

process through which such instantiations become meaningful both discursively and socially, and with significant material affects.

The black British photographer Ingrid Pollard gave me the language to describe my experience with the Dyche negatives when I recounted it to her a few days later over tea. "There's a 'thingyness' to an image," she said, "a thingyness that you feel incredibly strongly when you work with negatives." *The thingyness of an image.* As she explained, photographic images have a tangibility, a materiality that we often lose sight of when we engage them only in print form, and negatives remind us of this materiality. Like the haptics of black German domestic photography, the thingyness of this very different set of images similarly requires us to consider how the photographic image materializes race and community in diaspora. These negatives confront us with both the limits of the photograph and our desire for it to simplify the work of racial and diasporic identification and affiliation by doing it for us. We rely all too often on images to confirm our unspoken assumptions about race and diaspora through their capacity to materialize the visible traces and visual indexes of difference and affiliation. My encounter with the materiality of the photographic negative reminds us that even when race seems clearly visible in a photographic print, its visibility is the creation of technical, material, and cultural processes of conjuring and fixing, where the very chemical and technological matter of the image—the photographic negative—must disappear race in order to make it reappear in recognizable form.

My archival encounter with the Dyche negatives also provides a perplexing yet extremely illuminating example of some of the profoundly sensate ways through which the affects of such images register. For while the affects of photographs are certainly produced through their visibility, they also resonate in equally profound ways through their materiality and through the haptics of their thingyness. Yet I would propose we extend this affective sensorium to include a less obvious sensate register: the sonic and, more specifically, music. Extending the affective sensorium of the image to include their sonic and musical registers offers dense and revealing insights into what Eve Sedgwick has called the "finitely many possibilities" of affect, and helps us to understand the photograph itself as a particularly affect-laden object and medium.¹⁰ The promise of those possibilities invites us to shift our attention from engaging the "matter of the image" to engaging the matter of both its "musics" and its "movements."

BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND, SUMMER 2006. On my first trip to Birmingham, there was a noticeable chill in the air. Although not unusual for late summer in England, it was a different kind of chill. I had arrived at the Birmingham New Street Station the day after England had been eliminated from the 2006 World Cup quarterfinals, and quite frankly, it seemed as though the entire country was in a bad mood. But not Pete. Pete James is the archivist in charge of photographic collections at the Birmingham City Archives and, to me, the oracle of all things photographic and sacred in Birmingham. It was Pete who had unearthed the collection I had come to see, quite by accident, when he rang the doorbell of a desolate building he believed to have previously housed a photography studio that had served the black and Asian communities in Birmingham's Balsall Heath for nearly a half century.

An older woman had answered the door on

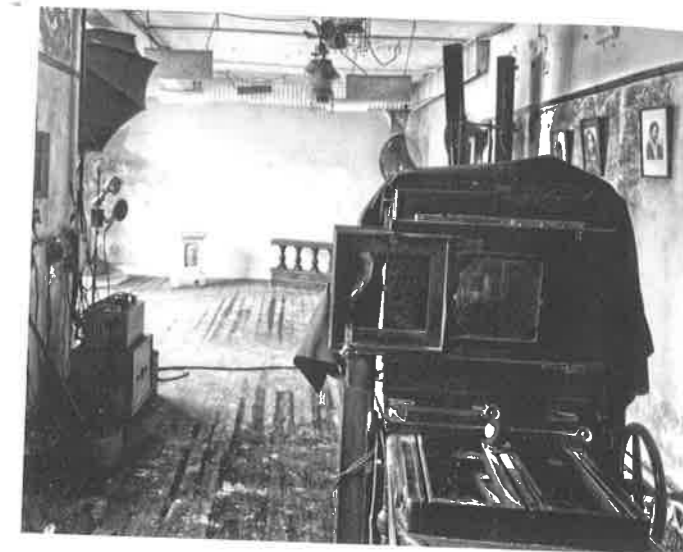


that unremarkable day in 1990. Pete said that when he explained he was researching the Dyche Photography Studio, she insisted he come in. Moments later, she introduced him to her husband, Ernest Malcolm Dyche. Malcolm Dyche had been trained in photography by his father Ernest Dyche Sr., a self-taught photographer who had opened the first of two Dyche Studios almost a century before. There had never really been a question that Malcolm would be a photographer. His training had begun when he was just a boy, and he had worked alongside his father for most of his life, eventually taking over the family business after his father's death in 1973.

When Pete entered the building, he realized that the studio he had researched was still more or less intact. Although the business had closed years ago, in the rooms that once served as the studio, he found thousands of prints, film and glass plate negatives, and photography equipment dating back to the teens and twenties. Malcolm Dyche died shortly after meeting Pete. He had been delighted by the interest in the studio, and just before his death, he had agreed to be interviewed about the history of the studio, and he eventually donated its contents to the Birmingham Central Library. Later, on that chilly first day in Birmingham, Pete told me about the events that followed Malcolm's death. He told me about the sale and ultimate demolition of the building shortly thereafter, and about the rush to recover and preserve as much as possible of the studio's contents before the building was cleared. He described the urgency of photographing and documenting the original state of what he had found on the day he showed up on Malcolm's doorstep, and how, in the hectic days after he learned of the family's intent to sell, all their energies shifted to the labor and logistics of renting a van and packing up as much as they could physically carry to deposit in the archives.

When we returned to the library after lunch, Pete led me downstairs into the bookstall. We gathered box after box of images and brought them upstairs to the office, where I combed through countless photos with awe and admiration. In the coming days and weeks, I sorted, stared at, scanned, and ruminated over hundreds of portraits that rapidly began to blur in my mind.

Face after face of men, women, boys, and girls; parents, siblings, and friends. Work portraits, wedding portraits, family portraits; head shots, standing shots, seated shots; close-ups, full-body views, people standing pensively or seated demurely—they seemed to form an endless, interchangeable litany. From the moment I first laid eyes on them, I have struggled to understand what exactly





Photograph *Byche* Birmingham Ala.



Photograph *Byche* Birmingham Ala.



these images were saying, and what it was they told us about photography and the making of community in diaspora. But I also came to realize that what was so captivating about them is not only what I was seeing, but what I was hearing as I looked at them—a playful yet insistent *hum* that I found difficult and, frankly, a mistake to ignore. Eric Shouse's description of the reverberations of affect as a "half-sensed, ongoing hum of quantity/quality that we experience when we are not really attuned to any experience at all" accurately captures my own response to these images.¹ However, this chapter foregrounds what often goes unnoticed or what seems almost taken for granted in Shouse's description: the sonic and musical structure of these reverberations.

Focusing on sound as a critical interpretive frame of the photo, Fred Moten urges us to engage in forms of looking that are "attentive to the whole sensual ensemble of what is looked at," for, as he writes, "the meaning of a photograph is cut and augmented by a sound or noise that surrounds or pierces its frame."² Moten delivers his influential articulation of the "phonic substance" of the photo in a chapter that presents a trenchant critique of the work of Roland Barthes and of a forced universalism he locates as part of a larger problematic in the broader field of semiotics. It is a universalism that, for Moten, lies at the core of semiotics as a "search for a universal language and a universal science of language,"³ which necessarily represses or excludes an engagement with other sensory modalities of the photograph—in particular, that of sound.

The question of what constitutes the phonic substance Moten describes in *In the Break*, and whether it is common to all photographs is left productively unresolved, as an openness that arguably provides one of the book's most generative and compelling scholarly contributions. The text challenges readers to think the constitutive supplementarity of the visual and the sonic as a larger whole, in short, "the whole sensual ensemble" that is the persistent object of his interrogation. The photo that engenders Moten's phonic analytic—the infamous posthumous photograph of Emmett Till—is an indisputably singular image. The phonic substance he attributes to this photo requires one to listen to rather than merely see this image. It requires an attentiveness to sound not as a replacement for sight but as the necessary synesthetic supplement to a larger sensory ensemble of "movement, feel, taste, smell (as well as sight) of what is looked at."⁴ Yet the phonic substance of the Till photograph, what Moten describes as the "sound of black mo'nin," does not reside *in* the photo. Moten's accent lies on reading the "cut" music enacts on the image, on look-

ing at the image, and on our ability to look at an image. In the Till photograph, "black mo'nin" is neither the sound *in* nor *of* the image, but the *unheard sound before the image*; it is a "phonographic content" that constitutes the image through a "looking that opens onto an unheard sound."⁵

If he [Emmett Till] seems to keep disappearing as you look at him it's because you look away, which is what makes possible and impossible representation, reproduction, dream. And there is a sound that is seemingly not there in this performance that this performance is about; but not just a sound since *we are also concerned with what that sound would invoke*. . . . An image from which one turns is immediately caught in the production of its memorialized, re-remembered reproduction. . . . the aesthetic and philosophical arrangements of the photograph—some organizations of and for light—anticipate a looking that cannot be sustained as unalloyed looking but must be accompanied by listening, and this, even though what is listened to—echo of a whistle or a phrase, moaning, mourning, desperate testimony and flight—is also unbearable. These are the complex musics of the photograph. This is the sound before the photograph.⁶

The complex musics of the photograph are thus a sound that is not contained within the image, but one that precedes the image as its constitutive and enunciating force. We encounter these musics through the necessity of a synesthetic encounter that, I would contend, certain photos involuntarily require. Like the condition of synesthesia, Moten's conception of the musics of such images requires sound as a constitutive supplement that we both can and cannot hear as part of the structure of an image that forces us to avert our gaze. We cannot look, but we must; to see, to keep looking, we must listen instead.

