from their pre-booked accommodation in London, a case which mirrors Sir Learie Constantine’s racist refusal of hotel lodgings some three decades later.<sup>671</sup> Additionally, in 1927 dance halls and restaurants in Edinburgh began banning ‘British citizens of Asiatic and African origin’ until forced to lift the policy following a protest by the Edinburgh Indian Association and mediation between the two groups by the city’s Lord Provost.<sup>672</sup> Crucially, these exclusionary practices cannot be

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<sup>668</sup> *Liverpool Echo*, 14 July 1948. See also *Liverpool Echo*, 13 July 1948.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>670</sup> Paul Gilroy, *‘There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack’: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1991), 160-1. I would like to thank Jason McGraw for pointing this out in Jason McGraw, ‘Sonic Settlements: Jamaican Music, Dancing, and Black Migrant Communities in Postwar Britain’, *Journal of Social History* 52, no. 2 (2018): 357.

<sup>671</sup> *Times*, 4 February 1925. For Learie Constantine’s exclusion, see Learie Constantine, *Colour Bar* (London: Stanley Paul, 1954).

<sup>672</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 1 June 1927. See also *Manchester Guardian*, 1 July 1927; Clare Torney, ‘The Edinburgh Colour Bars’, *Historic Environment* (blog), 14 January 2021, <https://blog.historicenvironment.scot/2021/01/the-edinburgh-colour-bars/>.

seen as tied to any quantitative explanations of a black presence, the line of reasoning most often wheeled out.<sup>673</sup> Small black communities had existed in Britain for centuries, mostly concentrated in London's east end or seaport towns such as Liverpool, Cardiff, and Bristol, but constituted a minute section of the overall population. The black population in Britain had increased during the war with an influx of American GIs and Commonwealth soldiers, but in the war's immediate aftermath declined to figures comparable to pre-war years: between 7,000-20,000.<sup>674</sup> Racialised exclusionary practices thus existed in Britain before the advent of a significant black population.

Be that as it may, such exclusionary practices ramped up in the postwar period, commensurate with the growing black migrant population. And yet, relative to the issues of housing and employment, the issues confronting Caribbean migrants within the spheres of social spaces and cultural production and consumption have remained crucially understudied.<sup>675</sup> This historiographical oversight ignores the role of these spaces as a critical arena for understanding the formation of a specific historical instance of diasporic identity, and how this interacted with exclusionary practices to produce new cultural forms and emotional experiences. If, as Claudia Jones said, 'a people's art is the genesis of their freedom', attending to the cultural spaces of artistic production and consumption constructed within the context of highly circumscribed cultural and emotional liberty is vital in understanding the experiential conditions of these historical actors.<sup>676</sup> By examining these places and spaces from a perspective prioritising first-hand accounts, we find a changing landscape of emotional experience and expression buried lightly below the surface of their shifts in form, themselves often a reflection of wider

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<sup>673</sup> Thomas Edward Smith, *Commonwealth Migration: Flows and Policies* (London: Palgrave, 1981), 98; E. J. B. Rose, *Colour and Citizenship: A Report on British Race Relations* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1969), 269.

<sup>674</sup> Former Prime Minister Harold Macmillan estimated a prewar population of 7,000 in Harold Macmillan, *At the End of the Day: 1961-1963*, vol. 6, 6 vols (London: Macmillan, 1977). David Olusoga estimated 'fewer than 20,000' in 1948: David Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (London: Macmillan, 2016), 426. Parliamentary sources indicate that the Caribbean population was approximately 15,000 in 1951. See 630 Parl. Deb. H.C. (5th ser.) (1960) col. 1282.

<sup>675</sup> Some notable exceptions are McGraw, 'Sonic Settlements'; Paul Gilroy, 'Between the Blues and the Blues Dance: Some Soundscapes of the Black Atlantic', in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, ed. Michael Bull and Les Back (London: Routledge, 2003), 381-95; Michael McMillan, 'Rockers, Soulheads and Lovers: Sound Systems Back in Da Day', *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture* 9, no. 1 (2018): 9-27.

<sup>676</sup> Claudia Jones, *Claudia Jones: Beyond Containment*, ed. Carole Boyce Davies (Banbury: Ayebia Clarke, 2011), 155.



issues of cultural dislocation, hostility and exclusion, and transgenerational identity formation.

This chapter takes up this programmatic call and applies it to two closely related social spaces that Caribbean migrants constructed for themselves – house parties and blues parties – to parse the emotional experiences and expressions contained therein. These terms – along with the “shebeen” – shade into each other ambiguously, historical actors often using them interchangeably. But we can propose working definitions for use here based on some distinctions we possess. One common understanding of the deviation between a house party and a blues party was the shift toward regularity and commercialisation: whilst both were held in homes, house parties were *gratis* and singular events whereas the blues levied entry fees and recurred with an element of frequency. Shebeens took and multiplied the frequency of blues parties, being held on multiple nights in a week and thus drawing nearer in identity to an unlicensed club. Much more will be said about the distinctions between house and blues parties, but because of the close qualitative proximity between the blues and shebeens – and because historical actors often made no distinction between them – they are treated as mostly interchangeable in the following chapter. Taken together, these social spaces were remarkable – both in their longevity and plasticity as cultural forms. Beginning in the first half of the 1950s, they subsequently underwent multiple qualitative changes in their cultural, demographic, racial, and emotional makeups, reaching their heyday in the 1960s and persisting into the 1980s when media-driven equations of them with “vice” and repressive police measures effectively curtailed them. Tracking these changes over time reveals clear and shifting patterns of emotional experience and expression within them.

### 5.1: Migrant parties and the emotional refuge

The key interpretative tool used here will be the emotional refuge, a theoretical innovation introduced by William Reddy in his groundbreaking *The Navigation of Feeling*. Reddy describes an emotional refuge as ‘a relationship, ritual, or organization (whether informal or formal) that provides safe release from prevailing emotional norms and allows relaxation of emotional effort, with or without an ideological justification, which

may shore up or threaten the existing emotional regime'.<sup>677</sup> Its principal value lies in its sensitivity to vectors of power, how these impact emotional enforcement, and how these interact to produce or sustain social sub-groupings and formations. It enables the historian to, with requisite knowledge, study the interactions between and effects of a dominant emotional culture, including its mechanisms of reproduction and enforcement, and those who do not, or cannot, subscribe to its affective codes. Its utilisation here involves a theoretical reorientation of Reddy's project, both in its overarching conceptual direction and in its definition of the function of the emotional refuge in particular. Reddy's overall structure, with the emotive as its locus, possesses an exceedingly linguistic orientation, and other scholars have shown with subdiscipline-altering force the fruitful possibilities of modifying or augmenting this focus, drawing into the equation questions of practice and of the body.<sup>678</sup> Moreover, the emotional refuge's focus on interaction with a dominant society's affective prescriptions, codes, and styles only takes us so far. These migrant parties were developed against these factors, yes, but also within wider social and economic contexts and complex, transnational cultural flows. And whilst attending to how historical specificities have shaped the emotional dynamics of these parties, we should not simply view them as spaces simply reactive to white society's actions, but as places where new identities, cultural frameworks, and emotional experiences were actively produced.

## 5.2: The early growth of migrant parties

### 5.2.1: "Colour bar"

The growth of house and blues parties amongst Caribbean migrant communities needs to be read against two principal, and interacting, contextual factors. The first returns us to a discussion of the "colour bar" practised by British leisure venues. As we have seen, sporadic incidents of racial exclusion in these spaces existed long before the postwar growth of Britain's black population. And whilst this refutes any *post hoc* argument

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<sup>677</sup> William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 129.

<sup>678</sup> Scheer, 'Kind of Practice'. William Reddy's initial theoretical framework for the history of emotions was largely silent on the question of practice and practice theory. However, he began to incorporate this conceptual dimension when fleshing out his approach for his 2001 monograph. See Reddy, 'Against Constructionism'; Reddy, *Navigation*, 43-6.

resting on a fallacious attribution of the colour bar to a significant black presence, it nevertheless remains true that practices of racial exclusion accelerated exponentially with the postwar growth of Britain's black migrant presence. Such practices ramped up almost the moment this migration corridor was established. After learning of publicans refusing to serve Caribbean migrants, W. George Brown, a passenger on the *Windrush* in 1948, formed the Anglo Caribbean Committee, an activist and welfare organisation which immediately began campaigning against these venues' policies.<sup>679</sup> In addition to public houses, throughout the 1950s the Committee received 'many complaints that our people were not being admitted to the local dance halls'.<sup>680</sup> Highlighting the critical role that leisure spaces played in shaping the timbre of postwar racial politics and relations, Brown judged that 'the English people did not mind having us here in England, providing we kept to ourselves and did not share any of their amenities'.<sup>681</sup> Brown's appraisal of British emotional attitudes toward a metropolitan black presence *in itself* perhaps more accurately speaks to a specific historical moment in the late 1940s and early 1950s: before arrivals ramped up after 1954, before the phrase "Keep Britain White" reverberated around public houses and festooned roadside structures in white paint, and before the attacks of 1958 and murder of Kelso Cochrane in 1959. His assessment of British attitudes toward the black presence *in leisure spaces* would, however, ring true in largely unaltered form for decades to come. Moreover, the specific dynamic of exclusion and collective, organised resistance at the core of the Anglo Caribbean Association's actions would be retained. In 1959, for example, 'a group of Jamaicans' opposed the renewal of the licence of the Milkwood Tavern in London for refusing to serve black people,<sup>682</sup> while six years later High Wycombe's Overseas Friendship Council protested the renewal of licences for three pubs in the town which operated a "colour bar".<sup>683</sup>

A largely unexplored sub-plot in this narrative centres on the dogged resistance of British working men's clubs to black membership and participation, who began erecting

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<sup>679</sup> Brown, *Windrush to Lewisham*, 39-51.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>682</sup> *Times*, 15 February 1959.

<sup>683</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 11 March 1965.

“colour bars” in the 1950s and pursued this policy for decades thereafter.<sup>684</sup> This trend was especially pronounced in clubs located in areas of high immigrant settlement. In 1961, the Hitchin, Hertfordshire, Trades and Labour Club voted to exclude black membership applications, a move which was justified along economic lines and cloaked in an archetypal discursive deferral of responsibility: ‘twenty-five p.c. of our 400 members would have left if coloured people were allowed to join’.<sup>685</sup> A Labour Party function to be held at the Smethwick Labour Club in 1964 had to be relocated after the venue stipulated that no black people could attend. Defending their position in the national press, a secretary of the club stated that ‘so far as I know there are no working men’s clubs in Smethwick which do allow coloured people in’.<sup>686</sup> In some instances, the exclusionary practices of these clubs prompted white resistance. After a black bus conductor was denied entry to the Walsall Working Men’s Club where he had hoped to watch his snooker team play, the team walked out in protest.<sup>687</sup> Similarly, the Musicians’ Union threatened to blacklist its members from performing at the North Wolverhampton Working Men’s Club in 1968 after Ruth Saxon, a black woman entertainer, was barred from entering.<sup>688</sup>

By 1971, the Race Relations Board declared the exclusionary practices of Working Men’s Clubs to be growing.<sup>689</sup> This culminated in a 1974 ruling by the House of Lords which upheld the right of the clubs, numbering some 4,000, to practice racial exclusion. The case, an appeal by the Dockers and Labour Club and Institute in Preston, ultimately exposed the inadequacy and fragility of the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968, which outlawed racial discrimination in public places and in the housing and employment markets, but which did not cover working men’s clubs, which were deemed as not providing goods or services “‘to the public or a section of the public’”.<sup>690</sup> The Lords ruling played a major role in the passage of the Race Relations Act 1976, which repealed both

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<sup>684</sup> North Wolverhampton Working Men’s Club began practising a colour bar in 1958. See *Times*, 22 April 1968. Mount Pleasant United Working Men’s Club in Edgbaston were reported to have begun practicing a longstanding colour bar the following year. See *Daily Mail*, 11 December 1979.

<sup>685</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 September 1961.

<sup>686</sup> *Times*, 14 November 1964.

<sup>687</sup> *Times*, 24 October 1962.

<sup>688</sup> *Times*, 22 April 1968.

<sup>689</sup> *Daily Mail*, 1 July 1971.

<sup>690</sup> *Financial Times*, 17 October 1974.

previous Acts, established the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), and provided a legal framework allowing for working men's clubs – as 'social and sports clubs' – to be included within its remit.<sup>691</sup> The provisions of the 1976 Act were first used by the CRE to issue a discrimination notice against the Mount Pleasant United Working Men's Club in Birmingham in 1979, after a black Royal Navy veteran was denied admittance.<sup>692</sup>

### 5.2.2: Homeownership as socio-cultural value

The second, more complex motivation for the development of migrant house parties in the postwar period lies within the growth of homeownership as a disproportionately strong social value amongst Caribbean migrants. To understand this, we must turn to chronology. There exists a curious liminal stage within the early development of this postwar migration corridor, definitively altering the nature and tone of the community's social and affective values. The earliest trailblazers in 1947 and 1948 received a great deal of administrative and organisational support from a highly centralised, regulated, and bureaucratic state still operating under the extensive powers which had been ceded to it during wartime. Migrants alighting from the *Windrush*, for instance, were greeted by a clutch of government officials including MPs and civil servants, shepherded into temporary accommodation at the Clapham Deep Raid Shelter, and frequented by ministry officials eager to procure their labour. In contrast to the exorbitant rental fees migrants would later pay, a bed and three meals cost the Clapham residents six shillings per day; Jamaica's Oswald Denniston was so grateful he gave a speech at the Shelter and 'called for three cheers for the Ministry of Labour ... others clapped'.<sup>693</sup> Those who came in the second half of the 1950s, meanwhile, were able to draw upon dense migrant networks of knowledge and social contacts – fruits of the footholds that trailblazing Caribbean migrants had established in Britain's industrial centres. These networks were, for those in the Caribbean, usually tapped into via transnational correspondence, and allowed many riding the crest of the wave to secure preliminary accommodation and jobs.

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<sup>691</sup> *Daily Mail*, 12 September 1975.

<sup>692</sup> *Daily Mail*, 11 December 1979. See also *Financial Times*, 10 December 1979.

<sup>693</sup> *Daily Express*, 23 June 1948.

Those, however, who migrated after official interest had waned or soured but before extensive migrant networks had been established found the arrival process far more precarious. The tentacles of racial exclusion extended deep into Britain's housing market, large swathes of landlords simply unwilling to countenance a "coloured" tenant. This was often migrants' first experience of racism in the country, and the struggle for equality of opportunity in the housing market became the first front line in the increasingly racialised social landscape of 1950s Britain. But before migrants could organise and resist they needed somewhere to sleep, and born of this necessity migrants were pushed into the clutches of less scrupulous landlords such as Peter Rachman, who often owned the worst of the already substandard housing stock, charged exorbitant rates for the privilege, and imposed tyrannical regimes. Lloyd Miller remembers that he 'wasn't allowed to take no visitors at all, even the couple of friends that I know ... we got to meet in the street'. One night when Miller did risk bringing a guest home, the landlord called the police and turned him out onto the street the same night.<sup>694</sup> Miller's plight was so commonplace that it was brilliantly riffed on in Lord Kitchener's 1950s era calypso "My Landlady": 'My landlady is too rude / in my affairs she like to intrude / ... Lots of restrictions to break your heart / After ten o'clock / Tenants must know my front door is locked'.<sup>695</sup> All this was, of course, if migrants could even *secure* a room: racial exclusion was compounded by the acute shortage of housing in major industrial cities, pushing many newcomers into temporary homelessness. Frank King remembers that 'at the time coloured people were coming over as waywards. They were sleeping even in the cemeteries and places like that. I know for a fact some slept in telephone booths. Few coloured people had houses in those days, so the newcomer just could not find lodgings'.<sup>696</sup> One migrant, arriving with her nine-year-old child, found herself stranded at a London train terminus and had to rely on the charity of an unknown man to put her up for the night.<sup>697</sup> Faced with racial exclusion, extortion, and harassment in an already straitened housing market, along with an arrival marred by precarity, homeownership blossomed into a social and cultural value of herculean import for the Caribbean migrant

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<sup>694</sup> Lloyd Miller quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 90-1.

<sup>695</sup> Lord Kitchener, 'My Landlady', track 4 on *London is the Place for Me: Trinidadian Calypso in London, 1950 - 1956*, Honest Jon's Records, 2002, compact disc.

<sup>696</sup> Frank King quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 53.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

community. 'It was during those days', as Donald Hinds puts it, 'that West Indians swore that they would buy their own homes'.<sup>698</sup>

And buy their own homes they did. From the middle of the 1950s, a distinguishing feature of the Caribbean community was its remarkable growth in home ownership. By 1966, the rates amongst Caribbean migrants (and especially Jamaicans) living in seven of the most commonly-settled London boroughs had significantly outstripped their English neighbours: on average, 25 percent of Jamaican households owned their own home, as opposed to 13 percent for their English counterparts.<sup>699</sup> Migrants increasingly had not just a room of one's own, but a house. This meant not only an end to the new arrival's experiential precarity, an end to racist tenancy refusals, and an end to Rachmanism and bed-sharing. But it also marked a new beginning. A beginning of autonomous migrant leisure spaces in their homes, but a beginning impossible to be read through a sanguine romanticism because of the context within and against which they were constructed. Many migrants' eyes were turning away from the immediate necessities of accommodation, and now fell to leisure and recreation. Here, they discovered a decades-old battleground which necessitated new tools of subversion and resistance.

We should close this section by briefly discussing an additional motivation for the growth of Caribbean migrant house parties. Aside from the pressing specificities of the historical context, we must also give credence to questions of cultural context, and its dynamics of transmission and migration. Within the Caribbean, drinking and socialising were practices chiefly located within the home, and it was this cultural framework which individual migrants carried across the metropolitan border – cultural baggage accompanying its material counterparts. Public house culture was to many migrants an alien phenomenon, the closest Caribbean analogue being the male-dominated roadside rum shops where customers would buy alcohol for consumption at home.<sup>700</sup> The creation of party spaces within migrant homes was thus as much to do with questions of cultural continuity and a reenactment of more familiar cultural forms – not just a hostile leisure landscape, but a perplexing one.

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<sup>698</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>699</sup> R. B. Davison, *Black British: Immigrants to England* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1966), 53.

<sup>700</sup> See Kelvin Cook-Mohammed quoted in Francis, *Hope*, 209. See also "Myrtle" quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 21; Grant, *Homecoming*, 294.

### 5.2.3: Alternative Caribbean leisure spaces

Before turning to the house and blues party spaces that these migrants created, it is important to understand that despite the emotional and psychological roles they would fulfil for the community, they remain but one volume in the story of Caribbean migrant leisure spaces in Britain. Whilst not the main object of this chapter, we should keep the following context in mind throughout.

Throughout their lifespan, parties within the home coexisted with other products of migrants' initiatives to create spaces and places where they might socialise, interact within support networks, find sexual or romantic partners, engage in cultural consumption and expression, and emote. Borne of the same fundamental necessities as house and blues parties, these took the form of black-owned venues, such as dance halls and clubs, along with events such as dances, functions, beauty contests, and music concerts, held mostly in town and church halls and organised by black community leaders and an ever-growing litany of Caribbean migrant organisations. These events were not only synchronous with the age of house and blues parties, roughly from the mid-1950s until the end of the 1980s, but also presaged their growth as they were not contingent on home ownership reaching a critical mass. The Jamaican medical practitioner and activist Harold Moody, for example, was planning the creation of a cultural centre in London by mid-1945, a plan stymied by his death in 1947 and the subsequent decline of the organisation he had founded, the League of Coloured Peoples.<sup>701</sup> This made Liverpool's Stanley House the country's only social organisation and cultural centre which catered to black Britons before the postwar migrations.<sup>702</sup> After this, black activists and organisers stepped in to fill the void: In 1953, Amy Ashwood Garvey, the Jamaican pan-Africanist feminist, established the Afro Women's Centre and Residential Club in Ladbroke Grove, aiming to 'answer the longfelt need of the coloured woman for spiritual, cultural, social, and political advancement'.<sup>703</sup> Other migrants with a more entrepreneurial bent decided to establish ballrooms and dance halls where their

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<sup>701</sup> David Killingray, "'To Do Something for the Race': Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples", in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. Bill Schwarz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 66.

<sup>702</sup> *Liverpool Echo*, 23 June 1952.

<sup>703</sup> Excerpt from an Afro-Women's Centre advertisement, n.d., Amy Ashwood Garvey Memorabilia, Main Library, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago



peers could be assured of admittance. One such was the Paramount Ballroom on Tottenham Court Road, owned by a Jamaican immigrant. Here, black working migrants, African students, and a handful of Cold War-era US servicemen jived and jitterbugged until five or six a.m in a cavernous main room decked out in palatial fashion, light from the chandeliers bouncing off the gold-panelled walls.<sup>704</sup> It was in this room that Lord Kitchener, the calypso artist who watched from the *Windrush* as stowaways flung themselves into Tilbury Docks' water, encountered the same men just a few days later 'jiving and dancing around'.<sup>705</sup> The Paramount could well have been the unnamed London dance hall featured in a 1949 *Sunday Mirror* article, allegedly describing itself as "'London's Harlem'", with Caribbean men 'very much in the majority'.<sup>706</sup> From these early beginnings, migrant initiatives to create autonomous social spaces for black people expanded throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Brixton's Mango Club, operating since at least 1957, was forced to close in 1959 following a protracted legal dispute with the local Council,<sup>707</sup> while the black-owned Happy Link Club in Birmingham threw Christmas parties in the 1960s.<sup>708</sup> On account of their fixity and easily identifiable nature, black leisure venues such as these became lightning rods for white racist attacks in 1958 when, in addition to black house parties, venues such as the Calypso Club in London were firebombed.<sup>709</sup>

Aside from these relatively permanent places and spaces, migrants also began organising, sponsoring, and patronising singular events. One of the most important catalysts for this was the growth of migrant organisations, who sponsored such events, and black media outlets, which advertised them, in the second half of the 1950s. Dances in town and church halls featuring calypso bands and American jazz were the go-to format. The British Caribbean Association, for example, hosted an annual ball, with their 1960 edition at Kensington Town Hall featuring music from The Dudley Moore Sextet and

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<sup>704</sup> Lloyd Bradley, *Sounds Like London: 100 Years of Black Music in the Capital* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2013), 22-3; Francis, *Hope*, 106-7.

<sup>705</sup> Aldwyn "Lord Kitchener" Roberts quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 66.

<sup>706</sup> *Sunday Mirror*, 30 October 1949.

<sup>707</sup> *West Indian Gazette*, September 1959.

<sup>708</sup> *West Indian Gazette*, February 1963.

<sup>709</sup> *Daily Mail*, 3 September 1958; "Mrs. Werner" quoted in 'Racial Problems in England', BBC Home Service, 14 September 1958. For the firebombing of house parties, see David Katz, 'Count Suckle Obituary', *Guardian*, 4 June 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/jun/04/count-suckle>.

the Sonny Atwell Melotone Steel Orchestra; tickets for the event were sold in Britain's first black record store – Theo's Record Shop in Brixton.<sup>710</sup> A few weeks later on the other side of Hyde Park, the West Indian Student Union threw their Christmas dance in Seymour Hall.<sup>711</sup> In 1963 Derby's West Indian Association booked a local hall where migrants 'danced delightedly to the rhythm of Count Allan and his Calypso Music', and that same year the Nottingham West Indian Women's Club booked a local community centre and 'held a successful and enjoyable social'.<sup>712</sup> Dance, talent, and beauty contests were another feature of this period: July 1962 saw black community magazine *Flamingo* sponsor a dancing contest with the grand prize 'a round trip to the Caribbean',<sup>713</sup> while The United Afro-West Indian Brotherhood held a 'Grand Beauty Contest' in March 1964 Camberwell.<sup>714</sup> Such cultural forms persisted into the 1970s. The Trinidad and Tobago Society held a dance featuring the 'calypso king' The Mighty Duke in 1971, with other entertainment coming in the form of 'original Trinidad folk dancers'.<sup>715</sup> That same year, the Association of Jamaicans held a dance 'to celebrate Jamaica's 9<sup>th</sup> year of independence' at Quaglino's Ballroom in London.<sup>716</sup>

We cannot, of course, instigate a discussion of alternative Caribbean leisure spaces without mentioning its most famous and enduring format: the Notting Hill Carnival. Much has been written of the event – the context of violence from which it was born, its complex internal politics, its progressive association with deviance and criminality, and its eventual "redemption" through its transformation into a homily for modern, multicultural Britain – but suffice it to say here that for migrants Carnival operated in much the same way as their other social fora. By carving out a critical opening for cultural expression within an unfamiliar, often hostile environment, they constructed places and spaces where emotional experience, beauty ideals, and social codes were both consonant with more familiar Caribbean patterns and influenced by their historically-specific experiences of migration and diaspora. Additionally, Carnival served

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<sup>710</sup> *West Indian Gazette*, December 1960.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>712</sup> *West Indian Gazette*, February 1963.

<sup>713</sup> *Flamingo*, July 1962.

<sup>714</sup> *West Indian Gazette*, March 1964.

<sup>715</sup> *West Indian World*, 3 September 1971.

<sup>716</sup> *Joffa*, June 1971.

as another site, along with house and blues parties, where the cultural politics and emotional expressions of disaffection and alienation were enacted for a generation of black British people. However, carnival also contained an element of singularity in the fact that it was Britain's public space they were, if only temporarily, reclaiming and repurposing: the very space bound to emotional associations of violence, fear, precarity; affective bridgeheads which inverted the traditional colonial flow of power. The fact that they were actively renegotiating what it meant to be British and shaping a creolised national identity was neither consciously present within the minds of participants, nor of particular import for the immediate historical context. It is only through the privileged prism of retrospection that such processes of attrition and accretion become visible.

Finally, we should close this section on alternative Caribbean leisure spaces with an assessment of its relationship to Britain's "colour bar". We should be very cautious of overdetermined lines of argumentation when considering the impact of Britain's "colour bar", and this cuts two ways. First, on a point of historical accuracy we need to understand that throughout this period, British leisure venues did not practise a blanket ban on black people and that, especially in the industrial centres, black migrants always had a smattering of venues, such as the Lyceum, Paramount, Astoria, and Rialto, they could and did attend. Although making for a compellingly simple historical narrative, the growth of migrant leisure spaces cannot be monocausally attributed to these exclusionary practices. A key historical driver, yes, but we irrevocably flatten and distort the historical narrative if we simply equate these exclusionary practices as singularly determining the growth of these spaces, ignoring other incentives and contextual factors for their growth such as their impact on notions of collective identity, more familiar patterns of cultural consumption, economic motives, and their function as spaces of emotional refuge, all of which would have existed more-or-less independently of the "colour bar". Conceptualising migrant leisure spaces as *only* a reactive force in the wake of exclusion inherently circumscribes their creative power on the levels of economics, psychology, and emotions. Second, we should also understand that in almost every historical source we have, the colour bar and social exclusion was a lived reality for a huge number of migrants, and a pervasive condition of black people's experiences. The creation of autonomous migrant social spaces lay partly in the uncertainty, rather than absolute knowledge, that they may be turned away. Why go through the rigamarole and

rituals of bodily and sartorial preparation for a night out if one might be turned away? The final word on this point should come from one of the community's chief organs from the late 1950s into the 1960s, the *West Indian Gazette*: "We have almost no facilities for recreation; no halls of our own, no club premises where games may be played. The fight for integration is often too gradual, leaving us no choice when not at work to either sleep or play the gram".<sup>717</sup>

### 5.3: Enduring characteristics of migrant parties

Despite this rich and self-constructed leisure landscape, it was house and blues parties which became 'the universal form of immigrant entertainment'.<sup>718</sup> But although they may have been universal in their scope, these were spaces characterised by an extraordinary malleability in their deployment and forms over time. By tracking these changes, it is possible to chart the affective values invested in such spaces, and how these interacted dynamically with changing historical circumstances over several decades. We will first look at some of the more enduring emotional styles which set a rough framework for migrant parties, and which would be carried over in one form or another during the transition from house parties to the age of blues parties. Once this emotional foundation has been laid, we will turn to those affective styles characteristic in particular of earlier house parties. This then leads us into a discussion of the transition into blues parties, the particular emotional and sensory changes which they ushered in, and the wider historical context which this was enacted against.