The aural aesthetic of the Till photograph is moaning—an echo of memory structured by the repeated sound of a moan that, Moten insists, requires us to think about the relationship between "how mourning sounds, how moaning sounds."⁷ The aural aesthetic, or the musics, of the Afro-Caribbean portraits in the Dyche archive are, however, markedly different. Yet the synesthetic supplementarity that undergirds this analytic pertains nevertheless. Pushing Moten's concept of the "musics of the photograph" and "the cut music enacts on the image" in a different direction, I would like to suggest that thinking about images through music deepens our understanding of the affective

registers of family photography and helps us understand how such images are mobilized by black families as a practice that articulates linkage, relation, and distinction in diaspora. Inasmuch as there are multiple ways of knowing, it is my contention that music offers an alternate way of knowing images.

Rather than concentrating on a single or particular image and the music it might be heard to make, my focus is once again on the multiple, the serial, and the genre. This chapter engages the Dyche archive as an ensemble of photographic practices that help us understand the cultural and affective work of certain sets of images. Here I propose an approach to reading these photographs' affects that sets its sights not on the music *in* or *of* these images, but aims instead to read images *like music*. Reading images like music means using musical structure as a heuristic lens through which to engage the photographic practices of black communities in diaspora, and as a framework through which the photograph registers meaning or as meaningful.⁸ Drawing inspiration from Moten and from James Snead's earlier articulation of "the cut" as an analytic framework for theorizing black culture, this chapter engages the cut music enacts on our understanding of the salience of photography for black communities in diaspora.

While music may seem an unlikely aperture for understanding photography, music and images share a fundamental form of organization as *pattern* that structures our perceptions of both the sonic and the visual. As a particularly pleasing arrangement of sounds, music is a series of patterns that are neither random nor wholly original or spontaneous. Similarly, it is the patterns of any visual field that compose it as distinctive or related to a given form or genre. Reading the fundamental forms of patterning through which both sound and images register as meaningful or evocative, effective or affective, representational or expressive forms provides a point of entry for engaging the serial repetitions of this archive of portraits. Reading these images through the cut of musical structure highlights their enactment of moments of enunciation that articulate the affective relations of migration and mobility, homing and dwelling, self-fashioning and reinvention that constitute diasporic formation.

Prelude: What's the Score? Image, Music, Archive

To state the obvious, these are extremely formulaic images. They are staged. They are predictable. They are posed. They show smartly dressed individuals—black folks putting their best foot forward. But they are also stiff and



oddly “affected.” They are almost awkwardly formal, both quantitatively, through their repetition of props and poses, as well as qualitatively, through the uniformity of their production by a single photographer. They conform to what appears a timeless and conventional script of photographic postures and patterns that we recognize from older portrait styles both painted and photographic—portraits from bygone days that echo like hollow shadows of the individuals pictured in them. Apparently all surface and no depth, they emphasize artifice rather than interiority and seem to lack any form of creativity or spontaneity. Instead of giving us insight into content, individuality, or “soul,” they tantalize us instead at the level of external presentation and display.

Although they might invite an approach like Barthes’s reading of *studium* and *punctum*, somehow this does not quite capture some fundamental aspect of these images’ affects. Certainly one latches on to subtle details, like the gesture of a hand clinging awkwardly or perhaps a little too tensely to the arm of a chair or the end of a table. Possibly we dwell on an unlit cigarette held demonstratively but just precariously enough to distract the attention of the viewer. One might be drawn to an umbrella draped elegantly yet wholly ornamentally on the arm of a man posed *inside* a studio in front of a tree on a painted backdrop of a *simulated* forest. Or perhaps it is something even simpler that catches our attention—like the wilted chrysanthemums in a table vase that suggest they have been overlooked by the photographer and left there from the day before. Maybe this was the first session of the day or, alternatively, the last shot of a very busy one. We might linger on the repetition of identical backdrops we have seen in multiple images, or on props like tables or vases that carry over from one photo to the next. But these details neither prick nor puncture nor grab us, as Barthes’s conception of the *punctum* would have it. Such “points” and details are a function of the formulaic nature of their photographic genre. They do not rise to the level of the *punctum*; rather, they dissolve again into the background. In the phenomenology of the photographic image that Barthes develops in *Camera Lucida*, the attributes I find so compelling relegate the repetition of these details of form and genre instead to the less interesting category of *studium*, rather than constituting the more invigorating forms of *punctum* prized by so many theorists of visual culture. *Studium* is reduced to, indeed dismissed as a quantitative rather than a qualitative effect of an image, for as Barthes writes, “It is by *studium* that I am interested

in so many photographs, whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is culturally . . . that I participate in these figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions.”⁹ But what if we bracket the relationship Barthes poses of quality to quantity and attempt to resuscitate *studium* for a different purpose and toward a different end? What would it mean to take *studium* seriously and not dismiss it quite so quickly? More specifically, how might we reconceptualize and indeed revalue the seriality of studio portraiture, and of the image-making practices of black diasporic communities in particular, as a significant and revealing form of expressive cultural practice? I propose we do so by way of musical structure and the various cuts enacted through these images—cuts that become visible through our engagement of them as an archive, and through their production and consignment as both a genre and a set of multiples that constitute acts of linkage, performance, and improvisation illuminated through the structure of music.

If we stick to a traditional approach to interpreting these images, the script that emerges is a narrative that reads them as illustrations of the history and biographies of the individuals pictured in them. That script would tell the difficult story of postwar Caribbean migration and the struggle of West Indians to claim the rights of British citizenship, to inhabit the status of fully entitled and enfranchised subjects, and to challenge the racism and discrimination they experienced in the United Kingdom. But rather than a narrative approach or the scripting of images I have deployed critically in the preceding chapters, I suggest we read this archive of photographs quite differently—composing them and composing through them a kind of musical *score*. The idea of a visual-musical score intentionally deploys a synesthetic methodology that sutures the visual to the sonic and the musical by way of the structures they share at the levels of rhythm (meter), pattern (organized repetitions), and affect (sentiment/attachment)—structures that combine to evoke particular responses and associations in their viewers.¹⁰ *Scoring* these images juxtaposes their differences, continuities, and contradictions in ways that reveal multiple sensory, historical, and affective registers playing together at the same time. It plots seriality as more than simple repetition and renders its dissonances not as disruption but as an integral part of complex patterns of cultural enunciation. More significant, engaging the musical structuring of these images helps us account for some of the most important yet elusive dimensions of the image-making practices of black families in diaspora by focusing

on how photography operates in excess of vision and sight. Indeed, the diasporic work of popular image-making might easily be dismissed based on the ubiquity of such examples of studio portraiture more generally. Yet what is most remarkable about these photos are the very things that mark their simplicity and lack of sophistication as visual artifacts—specifically, a seriality and familiarity that makes them register most profoundly.

Here my invocation of the concept of registers, and photographic registers in particular, refers not only to how these images evoke affective linkages visually but also to how they resonate and enunciate musically and, in fact, diasporically. In the vocabulary of musicology, *register* is a measurement of the highness or lowness of the pitch of a sound. It is a *relative* measurement that is defined in relation to the range of a given instrument or voice. Register is always relative to an instrument's or voice's specific capacity to produce a limited range of pitches. For example, one might speak of a soprano's use of the high, middle, or low registers of her voice, or remark that the low registers of a bassoon rattled the table.¹¹ Adapting this concept to the field of visual culture, we might similarly think of the photograph as an instrument with a distinct set of sensory, cultural, affective, and semiotic registers—registers that map a range of sensibilities within a given community or culture and index and evoke the investments and attachments of individuals in/to these sensibilities.

The preceding chapters explored the haptics of domestic photography using an expanded conceptualization of touch to illuminate a complex set of sensate registers that articulate the affective force and intensity of such images as objects of attachment and sentiment that move people in profound ways and as sites of the enunciation of diasporic, racial, and gendered subject formation. As we will see, the photographs of the Dyche Collection are also profoundly haptic images. Yet unlike the images discussed in chapters 1 and 2, their haptics derive less from their materiality as indexical instantiations that trouble racialized conceptions of national and diasporic (un)belonging; they derive instead from their transnational circulation as tactile and affective objects and as performative enactments of postcolonial, diasporic subjects.

In contrast to the black German family archives examined earlier, the seriality of the Dyche portraits requires the sonic engagement of an inherently musical structure that lays bare important elements of the images' affective diasporic force. Similar to R. Murray Shafer's foundational conception of the

soundscape, these portraits have a sonic structuring that is revealed in generative ways by music. They, too, are characterized by what Shafer describes as *keynotes*—the key or tonality of a particular composition that provides its anchor or fundamental tone.¹² Retuning to Barthes's *studium* by way of the sonic, such keynotes are not necessarily listened to consciously; rather, their ubiquity transforms them into more general listening habits and ways of seeing that are taken for granted within communities and are often overlooked by those outside them. Yet this archive of images also has its own set of *soundmarks*—sonic qualities that are specially regarded or noticed by people as expressive enactments of community that in Shafer's words, "make the acoustic life of the community unique."¹³ Reading the musical structure of these images' seriality foregrounds the affective registers of diasporic enunciation that signify both within and beyond the visual composition of these portraits. "The importance of affect rests upon the fact that in many cases the message consciously received may be of less import to the receiver of that message than his or her non-conscious affective resonance with the source of the message. Music provides perhaps the clearest example of how the intensity of the impingement of sensations on the body can 'mean' more to people than meaning itself. . . . [For] the pleasure that individuals derive from music has less to do with the communication of meaning, and far more to do with the way that a particular piece of music 'moves' them."¹⁴

Building on Shouse's explication of the affective structure of music, this final chapter attends to three interconnected levels of seriality and musicality that structure the cuts and soundscapes of these images' diasporic registers: the first is that of *melody*; the second, a stylistic register of remix and reiteration, or what Dick Hebdige referred to as *versioning*;¹⁵ and the third is the coordination of these improvised performances in what I think of as a musical *ensemble*.

Finally and no less important, the sections that follow consider the insights such an approach offers into the gendered dynamics of diaspora. The gender of diaspora is defined first and foremost by the ways in which the practices that structure and sustain diasporic community formations—practices of staying, coming and going, and transnational, geographic, and cross-temporal linkage—are fundamentally infused with gender and structure how we see diaspora itself. Here I want to keep in mind a series of critical questions: What gendered logics become visible in these images and how musical struc-



or one of those irrepressible musical earworms that get stuck in our heads after hearing a particularly catchy commercial or ad. As a very simple tune with a straightforward arrangement of notes in a single tonal register, the jingle works on the basis of being highly accessible, recognizable, and infectious. Jingles are tunes we can frequently call up on command that often haunt us at the most unlikely of moments. Jingles are specifically pitched in ways that interpellate us and solicit our songs, for any random three or four notes can launch us into singing or humming them aloud, bringing a host of associations along with them.

These images cite familiar jingles of people trying to project and portray success, respectability, and prosperity. It is a melody one of my students once referred to as “the happy migration song”—an upbeat tune of economic opportunity and upward class mobility achieved through migration. It is a melody that finds expression in a late 1940s newsreel clip revived through its recirculation in the much-lauded BBC miniseries *Windrush*. Responding to a journalist’s question posed to him on arrival on the deck of the ss *Empire Windrush*, the Trinidadian passenger and renowned Calypsonian Aldwyn Roberts (better known by his stage name, Lord Kitchener), launched into a melodious rendition of “London Is the Place for Me” while flanked by his fellow passengers waiting to disembark.

Like Roberts’s lyrical soliloquy, the jingles cited in the photographs above present a short melody, but one far more predictable than the Calypsonian’s spontaneous performance. Melody structures these photos not so much as personal narratives about these individuals, but through the ways in which they evoke and correspond with things we have seen before. In fact, what we hear before we see these images is the melodic register of their genre: *the photographic portrait*. Put another way, we do not just see these portraits; they register equally loudly rhythmically and tonally as a particular range of pitches and keynotes that we respond to almost automatically in recognition. That range is a distinctive and familiar genre of studio photography that registers through its reproduction of props, poses, and backdrops. Hence part of what we might think of as the hum or keynote that resonates in the seriality of the genre is an echo of portraiture techniques and conventions utilized since the nineteenth century. As part of this larger historical trajectory, they not only resemble middle-class portraiture but resonate as well with ethno-



Trinidad. Negroes - costume martinique



Trinidad. Hindu from Madras



Trinidad

Trinidad

Trinidad



Trinidad. Nuer

Trinidad. Nuer



Trinidad. Negro



Trinidad. Negro in carnival dress



Trinidad. Nuer



Trinidad. Nuer, slightly modified

"Album #40—Types of Races of Mankind" (Sir Benjamin Stone Collection, Birmingham City Library)

graphic portraits taken in former colonial territories in Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, Asia, and the Pacific.

Such images circulated widely throughout Europe and beyond, as objects trafficked between lay collectors and trained scholars who commissioned and exchanged them as visual proof of racial distinctions and taxonomies. They trace their origins to the earliest uses of portrait photography as evidence for hierarchical social and racial differences.¹⁷ These are clearly photographic portraits of a different purpose and order. Setting them in relation to those of postwar Caribbean migrants is not intended to render them in any way visually equivalent. It highlights instead the compositional attributes they share as portraits produced by image-makers trained in techniques common to a generation of photographers who, while deploying them differently and in ways that require analytic distinction, nevertheless practiced the same aesthetic principles that structured a Western photographic gaze deployed through photography in ways that ultimately dignified as well as pathologized their respective subjects.

In contrast to the transnational circulation of ethnographic portraits, postwar portrait photography of Caribbean migrants to Britain was circulated not by photographers, scholars, or collectors, but by and among West Indians themselves, as a way of connecting them to families and friends separated by oceans. Beyond their status as artifacts that document the life and history of this community, these images are keepsakes as well. Like the family archives discussed in the preceding chapters, they, too, are material instantiations of individual lives and memories that serve as conduits of recollection. They are haptic images constituted through intensely personal and extremely tactile practices of collection and retention.

Made in the United Kingdom but frequently sent to the Caribbean, these portraits were part of the incessant to and fro of transatlantic migration. Their haptics are structured by the rhythmic, crisscrossings of Black Atlantic exchange as objects and practices that bear witness to postwar journeys and re-settlements of West Indians making new homes and selves elsewhere. Photography here serves as a medium of diasporic articulation that materializes the linkages and attachments of individuals in diaspora. Yet it does so indexically through references and performances that enact both existing connections of kinship and community and forms of subjectivity that are imagined, desired, and aspired to.



These photographs display an agential practice of portraiture that resignifies the earlier uses of this genre seeking to objectify and silence their non-white, subaltern subjects. The portraits made and circulated within this community display their subjects appropriating the genre of the photographic portrait as a technology through which to represent themselves as particular kinds of modern agents. The series of images shown here index forms of gentlemanliness portrayed through styles of dress and physical comportment culturally coded as “British.”¹⁸ Yet as Sandra Courtman points out, the agency in such self-fashionings makes them legible as “much more than the mimicry of an *English style* copied in an attempt to be assimilated.”¹⁹ They reference forms of industry, responsibility, intellect and erudition, dignity, and elegance that were not exclusively identified with Englishness, but signified status and accomplishment for their West Indian subjects and recipients in their own right. Gentlemanliness and respectability registered in this community on both sides of the Atlantic as references to forms of British subjecthood through which these individuals signify a sense of belonging both in migration and “at home” prior to departure.

These photos are thus pitched to register histories and experiences that activate and, for many, anticipate our assumptions and associations by citing familiar melodies, jingles we seem to know by heart. Their keynotes map a “structure of feeling” that renders these images intelligible according to multiple but particular cultural and historical contexts.²⁰ That structure of feeling and one of their most powerful registers is clearly *aspiration*: an aspiration to be someone; to be proud and good-looking, respectable and upstanding; an aspiration to betterment and middle-class prosperity. Their aspirations preceded these individuals’ migrations, but they were enabled in new ways through the forms of autonomy that transatlantic resettlement produced.

These portraits’ indexical citations perform subjectivities intended to solicit the responses of members of their community in the United Kingdom and abroad, while simultaneously creating their own visions and versions of self and community among individuals who shared points of identification, though differentiating themselves in the process. These photos image black Britons *in-becoming*—proud Jamaicans and Trinadians, Grenadians and Barbadians presenting themselves as both connected with a difference and respectable with a difference—a difference of migration figured through a stylistics of aspiration that imaged, imagined, and indeed affirmed them as at

once Caribbean and British, colonial and metropolitan, respectable and resilient. As a haptic practice that linked this community in diaspora, the simultaneity of these portraits’ production and circulation animate these imaging practices in ways that move us even now. Their movement is marked by a rhythm that is rooted in their seriality not as a litany of identical performances but as repetitions that both individuate and register in synchrony within a larger score. They are a set of performances structured by the basic conventions of the Edwardian portrait, yet punctuated by solo and group improvisations.

Returning to Moten’s conception of the cut of music on the image and linking it to James Snead’s influential theorization of the cut of repetition in black culture reveals a different but equally significant cut in these images. It is a cut that rhythm and music make visible and audible in the repetitions of this archive—repetitions that are not mere duplications, but creatively constructed, reiterative performances that resonate affectively in a distinctly diasporic register. It is perhaps an understatement to say that repetition plagues this archive of images. It inundated me as a researcher the moment I entered the stacks of the archive, when presented with boxes and boxes of largely uncategorized prints; it taunted me in the subsequent weeks I spent pouring over these images one by one; it overwhelmed me again when I set about to view the thousands of glass plate negatives; and it continues to vex me today when viewing them outside the context of the archive. Repetition is the hallmark of this archive, as there is quite simply no way around it. Yet rather than seeing mere similarity or replication in repetition, Snead has famously proposed that we engage repetition in black culture as a way of embracing its inevitability as a fundamental form of creativity and improvisation.

In these images, repetition begins with a hand on a table or an arm held at one side; a right leg crossed over a left or hands resting on a lap; a purse suspended on an elbow or resting on a table. At times it continues, intensifies, or devolves into a monotonous chant: table-table-table; chair-chair-chair; rug-rug-rug. . . . Identical tables, chairs, and rugs—ornaments, props, and accessories of staging that distract our attention and almost erase the figures in these images by dissolving them into the mass and multiplicity of this archive’s repetitions. Repetition transforms what might have been an encounter with an individual image into an encounter with the opacity of *studium*: the Edwardian portrait as genre. Transcribing such a score into the history of



empire, colony, and postcoloniality that these images record, such repetitions might register as mimicry, a visualization of colonial respectability, Englishness, conformity, and normativity. Or is there an alternative score that would help us differentiate between possibly divergent iterations of respectability and their multiple appropriations?