#### 5.3.1: Safe spaces

The interaction of Caribbean migrants with different components of Britain's emotional regime represents an enormously important shaping influence of these parties, simultaneously operating as both a rationale for their formation and channels through which their emotional atmospheres would be shaped. The components of this regime which exercised the greatest force here were the affective prescriptions regarding racist hostility, fear, and hatred, and which found their expression in practices of discrimination

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<sup>717</sup> *West Indian Gazette*, November 1960.

<sup>718</sup> Donald Hinds, 'The "Island" of Brixton', *Oral History* 8, no. 1 (1980): 51.

and violence. This becomes easier to grasp once we understand racism as partly consisting of a set of emotion concepts – hatred, fear, and hostility – along with a combination of practices and expressions based on those emotions. We have already seen how metropolitan discrimination generated powerful incentives for the creation of autonomous migrant leisure spaces, and we should now turn to the question of practices of violence and their role in the affective makeup of migrant parties.

From their earliest beginnings, part of the emotional power of these parties resided in their ability to circumscribe a spatial zone free from the emotional structures of hatred and fear in the host society's affective culture, and in particular their expressions through verbal or physical violence. In so doing, parties became places to achieve the emotional states of safety and security, places where one could attenuate the hypersensitivity to sensory stimuli which came with the navigation of public spaces.<sup>719</sup> A crucially important detail in this narrative lies in the recognition that violence was endemic to the black experience throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Failure to attend to this violence presents a historical chronology whereby racist violence becomes a part of the black experience only after 1958, when it spilled saliently into newspaper columns and into scholarly attention. Subscribing to this myopic historicism in turn distorts the emotionality of parties before 1958, when the attainment of the emotional state of safety from violence was extant and embedded within these spaces.

The spaces within which these parties were held – migrant homes – were already inscribed with the affective values of safety and security, formed against the precarious emotional associations of the public space separated from the home by just a few millimetres of glass. Yet they were intentionally intensified through the enactment of parties. Mike Nesbeth ultimately reaches beyond the precarity of black bodies to locate the importance of these parties within emotional dynamics: 'When people say safety in numbers it's not just from a physical point of view. That is one format. There's safety in feeling safe from the hostile environment around here'.<sup>720</sup> The attainment of this emotional state was not a passive epiphenomenon of these parties; instead, these spaces and the practices and objects within them were actively structured, performed, and manipulated to create such affective experiences. As one would expect when

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<sup>719</sup> See, for example, Mike Phillips quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 146-7.

<sup>720</sup> Mike Nesbeth quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 299.

dealing with questions of violence, the body was central to this process. Parties became spaces marked by the dense concentration of black bodies; it was common for these spaces to have ‘hardly any room for jiving because of how closely packed the floor was’.<sup>721</sup> Thus, the emotional efficacy of these parties in achieving states of safety and security for partygoers rested partly on their centripetal force in concentrating many black bodies into small spaces. Because of the volume of the music, and ‘because space is so limited’, communication is ‘made with the body’ in these parties.<sup>722</sup> Donald Hinds views these dense spaces as ‘an excuse for bodies touching’, but in such tight and frictional confines, and factoring in the historical context, it is possible to read physical touch as not merely expressions of eroticism but mutual affirmations of protection. In such a reading, the manipulation of objects and structuring of space becomes a tool to facilitate a compact, tactile congregation of bodies and thus certain desired emotional states. Furniture was commonly removed from the main dancing room to maximise capacity, and either the Bluespot radiogram was pushed into the corner or else replaced by a sound system’s stack of speakers.<sup>723</sup> Count Lynwoodee, a Nottingham sound system operator in the late 1950s, explicitly lays out what was at stake in his motivations: ‘I started the first sound system ... to bring black people together, because things was hard for us in those days. The Teddy Boys were bad attacking black people’.<sup>724</sup> Here, the emotional refuge functions by allowing partygoers to participate in a subversive experience of safety and security; emotions which, through white attacks upon and abuse toward black bodies, were deemed deviant by aspects of the underlying emotional regime.

### 5.3.2: Violence, hostility, and identity formation

The dynamic between migrant parties and the contexts of violence and exclusion which they were practised within also contains critical consequences for the question of diasporic identity. As Stuart Hall has pointed out, it was only in the metropole that a

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<sup>721</sup> Donald Hinds quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 166.

<sup>722</sup> Ken Pryce, *Endless Pressure: A Study of West Indian Lifestyles in Bristol* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1986), 100.

<sup>723</sup> Donald Hinds quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 166. For the manipulation of furniture, see “Mr. Ben” quoted in *Ibid.*, 148-9; Grant, *Homecoming*, 295.

<sup>724</sup> “Doctor” quoted in McMillan, ‘Rockers’, 16.

sense of a black identity began to emerge amongst Caribbean migrants, and a wealth of historical evidence gives credence to such a view.<sup>725</sup> Parties were the zone *par excellence* where such collective identities were not only forged, negotiated, and reworked, but done so in ways where feeling, affect, and sensory experience were its chief modalities of operationalisation. In summarising the intersubjective and interactional significance of these parties, Mike Nesbeth typifies this dynamic: ‘you get together and you play your music and you *feel* at one with each other because you share a common bond against the kind of discrimination that is perpetuated against you as a black person’.<sup>726</sup> In addition, the interaction between parties and affectively experienced notions of identity changed over time, commensurate with changing historical contexts and demographics: early party spaces of the 1950s were crucial in the formation of a black diasporic identity, whilst migrants’ children seized on the same cultural form and adapted it to suit the specific struggles of their generation, in so doing negotiating for themselves not so much a black diasporic identity but a black British one. We will return to this question later, when reggae, lovers rock, and the struggles of the second-generation emerge in blues parties. The particularities of these interactions changed over time, but the essential nature of them remained an enduring feature of black parties in Britain from their inception in the 1950s through to the 1980s. By taking a broad and historically plastic interpretation of “the condition”, the following statement could be applied to black postwar parties in any decade, and amongst either generation: ‘We used to get together, we used to talk about the condition ... you’d talk about it, you’d discuss it’.<sup>727</sup> This dialogic component of these spaces also opens the way to the British black power movement, and the growth of Rastafarianism and reggae: ‘it’s like a powder keg, it builds up ... It keeps your sanity, it takes you away for a while from the reality of the hostility that you’d deal with probably from Monday through till Friday. But even so, you could see and you could feel the frustration building up day by day, week by week’.<sup>728</sup>

An enduring function of these parties, then, was their ability to carve out intersubjective experiences of identity from the specific historical conditions and

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<sup>725</sup> Hall and Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger*, 99. See also unnamed migrant quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 51; Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 179.

<sup>726</sup> Mike Nesbeth quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 299. Emphasis added.

<sup>727</sup> Mike Nesbeth quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>728</sup> Mike Nesbeth quoted in *Ibid.*

struggles of each period. This was enacted chiefly on the level of *felt* experience, and bound actors together under a shared intersubjective umbrella, operated as a coping mechanism, and helped formulate languages of resistance. As Mike Nesbeth says, these parties ‘held us together’,<sup>729</sup> whilst Guyanese Doreen Phillips, reminiscing on the parties she attended, touched on ‘the closeness that we black people had’.<sup>730</sup> This is where the emotional refuge is again activated. An understanding of identity as chiefly affective and *felt* in its operation allows us to view the sites where they were worked out and participated within as sites of expression – sites which allowed participants to express their own self-fashioned conceptions of identity, and by so doing jettison the metropolitan idea of blackness, an idea unilaterally imposed, semantically static, and formed largely through the prism of colonialist histories and practices.

### 5.3.3: Parties and expressiveness

When migrants did encounter hatred and hostility that was not immediately expressed through violence, it was often couched in cultures of (in)expressiveness completely alien to them. Caribbean migrants perceived in Britain’s social codes and cultural mores an evasiveness and lack of directness which, by turns, confused, rankled, or infuriated them. Cecil Holness recalled an encounter with a racist landlady who agreed to let him a room over the telephone, only to retract the offer when she saw him in person. After several minutes of fumbled excuses, Holness finally extracted the true motive: ‘I don’t want black people’. Holness replied by simply asking: ‘why not say so?’.<sup>731</sup> This evasiveness of racism finds its way into the contemporary literary output of the Caribbean diaspora. Sam Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* fuses this with the region’s characteristic transnationalism when Moses explains ‘the thing is, in America they don’t like you, and they tell you so straight, so that you know how you stand. Over here is the old English diplomacy: “thank you sir”, and “how do you do” and that sort of thing’.<sup>732</sup> This indirectness finds its rhetorical counterpart in what migrants perceived as a

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<sup>729</sup> Mike Nesbeth quoted in Upshal, ‘Intolerance’.

<sup>730</sup> Doreen Phillips quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 30.

<sup>731</sup> Cecil Holness quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 90.

<sup>732</sup> Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*, 20-1. See also Lamming’s *The Emigrants*, where Tornado talks of ‘the way they smile at you. Behin’ that smile, boy, the teeth they show does bite’. See Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 67.



characteristic British deferral of responsibility for their racist emotions, a cultural trait brilliantly parodied by A. G. Bennett in *Because They Know Not*:

Since I come 'ere I never met a single English person who 'ad any colour prejudice. Once, I walked the whole length of a street looking for a room, and everyone told me that he or she 'ad no prejudice against coloured people. It was the neighbour who was stupid. If we could only find the neighbour we could solve the entire problem. But to find 'im is the trouble! Neighbours are the worst people to live beside in this country.<sup>733</sup>

It was through these encounters with a certain flavour of racist emotional expression and practice that migrants picked up on characteristic elements of Britain's wider emotional regime. Thomas Dixon has forcefully demonstrated that between roughly 1870 and 1965, Britain was in the thrall of an emotional style which prescribed a terse restraint – an age of the “stiff upper lip”, where cultural prescriptions regarding emotional expression, and particularly weeping, were restrained and regulated.<sup>734</sup> It was into this context which Caribbean migrants were thrust, and by all accounts it butted heads nastily with the emotional styles of their own islands, helping to condition the affective shape their parties would take. In the minds of these migrants, their islands were places marked by higher degrees of warmth, openness, and conviviality. Places where ‘people enjoy themselves more. They’re more open and friendly’, as opposed to Britain where people were ‘locked up’ in themselves.<sup>735</sup> This motif of a stark disjuncture in openness and conviviality is repeated ad nauseam in the primary source material. Jamaican Hermelyne Gayle says that ‘people were not open like us in the West Indies’,<sup>736</sup> whilst Ken, an Indo-Trinidadian, poignantly recounted his ultimately fruitless quest for whiteness and acceptance and provided for us his internal reasoning: ‘my manner was still a shade too bright, my smile a trifle too spontaneous, myself a nuance too friendly’.<sup>737</sup>

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<sup>733</sup> A. G. Bennett, *Because They Know Not* (London: Phoenix Press, 1959), 22.

<sup>734</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*.

<sup>735</sup> Conversation between “Dave” and “Pearline” in Hinds, *Journey*, xx.

<sup>736</sup> Aubrey and Hermelyne Gayle oral history interview, *Sound System Culture*, <https://soundsystemcultureblog.tumblr.com/>.

<sup>737</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 3.

At a fundamental level this resided in the British culture's circumscription of codes of expression and social interaction. On one level this operates to structure the rules governing interactions in themselves – a formal, encoded, and heavily structured set of rules governing social communication. One of the most valuable pieces of source material we have here is a 1959 pamphlet named *Going to Britain?*, published by the BBC's Caribbean Service for prospective migrants. Because it is written by Caribbeans already resident in Britain, it gives us a critical insight into the cultural codes that migrants deemed important for fellow Caribbeans to know and might not necessarily possess. After imploring them to respect English people's privacy and to avoid congregating on doorsteps and pavements, the pamphlet states that 'what they like is politeness. You may find yourself getting tired of saying please and thank you, but they will never be tired of hearing you say it'.<sup>738</sup> Many migrants perceived such prescriptions as indirect, oblique, even dishonest. As Jamaican veteran E. Martin Noble wrote about English culture, 'honesty of expression is for the undiplomatic'.<sup>739</sup> Parties, then, were thus designated spaces where such strict codes could, for a time, be suspended. Guyanese migrant Doreen Phillips, for instance, recalled of these parties that 'you didn't have all these airs and graces'.<sup>740</sup> This lack of feigned formality meant, in the main, a less structured directness of expression and a willingness to confront *all* emotions, whether positively or negatively construed. After a long account of a migrant party gone awry, riven by island rivalries and nationalisms, Donald Hinds reflects that 'it is this informality, and the resultant chaos, which form the most striking contrast between the lives of migrant and Briton'.<sup>741</sup> The openness and conviviality which many migrants perceived in their home island's affective culture was, at times, coterminous with its shores.

The interaction of migrants with Britain's emotional regime found its most dislocating aspect in the circumscribed nature of British culture's rules surrounding verbal interaction and expression. Connie Mark remembers 'when I came, I saw everybody going into their little houses, and then nobody spoke to you. That never happened in Jamaica. As long as you met somebody in the street - whether you'd met them or not it's

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<sup>738</sup> 'Going to Britain?' (BBC Caribbean Service, 1959), 32-3.

<sup>739</sup> Noble, *Jamaica Airman*, 66.

<sup>740</sup> Doreen Phillips quoted in Reynolds, *When I Came*, 30.

<sup>741</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 117.

good morning, good evening, and hello'.<sup>742</sup> Ben Bousquet concurs, finding the dearth of greetings and communication disquieting – he was instead 'accustomed to people speaking just naturally and easily and sociably'.<sup>743</sup> Again, these cross-cultural hiccups find evocation in migrants' literary output. Tornado, a character in George Lamming's *The Emigrants*, states that 'in England nobody notice anybody else. You pass me in the street or sit next to me in the train as if I come from a next planet'.<sup>744</sup> Parties, then, became a key site for the recreation of more open-ended, multifocal verbal dynamics. Maxi remembers that, at his parents' parties, 'the conversation would start as soon as the first brother arrived and it wouldn't stop until the last one had left. Never did "these two" start talking to each other, or "these three" begin a separate conversation, or "those four" lock in dialogue. The conversation was room-wide, all night long' and 'completely free-flowing'.<sup>745</sup>

And so these emotional refuges did not only serve as respites from racialised affective codes within Britain's emotional regime. Emotional suffering arises here not only from acts of racist emotional practice, but from the lived everyday realities of navigating an emotional regime with starkly different – and in many ways stricter – prescriptions. Migrant parties afforded partygoers an important space for the suspension of these codes of Britain's emotional regime in favour of patterns of feeling more culturally familiar to them; as one migrant asked, 'what else could we do to relieve the frustrations of a suppressed life in Britain?'.<sup>746</sup>

#### 5.3.4: Emotional release

Aside from migrants' interactions with Britain's emotional regime and social codes, frustration built up through other channels – channels which interacted and fed off one another, creating undesirable emotional effects which were to be exorcised in these party spaces. One of the most significant domains for the creation of negative emotional experiences was structural. The knowledge of being underemployed in low-skilled jobs,

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<sup>742</sup> Connie Mark quoted in Upshal, 'Arrival'.

<sup>743</sup> Ben Bousquet quoted in Ibid., 128.

<sup>744</sup> Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 74.

<sup>745</sup> Maxwell "Maxi Jazz" Fraser quoted in Matthews, *Voices*, 236.

<sup>746</sup> May Cambridge quoted in South London Press and The Voice, *Forty Winters On*, 35.

and the bodily impacts of these occupations' long hours and physical demands, combined with the daily humiliations of poverty – all of which the result of a socio-economic structure designed to push migrants into an underclass – to produce states of tension and frustration which these migrants resolved on the dance floor. For Andrew Pritchard's mother, who migrated from Jamaica in 1951, parties were 'her one bit of relief from the daily round of factory shifts'.<sup>747</sup> And for a large portion of the postwar period these emotions were felt within a particular historical moment wherein the Caribbean community, and its relative presence in places of work, was growing but far from substantial. In order to understand these migrants' experiences, the constituent elements of their experiences cannot be neatly separated out, and must instead attend to them and their interactions simultaneously, as they were experienced. It is in precisely this way that these structural considerations interact with considerations of racism, cultural dislocation, and demographics to produce the negatively-conceived emotions migrants were exorcising, suspending, or bracketing. No clearer statement of this comes from Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe, who evoke the links between racism and structural economics as producing senses of loneliness and isolation without need for reference to Marx's alienation: 'racial tensions and the pressures of a hard, long working routine made loneliness and reality for us'.<sup>748</sup> The multidirectional, diffuse nature of these tensions' sources is surmised by Mike Nesbeth: 'You needed something then to take you from the pressures of the climate, situation, the culture, the food, the hostility against you as a man of colour'. Without parties, Nesbeth argues, 'I don't know what we would have done as people'.<sup>749</sup> Migrant parties were spaces not only for achieving certain emotional states, but also for the suppression or release of unwanted emotions; they became 'balms to the aching souls'.<sup>750</sup>

#### 5.4: Unique attributes of house parties

It was these elements which largely dictated the emotional atmospheres of early parties and would be largely retained, often in an adapted fashion, as house parties gave way to

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<sup>747</sup> Andrew Pritchard and Norman Parker, *Urban Smuggler* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2011), 17.

<sup>748</sup> Bryan, Dadzie, and Scafe, *Heart of the Race*, 37.

<sup>749</sup> Mike Nesbeth quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 299.

<sup>750</sup> Hinds, 'Island', 50.

blues parties. Yet earlier house parties also carried with them distinct characteristics in their form, structure, and enactment, ones not necessarily carried over into the transition to the blues.

#### 5.4.1: The front room and its values

This begins, first and foremost, with a distinct spatial context of enactment. Early parties were usually held in the front room – a site which, as Michael McMillan demonstrated in a landmark exhibition, was of enormous cultural significance to Caribbean migrants.<sup>751</sup> On a certain level the import of the front room reaches beyond the historical specificities of this group in that it functioned as a site where particular sets of social codes and gendered values were produced, arranged, presented, and replicated. Having developed from the Victorian parlour room, we find that not only are that era's notions of respectability, domesticity, and propriety central to this space, but its dynamics of perspective are largely retained. Like the parlour room, the front room was a place to entertain guests and thus acted not merely as a family's projection of these cultural values but a projection of them *to the outside world*; an outward-facing portal to the interior of the family. The conceptual key which ties these values and dynamics together rests on a projection of status, an identity performance which one is inviting – persuading – others to accept. It represents, in microcosm, the power structures of the Western nuclear family as they are projected along generational and gendered lines. A place from which children were excluded, except perhaps on Sundays; a place for the husband's relaxation and entertainment; and a place where the wife would make aesthetic decisions and keep clean.

On another level, however, the import and function of the front room becomes filtered through historical context to produce a unique, creolised space. Not only are its cultural values learned through the lens of a colonial Caribbean context, but the historical specificities of the migration experience come to assert their sway on the room. The contexts from which the cultural value of homeownership arose within this group – the precarity of arrival, the economic motif of underemployment, and the

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<sup>751</sup> See Michael McMillan (curator), 'The West Indian Front Room', Geffrye Museum, London, 2005-2006. This exhibition was subsequently turned into a book. See Michael McMillan, *The Front Room: Migrant Aesthetics in the Home* (London: Black Dog, 2009).

structural racism of the housing market – shape the affective values ascribed to the interior rooms once homes were bought. Norma Walker, recalling the squalid, Rachmanesque roomsharing of the early Caribbean experience, asserts that the front room ‘was so special to a West Indian, because we were used to that small likkle room’.<sup>752</sup>

The spatial zone of the front room itself inherently contained these affective tones, but just as important was its role as a frame for material objects which struck the same chords, producing an orchestral ensemble of purchasing power, material splendour, and thus status which hosts invited guests to hear. The centrepiece was the Bluespot radiogram, a combined phonogram, radio, and speaker system housed in a wooden cabinet without which ‘no front room was complete’.<sup>753</sup> “The gram” was the focal point of entertainment in Caribbean living spaces throughout the 1950s, but because of its price also functioned as a weighty waymarker of spending power and upward social mobility for guests. This would regularly be flanked with hire-purchase furniture, distinguished by a film of protective plastic wrapping which covered it. Glass cabinets would contain ornaments or objects which simultaneously spoke to domestic utility and spending power: Norma Walker reflects on the communicative value of these objects when she says ‘when your friends come along you want them to say, “oh look at those lovely plates. Look at those cups and saucers; oh, she’s earning some loads of money”’.<sup>754</sup>

During parties, these were the evaluations which hosts desired guests take from such objects. And yet come party night, guests actively projected their own identity performances, and indeed used objects to do so. Without the canvas of the front room this necessitated a sparser brush. Two ways to achieve this were the practices of “bringing a bottle of something” or else helping to underwrite the costs for the party’s food.<sup>755</sup> The supply of alcohol and food was, of course, a part of the identity performance of hosts: the day of the party was spent preparing chicken, souse, and curried goat, which multiplied the domesticity of the household and their perception as providers and breadwinners, capable of properly hosting guests. But by contributing materially and

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<sup>752</sup> Norma Walker quoted in Marcus Ryder, *A Little Piece of Home: The Front Room* (BBC Two, 4 May 1999).

<sup>753</sup> Grant, *Homecoming*, 294.

<sup>754</sup> Norma Walker quoted in Ryder, *Piece of Home*.

<sup>755</sup> For the practice of “bringing a bottle of something”, see Hinds, *Journey*, 109. For contributions to food costs, see Ken Corbin quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 145.

financially to such rituals, guests carved out an identity performance of their own along the same lines. Guests' most important tool, however, was sartorial aesthetics. They would attend, immaculately cleaned and groomed, in their smartest and most expensive clothes. Maxi Jazz remembers his father hosting parties at their family home where 'all the men would show up in suits, usually dark, with a little skinny tie'.<sup>756</sup> It was through these aesthetic choices that guests could participate in mutual projections and recognitions of the respectable traits of status, spending power, and upward social mobility.

One of the most interesting intersections between sartorialism, objects, and projections of respectability rests on the role of children within party spaces. With parenthood and childrearing practices central to the cultural values of domesticity, respectability, and propriety, one of the functions of children – from the perspective of adults – was not dissimilar to the inanimate objects they used in the front room as value-communicating tools. Operating through a demarcation of space, the front room was a key vector for the projection of familial power structures, a place associated with adulthood, and in particular with the patriarch: 'the front room was sacrosanct, a designated area marked off for our father's entertainment'.<sup>757</sup> Children were thus excluded from this space, only allowed to enter either on Sundays or, tellingly, during parties. Operating largely on the premise of "children should be seen and not heard", young people during these events were embedded in the object-oriented identity projections of hosts and guests: 'we had to sit there for what seemed like an eternity – largely ignored by the big people'.<sup>758</sup> Within this presentation of children, the question of sartorial aesthetics again returns. The presence of children *per se* meant little for projections of domesticity if they looked uncared and unprovided for, and thus would be accordingly dressed in ways which mirrored the formality of the adults: 'in stiff tweed suits – their sunday best'.<sup>759</sup> The permittal of children into the front room during parties represents a temporary suspension of certain domestic codes and spatial demarcations, but simultaneously a reinforcement of parents' familial cachet, and thus respectability.

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<sup>756</sup> Maxwell "Maxi Jazz" Fraser quoted in Matthews, *Voices*, 235.

<sup>757</sup> Sonia Saunders quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 313-4.

<sup>758</sup> Sonia Saunders quoted in *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>759</sup> Sonia Saunders quoted in *Ibid.*

But children were not – and perhaps this goes without saying – merely objects. Aside from other affective dynamics from the perspective of adults (the immaculate presentation of children can forcefully be read as expressions of material providence, care, and love) children also exercised a measure of agency within these parties, shaping circumstances to suit their own ends. Maxi Jazz remembers being allowed to choose records at his father's parties, and used this to his advantage: 'when I felt like I hadn't had enough attention over the course of the evening, I'd put on one of my records ... just to interrupt the flow a little bit'. This inevitably drew the ire of the adults, but to him 'it didn't matter that they were yelling at me, I was the centre of attention for two minutes'.<sup>760</sup>

#### 5.4.2: Intimacy

The presence, functions, and actions of children also hints at wider questions of attendance and demographic composition within these early party spaces, and these questions become additional distinguishing characteristics of these events compared to the blues parties which were to come. The visibility of children at these early parties bespeaks, as one might expect, a far more familial demographic composition. These spaces were attended, by and large, by a handful of nuclear families – they were 'family-oriented', as Allyson Williams remembers.<sup>761</sup> And insofar as the nuclear family is a key value within concepts of domesticity and respectability this became another way for migrants to project and participate within these cultural frameworks.

Additionally, in terms of sheer numbers, these house parties were far more localised and smaller-scale, hosts knowing all guests personally or at most by one degree of separation. The following week, the host would turn into the hosted as parties alternated between the different homes of the participants within tight social networks.<sup>762</sup> Not only did this afford each migrant household the opportunity to use manipulations of space and objects to project their own identity performances, but mirrored the nature of the incipient postwar migration flow, the black presence still relatively small throughout most of the 1950s. Read within this context, early parties also

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<sup>760</sup> Maxwell "Maxi Jazz" Fraser quoted in Matthews, *Voices*, 235.

<sup>761</sup> Allyson Williams quoted in *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>762</sup> Hinds, 'Island', 51.



functioned to enable black migrants to meet one-another in scattered and often lonely communities; they were ‘a way of meeting a lot of West Indians’.<sup>763</sup>

With these distinct demographic compositions comes distinct dynamics of interpersonal relations. On the level of community, in these early years black people would commonly acknowledge each other whilst navigating public spaces, even if there was no mutual familiarity: British-Jamaican comedian Lenny Henry, who grew up in Dudley in the 1950s, remembers his parents ‘walking around and nodding to other black people who I didn’t know. “Who was that?” “Oh, I don’t know. It’s just somebody, you’ve got to show your respect. Just to say Hello, it’s good to just incline your head”’.<sup>764</sup> Such dynamics seeped into early party spaces from these wider fora, powerfully conditioning their affective interactivity and levels of intimacy: ‘at that time ... everybody was familiar, it was small’.<sup>765</sup> These micro-climates and the higher levels of intimacy within them also served more quotidian purposes, as these parties became sites for the diffusion of knowledge and the construction of support networks. Here, partygoers could learn about available properties and job vacancies, and receive news about mutual acquaintances back in the Caribbean.<sup>766</sup>

#### 5.4.3: The affective value of house parties

We should now think through these unique characteristics of early parties in terms of emotional experience. The common denominator in most of these attributes returns us to the question of an identity projection of respectability, domesticity, and propriety, and I would like to suggest that rather than interpreting them purely as expressions of status and upward social mobility – ends in themselves – we ask *why* these were desired cultural expressions and formulate answers which go beyond the remit of social psychology. The successful projection of these identity performances, at root level, revolves around the generation of emotions, and whilst one reading of the significance of these emotions could arrive at narcissism or egotism a far more compelling reading comes when we construe these strivings for certain emotional states positively. Feelings

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<sup>763</sup> Joan Springer quoted in Western, *Passage*, 145.

<sup>764</sup> Lenny Henry quoted in Upshal, ‘Arrival’.

<sup>765</sup> Allyson Williams quoted in Matthews, *Voices*, 147.

<sup>766</sup> Don Letts, *Don Letts Explains the ‘Blues Dance’*, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVZldfPItN4>.

of pride, of self-worth, and of self-affirmation are generated when others perceive one to be operating within the historically-contingent value-systems of respectability, domesticity, and upward social mobility, and this assumes critical importance once we factor in the historical context. Many of these migrants' experiences were typified by underemployment, a precarious arrival, and a structural shove into an underclass, and by participating in value systems that the dominant society tried to exclude them from, they disrupted the traditional flow of discursive power and generated their own feelings of self-worth. Parties then, as sites which effectively facilitate the expression of these value systems, become functional tools for the attainment of these positive emotional states, places where all may experience these emotions and, no doubt, justify to oneself that the tribulations of the journey and the uprootedness of one's life had, in some measure, been worth it.

### 5.5: The shift to blues parties

'By the end of the fifties', Donald Hinds says, 'it no longer made economic sense to adequately provide drinks for nearly a hundred people'.<sup>767</sup> It was in this moment that house parties began morphing into blues parties, and, as Hinds indicates, one of the most significant changes relates to scale. They were far larger, far more rambunctious affairs; attendance grew and became less tied to the immediate social networks of the hosts, and with this shift the intimacy of the earlier parties either evaporated or was transformed. Knowledge of blues parties was circulated amongst complex diasporic networks in places such as barbershops, factory floors, other dance floors, and, curiously enough, schools: Sharon Frazer-Carroll remembers distributing invitations for her mother's blues parties by 'asking our black friends at school to pass them to their parents'.<sup>768</sup> To facilitate the increased attendance, the main dance floor shifted from the sacrosanct front room and into the larger basement. It was in this moment, too, that the commercialisation of parties began. Charges would be levied for entry, and makeshift bars selling unlicensed alcohol and food – curried goat and rice the mainstay – erected.

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<sup>767</sup> Hinds, 'Island', 51.

<sup>768</sup> Sharon Frazer-Carroll quoted in Brinkhurst-Cuff, *Mother Country*, 89. For the importance of barbershops in the diffusion of diasporic knowledge, including parties, see Glass, *Newcomers*, 202; Lamming, *The Emigrants*, 129-62.

Motives for parties thus became not purely emotional or experiential, but economic. With transnational echoes of Harlem's rent parties, and in a Catholic indulgence-like collision of the spiritual and the economic, Don Letts explains: 'they provided an important social function, because it's where people could feel free and elevate your spirit ... another function was economic. People would get together and say "ok, we'll have a party round Don Brown's house" ... at the end of the session, Don Brown would have some money to feed or clothe his family'.<sup>769</sup>

Before we continue, it is important to understand that smaller, more family-oriented parties shot through with domesticity and propriety would persist throughout this period. A *Times* reporter, attending one of these smaller house parties in 1965, 'looked for sin' but found 'no money change hands'; only two people drunk; 'no drugs'; and, in a clear demonstration of the way that domesticity was central to these gatherings and the gendered spaces that existed *within* these parties, a group of women in a room upstairs 'doing their knitting'.<sup>770</sup> Nevertheless, they were increasingly eclipsed in the 1960s by the format of the blues party in terms of size, scope, and popularity.

### 5.5.1: Nostalgia and longing

Beginning with the growth of blues parties in the late 1950s, we find evidence both of Caribbean migrant parties' robustness as a social form and their exceptional emotional malleability. In this moment, an additional affective quality begins to assert itself on dance floors with increasing force: an emotional nostalgia which sought to recreate, re-present, and re-experience the social, emotional, and sensory milieus of their home islands.

This was not, in and of itself, alien to earlier parties. As we have seen, from the beginning partygoers were utilising these spaces to reenact codes of expressiveness more culturally familiar to them. But this is precisely where changing historical circumstances again help to elicit changing emotional experiences. Towards the close of the 1950s there was a critical shift of sentiment amongst these migrants; many began to realise they were not here for a temporary sojourn and were, almost unbeknownst to

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<sup>769</sup> Letts, *Don Letts Explains the Blues Dance*.

<sup>770</sup> *Times*, 21 January 1965.

themselves, settling down. Mike Philips locates the fulcrum of this shift within the racial attacks of 1958: after this, a 'changed mood' emerged which revolved around 'making a decision about what you did with your life here; that you weren't just passing through'.<sup>771</sup> There is evidence to support migrants paradoxically inverting the objective of racist attackers to "Keep Britain White", but in actuality this realisation ran across a chronological spectrum, coming to some, like Alford Gardner, earlier, and others later.<sup>772</sup>

Nevertheless, 'ten years after migration really got into its stride, it was plain that West Indians were not here to just fetch fire, as the Jamaicans would put it'.<sup>773</sup> An unnamed Jamaican conceded 'I know that I will not be going back. My wife knows that she will never be going back, but we never admit it to each other', and it is within these inexpressible feelings that it is possible to locate the nostalgic import of the blues dance.

<sup>774</sup> With ideologies of return no longer on the table, nostalgia and longing began to permeate Caribbean diasporic culture from multiple angles, ultimately seeping into the emotional fabric of blues parties. In a curious idiosyncratic twist, these emotions were not explicitly present – or at least, not commonly acknowledged – within these spaces. Instead, they manifested themselves in desires to recreate the experiential conditions – sensory, bodily, emotional – of the islands they had migrated from. Nostalgia and longing provided one of several emotional substrates to these parties, and practices, patterns of consumption, and the construction of environments geared toward particular sensory experiences were the mechanisms used to create these affective "return migrations". Blues parties were increasingly about *feeling* one was back home. One Jamaican migrant stated that 'to me the importance of Jamaica is that it is there'.<sup>775</sup> But increasingly for these migrants, the importance of the Caribbean was that it was *here*.

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<sup>771</sup> Mike Philips quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'.

<sup>772</sup> For the paradoxical inversion, see Baron Baker quoted in Reilly, 'Time Shift'. Alford Gardner's plan when he arrived in 1948 was to work for five years and return, but within those five years he realised it 'wasn't to be. Within five years I started a family, married, bought my house, working hard and settled down'. See Alford Gardner quoted in BBC News, *Windrush Generation: Three Stories - BBC News*.

<sup>773</sup> Hinds, *Journey*, 158. Cf. Stuart Hall, who locates this in the 1970s: Hall and Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger*, 100.

<sup>774</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in Hinds, *Journey*, 175.

<sup>775</sup> Unnamed migrant quoted in *Ibid*.

### 5.5.2: Nostalgia and the body

This was enacted, firstly, on the level of the body. Blues parties became spaces where one could use the body to interpret rhythm in manners which increasingly mirrored the rituals and movements inscribed in the sending country's cultural codes surrounding dance. The earlier parties of the 1950s were largely focused on British and US dance forms, such as the jive, foxtrot, and rumba, and these largely mirrored Caribbean listening tastes of the time which were placed outside the region. And whilst some migrants enjoyed showing 'white people how to do the jive'<sup>776</sup> in the dance halls that were open to them, ground zero for these bodily practices were their parties: 'We smooched to Billy Ecksteine and Sarah Vaughan, and Shirley and Lee; and jived to jazz rhythms, and to Antonio "Fats" Domino's *Blue Berry Hill*'.<sup>777</sup> Joyce Gladwell recalls watching several white couples dancing 'without joy or ability' at her university department's Christmas party in the 1950s and, watching this, 'longed to dance as we would at home – because we enjoyed moving to music, arriving at one's preferred style or dancing and finding a partner to suit, not bound to waltz to a waltz or writhe to the rhumba, so long as one moved in rhythm with the beat of the music and above all delighting in it'.<sup>778</sup> Here, Gladwell paints an image of the less structured and regularised dance practices in Jamaica, and affords us a critical insight into an emotional prescription surrounding dance: one must "delight" in it.

To enter into these emotional prescriptions and practices, Gladwell need only have attended a blues dance in Britain rather than crossing the Atlantic. In his 1965 book *Jamaican Migrant*, Wallace Collins recalls one such party. After expressing bemusement over how fellow Caribbeans were behaving exactly as they would at home despite being 'exposed both to the English and European ways of life', Collins immediately turns to the example of dance, and the intersection he evokes between the body, emotional expression, and notions of "home" is instructive: the 'old houses in Willesden were rocking from the stomping and shuffling ... this joy, this abandon, this happy rowdyism, evoked memories of life in Jamaica'. This became, for these migrants, 'their own way of dancing their own interpretation of their emotions, of what they felt and wished to

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<sup>776</sup> "Egbert" quoted in Francis, *Hope*, 49.

<sup>777</sup> Donald Hinds quoted in Reynolds, *England*, 167.

<sup>778</sup> Joyce Gladwell, *Brown Face, Big Master* (London: IVP, 1969), 71.

express through dancing’.<sup>779</sup> The relationship between emotion and memory is given concrete embodiment in such historical circumstances. The nostalgia and longing for a Caribbean which many migrants had begun to suspect that they might not return to, and which increasingly shaped the experiential conditions of these parties, finds its enactment, in a complex chain of causation, through other emotions (“this joy, this abandon, this happy rowdiness”) and through culturally-proximal, bodily interpretations of rhythm. Ultimately, they contained the power to evoke stored memories of the “homes” from which they came.

### 5.5.3: Nostalgia and the senses

Nostalgia and a longing for “home” found its most forceful translation, however, in the cultivation of sensory experiences. The convergence here with the above discussion on the role of the body in these emotions is clear – bodily interpretation of rhythm necessarily involves a component of aurality, and the marshalling of this sensory perception around shifting musical forms represents a key site for the conversion of nostalgia and longing into practice and expression. Music became a lathe upon which a fleeting return to the Caribbean was shaped. Although calypso was a continuous presence on migrant radiograms throughout the 1950s, it was often accompanied by other, transnational genres from the black Atlantic such as American jazz and rhythm and blues. Beginning in the 1960s, however, a wave of Caribbeanisation swept over the listening habits of migrants, commensurate with the increasing influence of Jamaican musical forms in particular. This began with the growth, and then explosion, of ska – a Jamaican dance music modelled on American rhythm and blues but decidedly Caribbean and decidedly creolised, drawing upon Jamaican mento, Trinidadian calypso, and Afro-Cuban jazz, with its distinctive emphasis on syncopation and the upbeat. Artists such as Prince Buster, Derrick Morgan, and Millie Small were key drivers of this musical trend, whose records were increasingly played by Britain’s earliest sound systems – a theme to which we shall return.<sup>780</sup>

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<sup>779</sup> Collins, *Jamaican Migrant*, 98.

<sup>780</sup> Ska was also called Bluebeat, mainly by white Britons, after the label which helped popularise the genre. Millie Small’s 1964 hit “My Boy Lollipop” sparked the British ska craze, and crossed racial divides to become popular with white British society.

Highlighting the way sensory experience circles back to questions of the body, part of the ska craze involved novel dance forms developed in Jamaica. “Ska-ing” – later “skanking” – is marked by its ebullience, rhythmic jerks, and extreme extensions of the limbs. At these parties, aural sensory experiences feed back into the body and allows one not only to access the Caribbean of their memories, but to access its contemporary qualities by keeping up to date with its cultural cutting edge. Consuming the region’s localised music forms and dance practices at blues parties ultimately meant, for these migrants, that they could ‘for a brief moment on a Saturday night take us way back to the Caribbean’.<sup>781</sup> From the 1960s, however, the pace of musical innovation in Jamaica was accelerating at a breathtaking rate, and if migrants wanted to experientially recreate the contemporary Caribbean they would need to keep abreast of these changing trends. By the second half of the 1960s, the ska craze had largely petered out, musical artists taking its creolised template and adapting it into what we know as rocksteady. Performed at a dramatically slower tempo, shorn of its bright horns and replaced by the melodiousness of the piano and an emphasised bass, it would eventually become a key influence in the development of reggae in the 1970s. British sound system operators and their audiences took to it in earnest, and largely for the same emotional reasons: rocksteady was ‘so warm and sweet it take us right back to the Caribbean’.<sup>782</sup>

The capacity for sensory stimulation to evoke re-experiences of migrants’ sending countries was quickly recognised by companies who exploited the commercial opportunity of these affective desires in what we might term an emotional economics of nostalgia. Nowhere was this more evident than for those companies supplying products to be consumed at parties. Melodisc, the record label which largely drove the popularisation of ska in Britain, ran advertisements in black community newspapers and magazines leading with the dictum ‘you’ll feel at home...’.<sup>783</sup> Such emotional economics extended from the phonograph to the palette. In their advertisements, Caribbean alcohol brands aligned themselves closely with the region: Jamaica’s Red Stripe lager stated ‘now you can get it over here — Jamaica’s favourite lager beer’,<sup>784</sup> while Wray &

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<sup>781</sup> Mike Nesbeth quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 299.

<sup>782</sup> Mike Nesbeth quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>783</sup> See, for example, *Flamingo*, June 1962.

<sup>784</sup> *West Indian Gazette*, August 1962.

Nephew's overlaid promotions of their Appleton Estate rum with maps of Barbados.<sup>785</sup> Distribution networks importing these and other Caribbean brands sprang up across Britain: one such was K.A. Morgan, based in Kings Cross, London, and Handsworth, Birmingham, which imported Red Stripe lager and Wray and Nephew's rum, advertising themselves as bringing migrants 'the drinks from home'.<sup>786</sup>

But these companies represented only the commercialisation of these emotional dynamics, and the monetisation of them hinged on the ability of businesses to adapt their marketing strategies in accordance with how these dynamics changed over time. With the advent of reggae and Rastafarianism, the nostalgia and longing present amongst Caribbean migrants and their children in Britain was transmuted into a different qualitative form. No longer were these emotional forms regional and hearkening for a return to the Caribbean; instead, they were Afrocentric and focused on a return to Zion. Before we explore how reggae and Rastafarianism as cultural forms impacted the emotional atmospheres of blues parties, however, we must first turn to the question of sound systems.

### 5.6: Sound-system culture and its affects

Sound system culture, a transnational import from Jamaica, developed in Britain in the late 1950s and quickly replaced the Bluespot radiogram as the principal medium of audio replication in migrant parties, be them blues parties, town hall dances, or black-owned leisure institutions. Also known as a mobile public address system, sound systems consisted of two turntables, a microphone, and multiple amplifiers delivering thousands of watts to stacks of speakers. Sound systems were not the work of a sole trader but instead comprised a hierarchical collective with clearly delineated divisions of labour. Perched atop this pyramid is the "operator" who managed the sound, whilst the process of "stringing up" a sound was handled by the "engineer" and a team of "box boys". The "selector", with their comprehensive knowledge of the latest – usually Jamaican – vinyl records, handled the audio playback of "tunes" which the "toaster" would speak over to further amplify the affective and sensory experiences.<sup>787</sup> Status and recognition vis-à-vis

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<sup>785</sup> *Flamingo*, August 1963.

<sup>786</sup> *Joffa*, November 1968.

<sup>787</sup> McMillan, 'Rockers', 10.



other “sounds” is the defining value system within sound system culture, and was based both on a sound’s absolute volume, with a heavy accentuation of the bass frequencies, and its relative acquisition and playback of the newest and rarest records which came in the form of pre-releases, “dub plates” and “specials”.<sup>788</sup> These records – dispersed through complex transnational networks consisting of distribution chains and interpersonal contacts between producers, recording studios, and labels – became ‘sonic weapons in “challenges”/“clashes” between sounds’.<sup>789</sup> Sound system culture is a complex, multifaceted social form which encourages multiple readings from the standpoints of politics,<sup>790</sup> identity,<sup>791</sup> gender,<sup>792</sup> and style and sartorialism.<sup>793</sup> What I wish to sketch out here, chiefly, are its intersections with affective experience in a particular historical context, for a particular group of people, and in the particular social space of the blues party.

### 5.6.1: Sound system culture as medium

Firstly, what one finds is that the cultural form of the sound system represented one of the principal mediums through which the dominant affective themes of migrant parties that we have already discussed were activated. It is possible, for example, to read the early phase of sound system culture in Britain – from the late 1950s through the 1960s – within the context of the creation of atmospheres of safety and security. Sound system practitioner “Doctor” highlights the ability of this cultural form to create a communal space for black migrants marked by these emotional qualities: ‘I started the first sound system in Nottingham in 1957 to bring black people together, because things was hard for us in those days. The Teddy Boys were bad attacking black people’.<sup>794</sup> Furthermore, it

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<sup>788</sup> Gilroy, *No Black*, 164-8; McMillan, ‘Rockers’, 18.

<sup>789</sup> McMillan, ‘Rockers’, 18. Some of the labels included Trojan, Treasure Isle, and Studio 1.

<sup>790</sup> Lucy Robinson, ‘Smiley Culture: A Hybrid Voice for the Commonwealth’, in *Narratives from Beyond the UK Reggae Bassline: The System Is Sound*, ed. William ‘Lez’ Henry and Matthew Worley, (Cham: Springer, 2021), 101–24.

<sup>791</sup> Paul Ward, ‘Sound System Culture: Place, Space and Identity in the United Kingdom 1960-1989’, *Historia Contemporánea* 2, no. 57 (2018): 349–76.

<sup>792</sup> Sonjah Stanley Niaah, *DanceHall: From Slave Ship to Ghetto* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), 137-42.

<sup>793</sup> Michael McMillan, ‘Dub in the Front Room: Migrant Aesthetics of the Sacred and the Secular’, *Open Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (2019): 184–94.

<sup>794</sup> “Doctor” quoted in McMillan, ‘Rockers’, 16.

is precisely in this bringing of “black people together” that sounds facilitated the construction of intersubjective notions of black identity, and one cannot repeat too often the historical specificities of this period, wherein a notion of “blackness” was only constructed in Britain after the migration experience, against its racialised landscape and through cultural practices such as these. Sound systems also became part of the affective substrate for a release from tension: ‘sound systems in Huddersfield was a good thing for the community because it gives us something to look forward to at the weekend after hard graft during the week ... it’s a nice release, somewhere to go and let your hair down’.<sup>795</sup> Additionally, these earlier sound systems also became key tools for the satiation of feelings of longing and nostalgia. They not only played a direct role in the construction of aural sensory experiences – allowing one to experience Jamaica’s changing musical forms – but audiences’ very participation in the specificities of sound system culture’s Jamaicanised form was in itself an act of fleeting return to the Caribbean. It was through sound systems located within the space of the blues party that migrants could access the island’s cultural output, and through it the island itself.

### 5.6.2: Sound system culture’s particularities of form

But sound system culture was not merely a vehicle or amplifier for the preexisting emotional styles inherent to blues parties. It also precipitated a critical shift in the intersubjective relations of the diasporic dance floor, and achieved this in large part by mapping the particularities of its form from Jamaica onto these spaces. The key reference for understanding this is the work of Julian Henriques, who in a number of articles explores sound system culture’s sensory and affective valances. Whether in Kingston or in the ‘sonic diaspora’, sound systems are centred around the propagation of ‘vibrations’, theorised by Henriques not only as rhythmic changes in air pressure but as corporeal phenomena, encompassing rituals and routines on the level of the body, and ethereal, on the level of affect. Henriques draws out these latter two planes by playing on the linguistic shift from ‘vibrations’ to ‘vibes’ which more accurately encompasses the ‘deeper affective resonances’ of these spaces by drawing attention to the ‘mood,

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<sup>795</sup> Gayle and Gayle, *Sound System Culture*.

atmosphere or ambience of a session’.<sup>796</sup> Let us return to our historical context to sketch out the affective atmospheres generated by sound system culture within the space of the blues party.

One of the most important impacts of sound system culture’s penetration into the blues was its ability to draw partygoers together in heightened affective states of intimacy and communion, thus injecting, in a transmuted form, the togetherness of earlier house parties which was lost in the shift to the blues. This functioned on three levels. First, the performer and crowd are joined together in a dynamic relationship of call and response, sound systems projecting affective “vibes” to the crowd and simultaneously responding to the flux of general feeling on the dance floor. This modulated interrelationality draws in Paul Gilroy’s notion of the ‘ethics of antiphony’ which highlights the community-forming power of antiphonal forms of cultural expression at the heart of artistic production across the black Atlantic.<sup>797</sup> One blues partygoer tellingly reveals this dialogic dynamic: ‘the room would ricochet with tinny treble and throb with trouser-shaking bass from huge stacks of Fatman’s homemade speaker boxes. The room would be rammed with a crowd blowing whistles or letting off horns in response to the tracks they liked best, or a clever rhyme from a “toaster”’.<sup>798</sup> Second, affective intimacy operates within the crowd itself, creating ‘micro-climates of inter-subjectivity’.<sup>799</sup> Louise Fraser Bennett says that the sound system ‘brings a oneness, it brings together a people in one surrounding’.<sup>800</sup> Such a togetherness helped suspend anxiety over economic hardship: In Nottingham blues parties, ‘even if you were going through whatever, poverty, no money, whatever, soon as you got to the blues it was like “one love”’.<sup>801</sup> Thirdly, affective intimacy was also produced on the level of the party

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<sup>796</sup> Julian Henriques, ‘Sonic Diaspora, Vibrations, and Rhythm: Thinking Through the Sounding of the Jamaican Dancehall Session’, *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 1, no. 2 (2008): 221. See also Julian Henriques, ‘The Vibrations of Affect and Their Propagation on a Night Out on Kingston’s Dancehall Scene’, *Body & Society* 16, no. 1 (2010): 57–89.

<sup>797</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 199–201.

<sup>798</sup> Paul Canoville, *Black and Blue: How Racism, Drugs and Cancer Almost Destroyed Me* (London: Headline, 2012), 146.

<sup>799</sup> McMillan, ‘Rockers’, 10.

<sup>800</sup> Louise Fraser Bennett interviewed by Julian Henriques in Julian Henriques, ‘Situating Sound: The Space and Time of the Dancehall Session’, in *Sonic Interventions*, ed. Sylvia Mieszkowski, Joy Smith, and Marijke de Valck (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 301.

<sup>801</sup> “Maxine” quoted in Joshua Kimuyu, *The Hyson Green Flats -the Story*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwAh1vUUV4E>.

itself, encompassing the dynamics between both the performer and crowd and the crowd itself, so that both can be seen as constitutive elements in the party's "vibe". The dance hall parties in Jamaica which sound systems performed within were judged as successful based on their *relative* and not absolute capacity, and British blues parties featuring sound systems were evaluated by the same metric. Josephine Taylor describes the parties in Nottingham: 'bag o people. It's wall-to-wall, door-to-door'.<sup>802</sup> By mapping the evaluative philosophies of Jamaican sound system culture onto the space of the blues party, bodily contact and intersubjective intimacy become implicated in the production of the party's vibe.

Other particularities of the sound system's form which impacted the blues dance are less savoury in nature. In particular, they invite pressing questions about gendered emotional styles. Although Henriques paints the contemporary Jamaican dancehall as a feminised space where masculine gender ideals can be temporarily suspended,<sup>803</sup> and despite important historical work highlighting the ways women have contributed to sound system culture,<sup>804</sup> it nevertheless remains that many blues parties in Britain began to revolve around heavily masculinised codes inherent to the Jamaican form from which it came. Although there are pathbreaking historical examples in Britain of female participation in sound system culture, it remained, in this era, a practice dominated by men.<sup>805</sup> These men participated in the fierce and often acrimonious culture of competition inherent to this specific cultural format, manifesting itself in threats or attacks against rival sounds.

It is precisely here that the emotional atmospheres of blues parties and their larger counterparts in clubs and town halls begin to diverge. Beginning in the 1970s, clubs and town hall dances across Britain, by dint of their size, usually hosted the largest and most prestigious sounds, two systems usually competing in a "sound clash". These sounds commanded the largest and most devoted followings, and audiences were thus

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<sup>802</sup> Josephine Taylor interviewed by Michael McMillan for Michael McMillan (curator), 'Rockers, Soulheads, & Lovers: Sound Systems Back in da Day', New Art Exchange, Nottingham, 2015. This conception of space is picked up in Sonjah Stanley Niaah's "ram dance" reading of Jamaican dancehall culture, where partygoers link space to the density of bodies contained within it, circumscribing the evaluations of a dancehall event as successful. See Niaah, *DanceHall*, 60.

<sup>803</sup> Henriques, 'Sonic Diaspora', 220; McMillan, 'Rockers', 24.

<sup>804</sup> McMillan, 'Rockers', 16.

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-9.

implicated in the transformation of these spaces into arenas where masculinised aggression and violence most pressingly articulate themselves. As raver “P” states, ‘the clubs of today are too violent’,<sup>806</sup> and this was ‘particularly intense where operators from north and south of the river [Thames] clashed’, a geographic rivalry ‘which often erupted into violence’.<sup>807</sup> The autonomous black leisure spaces which early migrants had partly created as refuges from racist violence now became sites of violence stemming from the rivalries of different sound systems. In contrast, because of constraints over space, only the more modest sound systems with less fanatical followings played in blues parties.<sup>808</sup> By the same token, they were places where usually only one sound would operate, sweeping the competitive rug from under these operators’ feet. As a consequence, blues parties were never sites where masculinised aggression and violence permeated the emotional atmosphere, and almost no historical source we possess attests to the blues as a violent or aggressive space. Chris, a Nottingham blues partygoer, says that ‘there was no trouble. You go to one blues and you might see somebody there that you had a likkle bit of disagreement with, and you go somewhere else, that person is not gonna follow you ... everybody was out for a good time’.<sup>809</sup> This often extended to feelings of safety specific to the experience of women, being spaces where ‘a woman can dance on her own without being harassed’.<sup>810</sup> The experience of Julie in the blues party is instructive here: ‘I was thirteen ... I should have been perved on ... and instead I found that strangers would be protecting me’.<sup>811</sup>

### 5.6.3: Reggae and Rastafarianism

We must now add another layer of complexity onto the impasto of the blues for, beginning in the 1970s, reggae and Rastafarianism introduce themselves into these spaces, dramatically altering their emotional tones. Following on from the release of The

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<sup>806</sup> “P” quoted in ‘The Big Big Sound System Splashdown’, *New Musical Express*, 21 February 1981.

<sup>807</sup> Gilroy, *No Black*, 166.