Central to Snead's conception of repetition as a form of black cultural articulation is his definition of the cut as "an abrupt, seemingly unmotivated break . . . with a series already in progress and a willed return to a prior series."²¹ It is a cut that continually *cuts back* to the start, skipping back and at the same time *moving forward* to initiate another beginning we have somehow already heard: "Black Music sets up expectations and disturbs them at irregular intervals: that it will do this, however, is itself an expectation."²² For Snead, the magic of the dynamic reappropriation of repetition through the cut is a confrontation with accident and rupture that suppresses neither uncertainty nor unpredictability but incorporates them instead into the system itself. As Camille Peters notes, "Rupture and disjuncture are thus folded into the set of expectations, making unpredictability a desirable quality. The cut, like repetition in general, reflects an orientation toward life. Black culture builds 'accidents' into its set of expectations, realizing that ultimate control is unattainable. . . . Through the cut, this harsh fact of life is appropriated, transformed into an aesthetically pleasing musical technique."²³ For Snead, the cut is inseparable from repetition. It is a break that does not produce a separation; it is a break that establishes a link to something prior—a prior series that it begins, restates, and revises. Snead's cut is both a distinction and a disruption, yet it is also a continuation. Its (dis)rupture interrupts a series to begin anew, while maintaining a continuity that relies on seriality to produce emergent forms that simultaneously repeat and distinguish.

What is the cut of repetition that musical structure enacts in/on these images? What do they repeat and simultaneously break away from? What do they produce, not necessarily as new, but as distinctive expressions? The cut of these photos is both with and against the seriality of middle-class portraiture and with and against the relations of colonial and postcolonial respectability. The cut of music on the images of Afro-Caribbeans in the archive of the Dyche Collection is a cut that allows us to see them as an abrupt break with a series already in progress that returns to a prior series. The series already heard

are the reiterations of the portrait but also, and equally important, the multiple reverberations of respectability.

Respectability has a long and freighted history in the culture of the Anglophone Caribbean, and its role in the cultural formation of West Indians has been debated among historians and anthropologists. George L. Mosse's seminal study, *Nationalism and Respectability*, traced the emergence of the idea of respectability to eighteenth-century European bourgeois culture and its concern with "decent and correct" manners and morals and a "proper attitude" toward sexuality.²⁴ Mosse charted the establishment of respectability as a means through which the European middle classes sought to legitimize and demarcate their status from the lower and upper classes. As John Tagg has convincingly demonstrated, the technology of the photographic portrait was marshaled initially by the middle classes (though it soon was widely adopted in other classes) as a representational medium that visually accomplished this goal.²⁵

Taking Mosse as a starting point, Karen Olwig constructs a useful genealogy of how respectability became an important basis of West Indian societies dating back to the influence of English Methodist missionaries among African slaves in the late eighteenth century and their promotion of their own middle-class values of respectability among the slaves they sought to convert.²⁶ Olwig explains that while respectability was initially confined to relatively small segments of the black population and did not become the cultural foundation for the entire population as it did in Europe, it later became identified by the Afro-Caribbean population with higher social status and as an ideal for lower classes to aspire to.²⁷ Yet rather than viewing respectability as a "foreign value" imposed on blacks by English colonizers, Olwig argues for a more complicated understanding of the ways in which Afro-Caribbeans appropriated respectability for their own ends.

The role of respectability in Caribbean societies must be examined from the point of view of a cultural struggle between colonial and local interests in which men and women were equally involved. This struggle centered on attempts, on the part of the colonial authorities, to control the Afro-Caribbean population by integrating them via social institutions of respectability, and, on the part of the Afro-Caribbean population, on the employment, or appropriation, of these socially recognized institutions of

respectability as a means of displaying their culture in a society which refused to grant this culture any public recognition. . . . the tradition of respectability, which was introduced to the Afro-Caribbean population primarily through English Methodist missionaries, "went native" in the West Indies; . . . its institutions were unmade and appropriated into West Indian custom as a pattern of social practices constituting "respectability." This respectability therefore became at one and the same time an expression of Afro-Caribbean identity and an institutionalized means of seeking recognition in the wider Euro-Caribbean society.²⁸

As Olwig and others have made clear, respectability is a complex ideological formation that was creatively adapted and appropriated both in the pre- and postemancipation British Caribbean. The Afro-Caribbean portraits of the Dyche Collection offer a vivid example of such reiterative appropriation. Far from signifying submission to English or European values or the systems of racialized oppression associated with them, these visual enactments are a further iteration of the historical process described by Olwig whereby, "externalizing their culture through foreign form, in the process transforming the forms, the Afro-Caribbean people managed to keep their culture alive, [and] at the same time they institutionalized it," demonstrating in the process "the way in which colonial, invented tradition can be appropriated by those it was meant to control and sometimes even turned against those who invented it."²⁹ Like the cut of repetition Snead so masterfully plots, the rhythmic seriality of these images cuts with and against the respectability of middle-class portraiture by setting up an expectation that they at the same time disturb. It is an expectation of mimicry and conformity with class respectability signified by the Edwardian portrait and presumably imposed on blacks in the Caribbean as a "civilizing" influence. Yet it was this simple notion of respectability that these images both repeat and simultaneously disrupt.

Bridge: Out of the Archive and into the Fire . . . ; or, Playing in Our Own Time

A week after arriving in Birmingham I found myself hopelessly confused, trying to navigate the city bus system without the benefit of a map. I was headed to Newtown, a racially mixed, working-class area just outside the city center, on my way to the Annie Wood Community Resource Center.³⁰ I had wanted to know more about the sitters in these portraits and their motivations for

making such images, and the staff I was working with at the archives insisted that the answers to my questions lay in Newtown. Founded in the 1970s, the center had been a vital resource for the Afro-Caribbean community in Birmingham and had served as the meeting site for a group of ten to twenty Caribbean seniors (mostly women) between fifty and seventy years old.

Following the cryptic directions I had been given, I disembarked hesitantly at a peculiarly British traffic structure—a massive roundabout at the intersection of six major roads. Crossing under it and walking over a hill, I passed through what felt like a maze of low houses and council flats. The center was located in one of them, and I found my way there by following the cheerful sound of Caribbean and Birmingham accents—older voices that were busy and loud, warm and familiar. The group had been meeting once a week, every week, for more than twenty years. Although its membership had changed over time, a core group of about seven women had known each other for decades.

After being introduced to the members of the group I began by thanking them for allowing me to attend and describing my research and some of the questions that had arisen for me in trying to understand these images. I asked them to share with me their reflections on their imaging practices in this period. Why had they chosen to make these particular types of photos? What did they do with them? How did they think about them, and how did they think we should understand them now as a commentary on their lives and struggles in this period? Their initial response was dead silence. Sitting there in the midst of this group, fixed by the stares of a room full of Caribbean women who resembled my aunts and grandmothers, I felt the silence to be endless. After a bit of prodding, the answer they gave me was quite simple: "We didn't think about it at all. We didn't think about making pictures or why we were making pictures back then. We just made them. That's just what we did." More often than not, when we do not think about what we are doing, it is because those things are too familiar; because they are things we are used to doing. Or as the members of the group themselves said, it was because it was something they "just did." But why, I asked. Why did they "just do it"? "You could write a letter. Sometimes you could call. But none of that mattered. Whatever story you told them, they wanted to see a *picture!*" According to their accounts, the pictures told the definitive story—in other words, the story that would be believed. "In a picture, they could see what you looked

like and see how you were *really* doing. They could see if you looked fat or thin, or if you looked happy or healthy or tired or sick." Because these photos were seen to index "the real," or, in their words, "how you were *really* doing," photographs proved both mundane and monumental in this community, for the images they created were *required* as well as *requested*, and they would be vigorously scrutinized as one of the few tangible traces of individuals an ocean away. As such, these portraits' circulation endowed them with an indexicality that had a doubly affective register. The audiences to whom these portraits were sent were neither naive, passive, nor innocent readers of images. They invested these photos with meanings and associations that did not always align with those of their sitters. These images are in this way complex objects of inscription that transport the desires, aspirations, and attachments of diasporic affiliation as forms of articulation that Hall defines as both a "joining up" and a "giving expression to."³¹ It is "a connection that speaks" as a linkage constituted at the very point of separation—in and through difference, and in and through the distance of migration—bridging temporal and geographic ruptures that, in turn, initiated new constructions of self and community elsewhere. These portraits are haptic images that construct affective diasporic linkages underscoring continuities of connection and attachment maintained both psychically and materially to places and communities of origin. They are objects of articulation that play diaspora in their own time, composing community as difference through the simultaneity produced by images that are at once here and there, at home and "in foreign."