<sup>808</sup> The blues often acted as a stepping stone toward wider recognition for early-career black musicians in postwar Britain. One such example is Jazzy B, who in the mid-1980s ‘transcended from the blues scene’ to playing ‘up town’. See Jazzy B quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 320.

<sup>809</sup> “Chris” quoted in Kimuyu, *Hyson Green Flats*.

<sup>810</sup> ‘The Big Big Sound System Splashdown’, *New Musical Express*, 21 February 1981.

<sup>811</sup> “Julie” quoted in Kimuyu, *Hyson Green Flats*.

Cables' "Baby Why" in 1970 – 'one of the first discernibly "reggae" recordings'<sup>812</sup> – begins the growth of perhaps the most significant musical form and mode of black cultural expression in postwar Britain. Against the wider historical context of the Black Power movement, reggae brought to the table a genre, in its lyrical content and stylised codes, notions of collective identity and blackness expressed in a more radical, self-conscious, and masculinised style; as opposed to ska and rocksteady reggae was, as Don Letts explains, 'a lot more militant and politicised'.<sup>813</sup> These artistic productions found their theological counterpart in Rastafarianism, an Afrocentric religion which originated in Jamaica in the 1920s but was increasingly seized upon in the 1960s and 1970s as tools of cultural expression, spiritual salvation, and collective frames of reference. Although sound system culture predated the birth of reggae and growth of Rastafarianism by some time, these three cultural structures become so inextricably intertwined after this point that it becomes impossible to separate them neatly. What remains here is to sketch out how the infusion of reggae and Rastafarianism into sound system culture – and by extension the blues party – altered the emotional landscape of this space. And, in a striking mirror of the dynamic between sound systems and blues parties, reggae and Rastafarianism both enhanced the preexisting affective characteristics of sound system culture and simultaneously injected into the equation its own emotional qualities.

We have already seen how blues parties were key spaces for the negotiation and development of new and affectively-experienced conceptions of identity, and this was significantly amplified once sound systems became the principal medium of auditory replication for reggae and spiritual experience for Rastafarianism. Disseminated through the sound system – which made some ravers 'become Rasta' – felt experiences of collective identity were produced and practised, by partygoers, within the cultural templates of reggae and Rastafarianism.<sup>814</sup> This is where the particularities of these cultural templates enter the picture: These were tied to explicitly expressed notions of blackness and uncompromising modes of expression: Mike Iratton, based in Leeds, remembered of this time that 'back in the days it was a black thing. Back in the days it

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<sup>812</sup> Gilroy, *No Black*, 220.

<sup>813</sup> Letts, *Don Letts Explains the Blues Dance*.

<sup>814</sup> Claston Brooks oral history interview, *Sound System Culture*.

was militant’.<sup>815</sup> Collective emotions on the dance floor became more explicitly fused with the political, more openly concerned with specific lived realities. Reggae and Rastafarianism’s emphasis on diaspora, “exodus” (as Bob Marley’s titular album indicates), and “return” gave voice to ravers’ immediate concerns and offered a cultural framework to express what it meant to be black in Babylon, to express how interlocking systems of oppression affected their lives. In this Babylon, marked by an emotional regime if not prescribing, then at least permitting racist emotional expression, the blues party and reggae gave black migrants and their progeny ‘the opportunity to be yourself’.<sup>816</sup> Peter John Nelson’s testimony helps tie together the emotional products of the interaction between the blues, reggae, and sound system culture, and the specific affective threads that reggae helped to weave into the tapestry:

The blues, that was your lifeline. And one thing with reggae, they’re singing about things that are happening in the present, so the music were about the politics and the social condition at the time ... the sound systems played in the blues and the cellar parties. You’d have an afro, and wear bell-bottom trousers, flares, and your trousers would be on your hips, and you’d have a dashiki, and African floral shirt, that would be a roots thing. You’d have your afro and walk down the street, “yeah man, I’m African”’.<sup>817</sup>

With the blues as a lifeline, these increasingly political assertions of identity were as much an emotional coping mechanism for concrete, lived realities as anything else, returning us to the release of tension which remained a dominant affective motif throughout the life of migrant house parties. Reddy’s emotional *refuge* is activated in its most forthright sense as a place where these migrants could participate in felt forms of identity which provided cathartic release from oppression in politically engaged ways.

We must also return to the questions of masculinised affective codes and gendered exclusions of space. Beginning in the 1970s, the dynamic between sound system, reggae, and Rastafarianism radically altered the gendered-emotional atmospheres of blues parties. This was always more pronounced within the larger dances at town halls and

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<sup>815</sup> Mike Iration oral history interview, *Sound System Culture*.

<sup>816</sup> Taylor interviewed by McMillan, ‘Rockers, Soulheads, & Lovers: Sound Systems Back in da Day’.

<sup>817</sup> Peter John Nelson quoted in Grant, *Homecoming*, 309.

clubs, yet the blues dance was not immune to the tailwind as the advent of reggae helped to bolster the division of space along gendered lines which sound system culture had introduced. One male raver, for instance, stated that 'blues ain't really for the gal them',<sup>818</sup> while a female partygoer remembers that 'there would be some blues that would be mainly men, and you couldn't really go in there ... women couldn't go in certain blues, it was seen as more a man thing'.<sup>819</sup> Between reggae, Rastafarianism, and its principal medium of sound system culture, blues dances were becoming more masculine and more exclusionary, places where women were made to *feel* unwelcome, made to feel that they were social forms which did not cater to their specific needs, struggles, and emotions.

Walking hand-in-hand with the increasingly overt, masculine overtones and the gendered divisions of space that it consequently created, reggae and Rastafarianism also started to pare away the latent eroticism present in earlier migrant parties. When Ari Up, a white female punk, started patronising blues parties in the 1980s, she found that it was 'very strict Rasta then', receiving 'a lot of hostile attitude from guys for not being covered'.<sup>820</sup> In a fusion of the political, the spiritual, and the masculine, one's religion and the sensory experience of particular musical forms combine and produce, in the extreme wings of this trend, trance-like affective states shorn of eroticism but with profound psychoactive effects: 'Rastaman is the kind of person who'll dance by himself and feel high'.<sup>821</sup> Thus, from the 1970s we find that the affective dimensions of the blues party were significantly altered by the interaction between sound system culture, reggae, and Rastafarianism. On the one hand this produced new ways that identity as felt experience was practised and expressed, and through its participation brought with it heightened states of intimacy and introspective spiritual experiences with consequences on a neurological level. These came with affective tradeoffs, however, for on the other hand femininity and eroticism began to be excluded from the blues dance. There is another affective twist to this narrative, but before we can explore this we must first turn to

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<sup>818</sup> "P" quoted in 'The Big Big Sound System Splashdown', *New Musical Express*, 21 February 1981.

<sup>819</sup> "Maxine" quoted in Kimuyu, *Hyson Green Flats*.

<sup>820</sup> Ari Up quoted in Simon Reynolds, *Totally Wired: Post-Punk Interviews and Overviews* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>821</sup> "C" quoted in "P" quoted in 'The Big Big Sound System Splashdown', *New Musical Express*, 21 February 1981.



questions of demographics, because it was in this historical moment that significant changes were occurring in the composition of blues parties which subsequently altered ravers' emotional experiences.

### 5.7: The second generation

Aside from the complex interactions between sound system culture, reggae, and Rastafarianism, the 1970s also witnessed two significant demographic shifts on the blues party dancefloor. Firstly, these spaces became increasingly patronised by the children of Caribbean migrants. The reason for this lay partly with the ongoing exclusion of black people from leisure spaces: 'we find when we leave school and grow up we do not have places in which to hold social activities like dances'.<sup>822</sup> However, for this generation questions of identity and emotional experience take on new, distinct, black British characteristics. These young adults had grown up in households whose cultural "roots" were embedded in places they had never seen whilst being excluded, demonised, and criminalised by the society within which they had lived their whole lives. These historical specificities open up important questions unique to this generation regarding the dislocation of identity and the patterns of feeling which stem from such disconnects. Understanding identity and belonging principally as *felt* experience helps us here. Contained within and emanating from these two notions are a host of emotional practices and experiences, the corollary being that the dislocation of identity, feelings of non-belonging or out-of-placeness, pivot partly around the emotional consequences which stem from the inability to enter in to these affective states. Paul Gilroy hints at this exact process without making the connection explicit when he argues that in the 1970s, black Britons 'are a deeply troubled generation, because they *feel* deeply the sense that they don't know who they are'.<sup>823</sup>

These issues emerged for this generation – if ever there is such a thing – at an opportune cultural moment. The Black Power movement of the late 1960s and the growth of reggae and Rastafarianism in the 1970s provided them with a certain set of cultural tools to fashion new meanings, new identities, and new belongings; reggae, for

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<sup>822</sup> Unnamed schoolchild quoted in *Report from the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, Session 1968-69, The Problems of Coloured School-Leavers*, vol. III: Minutes of Evidence (London: HMSO, 1969), 1023.

<sup>823</sup> Paul Gilroy quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 196. Emphasis added.

instance, 'provided a soundtrack to how my generation felt about our situation in England'.<sup>824</sup> They fed into the felt experience of black British dislocation and it was these forms which both spoke to their affective quandaries and allowed them to express the emotions they were feeling. This overlapped with the localised – and far less opportune – historical context, as increasingly oppressive police tactics and racist media coverage combined to feed feelings of alienation and dislocation, and the emotions of anger and resentment which stem from them. As Phillips and Phillips point out, for this generation the always tenuous lines between the cultural and the political become increasingly blurred: 'this generation became politicised in a different way to their parents. Its politics became its cultural expression, or perhaps vice versa, its cultural expression became its politics'.<sup>825</sup> Thus, young black Britons seized on the spiritual and emotional sustenances provided by the iconography of reggae and Rastafarianism, gaining access to these largely within the spaces of blues parties and through the medium of sound system culture.

### 5.7.1: Tension and release

On one level this returns us to the dynamic of tension and release which these emotional refuges provided for their parents. The emotional experiences contained within these two dynamics are, however, qualitatively different. We have already touched on the specific circumstances which produced such tension, and we now find that this first generation of black Britons utilised aural sensory experiences in reggae, spiritual sustenance in Rastafarianism, and the dynamics of sound system culture within blues parties to provide unique forms of release. Paul Gilroy calls this generation 'saved, spiritually and culturally, by the advent of Rastafarianism and Reggae',<sup>826</sup> and Jah Shaka, a famous sound system operator who migrated to Britain aged five, explicitly connects the tension-release dynamic with the tool of religion to achieve these emotional aims: 'People get depressed in this country ... There is a lot of pressure ... People jump off

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<sup>824</sup> Letts, *Don Letts Explains the Blues Dance*.

<sup>825</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 294.

<sup>826</sup> Paul Gilroy quoted in *Ibid*.

buildings so as not to face earth as it is at the moment. The only thing to look to is God'.<sup>827</sup>

We must also circle back to the production of emotional states of pride and self-worth, which, similar to tension and release, were present for the parents of black Britons but adapted to suit the particular needs of this generation. No longer were pride and self-worth manufactured through the participation in – and recognition of one's participation in – the cultural frameworks of respectability and domesticity. Instead, it was achieved partly through a replacement of these cultural frameworks with reggae and Rastafarianism; spirituality, politicised musical forms, and a self-conscious assertion of blackness began instead to provide the tools to achieve this. Through them, 'they manufacture for themselves a black identity that they *feel* proud of. They find a space for themselves'.<sup>828</sup> Even the space of the blues party *itself* as a constitutive and self-empowering zone becomes implicated in this process: Linton Kwesi Johnson, who migrated to Britain aged eleven, says that 'independent cultural institutions ... gave us a sense of our own identity ... made us proud and strong and independent'.<sup>829</sup> The pitch might have changed for black Britons, but the goalposts, by and large, remained unmoved.

### 5.7.2: Whites and the blues

The second important demographic shift relates to the increasing penetration of whites into the blues from the 1960s onwards. The drivers of this trend were, in the main, subcultural or counter-cultural practitioners. As cultural movements, the affinities and ideological proximity of punk rock, on the one hand, and reggae and dub on the other has long been recognised. Both share in cultural and emotional styles of expressiveness which privilege a masculinised iconoclasm and a subversion of the prevailing societal structures and codes. What is seldom recognised, however, is how blues parties served as one of the chief historical sites for these cultural interactions and synergies.

Beginning in the 1960s, skinhead culture – a white subcultural movement – began to develop in urban working-class areas of Britain. In these districts, youths were in daily

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<sup>827</sup> Jah Shaka quoted in 'The Big Big Sound System Splashdown', *New Musical Express*, 21 February 1981.

<sup>828</sup> Stuart Hall quoted in David Upshal, 'A New Generation', *Windrush* (BBC Two, 13 June 1998).

<sup>829</sup> Linton Kwesi Johnson quoted in Phillips and Phillips, *Windrush*, 299.

contact with black migrants and their children, often working together in factories and docks. Skinhead culture is often monolithically portrayed as a petri dish for virulent strands of racism, and whilst racism was undoubtedly present in many practitioners, historical sources speak of a more complex and variegated ideational landscape than that of Teddy Boy culture – the white working-class subcultural analogue of the 1950s. In many instances, a camaraderie developed between skinheads ‘working side by side with West Indians’ in working-class environments.<sup>830</sup> This led to these white youths being invited to blues parties ‘where they were exposed to ska music for the first time’.<sup>831</sup> This was a critical historical moment. Listening habits aside, it marked the first significant exertion of influence that any black culture had achieved on the mainstream white society. No longer was the latter selecting and appropriating elements of black culture it found novel or interesting, à la Cy Grant’s calypso rendition of the daily news in 1950. Now, it was responding to the cultural dynamism of the former and being changed in the process.

The 1960s penetration of skinheads into blues parties also marked the start of a long-lasting relationship between white working-class subcultures and black musical forms. This relationship really got into its stride when the punk and reggae movements roared into life in the 1970s. In this decade, punks began to patronise black blues parties in increasing numbers:

in the basement until four-five am, sometimes later. You’d pay a fiver on the door, couple of quid even, and it was just wall-to-wall, you could hardly move. You’d have a little bar at the back and the place would just be full of smoke. And wall-to-wall speakers, so the whole house would shake. The physical bones in your body would shake in there, and you’d be compressed with everyone else.<sup>832</sup>

The important point for this chapter is the fact that when skinheads and punks started attending the blues, they found that some of the emotional styles which Caribbean

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<sup>830</sup> Shane Meadows quoted in *Facing History and Ourselves, Identity and Belonging in a Changing Great Britain* (London: Facing History and Ourselves, 2009), 41.

<sup>831</sup> Shane Meadows quoted in *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>832</sup> Martin Glover quoted in Joe Muggs and Brian David Stevens, *Bass, Mids, Tops: An Oral History of Sound System Culture* (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2019), 132,

migrants and their children had assiduously cultivated were still extant. It is from their testimonies that we can discern the blues' continuity of affect despite outside influences which sought to change these emotional atmospheres, a point to which we will return. Martin Glover, former bassist of the band Killing Joke, remembers his friend John Lydon of the Sex Pistols couldn't leave his house 'without being attacked for being a Sex Pistol', but 'going to a shebeen no one would give a fuck'.<sup>833</sup> John Wardle, better known by his stage name Jah Wobble, strikes a similar chord: 'as a punk rocker, you were safer in those days at the black dances than you were going down the local white-boy pub'.<sup>834</sup> The emotional refuge still possessed affective potency in the 1970s, and the experiences it provided were accessible to all regardless of race.

### 5.7.3: Lovers rock

These were the two key demographic revisions that blues parties underwent in their lifetime. We must now turn to one of the last emotional shifts within these spaces before their persecution and eventual decline. This shift got underway in the mid-1970s, and is yet again tethered to changes in the landscape of sensory auralty and musical forms. For the first time since the late 1950s, however, the impetus for this change did not come from Jamaica, nor even from the Caribbean. Instead, musical and emotional change was initiated and driven by the children of Caribbean migrants, producing a distinctly black British and creolised style which drew from the musical templates provided to them by their parents to alter the affective atmospheres of the very places that these parents had established. We are speaking, of course, about the growth of lovers rock.

Lovers rock is best understood as the melding of reggae rhythms and instrumentation – albeit aligned to a far slower tempo – with the vocal styles and lyrical content of American soul music. As we have seen, when reggae and dub ruled the blues it brought with it expressive styles couched in notions of militancy and masculinity, leaving parties open to criticism that they were emotional refuges constructed by and for men to the exclusion of women. This was the contextual tinderbox which Louisa Marks sparked with her 1975 track "Caught in a Lie", ushering in black British lovers rock and by so doing

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<sup>833</sup> Martin Glover quoted in *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>834</sup> John Wardle quoted in Simon Reynolds, *Rip It up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978–1984* (London: Penguin, 2006), 47.

carving out within the blues a feminised space which could cater for all. Through the slew of tracks in the late 1970s and 1980s, vocalists – often women – turned from masculinised expressive cultures and moved toward subjects of love, loss, companionship, and the issues thrown up for black femininity by existing and emoting within patriarchal structures.

At no point, however, should this be construed as a move away from the political, an interpretative lethargy which Lisa Amanda Palmer warns us against when she asserts the danger in sentimental readings of lovers rock which ignore ‘how black Britons are now imagining new discourses on black freedom that take seriously the gendered and erotic entanglements that shape and define our visions of black liberation’.<sup>835</sup> The reason commentators have often denuded lovers rock of its political dimensions is because, compared with the explicit directness of roots reggae, its politico-affective objectives were enacted through a radically different culture of expressiveness which often relied on encoded allusion and subtlety. Rather than being an apolitical (and “therefore feminine”) phenomenon, what is at stake in lovers rock is opening up of the political struggle on an additional front. The emotional can be separated from neither.

Lovers rock continued the Civil Rights movement’s and reggae’s legacy of political struggle against white discursive and emotional regimes which sought to delegitimise blackness, and did so through similar dynamics of emotional experience. Pride and self-affirmation are retained as desired emotional states, as Kofi’s 1987 song “Black Pride” makes clear: ‘Black is the life that I live / And I’m so proud to be / The colour that God made me’.<sup>836</sup> In addition, by bringing the intricacies of eroticism and romantic love back into the fold of what it meant to be black, it helped to define what these issues meant from a black perspective and subverted those elements of white discursive culture which sought to fetishise, demonise, or otherwise exclude them from unilateral impositions of blackness. The additional political front that lovers rock opened up relates to its energetic attempts at a cultural and emotional reorientation *within* black British culture. Mens lovers rock group Beshara epitomised this initiative with their 1981 track “Men Cry Too” which, as Palmer explains, ‘captured the sense of loss, longing, and

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<sup>835</sup> Lisa Amanda Palmer, ““Men Cry Too”: Black Masculinities and the Feminisation of Lovers Rock in the UK”, in *Black Popular Music in Britain Since 1945*, ed. Jon Stratton and Nabeel Zuberi (London: Routledge, 2014), 145.

<sup>836</sup> Kofi, ‘Black Pride’, track 2 on *Black Pride / Check Point Charlie*, Ariwa, 1987, 12” record.

vulnerability that was part of black male life in Britain'.<sup>837</sup> By capturing these emotions in context, Beshara were attempting a political intervention – trying to excavate black British masculinity from the pit of emotional prescriptions which it had entrenched itself within.

It was these particular political messages, couched in these particular emotional timbres, which were increasingly mapped onto blues parties from the mid-1970s. Lovers rock instigated not so much of a shift within a monolithic conception of a blues party, but more of a fragmentation of the blues into multiple forms with different affective atmospheres. Whilst some sound systems spun both reggae and lovers rock tunes depending on such variables as the crowd, the time, and the shifting moods of the crowd, others catered exclusively to either a militant, Rastafarian reggae crowd and were thus immune from the power for affective change that lovers rock could enact. The blues parties which did incorporate lovers rock, however, regained much of the warmth and conviviality characteristic of their earlier period – traded not from coldness or aloofness, but from the masculinised codes of male identity found in roots reggae. Within this new atmosphere of warmth and conviviality eroticism and affection was again allowed to bubble up to the surface: 'At a certain time of night, say about 5 o'clock, the music starts going nice and slow, smooch starts coming on, and then you start dancing with someone in the corner ... many of my generation came from blues days, because people got together, formed relationships'.<sup>838</sup>

Lovers rock also precipitated a loosening of gendered divisions of space, as women found a place simultaneously open to them, safe for them, and which acknowledged them. Through female musical artists and ravers, the opening up of a feminised space within the male-dominated production, distribution, and management of reggae musical forms provided, for black women, affective notions of female empowerment which had so often been denied to them. This empowerment was expressed through songs such as Blood Sisters' "My Love Don't Come Easy" and the ability of a woman to 'dance on her own without being hassled'.<sup>839</sup> This empowerment culminated with the

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<sup>837</sup> Palmer, 'Men Cry Too', 151.

<sup>838</sup> "Maxine" quoted in Kimuyu, *Hyson Green Flats*.

<sup>839</sup> 'The Big Big Sound System Splashdown', *New Musical Express*, 21 February 1981. For the Blood Sisters' track, see Blood Sisters, 'My Love Don't Come Easy', track 1 on *My Love Don't Come Easy / My Guy*, Sound City, 1979, 12" record.

acknowledgement by male ravers that their presence and agency were essential to the blues party space: 'a party is nothing without girls'.<sup>840</sup> This, of course, invites important questions about sexual harassment – yet they were overwhelmingly safe spaces for women to express themselves. Nottingham raver Maxine, who used to 'go straight to where lovers rock was playing', remembers that the blues 'was like one love'; a place where she found that 'strangers would be protecting me'.<sup>841</sup> The dominant emotional theme of the blues, whether for migrants, punks, or black British women, was always a place of safety. Of *refuge*.

## 5.8: The decline of the blues

Although *New Musical Express* proclaimed in 1981 shebeens to be a 'great British institution', the decade proved to be the last gasp for unlicensed, commercialised parties.<sup>842</sup> In the 1950s black migrants discovered that racial exclusion from social spaces did not preclude some whites from launching physical and discursive assaults on the autonomous leisure spaces they had created as a consequence of it. Since their inception, these parties comprised a significant element in intra-community tension and began, in the 1960s, to be placed by whites near the top of the docket of their list of grievances. For white neighbours, these tensions pivoted around a clutch of affective issues, with resentment over noise usually the common denominator: The issue of "noisy parties" was known to local police constabularies as early as 1961,<sup>843</sup> and in the following year John Cordeaux, MP for Nottingham Central, was receiving at least one complaint per week about 'noisy night parties' which 'do more harm to race relations than can be imagined'.<sup>844</sup> In 1963, one white resident complained of parties going on until 8:00 a.m., with 'screaming, shouting, and obscene language',<sup>845</sup> while another bemoaned a fall in the value of their property since Caribbean families had moved to her neighbourhood to throw parties which 'go on until early hours'.<sup>846</sup> The following year, The Report of the

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<sup>840</sup> "C" quoted in 'The Big Big Sound System Splashdown', *New Musical Express*, 21 February 1981.

<sup>841</sup> "Maxine" quoted in Kimuyu, *Hyson Green Flats*.

<sup>842</sup> 'The Big Big Sound System Splashdown', *New Musical Express*, 21 February 1981.

<sup>843</sup> See, for example, the concerns raised by Hugh Gaitskill in 650 Parl. Deb. H.C. (5th ser.) (1961) col. 1176.

<sup>844</sup> 654 Parl. Deb. H.C. (5th ser.) (1962) col. 1257.

<sup>845</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 31 July 1963.

<sup>846</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 20 November 1964.



Committee on Housing in Greater London stated that they had received complaints from white residents that ‘coloured people are frequently very noisy, and that they are given to late night parties’.<sup>847</sup> By 1967 local councillors and police forces had begun bringing noise metres to ‘trouble spots’ in an attempt to quell their presence, and drew on the provisions of the Noise Abatement Act 1960 in order to apply increasing pressure to these spaces.<sup>848</sup>

Resent over the imposition of unwanted sensory experiences often, however, revealed other racialised emotional currents within white society, such as anxiety over the congregation of black bodies: ‘it is the noise that worries people. Also the crowds of coloured people who appear from nowhere like a small, invading Congolese army’.<sup>849</sup> Indissolubly hitched to these emotions are cultural conceptions of race, and in particular the equation of whiteness with cleanliness and purity and blackness with dirt and pollution. A 1961 article in *The Times* epitomises the link between these emotions and ideational constructs when it wrote that the racial tensions swirling around Smethwick in Birmingham were ‘born out of thousands of late West Indian parties and hundreds of shabby immigrant front gardens’.<sup>850</sup> Articulating this link – and in one of the most apt historical instances of nominal determinism – MP Tom Iremonger drew the House of Commons’ attention to ‘the different ideas which many in immigrant communities have concerning nuisances, public and private, noise, sanitation, and so on ...’.<sup>851</sup>

On their own, these dynamics would likely have precipitated the reactionary rhetoric and draconian police crackdowns on migrant parties which were to come. The most important thread still needs, however, to be woven in. The association of these spaces with “vice” – prostitution, violence, drugs, and unlicensed alcohol – has done more than anything to place these at the forefront of the agendas of policymakers and law enforcement. This discursive formation was driven largely by lurid, sensationalist stories in the national press. In 1961 *The People* ran a story of English girls enslaved by black migrants ‘who live off prostitutes’ earnings’ – an act which ‘does not come naturally to

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<sup>847</sup> Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Report of the Committee on Housing in Greater London (The Milner Holland Report)*, Cmd. 2605, London: HMSO, 1965, 194.

<sup>848</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 June 1967.

<sup>849</sup> *Times*, 21 January 1965.

<sup>850</sup> *Times*, 5 October 1964.

<sup>851</sup> 754 Parl. Deb. H.C. (5th ser.) (1967) col. 564.

the English criminal'. The anecdotal example used in the story was of a girl of 15 sexually assaulted and pushed into prostitution after she was 'invited to a party given by a crowd of Jamaicans'.<sup>852</sup> By 1967 the association of blues parties with vice and moral depravity had been firmly set, and would continue throughout the 1970s and 1980s. That year in Walsall, police raided the party of Herbert Artwell, whose attendees accused the police of violence and planting cannabis on them. One man, who asked to see the police officer's hands before searching him, was kicked and called a 'smart guy'.<sup>853</sup> The same newspaper, in 1961, carried a story of a drunken knife fight between two Caribbean migrants and 'a trail of blood stretching for 150 yards' after both had attended a party.<sup>854</sup> Lord Wigg, reading out his correspondence with a white resident living near a regular blues spot in the House of Lords in 1968, succinctly articulated the relationship between blues parties, race, sexual and moral anxiety, and gendered ideals: 'the man has a daughter and he is worried about the moral problems'.<sup>855</sup>

Police began stepping up their harassment of these spaces in the 1970s at the same time that national media outlets began painting them as dens of vice, attempting to cruelly invert the affective characteristics of safety and security that partygoers cultivated on dance floors. The attempts to shift emotional experience in blues parties toward precarity and violence was a key influence in producing feelings of resentment toward the police amongst black migrants and their children, and blues parties thus became key sites where the relationship between the police and black people was set and calcified for the following decades. British-Jamaican poet Linton Kwesi Johnson paints such a scene in his 1975 poem "Street 66", set in a blues party ultimately raided by the police, and which hints at the strange coexistence of emotions in blues parties of the time. On the one hand, feelings of intimacy, warmth, companionship, and empowerment poke through ('Weston did a skank and each man laugh and feeling irie'), and yet on the other increasingly militant and masculinised notions of resistance begin to assert themselves ('Any policeman come here will get some righteous, raasclot licks /

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<sup>852</sup> *The People*, 8 October 1961.

<sup>853</sup> *Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle*, 12 May 1967.

<sup>854</sup> *Walsall Observer and South Staffordshire Chronicle*, 24 November 1961.

<sup>855</sup> 289 Parl. Deb. H.L. (5th ser.) (1968) col. 964.

Yeah mon, whole heapa licks’).<sup>856</sup> This battle over the legitimacy of the blues and black cultural leisure spaces slots into the wider historical context of an increasingly repressive policing of Britain’s black communities, with racial profiling and the provisions of the Vagrancy Act 1824 used in combination to harass and search black youths in public spaces in what became known as the “sus law”. These were the key tactics used by the Metropolitan Police in 1981 when they launched *Operation Swamp 81*, a plainclothes stop-and-search campaign in Brixton which caused a lasting fracture in the relationship between the police and the black community.

We should also note another important factor in the decline of blues parties. Police harassment and brutality were not, in and of themselves, ever enough to prevent migrants and their children from constructing and participating in these key spaces of emotional expression and experience, and we should not accord to police harassment more efficacy than it is due. Another reason for the decline of blues parties in the later 1980s is that black migrants and black Britons gained a relative measure of access to leisure spaces: the “colour bar” of previous decades had if not disappeared, then at least declined. Promoters, venue owners, and venue security teams now worked under a mutual understanding that explicit racial discrimination was no longer as culturally permissible – and, more importantly for them, illegal. Although gatekeepers who still wished to practise exclusion could quite easily fabricate other, non-racial justifications, the penetration of black culture, in a creolised dynamic, into the heart of Britain’s cultural symbols, texts, and artistic output was reaching a critical mass by late 1980s, to the point where it became impossible to commonly deny them access to leisure institutions. A large generation of black Britons had emerged to claim their social birthrights. It was also the time of a great wave of Americanisation within British subculture as reggae and its subgenres, and the cultural and emotional codes of the island from whence it came, lost ground to hip hop as the dominant cultural and emotional reference for young black Britons. As part of this shift, the blues party came to be seen by a new generation as an outmoded space of cultural and emotional expression.

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<sup>856</sup> Linton Kwesi Johnson, ‘Street 66’, in *Mi Revalueshanary Fren* (London: Penguin, 2002), 54.

## Conclusion

This study has explored five historical snapshots of Caribbean migrants in postwar Britain in order to investigate and analyse the emotional experiences of these historical actors, in the hope of provoking work toward a richer field of historiographical literature which approaches this topic in the same manner. Moreover, it has done so by making use of a wider range of source material than is often the case for historical analyses, incorporating the migrant literary and musical output alongside more traditional sources such as memoirs, autobiographies, periodicals, archival material, and oral histories. The subject matter of this thesis represents a well-trodden domain of historiography, yet one which has never been approached with the analytical focus and conceptual tools of the history of emotions, and as such provides powerful evidence that even the most extensively-studied historical moments have buried within them profound and as-yet unarticulated dimensions which can revise or augment our understanding of the past.

Traditional historical and sociological analyses of this migration flow, beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, has represented these actors primarily as “economic migrants” – that is, emigrants seeking to take advantage of transnational discrepancies between wage differentials and labour demand in order to achieve upward social mobility. Whilst this study does not refute the fundamentals of such a line of argumentation, it has argued that emotional experience should be viewed as the connective tissue between situated economic context and motivation to migrate. It was the ways in which the Caribbean’s collection of fragile and anaemic economies – themselves the legacy of colonialist histories – manifested themselves in the day-to-day lived realities of Caribbean residents, *through* the negative emotional experiences that were generated from them, that motivations to migrate were partly generated. Moreover, this study has used this dynamic as a springboard to explore emotion-generating contexts which have largely been neglected by scholars in their quest to enumerate the causes of this migration flow. By attending closely to the Caribbean’s social and cultural domains, this study has found other powerful contextual forces which provoked negative feelings in would-be migrants, adding further motivational force to the equation. The pigmentocratic cultural value systems of the region – again, the legacy of colonialist histories – furnished darker-skinned Caribbeans with a gamut of unfavourable social and affective experiences

and consequently a desire to migrate. The discursive cloaking of Queen Victoria and, later, Britain itself within a shroud of familial metaphor used as its *modus operandi* the affective bonds and compulsions written into normative conceptions of the family, equating to a situation whereby many Caribbeans *felt* that they had a duty to migrate to the “motherland” and assist her in the great postwar reconstruction. Likewise, the normative emotional conceptions written into ideas of youth – of ambition, exploration, adventure, world-hungriness – help explain the early demographic structure of this corridor and the motivations that they brought with them across the Atlantic. In all of this, it becomes more appropriate to see emotional experiences as migratory motivations themselves, leading to a notion of emotivations.

Once the decision to migrate had been taken, these actors were thrust into a maelstrom of new experiential content from which they emoted. Affective evaluations of departure often ran across a valenced spectrum, and for many individuals their evaluations existed as synchronous multipositionings along this spectrum. This led to the growth of, during departure, feelings of polysemic ambivalence, as migrants struggled to evaluate and articulate their seemingly contradictory emotions. It was an ambivalence which disappeared from their consciousness during the initial stages of the transatlantic journey as migrants constructed ship-bound, intersubjective, sensory-affective atmospheres informed by the material environment and their cultural bodies, but which emerged during the swan song of their journey as thoughts turned to the practicalities of settlement and which their British cultural educations had nonetheless left them floundering in trying to make sense of. It was this saturation of Britishness within their cultural frames of reference which would also serve as the crucial generative principle for their emotional experience once they alighted, discovering a wide gulf between colonial expectation and metropolitan reality encoded in terms of built environment, social comportment, and precarity which fed directly into expressed feelings of disappointment, disillusionment, and homesickness.

Once migrants had struggled past the initial task of securing employment, and housing in a racist lettings market, migrant couples soon found that the structural economic conditions of Britain necessitated reformulation of women’s traditional domesticated role. This led to an affective reordering of the framework of the Caribbean

migrant family, as women's economic independence either led to an increased equality with, and heightened appreciation by, their male partners, or else provoked fear and jealousy in men by upsetting the domestic order of things. Complicating easy narratives of feminine liberation, however, were the many mothers who expressed anxiety over the treatment of their children within the woeful landscape of postwar British childminding. Those migrants who partnered with white Britons meanwhile found themselves embroiled within a physical and discursive vortex, their relationships of love and lust becoming politicised and the catalyst for the production of a host of negative emotional concepts among, mostly, white British men. Here, love and sex fused with politics, jealousy, and hate in a way remarkable, even in the broad sweep of history, for its overtness and acidity. Migrant children, meanwhile, were contending with the structural and social racisms of the school system, finding that their physical and emotional resistance to such practices led them to being disproportionately designated as "educationally sub-normal" and, as a result, educationally disenfranchised.

When talking of the violence which black bodies experienced in postwar Britain, there has been an overarching tendency to begin any scholarly narrative with the racist attacks in Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958. This study traces the existence of postwar violence back to 1946, when the earliest postwar Caribbean migrants experienced physical threat in government-run labour hostels. Racist violence is found to be not only endemic to the era as a whole, but experienced and conceptualised by migrants in an expansive and diffuse way, permeating their lived realities in a way in which concentrated analyses of historical episodes fails to account for. Moreover, the roots of such violence are stressed to be emotional in their cause and actualisation, racism and xenophobia here reactivated to reveal their latent emotionality, and thus their contingency on historical context. The reactions to such violence were manifold. Fear and a concern with safety obviously loom large here, along with its attendant emotion work to achieve such states. There was a heightened perception of sensory stimuli in the navigation of public spaces, spaces inscribed with new and dangerous affective associations. There was the development of emotional languages of resistance in migrants, and the obstinacy and determination to resist that these entailed. By the time of Kelso Cochrane's murder by white racists in 1959, this determination to resist was

channeled by a coalition of black activist groups into a reconceptualisation of practices of mourning, turning Cochrane's death and memory into a political statement on the precarity of black bodies which used emotion as its central unifying principle.

It was partly in response to this landscape of violence and exclusion that Caribbean migrants constructed several zones of autonomous leisure institutions. Parties held in newcomers' front rooms – a domestic space of inordinate value, and saturated with cultural codes and conventions – were one such cultural space. Created partly to escape the distance and coldness that migrants perceived in Britain's emotional regime, these events provided settings of intimacy and emotional support, a place where emotional expressiveness could cleave closer to Caribbean procedures, and a stage on which to project, present, and participate in performances of identity which went against the grain of metropolitan representations of blackness. Beginning in the 1960s, the migrant house party was gradually superseded in popularity by the blues party, a recurring and commercialised leisure space held not in the front room, but in the basement. From their growth in the 1960s to their demonisation and subsequent decline in the 1980s, blues parties were remarkably plastic in the qualitative nature of the emotional objectives and content contained therein, and this was for one primary reason. Significant demographic shifts within the blues began to occur, first-generation black Britons beginning to patronise these spaces in increasing numbers. This changed the emotional landscape of the blues by shifting their emotional objectives away from a nostalgic yearning to re-experience – emotionally, bodily, sensorily – the Caribbean toward more militant and masculine assertions of identity, belonging, and their plight as disenfranchised Britons. It was at this moment that sound system culture, reggae, and Rastafarianism began to dominate these spaces as cultural outlets for their emotional experiences, with all the masculine emotional prescriptions that these particular forms entailed. Against this new landscape arose a reaction by black British women, who found there was little representational space for them inside this new framework. By crafting lovers' rock, these women expressed the unique struggles inherent to black British femininity, and by so doing injected back into the blues a measure of warmth, intimacy, and conviviality that was lost in the drive toward reggae and sound system culture.

I began this thesis by stating a wish to inject questions of emotion and felt experience back into the equation regarding Caribbean migration to postwar Britain. Through five narrative snapshots we have found that these questions are inescapably and critically embedded within these and thus, going forward, should be of paramount importance when asking questions of and searching for answers about this great historical story.



## Appendix A: Transcript of interview with Majorie Rennie, recorded and transcribed by Ryan Tristram-Walmsley

London, 27 September 2021

**Ryan Walmsley:** This is an interview with Majorie Rennie in London on the 27th of September, 2021. This is Ryan Walmsley. We're going to be doing an oral history interview with Majorie Rennie. Hi, Majorie.

**Majorie Rennie:** Hi.

**Ryan:** I'm just wondering, can we start off by you telling me a little bit about where you grew up?

**Majorie:** I grew up in Trinidad, that's Trinidad and Tobago. I had a lovely upbringing. My dad worked as an accountant. My mum was a housewife until we grew up. Then she opened her own business teaching dressmaking, which was very successful. The big thing in that home was education. We had to learn so much. I'm sad to say this but I hate the word qualify. That's true, I hated that word.

I used to see my father's mouth saying, "If you all do not qualify... You have to qualify then nobody could take that away from you. That's what you have to do." We weren't given chores, but we were given little projects to do. The holiday time: and if we hadn't gone down to the country to the grandparents also. We spent half the time at home while he worked because he wouldn't have a whole month, he'll just have two weeks. Then we go down to the countryside, south of the island to both grandparents and loads of cousins and so on. We go down there for the holiday but the time we spend at home before holiday.

**Ryan:** Which province did you grow up in?

**Majorie:** I grow up in San Juan. I should say, about half an hour from Port of Spain which is the capital. He's going off to work and he will say, "Find out how ice is made" or "find out about the clouds," something like that. We'll be outside running like mad around the place and mum will call us in for lunch. Then we hit the encyclopedia. I think that's why I have all this [shelves of books] around me because this is what the house was like. Everything was there and we would go into the different encyclopedias.

We still had all his because he studied accountancy, we still had all his accountancy books there and that was another plaything for us. We used to borrow money from each other, from our allowance, borrow a penny so that we could write, "I owe you. I, Majorie Rennie owe Winston Rennie one shilling or one pence or half of pence and all this nonsense, we were playing. We didn't know we were learning, we were playing. The same thing, we would be diving into the thing to find out how ice is made.

While you're looking for how ice is made, you'll come across other facts. We will be shouting out to each other, "Guess what I've just seen, blah, blah, blah." We were

playing. I tell you, we didn't know we were learning, we really didn't know we were learning. We were just having fun. We will find out how ice is made or the clouds or whatever, and we think. Then we run outside and finish play. In Trinidad, afternoon time, all children, everybody, you're brought in, you're bathed and you're dressed for the evening. No more rascal playing. Day playing will be reading or playing a board game or something like that, or just chatting. That was it.

Then as we grew up, I was the dunce in the family. So much so when I came to England and I saw boys failing exams, I couldn't understand it. He's a boy, why is he failing? I really couldn't understand it. That was it. I heard him say once because we had to pay for education, you went to primary school that was free but to go onto college, you had to pay. I remember him saying he is going to pay for every – college is usually about five years – he's going to pay for every child to go to college so no one, not one of his children would say, "You didn't pay for me, you didn't let me go to college." If you fail, you failed, but I am going to pay for you to go to college."

**Ryan:** What kind of stuff did you learn in primary school? What were the schools like?

**Majorie:** I think very much was like here: reading, and writing, and arithmetic, all those sorts of thing, but it was more like digesting stuff.

**Ryan:** Rote learning.

**Majorie:** Yes, digesting stuff. The teachers were there, and they rule the classroom, and they told you, "Do the timetables or spell this or whatever." You were just absorbing this. I don't think we ever argued with the teacher. That just didn't happen. So much so that when my brothers went off to university and they went off to Canada or New York.

The students at university was arguing with the lecturer, the professor. My brother, Winston, he's passed now actually. Winston remember sitting in class, he was in Canada and these guys, these Canadian guys arguing with the professor, they know this and that. Winston, he was sitting there and thinking, "Oh my God, what are we doing here? We're out of our depths with this" because they didn't never used it.

When the projects was given, they were top of the class. Then the sudden thought, "Okay. Right. This is it. It is not that we don't belong here, we belong here." Like our Winston, he won the Lieutenant medal at his university and all that. That was a difference in learning with us. That went through to elementary school, it went through the high school as well.

**Ryan:** Did you learn anything about Trinidad and Tobago when you were in school or was it more--

**Majorie:** I did not learn *anything* about West Indian history. I don't know West Indian history. I know British history. I know the Tudors.

[laughter]

**Majorie:** When I came to England and we go to the Museum, "Oh, yes, I know it all." It was there: "oh, it's the Magna Carta! Wow!" Somewhere along the lines because I was the first child, and then by the time, it was me, Winston, Carl, British history, Booker, Yvette didn't learn, but by Merlin, somebody woke up and realised that these children don't know anything about West Indian history so then West Indian history was brought in.

**Ryan:** While you were in school.

**Majorie:** No, I was out here [in Britain] studying.

**Ryan:** I guess that came with independence.

**Majorie:** I think so, yes. Independence was in 1962, '63. My little sister, I call her my little sister, she's retired now, and when she starts telling me about West Indian history and my brother Booker at the time, when he went into teaching, he was dead bone that the children must learn West Indian history. He wrote these books [gestures to her brother's books] that's his writing there. Must learn West Indian history. When Merlin was telling me about the French and what happened with Haiti way back.

Right now, she said, "This is why Haiti is so financially poor, it's because of the French rule." Because they came and they had some money to pay, there was some financial thing, and they blockaded the country, they couldn't do that. I was like, "I didn't know that." That was one good thing because the rest of them, they knew West Indian history. I knew British history. Our reading was Shakespeare. Shakespeare and Dickens.

**Ryan:** Do you remember the textbooks you used to get in school?

**Majorie:** Yes, in my day, it was all English. Because remember in those days, we were British.

**Ryan:** I remember one textbook, I think was common in Jamaica, I'm not sure about Trinidad and Tobago, was the Royal Readers.

**Majorie:** Royal Readers, yes. That was all throughout the Caribbean, I think, because we had that in Trinidad as well. I think I was over here already, they brought out The Student's Companion and every home in Trinidad had a Student's Companion, because that gave you everything, a bit of the history. I remember horticulture, it was in fact, every home had that, Student's Companion.

**Ryan:** How did the grade system work?

**Majorie:** I really can't remember, I can't remember.

**Ryan:** That's fine.

**Majorie:** Because I didn't do my senior Cambridge exam because I dropped out and came up to England to do the nursing. But back, I remember my brothers and they're all doing the senior Cambridge exams. That was graded. A grade one, two, three, something like that, and distinction. That was all through college, they had that but I didn't do my

senior Cambridge because I just wanted to leave school. Those days you were hearing on the radio, because England was very short of nurses so you were hearing on the radio all through the day was, "Nursing! Come to England to do nursing". A lot of us decided that we were going to leave school, we were going to go up to England and do nursing but it wasn't all the nursing as well, it was a time to get away from the parents to be quite honest.

**Ryan:** Do you think that the radio put this idea in your head or gave you the inspiration.

**Majorie:** Yes, it was. At that time, Enoch Powell was the Minister of Health.

**Ryan:** That's ironic, I guess.

**Majorie:** It is.

**Ryan:** I remember he drove the recruitment drive of nurses from the Caribbean in the early days and then completely switched his attitude later on.

**Majorie:** I think we would have come and done and help when they needed us, and then afterwards, we just disappear.

**Ryan:** It didn't happen like that.

**Majorie:** It didn't happen like that.

**Ryan:** What did your parents say when you suggested that you wanted to go to England?

**Majorie:** Oh, nothing, because England was seen as the be it of all, you're going to England, you're going to the motherland. Would have been 100% better than staying in Trinidad, because we had a saying in Trinidad: if you saw somebody sitting in the veranda just relaxing, somebody will pass and say, "Oh, girl, look at you, life in London." That's what we thought life in London would be, the big mother country, the big, wealthy London. Then we came here in 1962 and realised that that's not life in London, that's life in Trinidad, thank you very much.

**Ryan:** How did you come over here?

**Majorie:** I came over by ship, my father worked with a company called the Caribbean Development Company. Part of that company, they did glass ornaments, but they also brewed CariBeer. They had shipping lines, one of the shipping lines was the SS *Herbet* and that's what I travelled on because my dad was an accountant with the company.

**Ryan:** Was it expensive to get to England?

**Majorie:** I don't know how he get the ticket or how much he paid. On that boat coming over, I met a girl that I went to school with. They were very light-skinned so they really passed themselves off as white, but her aunt worked in the same office with my father.

When I got onto the ship and there she was. We arrived in England the same time, '62, I never saw her again until years after. Trinidadians used to meet up on Sunday lunchtime and we would take over one pub and they'll be playing. We'll have a steel band and Calypso music and pudding and souse – Trinidad stuff. We'll be all there wiling away there until about two o'clock. That was a thing for Trinidadians.

When it came down to this note circular, a note circular, and one of my friends who lived around there, he's passed now, said to me, "Oh, Majorie, I know this Trinidadian girl, come and meet her." I'm looking at this girl and she's looking at me and I'm saying, "Your face is so familiar." She said, "But your face is familiar too." I said, after all this familiar, I said, "Well, what's your name?" "Julia." I said, "Julia, I'm Majorie!"

**Ryan:** How many years was it?

**Majorie:** That was a lot of years.

**Ryan:** Decades.

**Majorie:** Nearly decades. Decades.

**Ryan:** What about the day that you left Trinidad, do you remember leaving?

**Majorie:** Yes, I remember leaving, very much so. It's all in here. The family all came to see me off.

**Ryan:** What years did you go to school?

**Majorie:** Well, I was born in '40.

**Ryan:** Okay.

**Majorie:** This is me leaving Trinidad.

**Ryan:** Wow, you look so young, so beautiful. Was it very emotional, saying goodbye?

**Majorie:** No, I was happy to--

**Ryan:** Really?

**Majorie:** Oh, my goodness. I was--

**Ryan:** You were with your parents?

**Majorie:** Well, they were happy for me to leave. No, there wasn't any sad feelings at all about leaving Trinidad at all.

**Ryan:** Exciting.

**Majorie:** It was exciting. It was exciting. My father wrote here on this news clip from the newspaper. Friday the 6th of April 1962. That was the ship and this was my brand

new-- Well, we came here. When we came here we came with a suitcase of brand new clothes. You didn't bring anything that you've worn before. Everything was brand new. From sleeping clothes to going out. Everything was brand new in your suitcase. Because we thought it would be cold we all had flannelette.

There was a fabric called flannelette, I think. I had pyjamas made out of that to keep you warm and quilted dressing gowns and all that. When you're been measured up and when you fit in these things and of course in the heat and you put this thing on you think, "Oh, my God I'll never be cold!" [laughs] And then you come here and you're wearing two of them. Because the first winter was that '62 winter, there's never been anything like that again.

**Ryan:** That was especially bad.

**Majorie:** It was. That was the worst winter. It started on the day after New Year. I always remember that because we went to spend New Year with another Trinidadian girl who was much senior to us. She was married so she had her own home. We went, she took us. Me and another friend of mine to her house to spend the New Year. After the New Year, the next day, we were making our way back to the hospital because we were night duty. We started night duty and it started to snow on our way back to the hospital.

**Ryan:** That was the start of this winter?

**Majorie:** My birthday is the 13th of March and we were still knee-deep in snow.

**Ryan:** My God.

**Majorie:** The 13th of March. You couldn't put on, in the home, you couldn't put on-- Because we all lived in nurses home. I was in Fulham, Seagrave Road. The call was they wanted nurses to come to work in the mental health hospitals and the fever hospitals. I came to work in the fever hospital. That was Western Fever Hospital Seagrave Road, Fulham.

**Ryan:** How long did you work there for?

**Majorie:** Two years.

**Ryan:** Were you training or you were qualified?

**Majorie:** Training, training, training, yes. I didn't pass the final but the introductory class I won one of the awards. I won the award. It should be here. This is all us leaving. This is us in the New Year. Anyway, I won the award for the best practical exams and it's me. It's supposed to be here. But I didn't stay to do the final exam. I left because at that time I decided I don't want to do fever nursing anymore. Then they said you could do the general-- Here it is. That's me with my award.

**Ryan:** That's great. When you were training, was it mostly people from the Caribbean you were training with, or was it like a mix or you--?

**Majorie:** The people I was training with?

**Ryan:** Yes,

**Majorie:** Mostly Caribbean people. Yes, mostly Caribbean people in all the nurses' home.

**Ryan:** I'm also wondering when you left Trinidad and Tobago did you have any idea when you might go back or--?

**Majorie:** No.

**Ryan:** No, you didn't think about it or you didn't have a plan?

**Majorie:** No, we didn't think about it at all.

**Ryan:** When was the first time that you went back after coming here?

**Majorie:** I think after three years I went back. I saved up all my stupid little money that we used to get. Because we used to get paid in those days. You get a little salary and I saved it up and I went back BOAC. They said that you could fly now and pay later. We all went to them and then you discovered that if you said you was a nurse they wouldn't give it to you. I went to these travel agents and then the price was, I can't remember what it was. He looked and, "How much money have you got saved and all that? You could pay, you can buy your ticket, you could pay," but that left me with not a cent left after that. Along the lines, people realised that it wasn't free for nurses. They wouldn't give it to nurses.

**Ryan:** Do you know why?

**Majorie:** No, I don't know. It was advertised, BOAC fly now pay later and all that. But nurses, once you said you were a nurse you didn't get it. But he worked out that I had the money. He took all my money to my last living cent and bought the ticket but I went home. It was a return flight.

**Ryan:** How was it going back? Was it a big shock?

**Majorie:** No, it was lovely to see everybody again.

**Ryan:** Did you get used to the way things were done in England and then you had to adjust to go back

**Majorie:** Not in my house. Not in my house because in ours we did everything more or less like here. The manners was there, the table manners was there. On contrary to how you hear like the television is going to put on West Indian with a stupid accent. That wasn't around me. None of our friends. None of my parents spoke like that or anything. We came from an educated British standard home and all around us because all our friends were the same. I went back into that quite easy. There was no problem. The only thing was is we bathed with water. You open the tap and whatever comes out it was cold. Then they had to put in hot water because as they would bath in with hot

water here. If I go back down there to bath with cold water, it wouldn't be good for me. Yes, so they had to bring in hot water. [laughs] that's all.

**Ryan:** That's nice. Will you tell me a little bit about the ship journey?

**Majorie:** The ship journey was fun. It was just total fun. I met some girls, two coming up to England. Well, Judy was one of my friends. We went to elementary school together and then we parted into high school and never saw her again. Then saw her on the ship coming up. I know her aunt worked at the same office with my dad and then I met some other girls there who were all coming up to do nursing in England. They were coming to do mental health nursing and we met them on there and we all shared a cabin. It was just fun.

**Ryan:** How many were in the cabin?

**Majorie:** Oh gosh, I can't remember that. It was Pearl, Majorie. I'm looking at Pearl there in that picture there. No up there in that-- Yes, that's Pearl. That's when we stopped out at Madrid. You see us all with that Madrid bus. Anyway, it was about four or five-- Pearl, Majorie, and then me three. Either four or--

**Ryan:** You had entertainment on the ships?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes. There was somebody called-- Oh gosh, what's his name? A young singer who we never heard of because we were more in tune with the American artists. On the ship we saw films with-- Oh God, what's his-- He was recently had a run-in with the law where they accused him. An Anglo-Indian boy, you know him?

**Ryan:** A singer?

**Majorie:** Yes, Anglo-Indian.

**Ryan:** No, I don't think so.

**Majorie:** Yes, yes. His name's just gone. Yes, you know him very well. He represented England in that in that European--

**Ryan:** Eurovision.

**Majorie:** Eurovision. Yes. What was his name? He represented England. That was in the '60s to '70s. Yes. You know him. Anyway, his name will come. They showed us films with him and all that. We didn't know him at all because we knew the Elvis Presley and the Brooke Benton and the-- We knew all the American artists but we didn't know him at all. There was lots of films so we saw that a lot.

**Ryan:** Did you have any dances on the ship?

**Majorie:** I can't remember dancing on the ship. I remember the cinema.

**Ryan:** I can imagine it's a lot different experience to flying because you have more time, you have more space on the ship.



**Majorie:** You made friends with everybody around you.

**Ryan:** I guess some people fell in love as well.

**Majorie:** I don't know about that. I know we came up there and I met up with two boys who were coming up to join the RAF. There were two guys coming to join the RAF. There were all these girls coming to do the nursing, different mental hospitals or with me thing. There was a wife with her children coming to meet her husband who was already living here. They came up to join the husband. I can't remember anybody else that I was very friendly with. It was a whole ship of very friendly people.

**Ryan:** I guess very excited as well.

**Majorie:** Very excited to reach London until we got into Liverpool and then saw this grey place and we're thinking, "What is this?"