In these portraits of women seated and standing, the repetitions that construct their seriality begin with feet placed like clock hands at twelve and two, or legs folded from knee to ankle. They continue upward to hands perched on tables, or arms balancing purses that seem almost too conscientiously displayed as intentionally placed props in the still life of the image. Their repetitions extend further to the smiles of women that seem genuine and unforced yet also practiced in a restraint that never quite breaks the surface of a grin. Again, their register is serial rather than narrative—a seriality that is not simple repetition, but synchronic in nature. Their synchrony is temporal, through the simultaneity of their production within this community, as well as aesthetic, through both the formality of Edwardian portraiture and their styles of dress. Yet while their synchrony is produced both historically and aesthetically by the photographer, we must also recognize the cultural regis-



ters that shaped these aesthetic forms with equal force. For the semiotics of these images register not only *as* but also *because* they are synchronized performances intended to invoke connection and identification. These images' seriality makes them signify not simply as portraits, but as cultural practices of diasporic self-making.

A narrative scripting of these respectable portraits might read them as complacent and conservative colonial subjects who migrated to the United Kingdom to pursue a conventional path of upward mobility. In this version of the struggle for racial equality, the radical activism and political "heavy lifting" of racial confrontation and reform is left to their black British children to accomplish through the social and political transformations that followed the riots and protests of the 1970s. But what about a different version of this narrative? How would a *gendered* remix recast this earlier narrative according to an alternate beat? What are the gendered frames that structure them as meaningful representations of diasporic transition, success, and/or failure? Such a remix will, as ever, hinge on questions of style . . .

Version: Gender, Indexicality, and the Stylistics Sunday Best

In her essay "Englishness, Clothes, and Little Things," Carolyn Steedman urges historians to focus on "little things" and to consider what might be learned from the imaginative uses to which these have been put. Emphasizing the role of dress as one such "little thing" that marks a significant node of interaction between national identity and objects, Steedman writes that clothing and dress more generally are "ways of dreaming, or imaging *yourself*. . . in new ways."³² Following Steedman's instructive lead, it is not only such little things as a seemingly mundane studio portrait but also the tiny details of dress used to compose these images that warrant reflection and consideration.

Take, for example, an object that was to me perhaps the most conspicuous, consistent, and curious of props found in the images of women in this collection: the purse.

Why does nearly every woman's portrait choose to display a purse, and why is it always featured so prominently? Steedman's comments prompt me to recall my own response to this persistent detail in the portraits of this collection. Thinking I saw a difference between these photos and my own family's imaging practices, I was initially convinced that, in my family, such a prominent display of purses would be considered "showing off." Unless, that



is, these bags formed part of the outfit. But the ladies of the Annie Wood Center corrected me on this. They were both part of the outfit *and* “showing off.” “That’s exactly what we were doing. There may not have been a cent in it, but you acted like there was. That’s what you wanted them to think—that you had something.” In precisely this way, these images are indexical enactments that reference forms of social status and respectability that the members of this community had come to England to claim. Furthermore, the adoption of studio portraiture was not an imaging practice they discovered in the United Kingdom. The women of the Annie Wood Center explained this to me when I asked whether such portraits were expensive acquisitions. “Maybe they were, but the money didn’t really matter. That wasn’t the issue. You see, we wanted the right pictures. The price wasn’t the point. However much it cost, we’d find the money. We didn’t have any money anyway, so it didn’t really matter how much it cost. But the pictures had to be right. That’s why we went to a particular studio in the High Street. Their pictures looked just like the ones from the studio in Kingston.” What the speaker describes in this comment is a form of diasporic articulation that shaped this community’s imaging practices in important ways. The studios and portrait styles they chose were selected because the images they produced *looked like* ones they recognized from the West Indies, and for this very reason, they would be recognized positively and thus effectively hail the home communities to which they were sent. As a crucial part of the cultural work of such diasporic imaging practices, these visual enactments were enlivened by the haptic attachments these photographs solicited and produced, for the recipients of these portraits engaged them as tactile indexes that registered a material and affective trace of that which once stood before the camera. In this case, that trace or “real thing” was their loved one and his or her new life abroad.

Even when the frames in which those loved ones appeared were extremely artificial and the people were awkwardly posed with staged props or contrived backdrops like those found in the Dyche portraits, that trace was nevertheless a meaningful one, one that served as a tangible link to the photographic subject. At the same time, West Indian migrants to Britain used the photographic portrait as a medium whose indexicality was in fact and by default *performative*, in that it enacted and thereby produced the very forms of subjectivity and linkage it appeared to record. It is a performativity staged for the consumption of intimate and extended relations—(af)iliates and familial

circuits of kin linked through the haptic circulation of these images. Like the concept of performative indexicality developed in the previous chapter, these portraits performatively invoke and produce respectable and accomplished diasporic subjects within their photographic frames.³³ As the ladies of the center adamantly pointed out to me: “Some of our boys were sleeping in phone boxes or renting rooms where they slept in shifts in the same bed. When we arrived here in England it was horrible. It was cold and miserable. But we always looked good. Even if you only had one suit or one nice outfit, it was clean. *We* taught the English how to dress. They used to wear the same clothes everywhere. You don’t wear the same thing everywhere! We had work clothes, and going out clothes, and *Sunday best*. Those teddy boys used to beat up our boys because they looked so sharp. It was not just about race. It was about style!” *Sunday best*. We see *Sunday best* all over these images. *Sunday best* is perhaps the embodiment of this generation of Caribbean migrants’ aspirations to middle-class respectability. *Sunday best* were literally church clothes, but they were also dress clothes with a difference. They were clothes meant for worship in a community with a deeply religious sensibility. *Sunday best* was attire that stood apart both from the work week and from leisure time. *Sunday best* was dressing up, but not showing off. It was clothing intended to be reverent and to show respect for the place and practice of worship, as well as gratitude and humility in the presence of God. *Sunday best* was in this way a demonstration of faith—one that signified that, for West Indians in this period, respectability was not just a question of class; it also had an equally important spiritual dimension.³⁴

The version of *Sunday best* pictured in these images was intended to harmonize back home as a familiar register for the loved ones left behind who received them. It placed relatives and friends in a visual context of people “keeping faith” oceans away. These portraits project upright and respectable folk who, in what was seen as the highly secular world far away from their families and community, gave the appearance of maintaining similar values. These images aspire to “the good life”—yet it was also a spiritual life, as well as one that was gendered in its inflection. The sitters perform encoded variations on the melodies and tropes of respectability they compose and project in ways that represent aspiration as anything but simple or straightforward.³⁵ Returning to the cut of music on these images, what registers when we attend to these photographs’ musicality is an *aspirational harmonics* of *Sunday best*.

Extending Steedman's attention to "little things," Carol Tulloch emphasizes the critical importance of style to the formation of Caribbean identity in diaspora.³⁶ Tulloch contends that the detailed styling of the black body through fashion, dress, and style are a central expressive component of the Caribbean experience that articulates the experience of diaspora as a "certain moment" of postwar black identity formation.³⁷

The personal and cultural trauma experienced by the first generation of Caribbeans and Africans to arrive in Britain after World War II left them with a sense of being "out of place," having left the country where their sense of self had been forged. . . . In such a historical moment of migration and settlement, style and fashion became more than just a superficial means of cultural engagement. It was a visual and tangible affirmation of their existence, or who they were, and of their cultural and social relevance in their new "home." . . . They capture fragments of a time when dress was essential to the formation of the identity of an individual, a group or a specific culture. . . . From this comes the ability to evoke visual pleasure in the observer, bringing psychological reassurance for the wearer and a consequent sense of pride. Such feelings simultaneously compound the wearer's difference while underlining their permanent place in Britain.³⁸

This archive's rhythmic repetitions enunciate a series of stylistic variations in a kind of freestyling that disrupts a desire to hear them playing solely in a single, gender-neutral register of respectability. In these portraits we frequently see elegant fedoras, yet fedoras often cocked carefully to one side. We see cigarettes and zoot suits that straddle the line between Sunday best and "Friday night finest." We see pens and watches and other adornments, yet these accessories were frequently not the property of their sitters. Often borrowed or supplied as props by the studios they patronized, the sitters selected them as individual stylizations and coded performances that suggest the bad boys and not always so good girls beneath Sunday best—men and women making their own way on the other side of the Atlantic.

Musical structure foregrounds these images' multiple registers of meaning as coordinated performances that beckon and respond to one another as aspirational versions produced in the photographic studio as a site of self-creation. The musics of these images are a call and response of indexical and performative citations that hail the affective attachments of members of their

community in the United Kingdom and abroad, while creating their own visions and versions of themselves and in diaspora. To add a further layer of musical complexity, it is particularly illuminating to think these visual improvisations through the jazz structure known as "trading fours."³⁹

Trading fours describes a structure of ensemble improvisation among different members in a group performance. In jazz, the solo is most often performed "over" the form of a song, with choruses usually set in a standard AABA thirty-two-bar form.⁴⁰ In this configuration, call and response is always present as the drummer, bassist, and pianist each respond to the notes and rhythms of the soloist, yet the latter almost always takes the lead. Trading fours (or twos or eights, depending on the duration or number of bars over which a solo is played) differs in that the thirty-two bar form is shared as it is transferred or traded back and forth from soloist to drummer, to the next soloist, and back to drummer continuously, frequently over the course of many choruses. Each member of the group improvises yet within the basic form of a given piece. Transcribed into words, the structure of such an improvisation might resemble the following:

Alto—4 bars
Drums—4 bars
Piano—4 bars
Drums—4 bars
Bass—4 bars
Drums—4 bars
Tenor—4 bars
Drums—4 bars

In the structure of trading fours, the drummer sustains the ensemble, "holding the band up" as the keeper of an underlying beat propelling the performance as a driving momentum that moves the dynamic of the group through modes of interruption and (re)turn. As Moten explains in "The New International of Rhythmic Feeling(s)," a drummer sets in motion a kind of timeline that moves by way of a series of suspensions and reversals.⁴¹ Moten uses Charles Mingus's concept of "rotary perception" as the prime example of what he defines as "an articulated ensemble." "No hegemonic single pattern means no sole instrument or player responsible for that pattern's upkeep. There is, rather, a shared responsibility that makes possible the shared possibilities of irresponsibility.



Photograph *Byche* Birmingham.



Photograph *Byche* Birmingham.



Photograph *Byche* Birmingham.



Photograph *Byche* Birmingham.

More precisely, attuned and passionate response is given both in the capacity to walk and to walk away. While freeing the individual player—say, the bass player—within the fixed rhythmic group or rhythm section from the sole burden of keeping time does constitute a liberation from collective temporal constraint, such escape or animation of the bottom is, itself, an effect of law.⁴² This “articulated ensemble” structure reveals a more explicit form of response/-iveness achieved through the process of “playing off” the soloist’s or drummer’s improvisation in her or his four bars. As Piotr Szpunar emphasizes in relation to trading fours, there exists a playfully competitive spirit between players that directly responds to the individual solo performances in turn, as each player attempts to outdo or top each performance as the focus of their own solo.⁴³

What is of primary significance for our purposes, and what defines this musical encounter, is the dominance of a formal structure within improvisation that allows each musician a freedom of expression to play with as she or he desires.⁴⁴ Because no single player leads directly or definitively, what dominates instead is form and expression, but within a structure that nevertheless facilitates improvisational freedom. Improvisation is thus both free and formal.⁴⁵ Similarly, trading fours offers a compelling analogy for understanding the sonic structures of these visual performances, in particular, the dynamics of call and response enacted in the portraits of Afro-Caribbeans in the Dyche Collection. These images similarly stage improvised performances of diasporic self-making, albeit within the highly formal structure of Edwardian portraiture. Their improvisations signify both within that formal structure and freestyle beyond and against it. The seriality of these visual performances thus function as an ensemble of diasporic calls and responses between people elsewhere and “back home,” and as improvisational versions that register complex and competing iterations of the poses, posturing, and enunciations of diasporic belonging. It is in these improvisations that the Dyche archive’s “versionings” begin to take on a more markedly ensemblic structure.

Ensemble: Gendering Diaspora—Off Tempo, in Time . . .

In a jazz ensemble performance, we hear multiple instruments and musicians playing the same song, but they do not form a unitary whole. Each musician improvises his or her part, yet they do so in coordination with other members of the group. The jazz ensemble is, in this way, an organizing structure that de-





scribes a constellation of coordinated improvisational performances, versions, and interpretations. It is an elastic and evolving framework that articulates musically multiple and variegated interpretations within the performance of a larger musical composition.

In these portraits we sometimes see rhinestones and other forms of jewelry that appear a bit flashier than or at odds with Sunday best. And we notice the absence of an otherwise ubiquitous accessory in this community: crosses. Occasionally we see hems that show a bit more leg than would ordinarily be displayed in and around the pews. In these images, Sunday best often reflects a secularity and autonomy achieved through migration. As much as they image reverent and respectable Caribbean men and women, they also show covertly fly girls and boys winking at the camera and flaunting their autonomy through style. For what registers with equal depth in these portraits' presentation of Sunday best is the gendering of diasporic aspiration. Gender emerges through performances of bodily comportment that register not only the adaptation and improvisation of Sunday best but also a gendered versioning of respectability that undergirds the diasporic narrative of the *Windrush* generation.⁴⁶ Like the articulated ensemble Moten describes, these images enact multiple versions of gender and respectability as an ensemble of improvisations that play off and against each other while maintaining the formal structure of the portrait. As articulated ensemble performances, the diasporic subjects enacted in these images both conform and contest the forms of respectability they project by improvising *within* rather than in opposition to a structure that enables but cannot contain them.

Take the images of women that dominate this collection: portraits that figure young women as “ladies,”



accessing a racialized and exclusionary category of womanhood through the performativity of the photographic portrait. Viewed against the images of zoot-suited, fedora-clad, cigarette-holding jazz cats or blues men, these comparatively chaste women appear withholding and restrained in the more domesticated image they compose.

These portraits almost strain to project sisters, aunts, and daughters—virtuous and dutiful family members whose images evoke pride and filial loyalty. These photos are representative of the overwhelming majority of women's portraits in this collection. There is, however, one quite notable exception.



Finding this image in the midst of so many hundreds of others in this archive, I must confess to being initially somewhat taken aback. “She is singular,” was my immediate response, “perhaps even exceptional.” Her image stood out from the rest. Her corporeality disarmed and delighted me. Indeed, her provocative self-display raises an irresistible question: Why did she choose to make this image? Who was its audience or its intended recipient? Her proud and voluptuous sexuality places her in an almost uncomfortable relation to the other women in this archive. Viewed against the backdrop of the other comparatively conservative portraits in this collection, it registers as dissonant—out of time and out of tune. We wonder why she made

this particular image, and we search energetically for answers. Was it for a carnival pageant or beauty competition? Perhaps its audience was more intimate, for example, a boyfriend or lover far away? Was distance the reason for the choice of the visual medium as a mode of more “sensual” connection? A desire to deliver a physical replica, a tactile trace, or something as close to the real thing as possible? In what ways was it, too, a performance, intended to invoke a deeper and indeed quite sensual connection? How do we explain such a rupture in the serial musics of this visual archive?

In many ways, this image gives voice to a suppressed melody of licentiousness that plays in the background and, I will confess, hums in the back of my own response to this photo. Is she an example of the girl-gone-wrong—the buck-wild flip side of diasporic aspirations and sexual autonomy set loose by migration?⁴⁷ Does she represent the realization and embodiment of the worry of many at home and abroad; fears of what might become of the proud and well-turned-out women or forlorn girls pictured arriving at Southall or Victoria in photos published in the pages of periodicals like *Picture Post*—photos that constructed the social gaze of Britain at the time and helped constitute the *Windrush* migration as the iconic visual (and to some, originary) moment in the making of multicultural Britain?

Is this image not only evidence but in fact a symptom of the “slackness” that might result from mobility and access to urban spaces—an eventuality that would have, could have, might have been avoided had she remained safe, sound,



and settled “back home”? But before we cast this photographic subject as a black woman fallen from grace, before we reinscribe her into an all-too-easy binary of virtue and shame, chastity and licentiousness, I want to return to the cut of musical structure on this archive and to scoring these visual performances as a series of *versions*. What shifts about the seemingly anomalous image of our proudly exposed young lady when we look beyond what we see and hear it instead as a performance that is *coordinated* and *synchronic* in ways that harmonize with the seriality of the images that preceded it? If we consider this photo part of the same *ensemble* performance enacted in this larger archive, the gender of diaspora looks slightly different. Continuing to translate the structures of music to the image, dissonance is part and parcel of the patterns of both the visual and the musical and is a central component that links the structure of each.

When we place the portrait of our sassy sister perched in her two-piece in the context of a larger ensemble performance, its dissonant musics gender a remix of the alternate versions of kinship, coupling, and sexuality that have historically structured Caribbean culture since slavery—structures that have sustained and supported these communities through generations of migration for individuals both at home and abroad.⁴⁸ As anthropological studies of kinship and household structures in the Caribbean have shown, sexuality and sexual potency is positively valued as an important component of identity and social status for women as well as men.⁴⁹ Procreation is a significant indicator of personal status for both genders, a status confirmed through the birth of children within and outside marriage. Parallel to the value of child-bearing and sexuality in Caribbean communities, the key bond in the family is not the husband-wife bond, but the mother-child bond as the foundation of extended families and household structures.⁵⁰

With these points in mind, why see this image not as standing apart from but as playing in concert with other registers in this archive? Rather than scripting her as a radical deviation from the demure images of women we have seen, what if we score this portrait as *playing off tempo, but in time* with other images in this collection, albeit in ways that reflect the gendered dimensions of diasporic relations? Instead of being at odds with the mothers and sisters we associate with the portraits of women in their Sunday best that dominate this collection, this sitter is very likely a mother herself.⁵¹ According to a 1953 sample survey, 63 percent of women who migrated to Britain from



Jamaica were mothers, more than 90 percent of whom had left children in Jamaica, 95 percent of which were left in the care of grandparents. Similarly, it is equally likely that she shared a profession with one of the many women in uniform that also populate this collection.

On another day in the studio, she, too, may have requested that Ernest or Malcolm Dyche photograph her in a uniform such as these, as a bus conductor or a nurse in ways that depicted her as she might have appeared in her workplace outside the studio.⁵² Scoring this image as part of the larger ensemble performance of this archive of diasporic photographic practices prompts us, on the one hand, to question the distinction between the more maternal figures of women and this seemingly dissonant one. On the other hand, it encourages us to resist both the innocence of those more restrained and traditional depictions of womanhood and the temptation to see her as an audacious, abject counterpart in a binary presumed to differentiate the respectable as a desired norm from its Other, and to recognize her instead as the constitutive outside of the forms of respectability from which she is assumed to so radically depart.