**Ryan:** Was that your first reaction of England, the greyness?

**Majorie:** Yes, and cold.

**Ryan:** It was in April so it was just starting to--

**Majorie:** It was Easter because Good Friday I was sitting in a classroom taking my entrance exam. We probably got here about the Thursday or Holy Thursday or whatever, but Good Friday morning, I was sitting in an exam in a classroom taking my entrance exam. Those days they used to bring you up and then you take the entrance exam. If you fail, they either put you to work as an auxiliary then after. I remember doing this exam and I'm thinking, "What? Good Friday and I'm sitting in doing an exam? It's Good Friday. What is this country about?" [laughs]

**Ryan:** Would you say religion is more important in Trinidad and Tobago at this time than in Britain?

**Majorie:** Actually, it wasn't bad here. It wasn't really bad here. It's only that the hospital had their program. I've just come from the Caribbean off the ship. They send people to collect you. No, some friends came to collect me, actually. Some friends that I knew from Trinidad. They came to collect me and they brought me to the hospital. They were boys and then the warden gave them a warning, "You are not to come back here again." [laughs] That was it.

**Ryan:** Did you travel down from Liverpool to London straight away

**Majorie:** Yes.

**Ryan:** -or did you do training in Liverpool.

**Majorie:** No. No, no, no. Came in Liverpool and came down straight off to the harbour but I must tell you to land, we had the hat, we had the gloves, we [laughs] had the suits.

**Ryan:** It sounds amazing.

**Majorie:** It really was.

**Ryan:** Sunday best.

**Majorie:** Oh, yes. In those days it was just the-- I always remember that because Grace Kelly had just got married so there was the Grace Kelly hat. I had my Grace Kelly hat and the gloves. I still got the gloves.

**Ryan:** Yes?

**Majorie:** Yes. I still got the gloves.

**Ryan:** Was there anything that shocked you coming in your first few days in England? Anything that sticks out in your memory being confusing?

**Majorie:** No, and I tell you why, because I was going to this Western Fever Hospital in Fulham. Friends of mine, who I went to school with in Trinidad were ahead of me. They were in the class ahead of me. They had made friends with all that group. I came into that group. They were all waiting. Oh, there was another girl that I went to school with as well, Shirley. She's in Canada now. It was like we came into and they were all waiting for us to come in, and they had cooked. They had cooked a pilau. It was a quick dish Trinidad, a one-pot thing and waiting for us there. We came into that atmosphere, it was really great but the one thing is, eating this pilau and I'm thinking, well, they said it's a chicken pilau but I'm only seeing wings and you're not seeing the other bits. I said, "How could you just," and then they all burst out laughing. It's because they used to go down to the butchers and say, could we have some giblets?"

[laughter]

**Majorie:** That's where they go because they were here before they go down to the butchers and say, could we have some giblets? They give them a bag of giblets and they come and they make it into a pilau. They only had to buy the peas and the rice and cook it up.

**Ryan:** What about finding somewhere to live when you got here?

**Majorie:** We didn't. It's why we came to the nurses' home.

**Ryan:** Okay, so you had accommodations through your work?

**Majorie:** Yes, we had accommodation. Yes, through the work. All the nurses' homes had the cleaners, all meals were there, breakfast, coffee, lunch, tea, dinner. They took money out of your pay salary for board and lodge. Your salary was whatever, they took out board and lodge and you were left with – I think we were left with about five pounds or something. 1960 it was a lot of money. We went to the theatre, we went to the ballet, we bought clothes.

**Ryan:** That sounds great.

**Majorie:** Yes, I bought my typewriter.

**Ryan:** It sounds like a very happy time in your life, these early years.

**Majorie:** It was. It really was. What other West Indians was talking about finding accommodation and all that. We were exempted from that because each hospital had the nurses' home, each hospital had the dining room and had their own kitchen, and had the catering staff.

**Ryan:** Did you have any friends at this time who were not nurses who'd come over from the Caribbean?

**Majorie:** Yes, I did because I had those friends who had come before me and who came and collected me from Liverpool and I had them, this boy Jim and his aunt, who came up because his aunt was living here. His aunt would have us around for Sunday lunch and so yes. Then Jim and all his friends that he met here would come and take us out and we would go sightseeing and all that. We would go sightseeing as a group because we were more or less all from Trinidad or Jamaica and my Trinidadian friends, Daphne and all of them and we went to Fulham and we will come up to Madame Tussauds or go up to the museums or so. Yes, we had a lovely time.

**Ryan:** Do you think your friends who are not nurses struggled with accommodation or they were also--

**Majorie:** I didn't have any friends that weren't nurses. I didn't have any friends who weren't nurses.

**Ryan:** I think similar to the nursing profession the people from RAF did not struggle either for accommodation because they had it provided from jobs but other people struggled more than that.

**Majorie:** Oh, yes. I was aware of Caribbean -- later on, I was aware, say, as the years passed, I was aware of the struggle of West Indian people who lived outside the nursing world but we didn't experience any of that. We had some patients who weren't very kind. I remember, not at the Western Fever Hospital, but I went to the homeopathic in Great Ormond Street and we had a patient there. If a Black nurse, if at breakfast time and mealtimes, if a Black nurse served him his food, he wouldn't eat it.

He would not eat it. He'll sit there just watching it and then a White nurse will have to come and take it away and bring him some other food. But: We were having a practical, we had the examinations, you'll have a practical on the ward and then a theory. For one of the practical, they chose him to be a patient. I always remember this girl, Lynn Swaley she was a Jamaican girl, walked up to him and said, "They've chosen you to be a patient for our practical tomorrow but if you do anything, because they want us to fail, but if you do anything to make us fail, I'm not going to forgive you for that.

**Ryan:** Did he behave himself?

**Majorie:** Yes, extremely well, because one of the tasks they chose him to do a bed bath and the nurses was doing the bed bath and we usually have a sheet covering the

patient's body while we do the bath, while we give them this bed bath. Then you remove that sheet and then after the patient is all dressed and so on, you move that sheet and throw it off, it goes into-- Then the bed is made properly and all that and they forgot to remove the sheet and he pulled it down with his legs to pull it down.

**Ryan:** To help you.

**Majorie:** To help the two that was doing that. The examiner must have thought they haven't moved the sheet so she came and just-- You know how they make hospital beds? She pushed her hand under but she couldn't feel any sheet. He had pulled it. Well, that went all around the hospital.

**Ryan:** You said just now that some people wanted you to fail?

**Majorie:** Yes, because in those days the sisters and the staff nurse were all White. Some would be nice to you, but on the whole, we were given the dirty task. Whereas our counterparts who were White were given the nice jobs and we were given the dirty jobs. We all went through that.

**Ryan:** Yes. Did you speak about it between yourselves?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes. Even still now. You ring each other up and you thought, "Oh, you remember the sputum parts."

**Ryan:** Was this just while you were training and while we were training and once you were qualified you weren't given the, you weren't given?

**Majorie:** Well, no, you're qualified then you-- Yes.

**Ryan:** No, that's interesting. What about outside of work? Did you encounter any racism in the public, so when you went to the theatre or restaurants?

**Majorie:** I can't really recall. I know I went to the butcher mill circus and two boys started laughing, "Oh, look at that Black girl and laugh," but they were two Black boys. Yes, I can't remember. I remember one patient telling me, that was at that hospital, the homoeopathic, saying to me, "Look at you. I wish you have what I have. I wish you'd get what I have." I just walked away. I just walked away. Some of them were nice. Some weren't nice. That was that. Then I moved on to do my general training, and that was in Slough, Canadian Red Cross. My group was a mixture, more Whites than Blacks. I think in my class, we were two Blacks, and then the rest was all White. White Irish, White, Black. Two of us, I think it was Lynn and me, were the two Black girls.

Anyway, this particular day, all the nurses on the ward, I was the only Black nurse on that ward, and they were laughing with this patient. They were joking with this patient, a woman. I cannot remember what it was all about, but we were all there joking with her and everybody was laughing. She turned around and she saw me, and she said, "Don't you dare laugh at me, you savage."

**Ryan:** Do you remember when? This was in the 1960s?

**Majorie:** Yes. I was doing my general training in Slough. I just walked away, and I thought, "No, I didn't come here to be called a savage." That was her.

**Ryan:** How did you deal with things like that? You just tried to rise above it?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes. I know where I came from and I know my lifestyle, what my lifestyle was in Trinidad, so you calling me a savage doesn't--

**Ryan:** It's just ignorance.

**Majorie:** It's total ignorance. You don't know me. You don't know nothing about me.

**Ryan:** What did you think of London when you came here?

**Majorie:** Oh, I love London.

**Ryan:** Yes?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes.

**Ryan:** You loved it from the start?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes. London was lovely.

**Ryan:** I think it's very green.

**Majorie:** Pardon?

**Ryan:** I think it's very green, compared to other big cities.

**Majorie:** Yes.

**Ryan:** I guess it's nothing on Trinidad?

**Majorie:** Well, London was fun. We had fun. London was fun. We enjoyed ourselves. We really enjoyed ourselves.

**Ryan:** Did you ever think about going back?

**Majorie:** No, no, no. A lot of our friends went off to Canada, or went off to the States, settled in. In those days, nurses wanted to work in Canada and in the States. Their working hours were shorter than in England, so that's why a lot of them went off. I, for some stupid reason, I stayed here. I don't know why. I just stayed here. Then all of them when they go off, they used to send their money back and tell me, "Go to Marks and Spencer's and buy so and so." [laughs] I was running around London shopping with all their money and having to post it off back to them.

**Ryan:** What were they asking for?

**Majorie:** What were they asking? Things like lip balm and tops. Mostly the Marks and Spencer's bras and pants and things like that. I enjoyed myself shopping with their money.

**Ryan:** Oh, that's nice. Did you find it hard to buy a house, or it was much easier then?

**Majorie:** Oh, that's way back then, way, way back. This is the first house I bought. **Ryan:**

Really?

**Majorie:** Yes.

**Ryan:** When did you buy it, do you remember?

**Majorie:** This is when I got married. This is way back when I got married. My husband and I, we got married, and we bought this straight off because I didn't want to go renting anywhere. I came straight from the nurses' home to here. He lived in rental accommodation, furnished. When we bought and moved in here, I had a teapot, a mug, a plate, a saucepan, a knife, a fork, and a spoon.

**Ryan:** The bare minimum.

**Majorie:** Yes. He had much more than me. He had some plates and spoons and forks and things, but we had nothing. We had no furniture, no beddings, no nothing. We bought it here straight off. Got married and bought here right off because he was well paid. He worked with the DVLA and I worked as a nurse. That time, I was working as a midwife, and we bought it here.

We bought here with the thought of staying here for three years. Then, because this is not what we wanted to be home, this is what we could have bought at the time. The plan was to stay here for three years, get furnish, get all the furniture we need and everything else, and then find home, and then start a family, but the marriage broke up before three years.

**Ryan:** When did you move to this house? Do you remember the year?

**Majorie:** '72.

**Ryan:** How did you meet your husband?

**Majorie:** He was a friend of my sister, my sister that came much, much later to do nursing. Her husband, they're married now, actually. Her husband from Barbados, he was, going round to their house. They rented a place in Winson Green and I would go round there to see them. This boy was a friend of her husband. Then I met him there various times, and he would be saying-- because he used to write for *New Musical Express* at the time. That wasn't his real job. DVLA was his real job. His part-time was writing for *Musical Express*.

He reviewed all Black literature and Black music. Every week, he would write what pleased. He would say, "This is no good. That's all right," sort of thing. He used to call it the Grapevine. The Grapevine would come out in the *New Musical Express* on what he thought of this record and this sort of thing. He would be there and he would be talking and I was, "Who's this boy talking? Thinks he knows everything." I just decided to

oppose him just for fun. [laughs]

**Ryan:** It worked?

**Majorie:** It worked. We mistook that for love. We both mistook that for love. When you get to live together, you realise it wasn't love. Now, he would be saying, "Who's this girl opposing me?" I'm going, "Who's this boy who think he knows so much," just for fun. If he said the top of this bottle is white, I would say it's black, just for fun, [laughs] and argue my case. That's how we met. Then we went on a first date. Carol and Pete didn't know that we were meeting up outside. Then we decided to get married. Then—

**Ryan:** Break down?

**Majorie:** Yes. It wasn't love. It was just we kept on antagonising each other.

**Ryan:** Did you and your friends used to have lots of parties or went in the front rooms and stuff like this for entertainment?

**Majorie:** No. I went to some of them, but it's not with friends. It would be with people that we get to know through people. In those days, in the '60s, going right back to the '60s now, there were a lot of these front room parties. There was a lot of thing in the past saying about the West Indian with the noise and the noisy parties. Remember one thing, they couldn't go to the pub because they wouldn't. The Working Mens' club didn't want them. They would get together in somebody's front room where they could play their own music, have their own food, do their own thing. These parties also was-- [sneezes]

**Ryan:** Bless you.

**Majorie:** Sorry. Thanks. Was a way of socialising, plus it was helping the owner of the house to pay the mortgage. That is what this was all about.

**Ryan:** Did you go to a few of them?

**Majorie:** No, I didn't go to anywhere I had to pay. I went to, say, one of the girls in the hospital would have a cousin who was living here and he's having a birthday party. That's how we would go out. We'll go to this person's birthday party or christening or something like that.

**Ryan:** What was the music that you and your friends were listening to at the time in the '60s?

**Majorie:** As I said, it was a lot of American music. I got all the tapes here, actually. The Drifters, The Supremes. Oh God, I can remember The Supremes. I can remember-- that's a whole long story. Go back in Trinidad. My friend, Shirley, she came before me to do the nursing. She was one of the people who was at the hospital to greet me when I came.

I had gone to another friend to spend the weekend and I'd come home and I passed

through the kitchen and come in. My father didn't know I was home yet. My mum was in her bedroom. They went into the bedroom talking about the weekend I had, which would be done somewhat. Next thing I know, I heard Shirley's voice coming through the sitting room and my father saying, "Oh, Majorie isn't here. She's spending the weekend," and I'm coming out saying "Yes, Shirley, I'm here, I'm here. Come down."

She says, she turns to my father, "Oh, Ruby's in the car. We popped in to collect-- We're going down to see The Platters. Ruby's in the car with us. Come on, get dressed. Come on. We're going down to The Platters." I just dropped my bag off down in the car. Ruby wasn't in the car. It was another friend of our school friend seated in the car. They got this taxi, made the taxi come up to collect me, and off down to Port of Spain to see The Platters.

**Ryan:** It's amazing.

**Majorie:** It was a lovely concert to see. I always remember The Platters. They were really lovely. Then afterwards, our taxi to come back, because in Trinidad the taxis are public transports.

**Ryan:** Really?

**Majorie:** Yes, public transport. The people would run the cars, the vehicles as public transport.

**Ryan:** Wow. That's cool.

**Majorie:** That's The Platters. That was the music we were dancing to. Then here too, then we came, we fell into the Jamaican music. We fell into the Mash Potato and all that.

**Ryan:** Ska.

**Majorie:** The Ska. All that sort of stuff. We fell into that. Then you had Millie who came on with *My Boy Lollipop*. In those days, it was quite funny because Millie was on the television with *My Boy Lollipop*. So when White boys see a Black girl, it happened to me walking down, they started shouting, "Millie, Millie." Every Black girl was Millie.

**Ryan:** It was popular with everyone in Britain, this song, *My Boy Lollipop*? It was a big craze.

**Majorie:** Yes. It was a big thing, *My Boy Lollipop*.

**Ryan:** Then after that came rocksteady and reggae.

**Majorie:** After that came *Young, Gifted and Black*. "We are young, gifted and Black." We had some White friends, they will be going, "We are young, gifted and White."

[laughter]

**Ryan:** That's nice. What was your social group like? Was it a mix of White and Black?



**Majorie:** Yes, it was. There were certain things we would go to that would be the Whites and there is certain things that we would go to that was just Blacks.

**Ryan:** Do you remember what kind of things?

**Majorie:** Yes. We loved going to Café de Paris. I was a member. I had my membership for Café de Paris. That was more or less White with dotted Black faces around Empire Ballroom. We would be enjoying ourselves there, especially the tea dances at Empire Ballroom.

**Ryan:** Did you ever go to the Lyceum?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes.

**Ryan:** Did you like it?

**Majorie:** Yes. There was Portobello Road. There was a club there, a hall. What was it, Portobello Road? There was a hall there. I can't remember it now. Hammersmith Pally was another one.

**Ryan:** There was no trouble getting into them?

**Majorie:** No, we didn't have any trouble at all. I say to you, I had membership with Café de Paris, and we used to go there. It really was a total mix. There were young people coming from the continent to dance at Café de Paris every weekend. We'd all meet up there dancing at Café de Paris.

**Ryan:** You weren't over here when the West Indian cricket team won at Lords?

**Majorie:** Yes. I was on the field. I was one of them that ran out on the field.

**Ryan:** Were you really?

**Majorie:** Yes. At that time, I was married. My husband, we went down to see the match and some of the friends of ours from Ghana. We all had our big picnics down there. I was one of those people.

**Ryan:** What was the atmosphere like?

**Majorie:** Oh, it was fantastic. It was fantastic. We just pelted onto the field.

[laughter]

**Ryan:** I can't believe you were there. That's a great story.

**Majorie:** Oh, yes.

**Ryan:** There were some calypso musicians or so, ran onto the field.

**Majorie:** Yes. They were playing all through the match. [laughs] That was nice. I remember that very well.

**Ryan:** What do you think about English culture in general? I guess because you're so familiar with it from your upbringing with your family, it's not so much of a shock to you.

**Majorie:** No, it wasn't.

**Ryan:** Is there anything you think is peculiar about it when you came here or something that sticks out in your mind?

**Majorie:** No. I'll tell you something. I was thinking about that the other day. Just came into my mind, I don't know why. I was in Fulham and I was at the bank, Barclays, of course. There was this White mother with her White child, and he was running around, as kids of that age would do, and there was an elderly man. The mother said, "Oh, I don't know what to do with him." The man said him, "He doesn't have to do anything. He's English." I thought, "What? He doesn't have to do anything, he's English?" I thought, "This is great."

I remember there was a knifing. I was-- Where was I? I can't remember which hospital I was at. It was all on the papers. It was in a kitchen. It had taken place in some kitchen somewhere. I remember the English said, "Oh, an Englishman would never do that."

**Ryan:** That was in the paper?

**Majorie:** No, no, no. The case was in the paper about this knife stabbing. The English people I was with said-- Oh, Cliff Richards. That was the guy. Oh, because that comes back to me as I'm saying this. An English man would never do this, and I thought, "Wow."

**Ryan:** How long ago was this?

**Majorie:** Oh, this would've been going back late '60s. Then why I remember Cliff Richards is because when I was doing my general training, I was in Slough. One of the girls in my group was so annoyed that Cliff Richards was representing England in the Eurovision because he's not English.

**Ryan:** [laughs] That's funny.

**Majorie:** "He's not English. Why is he representing England?" That's why I remember his name. It was Cliff Richards on the ship coming over. They were showing you the fame was Cliff Richards and we'd say, "Who's he? We don't know him." [laughs]

**Ryan:** Do you think England's changed a lot since you've been living here?

**Majorie:** Oh God, yes. When we came over here in the '60s, if you sent a letter to a company, you would get a return post. "I have received your letter and we are dealing with it." So you know they've received it and they're dealing with it, and had to come. If you walking down Oxford Street or Regent Square or wherever, and you stop a gentleman, who has his bowler to ask for direction, he'll tip his hat and tell you exactly, "No, it's here or there." Wherever you've asked. "Hello, ma'am."

**Ryan:** You think a lot of the--

**Majorie:** Oh, that's all gone.

**Ryan:** You think a lot of the manners between strangers has disappeared?

**Majorie:** It's no longer here. It's no longer here. This is the England I came into. It's no longer here. That's all gone.

**Ryan:** That's interesting.

**Majorie:** That's all gone.

**Ryan:** It's the same with the police as well, we used to ask them for directions and they used to know the community.

**Majorie:** Yes. If you ask a policeman-- I've never had to ask a policeman, but I've heard from other people who are around the same time with me. If you ask them, they would walk you directly to where you want to go and be polite with you because you are a visitor to the country. That's all gone.

**Ryan:** That's interesting. What about Trinidad? Do you think that's changed as well?

**Majorie:** Oh, God, Trinidad has changed a lot too.

**Ryan:** In a different way?

**Majorie:** Yes. The same way like here. It has totally changed the-- Well, I go down there on holiday and so forth. It's not as sedate and gentlemanly like or ladylike as it was. No, it's not. Even going to church is different, because if you went to church, you were dressed. If you were going to high mass, you had your gloves, you had your stockings, you had a lovely hat. All that. Nobody goes to church like that anymore.

**Ryan:** Have you been going to church ever since you came to Britain?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes. That I kept, yes.

**Ryan:** Every Sunday?

**Majorie:** Yes. During the COVID, we were told that we don't have to come on a Sunday, just go once a week. The Catholic church, we have service every day. We were allowed to go, as long as you go once a week. Some people go every day. Even in Trinidad, they go every day. Some people go every day. I never went every day. I went every Sunday. Then, before I came here, I went to Sunday school as well. In Trinidad, before I came here, everybody had Sunday lunch at two o'clock, because at two o'clock, there was a program called *Aunty Kay*.

She was everybody's auntie. She had this program for children, *Aunty Kay*. Everybody listened to *Aunty Kay*. Adults, everybody, grandparents, parents, children. Everybody listened to *Aunty Kay*. She had some singing competition or whatever competition she's

going and whatever. While you eat lunch, everybody's listening to *Aunty Kay*. You eat lunch. Then after that, you got dressed and you went off to Sunday school, and that was in the church. It's all religious.

When I grew up, in my teenage, I started teaching Sunday school. I stopped teaching Sunday school because I then now wanted to go to the cinema to see Elvis Presley.

**Ryan:** [laughs] Heartthrob.

**Majorie:** I miss Presley. I came to England. Well, I came in '62, as you know. There was a film out, mid-'60s, whenever. One of his films were out and I rushed off to the cinema to see it. I sat in a cinema and I thought, "What a load of rubbish," and that was it. [laughs]

**Ryan:** When you started to go to church here, did you go with your friends, and was it majority White in the churches?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes.

**Ryan:** You had no problem?

**Majorie:** They didn't particularly-- Well, some people had-- The Catholic church wasn't so welcoming to us. The girls who were Methodist, the Methodist community took them in. My church was in Fulham. We went, we stood there, we sat the mass and we came home. Those days, all England was more religious than now, because even in those days, on a Sunday with our nursing duties, you never worked all day on Sunday. You either worked the morning shift or the afternoon shift. That is to allow you to go to church.

**Ryan:** They stopped doing that now.

**Majorie:** They stopped doing that now. They don't do that anymore.

**Ryan:** There was no big difference between the Caribbean and Britain in terms of religion?

**Majorie:** No, there wasn't. No, there wasn't at all.

**Ryan:** That's interesting.

**Majorie:** That's all gone.

**Ryan:** Do you think religion has helped you adjust to Britain?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes. Adjust your whole life. Adjust your whole life. I don't know where we would be without religion. Religion is important. Of all my family, I am the only one who maintain going to church.

**Ryan:** Really?

**Majorie:** Yes.

**Ryan:** Why do you think they stopped?

**Majorie:** Well, the boys, when they went up to university, going up to university, that stopped because it was a total different life. They were in Canada and New York sort of thing. My sister here, when she came over here, she came to do her nursing and met this boy from Barbados and they got married. She had her first baby and took him to the nearest church, it was Church of England, to ask for her child to be baptised. The priest said to her, "Why are you bringing this child into this church? Do you know what you're doing with this child in this church?" Carol just picked up her child and turned her back. That was it with her with church. She said she's not telling her children anything about God.

**Ryan:** Unbelievable. We've almost hit one and a half hours now. I'm just wondering, I want to give you the opportunity. Is there anything that you'd like to say about your experience that you think I haven't asked? If not, that's fine.

**Majorie:** No, not really. What should I like to say? In the nursing, because I said to you, we were all given the dirty jobs. When I went to Colindale, that was a thoracic hospital, there, every day my duty was to empty sputum pots and did everything. What I did was I studied. Every night I came home, I studied so that the people who were giving me the dirty jobs-- When I was in my second year or third year, if you were on night duty and I walked in, these same people will say, "Oh, thank God, it's you."

**Ryan:** Because you've got so good at your job in studying.

**Majorie:** Thank God, it's you. I looked at them and I thought, "if I had followed you, all I would know is to empty sputum pots."

**Ryan:** The reason why you were given those jobs is because you were Black.

**Majorie:** Yes, it is. The Black. There was this Irish girl and me. She would be doing the blood pressures. Then they had the workbook. The head, the main sister was a Nigerian guy. He was the head. His staff nurses would do the procedure books and a writer book. M Renee would always be doing the sputum pots and whatever. This other girl would be running around doing the blood pressures and taking the bloods and all this. I would be doing the sputum pots.

I decided-- my father say, qualify, study, qualify. Get yourself qualified then they can't take it away from you. That was my father. I did my studies and so forth. At the end of it, we were qualified. Then now they wanting, "Oh, I'm so glad it's you." I'm thinking, "Well, I don't know why you are so glad. If it was just for you, all I would've known--" When the Nigerian guy, who was the head nurse, when he did, then I would get a chance to be going around doing the blood pressures and taking the bloods and all that. Only when he'd do it or when he did the books.

Then at that hospital too, when I was doing my general training, there was this sister in

the ward. Every weekend, she will say to me, "Majorie, come and help me do the work." How do you call it? The work program. What everybody would be doing. "Who is on and who is off duty," and so forth. Then she'll say to me, "Oh, let's give nurse so and so--" This was a White South African girl. "Let's give her the weekend off so she could go out with her boyfriend." I'll be sitting there and I'm thinking, "We all have boyfriends."

Her thing was, if she calls me in to help her do the off-duty, by saying to me, "Let's give the nurse so and so." This girl didn't even have to ask for the weekend. That was that consideration given to her. Me, I had to work all the weekends.

**Ryan:** You were aware of what was happening at this time, but you just wanted to qualify?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes. Well, what could you do? There's nobody to complain about. There's nobody to complain to.

**Ryan:** Things got much better once you'd qualified and you were working professionally?

**Majorie:** Oh, yes. Once you qualified, which made me laugh, you had to know your stuff. You had to. You had to know it.

**Ryan:** You worked hard for it.

**Majorie:** You had to study. You had to study.

**Ryan:** Which role did you retire in?

**Majorie:** Oh, well, look, I've had three retirements. I was managing occupational health department with the NHS. I went into occupational health. I did my SRN. Then I did my SCM. That's midwifery. Oh, I did thoracic. Sorry, I forgot. I did thoracic nursing. Then I did my SRN. Then I did my SCM, which is midwifery. Then from midwifery, I went into occupational health. I retired as managing occupational health department. That was the first retirement. I wasn't really feeling-- I don't want to stop. That was with the NHS. I then went into local government, managing their occupational health department. Still didn't want to retire when I had gotten an age where they say you must retire.

I phoned up the agency that they used to employ people from and I said, "Oh, just give me-- I want two days." They rang me back straight away. "We want an occupational health nurse with your qualifications with the Metropolitan Police, but it's full-time." I thought, "I'm not passing that." I said, "Yes, please." I went to Metropolitan Police as occupational health, which was fantastic. I retired myself because it's the only job where I didn't have a secretary, so you have to do all the typing yourself. I started getting pains along my shoulders, coming down my arms, and then reached coming down to the middle finger. I thought, "Take the advice you've given everybody else. Time to retire." That's how I retired permanently.