In the ensemble performances of this archive, gender registers through forms of femininity in which sexuality harmonizes *with* rather than *against* respectable or maternal womanhood. In the score I am proposing, sexual autonomy plays in time with the financial autonomy women attained through migration as workers with wages that gave them independence from their families in the Caribbean and simultaneously sustained both families abroad and new families and partnerships in the United Kingdom. Looking again at this photograph and the forms of black womanhood it images, while the photograph captures a woman taking apparent pleasure in her own bodily display, we also see accents (“little things”) that suggest the performance captured in this portrait was not so far removed from those of the women pictured in the other photos. For beyond the shimmer of her revealing two-piece, the easily overlooked detail of a watch marks a telling contrast that suggests a consciousness of time. The wearer of this watch was not necessarily frivolous, but a woman for whom time mattered. As instruments that demarcate time into discrete but continuous units, watches are not merely ornamental accessories but necessary tools that allow their wearers to transition between work and leisure. This lingerie or, more likely, bikini-clad black woman was not oblivious to the passage of time, nor could she be, for the photo session

itself was a limited unit of time paid for through wages earned. To be sure, this image was certainly as purposeful and intentional as the uniformed portraits of the bus conductor or nurse, if not perhaps more so.

Unlike in the equally fanciful staging of this portrait of the same woman (which, judging from her identical makeup and hair, was most likely taken in the same studio session), the sitter chose to disrobe for the previous exposure. There was a reason for that photo as well as its counterpart. A reason for the choice to expose herself to a white photographer she did not know; a reason for the choice of evening wear and a bikini shot; a reason why she went to the trouble of balancing herself precariously atop a table used by the photographer in so many of

these images—a table whose ornament was usually a vase of flowers rather than the sitter herself. We might speculate that the reason for these aesthetic choices might have been a pageant, yet regardless of their actual motivations, the contrasts between swimsuit and formal gown in the portraits of this anonymous woman remind us of the multiple levels of black womanhood that play simultaneously in the larger archive of these images of postwar Caribbean migration. Black femininity was sexual and maternal; wage-earning and religious; autonomous and deeply invested in the family, all at the same time. As Wendy Webster emphasizes, these ways of inhabiting black womanhood were at odds with the discourse of dual roles that played a central part in the perception of black women migrants to Britain in this period. Webster maintains that in British society of the 1950s, migrant women were not perceived to have the relational identity enshrined in the idea of a “working wife.”⁵³ Their place in Britain was seen as anchored in their status as workers, but not workers who would establish families in the United Kingdom or workers who expected (and indeed, demanded) housing, education, or other provisions of the postwar welfare state.⁵⁴ They were constructed as workers only, not working mothers whose employment was in fact inseparable from the needs of their families.⁵⁵ In contrast, Webster argues that for black women



migrants, employment was itself a strategy for building a family, as holding a full- or part-time job was often “a precondition of any sort of family life and frequently involved full-time rather than part-time work.”

Few of the themes articulated by advocates of dual roles fitted their experience. . . . Employment was frequently crucial for financial support of families, and since black women’s families usually included members back home as well as in Britain, there were often a range of calls on their earnings, from sending food, money and parcels back home to providing for children in Britain, whether brought over or born after migration. Migrant women from the Caribbean often used their earnings to bring children over. Since black men’s wages were commonly lower than white men’s, this range of family needs was unlikely to be provided through male breadwinners, even when they used their earnings to meet them.⁵⁶

When we score these images as ensemble performances, their coordinated dissonances register a more complex ensemble of meaning of the gendering of diaspora. These were women who traveled oceans and left behind not only friends, parents, and siblings—many left behind single and often multiple children. They frequently departed with the intent of return or the promise to reunite on the other side. Like their male contemporaries, they were women who arrived in the United Kingdom with little more than the promise of a job that sometimes never materialized and the name and contact of a family member or friend. Yet it was these extended family and community networks of support—those who kept and raised the children left behind, who loaned the money for the journey, and who were the audience and recipients of these images—that made these migrations both possible and imaginable. The cultures of migration that emerged early in the history of Anglophone Caribbean islands was wholly dependent on these alternative family and kinship structures—structures that had developed there to sustain family relations characterized by extended absences and intermittent presences over expansive cartographies and multiple generations.⁵⁷

When we attend to the harmonics of the ensemble performances captured in these images, their dissonant versioning of gender and sexuality confirms these cultural formations. Here the link between sexuality and respectability registers *in the break* of cultural difference, but not *as a break* from the seriality of this archive. In other words, this image registers *a cut of continuity* rather than rupture as an important variation on the same theme. For this seem-

ingly exceptional image is the necessary counterpart and ever-present supplement to the performances of female respectability, industriousness, and virtue staged in the majority of women’s portraits in this collection.

In this context, photographic portraiture was a technological medium adapted and adopted as a practice that facilitated linkage, affiliation, and intense affective attachments. These photographs are images that enacted the subjects these individuals were or aspired to be; subjects who indexed the diasporic attachments and associations of the sitters, senders, and recipients of these images as an important social and cultural adhesive connecting them to individuals far away. While such indexical performances frequently attempted to sing a happy, optimistic song, they are also performances that may or may not have been true and, at times, played both off tempo and slightly out of tune. These images at times attempted to drown out or cover over a world of less pleasant melodies. For although they register as profoundly aspirational, this aspiration was tested by repeated disappointment, deferral, and disillusionment.

In her reading of this very different set of photos from the Dyche archive, Courtman points out that such images articulate important tensions within diasporic aspiration, for many West Indians failed to find employment at the level they were promised or at equivalent levels to those of white British workers. She cites nursing as one notorious example of such discrimination against black women, as one of the prime occupations that brought Caribbean women to the United Kingdom in this period. As she writes,

A Dyche photograph shows a nurse in a starched and immaculate uniform; she proudly carries a pile of textbooks to suggest she is on the way up, advancing her knowledge and training. But it is unclear whether her uniform might be that of a State Registered or State Enrolled nurse. . . . To read this image culturally would be to acknowledge contradictory evidence about a profession that was to become a prime example of bitterness and disillusionment. Having fought hard in the Caribbean to become properly trained and qualified, women were recruited to nursing, tested in advance of joining and assured of proper career structure. On arrival in England, however, many nurses found themselves relegated to lower status jobs as auxiliaries or cleaners. . . . a photograph taken in a nursing uniform is [thus] a token of immense pride and a symbol of its wearer’s successful fight against institutional racism.⁵⁸



The portraits of the Dyche archive both resonate with the hopeful aspirations of diaspora and testify to the discontents and disappointments that were their backdrop. Those discontents were composed visually in a very different but highly recognizable form. It was a catalogue of images characterized not by the serial musics of the portrait, but by the narrativity of photojournalism. This visual catalogue narrates the racism, discrimination, and violence the Dyche portraits in many ways sought to sing over, drown out, and silence for families back home. It was a narrative that included jobs promised but not received on the basis of color; a narrative that often involved downward rather than upward mobility resulting from having to take positions below one's qualifications; a narrative of housing and benefits denied in spite of entitlement to the rights and privileges of British citizenship so highly touted as imperial beneficence abroad yet resoundingly rejected in the metropole when the empire came home.

From the late 1940s onward, numerous published photographs featured Afro-Caribbean migrants poised to take up the promises of employment and economic prosperity many felt they had earned through their allegiance and support of Britain in two world wars. Here photojournalism played a critical role in defining how this newly arrived population was seen and portrayed. Photographs of *Windrush* arrivals were published widely in mainstream newspapers and magazines, most famously, in *Picture Post*, whose significance in shaping British public perception has been examined in depth previously.⁵⁹ The images of West Indian migrants produced by journalists in their documentation of this population's arrival, settlement, and homemaking have made the *Windrush* migration one of the most iconic representations of Britain's multicultural history in a manner that inscribed these individuals in particular ways in the visual history of postwar Britain.

In contrast to the portraits we have just seen, these images are not necessarily musical in structure. Their genre, photojournalistic reportage, is highly narrative and depictive. Publications like *Picture Post* used photos not only to illustrate but to tell the story itself, frequently by way of captions that sought to narrate the images. *Picture Post's* visualizations of this generation of West Indian migrants oscillate between the depiction of individuals and groups, shifting restlessly between huddled masses and lone travelers. Both these group and individual figurations have deeper gendered articulations. The figure of the lone black man depicted in these cityscapes is a man alone in the world yet a man making his own way. In spite of accompanying cap-

IS THERE A BRITISH COLOUR BAR ?

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BERT HARDY

Britain stages Colonial Month—a campaign to stimulate popular interest in the life and people of the Colonies. The King attends the opening ceremony. But there are more than 20,000 Colonial people who live among us. What do we know of them—of their work, of their living conditions, their hopes and grievances? Picture Post conducts a survey into this dangerous and important question.