**Ryan:** That's great.

**Majorie:** Then, you see, I could afford to retire then, because I had all my voluntary work going with the Commonwealth.

**Ryan:** What do you do for them?

**Majorie:** Well, at the time, I belong to an-- I don't do anything now. This year I retired totally. One of the Commonwealth groups that I worked with, that I joined, was a member of the Educate Girls throughout the Commonwealth. I was sending off some condolences. This woman who just died, her mother started this, the education for girls throughout the Commonwealth. I started with them. Every year, they did a Commonwealth fair, which is, they got all the high commissioners of the Commonwealth to get into the Commonwealth Institute that time.

then I became-- Oh, I forgot. I decided I wanted to study health education, health promotion, so I did the course. The people in this Commonwealth Countries League knew I was doing that study, and the friends of the Commonwealth Institute. When I was finished with the course, they said to me, "Would you come and advertise for the Commonwealth fair." I took that on, which was nice. Everything I learned in the course, how to manage, how to advertise and way to advertise and all that. I became the publicity officer for the Commonwealth fair.

I think I did that for about 13 years or something like that. Then from that, I became the chair of the executive committee. I did that for a number of years as well. Then we became a trust, and then I became a member of the trust board until this year. Early this year, I retired.

**Ryan:** That's nice. What motivated you to do that? Does the Commonwealth mean a lot to you?

**Majorie:** I came from a house, that was back to Trinidad, where both parents were very, very much involved with community work. I didn't say that before, but my father and my mother, they were both very, very much involved. My mum with her women's group, and they were always doing something, and my father with the political groups and all that. Our house was a house-- my mother people is inside having their meeting and my father people are gathering on the lawn for them to come in. That's how I was brought up. A lot of community work. It was just normal for me to fall into doing with these other groups.

**Ryan:** That's great. Majorie, thank you very much. Is there anything you want to add? Anything else you want to say?

**Majorie:** No, nothing.

**Ryan:** This has been great. I want to thank you so much for your time.

**Majorie:** See how it pan out, because I know then you have to put it into context and put it out.

**Ryan:** Sure, thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

**Majorie:** Okay.



## Appendix B: Transcript of interview with Lenore and Pearl

### Marcano, recorded and transcribed by Ryan Tristram-Walmsley

London, 12 November 2021

**Ryan:** The date today is the 12th of November, 2021. My name is Ryan Walmsley. I'm interviewing Lenore and Pearl Marcano at their home in South Harrow. I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about growing up in Trinidad before you came. I'm particularly interested in schooling. How was it for you in school over there?

**Lenore:** For me, when I started school, we started school at normal times, age five. Unfortunately, because I was very close to my father from a tiny thing. When I was three years old, he went to Venezuela. I, as a child, didn't understand what was happening. I just knew that he disappeared. He didn't come back until I was seven, by which time I had started school. As a result of that, I was very withdrawn. I didn't speak to anybody.

**Ryan:** Where did you think he was during this time?

**Lenore:** I don't know. As I'm saying, at that time I wouldn't have known. The teachers thought that I was stupid, because I didn't say anything, I didn't talk to anybody. For me, I was a slow developer because of that. My educational achievements only started to flourish as such when I went to secondary school. I went to a private secondary school.

**Ryan:** In Trinidad?

**Lenore:** In Trinidad. From there, I was top in everything. When I came here, I was a qualified person.

**Ryan:** Which qualifications were they?

**Lenore:** I was a trained nurse because I did my training in Trinidad.

**Pearl:** They had the same qualifications here, in Surrey.

**Lenore:** We have reciprocity with the Nursing Council, because they considered the training back home to be on par with the training here. That has changed now. They no longer have reciprocity. As I said, I didn't have lots of friends when I was going to school. I depended on my sister a lot, so anybody did anything to me, she dealt with them.

**Ryan:** What was your father doing in Venezuela, for work?

**Lenore:** Work. He is a mechanical engineer. He went there to look for work, and then to send for the family, but it didn't work out. I will say that children react to the disappearance of one or the other parent in different ways. For me, it threw me back. I didn't smile. I didn't talk to anybody. As a result, I still don't smile much. People get the

wrong impression of me, because they don't understand why I don't smile.

As I say, the fact that that happened, when he came back, I was unable to make up for that past. I had a very good grandmother, and my mother kept us together. Then, during the school time, as I said, I would be in the class, but I hardly participated.

**Ryan:** Do you remember what you were being taught in the schools at this time?

**Lenore:** Yes. I was aware of what was being taught, but I didn't get involved as I should have done, because as I said, I was a very withdrawn person, didn't relate to any of the children. Hardly related to the teacher, because they thought I was stupid.

**Ryan:** I heard from some other people that you learned nothing of Trinidad in school. It was all to do with Britain. Was this your experience?

**Lenore:** Yes, they did not--

**Pearl:** I think what he wants is tell him what standard of work, how it was done at home, as well as it appeared with here.

**Lenore:** School in Trinidad wasn't like what I have experienced in a children's schools here, because we had one building. It was an open affair. We had about six classes in that building separated by a blackboard. The teachers in Trinidad, I would say, were better. I wouldn't say better educated, but better able to cope with teaching subjects than the teachers here, because one teacher taught everything.

You didn't move from one class to another room to get English, and another room to get maths, and another room-- Everything was taught in that room behind that blackboard, and children made progress. You find that at school in Trinidad was a different kind of experience to what the children get here.

**Pearl:** Also tell him about, we knew all about England. Everything about England.

**Lenore:** We knew English history. We knew a lot about England

**Pearl:** That they did not appear when we came here.

**Lenore:** The British Isles and all. We knew all about that, because we were taught that.

**Ryan:** Nothing about the Caribbean

**Lenore:** No.

**Pearl:** No, they taught about Caribbean in a sense, Christopher Columbus and all these things. What I'm saying is, when we came to this country, I was rather surprised how dull the children here were informed. As a matter of fact, they didn't even know what was Trinidad. The only countries they knew was Jamaica and Africa. Nothing else. Don't talk about their grammar. Even though they thought they were English, their grammar was very poor. Extremely poor.

**Ryan:** This was a surprise?

**Pearl:** Exactly.

**Lenore:** My first interview when I came here, the chap said to me "Lenore Teresa Marcano, you could have fooled me." I thought, "What am I fooling you with? He went on to say, "You speak very good English." I thought, "Well, I don't speak anything other than that." Because they didn't understand.

**Pearl:** They didn't understand. No.

**Lenore:** Even when I was back home in Trinidad, two Americans chaps, when I was going to school there. My friend and I, we walked from school to home. It wasn't a question of being ferried to school in the car, and ferried back home in a car, and that deal. The only time you'd get that is if there was a problem, and your mother will come and collect you. We were going home walking along. These two American chaps stopped us, "Excuse me, do you speak English?"

I said, "No." I said, "I speak Wambi, and she speaks Swahili." I had no idea what is Wambi or what is Swahili, but since they could be so stupid to ask me if I speak English...

**Pearl:** Then you see then their knowledge of the West Indies for some reason was very poor.

**Lenore:** Well, that's what I'm saying.

**Pearl:** What I also found is the children at home were better disciplined than here, much better disciplined, in school and even on the road. A child see an adult, the adult speak to that child, that child respects that adult. The child will never backchat her, because you'll go to tell your mom you've done that, you're in trouble. Children respected adults. Here, they never did respect adults.

In that sense, when you go to school, your teacher, we had a certain routine we had to do of discipline. Here, I find they don't have that.

**Lenore:** The teachers at home were able to correct you.

**Pearl:** Yes.

**Lenore:** The teachers here cannot correct the children, because the parents will come for them. That's another difference in the schooling back home and here. Uniforms, you had to wear your uniform.

**Pearl:** That's correct.

**Lenore:** That went from shirt, tie, blazer--

**Pearl:** Had to be well dressed for the school.

**Lenore:** Everything, you had to be kitted out for school. That in a way didn't make any child look as if they were less advantage than any other. Whereas you might find here, some children will have a uniform on. Some children may not have a uniform on.

**Pearl:** The other thing is Len, the other thing is I found that, at home, for whatever reason, the way we were taught, we always look up at a person who was white. Didn't we? To some extent that when people came over to Trinidad. Exactly. Say for example, they came to work in the oil field, white men, women, mainly men came to work in the oil field. They were respected so much. The children never go to school with us. They had special schools and everything.

We knew everything about them. Strangely we respected them. When we came to England, "move out you black so and so." It was rather strange, because the way we treated them, there was no repercussion, no re-address, reciprocation. There was none at all. As a matter of fact, some of them didn't know some people were black, because I remember I went on an outing and this was a couple of years.

This bus, I think it was Poland or somewhere there, this bus with people coming on and stopping, my friend and I were on the road. We were just walking because we were on a cruise, and they run out the bus. We were scared. I thought they were going to kill us. They came and touch us. They wanted to see the black was real. Beyond me, I could not believe people over here was so daft. They wanted to see if you were really black.

**Ryan:** Your teachers in school, they were black or they were white?

**Lenore:** Black.

**Pearl:** Black teachers.

**Ryan:** In secondary school, primary school, everything.

**Lenore:** All black teachers. It was all black teachers, yes.

**Pearl:** We respected. We knew about white people. As I say, we wouldn't dare go and swear at a white person or anything like that. When we came here, that was a different question.

**Ryan:** When did you guys come here? 1962?

**Pearl:** I came in 1962.

**Lenore:** I came in 1968.

**Pearl:** I remember on my ward I was working one day, and this was a psychiatric unit. You could probably give her a little excuse for that. They were sitting and we walked in, and then one of the patients said, "Nurse Marcano." I said, "Hello, Pixie." She said, "Could I ask you a question?" I said, "Yes, dear. What is the question?" "Nurse Marcano, I think you are awfully stupid to paint yourself black." That is how people talk

about black people.

You paint yourself black. If they ask you, if I ask, "Where you think I come from?" It's either you come from Africa. They say North Africa? They'll think and think, and they might come up with Barbados. That's all they knew, nothing else.

**Ryan:** How did you guys, did you both come on the ship over here?

**Pearl:** I came before her.

**Lenore:** I came by plane.

**Ryan:** Both by-- No.

**Pearl:** No, I came by boat.

**Ryan:** Could you tell me something about the experience of coming, of the actual travel? What it was like?

**Pearl:** When I came on the boat, I had a few days to adjust. As you know, I had 14 days on the boat. It was an experience, because I've never been one away from my parents, and two in a strange environment. When I landed in Liverpool it was an anxiety state, because I'm anxious to see what I'm going to see. Then at the same time, some things happen, which I wouldn't like to relate to you, because I thought that was rather strange with the men. I don't want to say anymore than that. It was rather strange.

When we got to Liverpool and we had, it was this association met us and took us to a hospital. In that sense, I was all right because I went straight to a hospital and I was welcome, because in those days they needed nurses, and it was all Caribbean nurses. I was well-received. Some of the prejudices that many people experience, I did not get it then because I was in a certain way, I was wanted.

**Ryan:** What was the atmosphere like on the ship?

**Pearl:** The atmosphere on the ship was warm and welcoming. I had no problem. No problem at all.

**Ryan:** Everyone was excited?

**Pearl:** Yes, I was very excited, because I wanted to know, it's something new. When I came off the boat, the first thing, as I say, when I came and saw all these chimneys, I thought, "Oh, what's going on?" Then we went straight to this, but the boat was all right. I had no problems with the boat at all. The strangeness was when we get into the hospital, and what we saw there we started. It's different. Of course it's cold.

Some of the things you never experience, but then you see some people who came and went into houses, where they had one cooker, and one room and living with three and four people using a bathroom and a toilet. I didn't have that, because I was in a nurses' home, and I had everything provided. My food was provided, my clothes was provided. I

didn't experience that.

**Ryan:** That's interesting.

**Pearl:** The first time I experienced it is when one of my colleagues said to me, "Pearl you must come to London with me on holiday." I said, "Okay," and when I came to London, I was so shocked. When I went, she had this room, and this house had about four other tenants, and they all used the same cooker, and the same bathroom, and the same toilet. I thought, "This is rather strange," because in the West Indies, no matter how poor you are, everybody had their own toilet and their own bath. I couldn't believe that was in England. Those are some of the things that shocked me to start with. Then I started learning about multi occupants, but I didn't have the experience there, because I was in a nurses home.

**Ryan:** How was it, Lenore, flying?

**Lenore:** Again flying was strange because I had never been on a plane, but the plane, the flight was okay. Before I got onto the plane, no, this was strange. My neighbour, no I had no idea what to expect in England. I heard England is cold and I knew they had snow and fog and all those sorts of things. I understood what snow meant, what fog was, but having no experience of it. My neighbour said to me, "You're going to be so cold. See, you've got to make some things out of newspaper and put them underneath your clothes."

There I was, these things are made out of newspaper underneath my clothes. I felt like an idiot when I arrived in England and a hat, which I never wore before. I got here. Of course, she was here, and another friend of ours was also here. They were very good friends. They collected me from the airport. On my way from the airport, I couldn't believe it. I saw all these chimneys with smoke and I said to them, "Why do they need all these bakeries on one street?"

**Ryan:** What did they say?

**Lenore:** They told me [laughs] they're not bakeries, these heated the people's houses.

**Pearl:** That was strange, that was really strange. I always hated paraffin heaters, oh I hated it.

**Lenore:** I went to this hotel, before I went to the hospital. Went to this hotel, and I had this beautiful brooch that was given to me as a present when I was leaving. Again, I didn't see English people as being dishonest or whatever. I hung it on the door of my wardrobe. When came back, it was gone. The brooch was gone.

**Ryan:** What was it like in Trinidad the day that you were leaving, when you were saying goodbye?

**Lenore:** It was exciting because I had pictures with the neighbour's children and

**Pearl:** It was exciting.

**Lenore:** -it was very, very exciting. The whole family came to the airport to see me off, that kind of thing. You had pictures and what have you. It was sad when I had to leave them, because there I was, never left home before. The only time I left home because they don't live in hostel. Not compulsory hostels here, but in Trinidad, when you are doing your training, they had what we call the CPTS.

All the students were in this building, individual rooms and that, so you left home then, but you came back home on weekends and things like that. It wasn't like leaving home and not coming back, because I thought I was coming here for two years.

**Ryan:** How long did you think you were coming?

**Pearl:** Five. I said I was coming for five years, because I intended to do psyche and general, and then go back home.

**Ryan:** This makes it easier. I think, to say goodbye to your family?

**Pearl:** Well, for me too, because I kept thinking, "Oh, well, the days are going, I'll soon be back home," and I'm still here 40 years.

**Lenore:** Of course, I was trained. I did my general nursing at home. This is what I'm saying to you, my educational achievements flourished when I started secondary school. I got the medicine prize when I did my general nursing. As a matter of fact, the examiners commented that this student, her work was like a young intern. Like the doctors who--

**Pearl:** She's very brilliant, very brilliant.

**Lenore:** I wasn't there to receive my prize because I was already-- I just knew I passed my exam, and I was off. My mother collected my prize for me. Came here, I was trained. My impression is that our training, although we had this reciprocity with the general nursing council, meaning that the training was the same. I felt we were better trained than the nurses here, because at home we were doing things that the young interns would have done.

**Pearl:** Where they were not taught to do.

**Lenore:** Whereas here, you were not allowed to do it. I was putting on drips, doing cut downs and babies coming in the night and they're dehydrated, I do cut down, rehydrate the baby, things that you wouldn't be allowed to do that here.

**Pearl:** We weren't allowed to do it here.

**Lenore:** Taking blood. You wouldn't been allowed to do that here. I went on to the ward, my first ward, and they told me to do the flowers. I said, "Do the flowers?" I said, "You could call a man on the street to do the flowers. That's not nursing."

[laughs]

**Pearl:** I had that experience when they told me I had to scrub the floor. When I was doing psyche, they said, "go and scrub the floor." I said, "What the hell is this? Nurses scrubbing floor?"

**Ryan:** You also had nursing experience back in Trinidad?

**Pearl:** No, I didn't have, no.

**Ryan:** This was your first time?

**Pearl:** I came straight here to train. I come straight into training. I had to take an exam here, and when I passed the exam. The funny thing about it, I don't know why, they were so shocked to know we spoke English. When the doctor had to give me a reference to go and do my general, she wrote it, she speaks proper English. I thought I was rather funny.

**Ryan:** How did this make you feel? It sounds like a very regular thing that you experienced.

**Pearl:** I can't understand why I thought it was rather strange that what they expected us to be speaking. We were British. When I came here, we were British. We got independent since I am here, because we were still under the British. We were run by governors, British. They still couldn't understand that we spoke English. I tell you, I spoke better English than them here too, because some of their verbs were very bad.

**Ryan:** [laughs] This was frustrating for you?

**Pearl:** [laughs] No, I think surprising.

**Ryan:** Ok, surprising.

**Pearl:** Because I expected better of them. It's like church. Well, in those days they were very prejudiced against people who went to church. I had a boyfriend, African, he was staunch Catholic, and he used to go to church. After a few sessions, the priest came and told him he had to stop coming, because he was losing his members.

**Ryan:** This was a white congregation?

**Pearl:** Yes. We had the same thing too. Lenore, isn't it? When we had Sasha was confirmed in the church. Well, it wasn't saying telling us not to come.

**Lenore:** We went to this Catholic Church in Wealdstone.

**Pearl:** Wealdstone.

**Lenore:** When it was time to make the sign of peace.

**Pearl:** Peace be with you.



**Lenore:** We are sitting in this pew, the people at the front of us, they related to the people in front of them, the ones behind us related to the people at the back of them. We were alone. There's only two of us in this pew. People coming in late, the church was packed, but people were standing

**Pearl:** They wouldn't sit in the pew with us.

**Lenore:** -and they won't sit in the pew with us.

**Pearl:** That was one. That was what we actually experienced. I experienced that. The worst thing I experienced was with the police. My parents were here. I used to bring them up every year for holiday and just for a few weeks to go back. I had them in my car. I was driving in the city, just for the back of Selfridges. As I go to pass at the back of Selfridges, there were line of car, police cars. There were three or four police cars lined up.

I was about to pass them. The flag me down. I stopped and I wondered, I said, "What? I wonder what happened because I haven't done anything wrong." The policeman came to my car. I wound my glass down, and he put his head in the car. My parents were in the car. He said, "You black bastards, why don't you all go back to your country?" That shocked me.

**Ryan:** That's unbelievable.

**Pearl:** Well, but it's true. I wouldn't have--

**Ryan:** Yes, no for sure.

**Pearl:** My parents, my mother was shocked. My father was shocked. He said, "Police." I say "Yes." Had it been now, that police would be in trouble, but then I was new, and I didn't really know the ropes as I know it now. That police did that to me.

**Ryan:** What happened after that?

**Pearl:** I just drove off and went.

**Ryan:** That's it. They didn't want to stop you for any other reason?

**Pearl:** If I had retaliated, they would stick me with something, because that's what they do. Now. If he did that and I got angry and swear at him or something, then he would want to stick something on me. I just closed my glass door, and I drove off, and I thought that was the best way to deal with it. That is what happens to some of the black boys. See, when the police stop them and they resented the arrest for whatever reason, the police stick something on them.

My mother and father, they couldn't believe it. Another thing they were when they drive in the car and they see the police-- In those days, when they were cleaning the streets, the British people used to wear suits. Well, you were too young to know that. They used to wear suits.

**Lenore:** Yes. They only wore black or brown. Those were the two colours they wore. Shoes as well.

**Pearl:** They never dress up with any colour.

**Ryan:** It was very different in Trinidad?

**Pearl:** Oh, yes.

**Lenore:** They relate Caribbean people as all wearing gaudy colours.

**Pearl:** Gaudy colours. They say we all have that gaudy colour.

**Lenore:** I don't like gaudy colours. When I was at the university in Sheffield, the nurse manager, she and her friend came down to our place in London for a weekend. When she brought some gaudy colour something top, Sashi came in, she said, "Oh, this doesn't match anything here." I said, "No, because I don't like those bright colours." Oh, she said, "I thought you liked." I said, "No." [laughs]

**Pearl:** One of the ladies said that to me too, I went to church one day, and she said to me, "Oh, I didn't know you are still in gaudy colours, I thought--" What I was going to say is my mother, and my mother was in the car, one day when we were driving. This guy was cleaning the street. White guy. She said, "What is he doing there?" I said, mom, "What do you think he's doing? He's cleaning the street." She said, "A white man cleaning the street?!" You would never see that in Trinidad. Never, ever.

**Lenore:** I don't know if you know Ladbroke Grove? Ladbroke Grove, a lot of the houses, their steps come right down onto the street. I was walking along there one day with my mum. She was here on holiday, and this English woman was cleaning the step coming down to the road. She said, "What is she doing?" I said, "What do you think she's doing? She's cleaning her steps." Now, she wouldn't expect to see an English woman cleaning.

**Pearl:** No, because in Trinidad, that would be a black person doing it for her.

**Lenore:** As we walked further, this English woman had a mixed-race child, and the child was more mixed than anything else. She was more on the other side than on the white side. My mother looked at her, she said, "That is hers?" I said, "Whose do you think it is then?" All those things were strange.

**Pearl:** Shock, strange things, yes.

**Lenore:** It was as if they only saw children outside of marriage or even that, related black. When I was at university, I was the only black student in the class in Sheffield. This teacher came and she said, "It is the norm in the West Indies to have children outside of marriage." I said, "Excuse me, but that isn't true." I said, "I don't think my mother would throw a party if I had a child out the marriage."

**Ryan:** What did she say?

**Lenore:** I said, "You have to tell them about slavery and what happened then, so that they could understand why a lot of black people had children outside of marriage."

**Pearl:** Same thing happened to me.

**Ryan:** Exactly.

**Lenore:** You can't just say that it is in the norm because it isn't.

**Pearl:** That happened to me too when, in a group meeting and we always have a group meeting where we doing discussion with clients. You'll have a social worker, the doctor, the consultant, everybody, and this doctor came and said also, "These West Indian people always come and have these children without fathers." I said, "Hold your brakes, sir. What you said there is not true." I said, "You have to find out why this is happening." And I explained – that's what my sister was saying about slavery.

When the masters had the slaves, they didn't want them to get married, because if they're married, they'll form a bond. When I was finished, the secretary came and she helped me. She said, "Pearl, what you did there, I long wanted somebody to do that." You see, they haven't got the knowledge, but they talk this stupid things. When you have to put them, okay, if I didn't have the sense it would just pass me. I said, "No, that is not true." You have to find out where we are going nowadays. How many English girls having children without fathers? Lots of them.

**Lenore:** Well, not only now. I did not realise that English people had a lot of children outside of marriage, but what happened, it's coming to the surface now, the children who were given up for adoption.

**Pearl:** Yes, they put different homes.

**Lenore:** It was thought to be a shame on the family, so when they got pregnant outside the marriage, their parents sent them away. They had to get rid of the child, and then come back without the child, so no one knew.

**Pearl:** Now you're seeing it on television, they're coming out searching for their parents.

**Lenore:** There so many long lost families now, because the children who were born out of marriage were given away.

**Pearl:** It was a disgrace to the family.

**Lenore:** It was felt that only the West Indian people, black people or however you want. I don't like the word black, I refer to us as dark-skinned people, I don't like the word black. Only the dark-skinned people who would have had children outside the marriage, and people don't realise. I refer to folks as dark-skinned, you know that because my mother is half-Spanish.

**Ryan:** It's much more complicated than just black or white.

**Pearl:** Oh, yes in the Caribbean countries we are all mixed up, we are very mixed up in the Caribbean countries.

**Ryan:** Especially Trinidad of all of them.

**Lenore:** Trinidad is very cosmopolitan, so you'll find you have Spanish, Indian, it's the same as they think. When my brother died I went home, coming back from the funeral and I had an eye appointment. The chap said, "You look tired." I said, "Yes. I went home, my brother's funeral, and I did the catering for 100 people." "Oh," he said, "Rice and peas and curry goat," I said, "No." He said, "Well, what did you do then?" I said, "Special fried rice with pineapple chicken." Oh, he said, "That must have been nice."

Now, I'm not criticising the rice and peas and curry goat or whatever. I said, "No, that is Jamaican." Every country has got their own signature dish, their own culture. It's like a woman when I was doing my health visitors training. The woman said to me, "Excuse me, where are you from?" I said, "If you mean locally, London," because I was living in London, "but originally from Trinidad." She told me I would have done better if I had said I was from the West Indies.

I said, "As stupid as I might look, I know that the British Isles comprises England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales." I said, "You could take a bus or drive your car from here to Scotland." I said, "In the West Indies, there are a chain of islands, every one of them are surrounded by water so you could only get to them by boat or air." I said, "Even Trinidad and Tobago, Tobago is amalgamated to Trinidad for governmental purposes, but is not joined to Trinidad, you have to get there by either air or boat. If I told you I was from the West Indies I would be suspended in the air above all the islands, and you had no idea where I'm from."

**Pearl:** [laughs] It sounds like such people are very uneducated.

**Lenore:** You see this is it, people have no idea. One asked me, "When you go back to Jamaica?" I said, "No, I wouldn't be going back to Jamaica because I'm not from there." I said, "I've never been to Jamaica and if I went back to Jamaica I'd be alienated just the same as you are."

**Ryan:** It's the British people in this time and maybe even now they think that either Jamaica is the whole Caribbean, or the whole Caribbean is the same.

**Pearl:** That's correct, yes. They don't realise it's different islands.

**Lenore:** It's the same when you'd see cooking on the air, and I get quite angry. They say, "Caribbean food. Curry goat and chicken." I say, "Not Caribbean food." Every country has got their different, and even in Trinidad, it is so cosmopolitan so that you get everything.

**Pearl:** We have all kind of people in Trinidad.

**Ryan:** French, Spanish influence, Portuguese influence.

**Lenore:** We do have Italian. Our side we cook Italian foods, we cook Spanish food, we have--

**Pearl:** If I tell you that my great-great grandfather is a Scottish man would you believe me?

**Ryan:** [laughs] I would, of course.

**Pearl:** My grandmother's father is a Scottish man. In those days the slaves, those white men used to have a field day in it.

**Lenore:** No, but he was married to my grandmother

**Pearl:** Yes, he was married to my grandmother.

**Lenore:** -and his parents told him, "Get this black woman off my land." You have to understand.

**Pearl:** We were all mixed up, the British people responsible for it. [laughs] They put us everywhere.

**Lenore:** Even now they still don't understand the West Indies, they're still thinking it's Jamaica.

**Pearl:** They're all mixed up, mixed up with all things.

**Lenore:** I have nothing against Jamaica or any other island, but I'm just saying, every island has got its different cultural, and they have different accents if you listen, you will hear it.

**Pearl:** Yes it's different, totally different accent.

**Ryan:** It's very hard for me to tell the difference from.

**Pearl:** How do you find that?

**Ryan:** Pardon? I can but maybe I think because Jamaica and Trinidad is so far away and so different, it's very easy for me to tell in these things.

**Lenore:** A social worker said to me when I was working, she said, "Oh I remember you, you got a deep Jamaican accent" I said, "Hang on a minute sweetheart." I said, "I've got a deep tone of voice maybe, but not a Jamaican accent." Not that I have anything against the Jamaican, but I do not have a Jamaican accent. It's like Guyana. Guyana has a distinct, very distinct accent as well and Barbados.

**Pearl:** I think Grenada is nearest us in that respect, Grenada.

**Lenore:** Yes, I would find it difficult to differentiate Grenada, but Jamaica, Barbados,

Guyana, those places I can tell you.

**Pearl:** It's like England and Scotland as well, isn't it?

**Lenore:** As well. I can tell you if an Indian person is speaking, an Indian Trinidadian Indians they sing a different kind of accent, very different to ours.

**Pearl:** We have Indian, we have Chinese, we have everybody there, which is nice, everybody.

**Ryan:** What's funny is, I would say that today Britain is very mixed which is nice, but when you came, in your time, you were coming from a place that was very cosmopolitan to a place that was not.

**Pearl:** You say it like, "Harry's wife, please stiff upper lips," while Megan said, "If I stiff up a lip--

**Lenore:** You can try now, it doesn't take you long to see a mixed-race child going down the street.

**Pearl:** Every other child now, the white man, the black man is having a field day.

**Lenore:** Being mixed-race doesn't necessarily mean the mixed-race is from Africa, you don't know where the mix comes from, they were all over the place.

**Pearl:** Even when we came this country, English people-- Home in The West Indies, when you go to church you dress. You don't go to church with jeans, like shorts, you dare walk through the church you must be joking, you wouldn't even pass the door. Women used to wear hats in the old days, nowadays the youngsters propping it a bit, but they used to be well dressed. The children, the little boys, the nice little tie and a suit, they used to dress.

Even now I can't understand in my church, some of them come as if they're going to the garden, in shorts. I say, "This is crazy, they come as if they're going to the garden." Not home, you can't go to church so, even now, you can't go to church so.

**Ryan:** Was religion very important for you especially if you're coming here to adjust? Did this help? You said you had bad experiences.

**Pearl:** We were brought up in Church of England, Anglicans. I went to Anglican school, I was confirmed, I was Christened, everything, I was brought up in the church. It wasn't strange for me coming here in the church, it's just the resentment, I couldn't understand. If you come into my country and tell me about Jesus and about church and when I come here because in those days our priests used to be white. When you come here now, you're telling me I'm not good enough to be amongst you, it doesn't make sense, does it.

You find that makes sense? The white man going to Africa telling about them about God. In Trinidad our governor was a white man, the priests in the church, they were all white, now they are black, but they were white in those days, when I come here now,

you're telling me I can't come into church because--

**Ryan:** This was the Anglican Church?

**Pearl:** This is nonsense. Well I didn't-- I go sit in church, they didn't care on telling me that it was the Catholic Church.

**Lenore:** The one thing I find strange is that if you are going to say that God made everyone in His own image and likeness, then how could you resent someone because of how they, because God made everyone?

**Pearl:** You know the thing about it is when I came here I knew the difference between white and black, yes, but you know something? Everything I work on, all white people around me. I did not feel any difference. I treated them just the same as I would treat-- I never felt, "Oh I'm black I can't do this to them." No, I never felt that way.

**Lenore:** I still don't.

**Pearl:** What I'm saying, when I first came, I did not feel anything at all. I felt relaxed, everything, and accepted everybody for who they are. I did not feel, "Oh gosh, she is whiter." I didn't feel that at all.

**Ryan:** Did this change?

**Pearl:** For me now?

**Ryan:** No. You said that you felt like this when you first came.

**Pearl:** Yes. What I meant is, when you first come to a country, you see the difference in people. I didn't feel that way. What I found was, certain things I found strange like I would be walking in a market and two people are standing and kissing each other. I'm talking about tongue, not just the cheek.

Now, you wouldn't see that at home. That was a very private thing, isn't it, Lenore? You would've never seen that at home. If you did that at home, they wouldn't think very much of you at all. That was a bit strange when I saw things like that.

I don't know about now because we've moved away a long time ago. When I left home, that's how it was. You wouldn't have seen that at all. If you did it, people did not think very much of you.

**Ryan:** This was shocking?

**Pearl:** Those are the things that shocked me. I was shocked. I couldn't believe it was happening because you see, I always saw England as a mother country, I expected a higher standard. That's what it is. I expected a higher standard.

**Lenore:** Incest was something else that I found very difficult to come to terms with because on the air, I heard there was this woman, she had this child who was something about eight or nine years old. She allowed her husband to interfere with

the child because she was afraid to stop her husband.

**Lenore:** I thought, "How could you? It's crazy. You don't allow that thing."

**Pearl:** Generally speaking, even now when I go home, I have difficulty. Know what is the difficulty? To remember I have to answer people. I would be in the garden in front and the children passing, I haven't seen them, "Hello, auntie, good afternoon, auntie?" You don't have to know them to say hello to you. The child will not pass you without saying good afternoon to you, depending on how old the child is to you.

You go on the bus, somebody come and sit down, "Oh, hello." Not here. I have to get used to that, people talking to you. Whereas at home, it's a norm. It's more friendly. Here, I found it was very selfish. It's a bit better now, but it still is. It still is.

**Lenore:** It still is. So much that I would go to the bus stop and there's an elderly person sitting there. I am thinking "Now, do I say good morning or not? Is she going to answer that?" I go there and quietly sit on the side there. She turns and says hello to me. Because that is unusual.

**Ryan:** Maybe it's because you're both from the same generation.

**Lenore:** I don't know. It's unusual for someone to say hello to you if you're going to the bus stop. So when they do.. [chuckles]

**Pearl:** You're shocked. You get a shock. I work in the afternoon, doing my evening visit. These kids were playing, and the ball was flying into the road and the car coming. I stopped the car. I rolled down the glass and I said, "Darling," as nice as that "You mustn't do that. It's dangerous. You'll get killed." "Who are you, you Black thing? Why don't you go up to your country?"

**Ryan:** When was this?

**Pearl:** Just a few years ago, when I was working in the evening and coming to work. I was doing my district work.

**Ryan:** Quite recently?

**Pearl:** No, that's a few years ago. About four or five years. More than that, isn't it?

**Pearl:** You just had to wind up your glass and go. No. At home in Trinidad, that will never happen. If that child did that to you and you should trace their parents, they will be in real trouble. They definitely won't do it to you, they will be shying off. They wouldn't stand up and-- After that when we were in the bus stop, you remember the little boy who was-- He was beating the glass in the bus stop, trying to break it. I went and I said to him, "Darling, don't do that. It's dangerous." What did he do? He turned to me and said, "Come, stop me. You stop me." He went and he start. It's a natural thing. As an adult, if you see a child do something wrong, you would like to correct that child.

Back home it'll never happen. A child will never do that. I can guarantee you a child



will never do that. The children are well-disciplined. Those are the differences I find that still I can't handle. I don't know. It has changed because years ago, you didn't use to see children behaving like that years ago because, to me, there was more discipline around than now.

**Lenore:** The next thing I find, you feel isolated here, whereas back home, the houses are not joined up.

**Pearl:** No. You don't have any joined up.

**Lenore:** You've got your individual house and your garden unless you're in a block of flats.

**Pearl:** A government block of flats.

**Lenore:** Everybody near will know each other. If they didn't see you they'll phone you and say, "I haven't heard from you, you alright?"

**Pearl:** People are more friendly.

**Lenore:** You didn't feel isolated.

**Pearl:** You don't. Honestly.

**Lenore:** I suppose the difference here, you can come up out on your verandah or in your yard back home because it's not cold, whereas here, you're indoors and you don't see each other. Even when you see each other sometimes—

**Pearl:** Sometimes they hardly want to say hello.

**Lenore:** They hardly want to say hello.

**Pearl:** That I find strange still. People hardly want to say hello. Home everybody-- You talk to any or a neighbour across the road, "Hi, neighbour, how are you doing?" It's a friendly gathering. Not here.

**Lenore:** It's a friendly atmosphere, very friendly.

**Pearl:** Those are differences in England and our culture back home.

**Ryan:** What made you come here for this? You originally thought you'd come for two years or five years? [crosstalk]

**Pearl:** I came to study.

**Ryan:** This was the motivation?

**Pearl:** Well, you see, the thing about it is, with me, when I first came, I thought I would just train and go back home. You get hooked because I did psyche three years, then I went on to do my general, which was two years. I went on to do midwifery, which a further another two years. You had to do six months in a community, another two years,

then I went to do district work. You went on qualifying all the time with the intention to go back home and you get hooked.

I think what happened to us, in fact, Lenore, with the land, isn't it? I think that is part of our problem. We bought this land, hopefully thinking when we are retired, we'll build a home. You should guess what happened? Guess what happened?

**Ryan:** You sold the land?

**Pearl:** No, somebody took it.

**Ryan:** They took the land?

**Lenore:** You see back home if no one is on the land or they don't see anyone coming and doing anything with the land, and somebody moves onto your land. If they happen to stay on that piece of land for a certain time it automatically becomes theirs.

**Pearl:** They claim it.

**Lenore:** They can claim it.

**Pearl:** That is all our whole wrong. We had the land, just to build. It's gone.

**Ryan:** When did you buy the land?

**Pearl:** We bought the land a long time ago because we were just students at the time, and it wasn't convenient financially or otherwise to go and build. We wanted to just keep it until we reach more or less like we are now. We should be home.

**Lenore:** If you've got no one to supervise or keep an eye on it... **Pearl:** If you got nobody to supervise it for you. That is a problem. **Pearl:** It was in a nice area.

**Ryan:** What motivated you to come, Lenore?

**Lenore:** Well, you know

**Pearl:** She comes because I was here.

[laughter]

**Lenore:** She was here and she encouraged me to come.

**Pearl:** I encouraged her to come and widen her knowledge because it was easier here.

**Lenore:** The thing is, I explained what the system and schools and the facilities that they have got. Still being under the English, and they did not really provide a lot of facilities for us to move on. The only way you could have got to where you wanted to be was to move out, do it and come back home. You see?

**Pearl:** Yes, because the fact of the matter is, for example, I did psyche ... You couldn't go on to do anything else, whereas here, I could go on and on and on.

**Lenore:** Even the churches at home as compared to the churches you have here, most of the churches they built back home was just a hall.

**Lenore:** This is what they did. Like I explained to you, the school was a big hall and with just classes divided by a blackboard. We didn't have a kitchen. We didn't have a lab, a library. The things that we have in schools here, you didn't have that in the schools at home.

**Pearl:** We didn't have that at all. The libraries were general outside, not in the schools.

**Lenore:** We have a library outside and it's miles away from where you live, that sort of thing. But the schools were not equipped.

**Pearl:** Like it is equipped up here.

**Lenore:** -as they are here.

**Ryan:** Do you think there are better facilities here was a motivation to come for a little bit.

**Pearl:** Yes.

**Lenore:** Precisely.

**Pearl:** Definitely.

**Lenore:** That's right.

**Pearl:** Definitely and we wanted to be well qualified because you remember, initially, we wanted to go back and open a nursing home. We said if we're going back if we're well qualified, we'll be well placed. Instead of just doing general and running back home me, we went on because she went to university. She health visiting. We did midwifery. I did first-line management, I did family therapy. All those things, we'll be well equipped to go back home, then everything was taken away from us.

And then whoops, my parents start being sick. That was the next blow, isn't it?

**Lenore:** Yes.

**Pearl:** Our parents start being sick.

**Ryan:** When the land was taken away from you, this was one of the reasons why you decided to stay, or not?

**Lenore:** No. I got married.

**Ryan:** Okay.

**Pearl:** She got married. Yes.

**Lenore:** That cut into--

**Pearl:** After, our parents get sick, ain't it?

**Lenore:** Yes.

**Ryan:** It's funny how love changes the plans of life.

**Pearl:** Yes. Exactly. She got married. Nobody wanted me so I didn't get married.

**Ryan:** I'm not married. There you go.

**Pearl:** I got engaged but did not [crosstalk]--

**Lenore:** You're only young.

**Pearl:** I got engaged really young. [crosstalk]--

**Lenore:** You have lots of time to think about getting married. [crosstalk]

**Pearl:** I got engaged but not married. [chuckles] I got engaged twice but no marriage.

[laughter]

**Pearl:** Oh Lord, what is not for you, you won't get it. I will not go into a marriage if I think it wasn't right. That was my luck. I didn't get married, so there you are. That's why we are retired now, we try to go home. It's been a long while. Hoping that at the moment, we have a piece of land we are fighting to get now. With the COVID, the lawyer is just saying that everything is off work at the moment, so we're in the middle of nowhere. [crosstalk]

**Ryan:** You still like to get some land over there?

**Pearl:** Well, I'd like to if God permit, to go home and have somewhere to stay for a longer period.

**Ryan:** Maybe go over there during the winter in Britain. [crosstalk]

**Lenore:** Well, that's what we did.

**Pearl:** That's what we did. That's what we do right now. [crosstalk]

**Lenore:** The past few years, we went home at the end of November, came back in March. [crosstalk]

**Pearl:** Normally, to go home at the end of November and come back in March until we get things settled. That's how we were doing for the last few years.

**Ryan:** To avoid the winter?

**Lenore:** Yes.

**Pearl:** Yes, but because of COVID, we haven't been able to go. Otherwise, you won't meet us here now. You might have because we'll be going at the end of this month.

**Lenore:** We'll reunite with the family and enjoy.

**Ryan:** It's nice to see them again when you go back?

**Pearl:** Oh yes. My brother and me and steel band. My brother have a steel band. His birthday is in January we have a nice garden party in the yard. Everybody in the village comes because it's a village where my dad was working in the oil field. Everybody living in that area were families from the oil field, so we know everybody. You have a party, everybody come. Nice. Steel band.

**Ryan:** Do you think that parties in Trinidad are different to the parties in Britain?

**Pearl:** Oh yes. [chuckles] We have steel band. [chuckles] Len, do you want to offer him a drink or anything?

**Lenore:** Would you like a drink?

**Ryan:** I'm all good. Thank you very much. I'm all good. I literally just come from my parents' house. They live in Watford.

**Pearl:** Yes but you're here a long time.

**Ryan:** No. It's fine, honestly.

**Pearl:** Are you sure?

**Ryan:** Yes. I'm very sure. Thank you.

**Pearl:** You're not one of them who're afraid to eat from Black people?

**Ryan:** [laughs] No. I'll have a glass of water, please, just to prove not [crosstalk]--

**Pearl:** That's not food.

**Ryan:** Huh?

**Pearl:** That's not food. That's not biscuit or tea or coffee?

**Ryan:** What's the time now because usually, I'm not hungry until one o'clock in the afternoon?

**Pearl:** Oh, I don't know. As the time, it's doesn't matter. It's our culture, we offer people something.

[laughter]

**Pearl:** I don't know about you but then you go to most West Indian houses, they offer you something.

**Ryan:** Yes, I know.

**Pearl:** That's all right.

[laughter]

**Lenore:** Well, that's another thing. In the West Indies, if you were asked, "Would you like a drink?" It's not a cup of tea or coffee, it's alcohol. If they ask if you want to drink? If you want, because they'll ask you, "Would you like tea or coffee? [crosstalk]

**Pearl:** "Would you like to have coffee or tea?"

**Lenore:** But if they ask you, "Would you like to drink," a drink is alcohol. [chuckles]

**Ryan:** What is it usually, rum?

**Lenore:** Anything you would like. [crosstalk]

**Pearl:** Anything. [crosstalk]

**Lenore:** What alcoholic drink do you like? [crosstalk]

**Pearl:** All things, wine, anything.

**Lenore:** If you say, yes, they'll say, "What would you like to have, a little wine, rum?" [crosstalk]

**Pearl:** They'll say what they have.

**Lenore:** Yes, that's right.

**Ryan:** That's nice.

**Lenore:** If they say, "Would you like a drink?" [chuckles]

**Ryan:** I hear that Stone's Ginger Wine is very popular

**Pearl:** Very nice.

**Ryan:** -over here, especially.

**Pearl:** The last one I brought for Ali -- was it guava wine, Len, I can't remember?

**Lenore:** Yes, I think it is.

**Pearl:** It was guava wine and I said to her [crosstalk]--

**Pearl:** I bought a local bottle of guava wine for you, so she thought it was-- When she

tasted it, she said, "Oh my God." [laughs] It was strong. When we're at home the last time, they were making wine with almost everything. All the fruits. They have all sorts of wine. It tasted very well, too, but anyway. I hope you got what you wanted

**Ryan:** I think so.

**Pearl:** -or is there anything more you want? Let us know, we'll tell you.

**Ryan:** No. That's perfect. Thank you. I was not trying to seek anything, more just listen to some stories. [crosstalk]

**Pearl:** All right. How things were? Well, all I can say is England is a totally different place, from when I first came. [crosstalk]

**Lenore:** Even now.

**Ryan:** From when you moved or from Trinidad?

**Lenore:** From when we moved. [crosstalk]

**Pearl:** When I came from Trinidad. [crosstalk]

**Lenore:** Even we moved to Harrow. Harrow was different, a different place. [crosstalk]

**Pearl:** Yes, different again. When we started living here, it was not bad but now, it's not so nice because every house here, maybe apart from ours, the garage is a house so at the the back is a house. Instead of having one tenant living in a house, you have two, lots of tenants. Consequently, two lots of cars or three or four cars and that's because some of them have children and whatnot. They all going to have cars, so it causes a lot of congestion.

**Pearl:** The neighbours you have don't speak to each other.

**Ryan:** Do you think England has changed but not for the better.

**Pearl:** Changed. Not for the better. No.

**Ryan:** No.

**Pearl:** I'll tell you something, though. I have my card for America, too. I went to America and I was mugged in America. I said, "Not me." I was mugged, I was almost killed in America. If I came years ago and England was like this, I don't think I would've stayed so long, I'd go back home.

I love England when I first came. It was different and I thought: different but lots of things to learn. It gave me the opportunity to do so. Financially I was better off because I was working. Here, where you can move around to different continental countries and so forth, whereas, in Trinidad, it would be more difficult for me.

Now England doesn't attract me anymore.

**Lenore:** That was one of my reasons for coming. I wanted to travel.

**Pearl:** Firstly, you never used to get any killings in England like this.

**Ryan:** No?

**Pearl:** No. Murders? People in their homes. Women can't even go in the park, she's dead and to kill? [crosstalk]

**Lenore:** No. We didn't hear about murders in England.

**Pearl:** We never used to get that at all.

**Lenore:** We didn't hear about murders.

**Pearl:** Not only that. I think the people were more honest with certain things because in those days the milkman will deliver your milk, and not only milk, all your vegetation, vegetables. They'll put them on your doorstep.

**Lenore:** Your bread, your veggies, which are delivered and left on your doorstep.

**Pearl:** You come in the evening and it's there.

**Lenore:** You come in the evening, you collect it. Nobody interfered with it.

**Pearl:** You can't do that now. If you do that, you won't get any. [crosstalk]

**Lenore:** You can't leave that there now.

**Ryan:** No.

**Pearl:** I remember in Chalkhill Estate where I was working, the man used to come and deliver milk and so forth. One month he came and he couldn't get any money at all because the people didn't get their stuff. He delivered it but somebody just collected it and then he had to stop doing it. I remember when I moved into this house, it wasn't like this. All these things I painted it.

**Lenore:** No, we renovated it as well. We extended it--

**Pearl:** We renovated it because we add on that and the kitchen and all sort of things with it. I remember, two o'clock in the morning, I'll come from work and going to have a rest. Maybe about 11:00, I'll get up and I'll be doing all the decorating and painting. The door opened in the back, I'll go to the yard. Do you think I would do that now? I have to be crazy to do it because somebody will catch on to the fact that I'm doing it and come and kill me. That's how it is. They come into your house and kill you.

**Ryan:** It's more dangerous.



**Lenore:** It is more.

**Pearl:** It's too dangerous.

**Lenore:** When I first started working in the hospitals, they used to give us lots of free tickets to go to the theater and things like that.

**Pearl:** Yes. We used to get free tickets.

**Lenore:** You could be standing by a bus stop, one o'clock in the morning on your own, coming from the theatre. You're not worried, you're not afraid of anything and nothing would happen to you but you can't do that now.

**Pearl:** I used to drive around a lot. I'm coming from the West End and see anybody standing there waiting for the bus, I'll stop and said, "Can I offer you a lift?" Do you think I will do that now?

**Ryan:** No chance.

**Pearl:** No chance. None whatsoever. Police stopped me several times and asked me what was going on. I told them, "I was coming from the city there. I went to the theatre, coming home in the morning." Stop me. I told him who I was and where I was going. He said, "Okay, drive safely and go home." I don't know if they'll do the same now or they'll try to pin me on something.

**Lenore:** That's really changed. It's just changed.

**Pearl:** Everything has changed now. Everything.

**Lenore:** It is not as nice as it was.

**Pearl:** England is not nice. In those days, there were certain things about England I had liked. For example, you go into a shop, you didn't see people stealing things and all of that like you see now. I think people were more honest. The other thing I had liked: if you go in for a bus, people will queue, nobody will jump over your head.

**Lenore:** Yes, and nobody is rushing. They had a queue and everybody went into the bus in an orderly fashion.

**Pearl:** That affected me badly in America, because I went to America, went to the shop to buy something. Queuing and everybody come. They're going just to the counter and paying and buying their stuff, and I'm queuing. I said, "What's happening?" They tell me they don't queue here. You just go on buy. It doesn't matter who's there, you just go up and pay, whereas in England, it's not like that. It never used to be like that. You come for the bus you queue and those things I had liked about England. It was more disciplined, in that respect.

**Ryan:** Interesting.

**Pearl:** They've lost that now. The youngsters will come and see you there and jump in

front of you. You know how many times I say, "Hey, did you meet me here? Get out." Someone else swears at me, I don't care because their manners are gone to the air. They have no manners at all, and they don't respect you. Doesn't matter if you're older than them, or you're walking with a stick or whatever. They don't respect you.

That I don't like. Before, England, there was much more culture. Now, as I say, going to church, the youngsters coming in shorts.

**Pearl:** You see the youngsters coming, with the shorts on? Honestly, you won't believe it for truth. I can't believe. They couldn't go to Trinidad, or going to church like that.

**Pearl:** If they're going to a wedding, they dress up in all fancy thing but you're going to the church, you normally come in a shorts. There are lots of things I don't like about England now at all.

**Ryan:** Would you ever go back? Or you think this is your home now, you've been here too long now that this is your home.

**Pearl:** No, I don't mind going back, but the only thing that's keeping me here-- You see the thing about this, I work all my life, I pay tax. It's my time now to get my pension back.

**Ryan:** Exactly.

**Pearl:** If I go back home, certain benefits I get here now I wouldn't get at home because I never give anything to our home.

**Ryan:** That's a good point.

**Pearl:** That's the difference, you see? That's the difference or else tomorrow I would go back. I'm sure living at home with my experience.. there are certain things I may not like in Trinidad because I understand they have a lot of murders, too. I don't like that, but to me, murders is everywhere.

England never used to have killing. They're killing you now. Every time you hear "This youngster killed that one. Young men leave their children, got killed. Women got killed. People in their house get robbed."

**Lenore:** All the parks were safe.

**Pearl:** We never had those things.

**Lenore:** Elderly people in their homes were safe.

**Pearl:** We are very careful as who we let in this house. Especially if they get to find out there's two of us living here alone. Sometimes they come, very friendly and you think, "Oh well."

**Pearl:** The next thing they come back in it. We had to change our phone because we were having these-- Oh God, don't talk about-- Because we were having on the phone,

all sort of calls, so we changed.

**Ryan:** It's very sensible what you're doing now with the screening.

**Lenore:** You have to say who you are or they don't put you through.

**Pearl:** You have to say who are or they don't put you through. Those are the things I don't like about England.

**Pearl:** The other frightening thing is, I am not a prejudiced person because I don't believe in that. You see these certain Middle Eastern people who came and they were not vetted, you don't know where the Taliban or whoever it is, will infiltrate and had set them up.

You go in a crowd, you don't know who's going to put off a bomb. I know you can't live like that, but this is how I feel. I was scared. You could be in the church and they come and they bomb you out. Look at those children, going to have a nice concert. The next thing you know this man come with his bag on his back. How we could let a man wear a pack on his back and didn't check em out? Next thing, the bombs. Look how many young youngsters lose their lives. Those are the things I'm scared about because you don't know who came in with them.

They could be refugees, but you don't know who has infiltrated in the middle of them. They're going to take revenge because they always feel the Western society like America and England and whatnot owe them something.

**Ryan:** That's great. Thank you very much for your time, guys. I really appreciate it. It was super interesting for me.

**Pearl:** Well, at least you learned a bit. We love England, but I don't like the way it's going at the moment.

**Ryan:** No, that's fine. I think it's a very common opinion.

**Pearl:** Yes, I don't like the way it's going now at all. You know the other thing I don't like? I think in England if you have people to be in city foreign office and places like that, it should be English people. I don't think they should put a foreigner here. I don't know what you think, but I don't think they should.

**Ryan:** Not sure, to be honest.

**Pearl:** I think they should have an English person. Don't you think so, Lenore?

**Lenore:** Well, that's my opinion.

**Pearl:** Yes. In my opinion, you should have in those places, an English person. When you go in there, you'll meet what? Some Arab or some Indian or some-- No, there should be English people in those strategic positions. That's my opinion.

**Ryan:** Fair enough.

**Pearl:** I think sometimes those people do not have the country's interest at heart. There was an Indian guy, he was selling people the National Insurance number, whenever getting free treatment. He was selling it. That is the thing I'm talking about. They had to make money, not to look at the interest of the country. That's the only reason why I feel it should be an English person.

**Lenore:** Well, you could have an English person there and--

**Pearl:** I say you could, but I feel it should be an English person.

**Lenore:** Look what with the trafficking of some of those people who are coming across from the continent, it's Irish people who are putting them in lorries and things like that and bringing them over here. These white people who are doing it. That container where those Chinese crossed.

**Pearl:** They're not English, they're Irish.

**Lenore:** Those were Irish people who did it.

**Pearl:** They're Irish, they're not English. I said English.

**Lenore:** Fair enough, but they're still—

**Pearl:** No, they're not English. I said English people, and that's a different scenario. Those people are tricks. Those people are how you call them? There's a name for them. They're taking these people and taking their monies and just put them in a boat and let them go in it, like those Chinese that they had in the van. All the Chinese die from suffocation. That's very bad and it was the Irish people who did it.

**Ryan:** Lots of them died. I think a little girl died.

**Pearl:** Exactly.

**Lenore:** You could relate that to slavery. Who do you think sold the slaves? The Africans sold themselves.

**Pearl:** Yes. Some African sold them.

**Lenore:** That's what I'm saying.

**Pearl:** It's not just the Englishman. People selling the African slaves, selling their own people for slaves for money.

**Ryan:** They take them to the coast and that's when the English people, they buy them.

**Pearl:** That's correct, and buy them, yes.

**Lenore:** That's right.

**Pearl:** You have to read the history to know these things so that you don't have a biased opinion.

**Ryan:** It's always more complicated.

**Pearl:** Yes.

**Lenore:** Very much more.

**Ryan:** Yes. I'm going to end the interview here.

**Pearl:** Well, it was nice meeting you.

**Ryan:** Yes. You, too. Thank you so much.

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