It is not possible to find out the exact number of colonial coloured people in Great Britain. There is no registry of people with black skin, any more than there is a registry of people with black hair. And there you discover the first important fact about the colour bar in Britain: officially it does not exist. For the purpose of the law and the administration of Britain there is no distinction whatsoever made between white and coloured British subjects—they are all just British subjects. And the same official lack of discrimination is echoed categorically by all government departments, professional organisations

and trade unions. But officers and organisations are run by human beings, and inside the minds of human beings, both in and outside offices, strange fogs of ignorance and prejudice can be at work. Although there are no official figures, the coloured population of Great Britain is estimated by both the Colonial Office and the League of Coloured People at about 35,000, including students. This total is distributed over the whole of Britain, but there are two large concentrated communities: one of about 7,000 in the dock area of Cardiff round Loudoun Square, popularly known as "Tiger Bay," and the

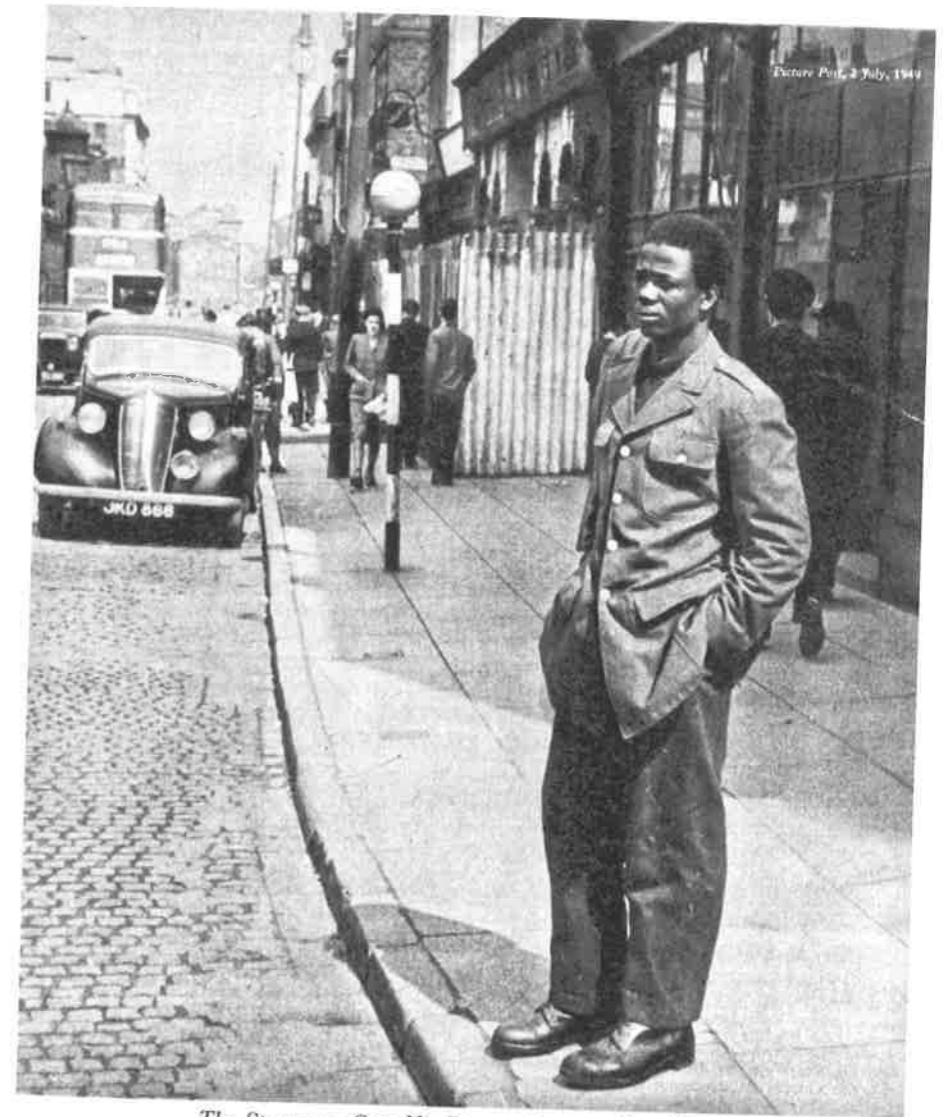
other of about 8,000 in the shabby mid-nineteenth century residential South End of Liverpool. These came into existence largely as a result of the immigration of colonial coloured people to work as seamen, soldiers and factory hands in the First World War. They were supplemented during the Second War. Similar coloured communities are found in all the main ports including London (there is one of about 2,000 in North and South Shields), in Manchester and the industrial areas of the Midlands. The prosperity of these different communities varies. The term 'colonial coloured people' is, of course, *Continued overleaf*



On the Curb of a Liverpool Pavement a Coloured British Subject Expresses the Indignation of His People. Officially there is no colour bar in Britain. But from restaurant-keepers and landlords, employers and employees, even from the man in the street, says Nathaniel Aboyi, he and his people meet with considerable colour prejudice. Aboyi has lived in five European countries, was a British Prisoner-of-War in Germany, but says he knows of no European country where the coloured man is treated with more unofficial contempt than in Britain.

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"Is There a British Colour Bar?," Picture Post, July 1949



The Stowaway Sees His Dreams Begin to Crumble. He stowed away from Lagos to realise his dream of working in the 'Mother Country.' The police gave him Service clothing, the Colonial Office gave him temporary lodging, the Assistance Board gave him £2 a week. But no one in Liverpool can give him a job. The danger is that he may drift.



Unestablished Seamen Sit Hoping for a Ship in a Seamen's Pool Canteen
They view life simply. In the war, when voyages were dangerous and Britain needed men, they could always get a ship. Now they need a job, but Britain has no ships for them.

"Is There a British Colour Bar?" *Picture Post*, July 1949





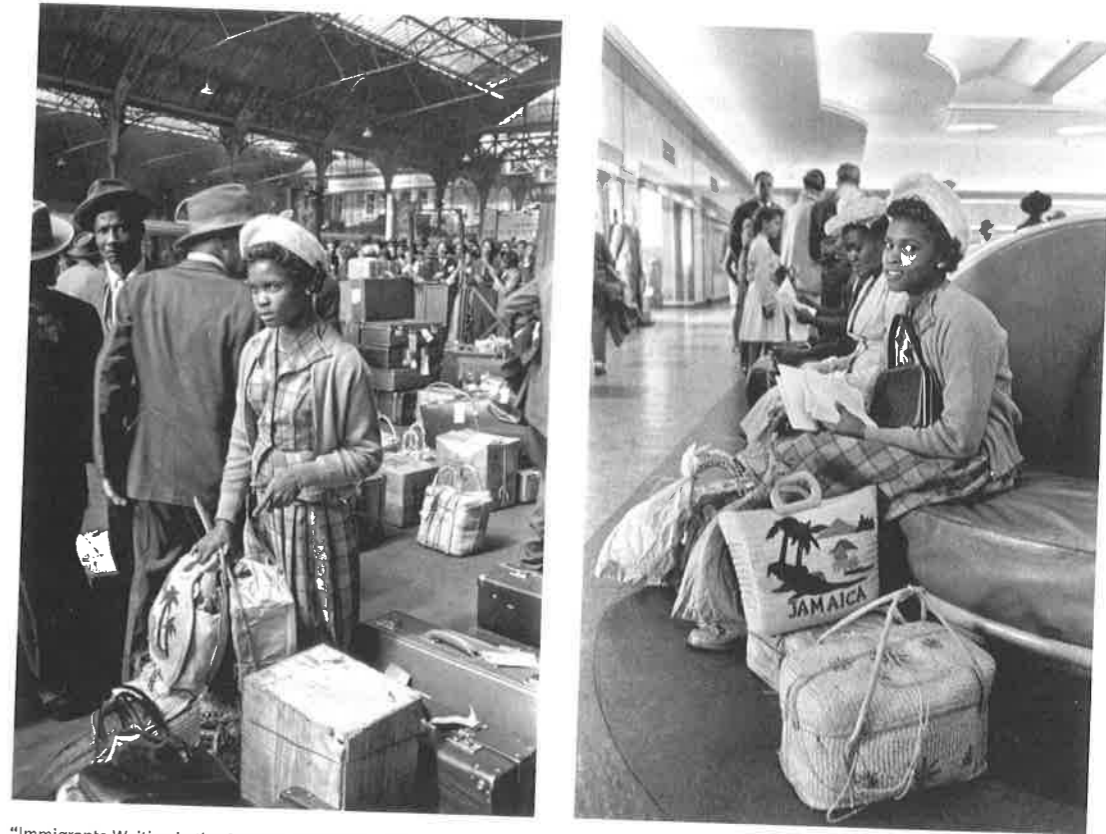
"Is There a British Colour Bar?" *Picture Post*, July 1949



tions and headlines of concern and dismay that ventriloquize the anxieties of a white British public, the gender of his isolation nevertheless situates him as the agent of his own destiny. These photos offer a striking visual accompaniment to Mary Chamberlain's watershed oral history of intergenerational Barbadian migration to the United Kingdom and to the highly gendered narrative structures revealed in her informants' accounts.⁶⁰ Chamberlain highlights that many of her male informants emphasized the spontaneity of their decision to migrate, which they narrated as tales of heroic adventure or masculine camaraderie against all odds. Their compelling accounts of agential autonomy often retrospectively justified the hurdles and travails they encountered on arrival in Britain with a happy end of accomplishment through cleverness and self-reliance.

The preceding images extend this theme through an atmospherics of shadow and light that amplify the risks and loneliness of diaspora that images like the Dyche portraits so effortfully tried to filter out or paper over. In the script this image writes, the lone male diasporic signifies autonomy, albeit without the economic opportunities that fueled his migration. As its caption confirms ("Social Segregation That Can Lead to Trouble"), such an image situates the black male diasporic as perpetually at risk and illustrates the potential dangers of diasporic failure. In the English imagination, those black migrants who did not attain the employment they sought became objects of concern and distrust, as idleness activated a threat to the availability to white femininity in other sites of urban sociality—a threat that revived and affirmed older discourses of moral panic about the dangers posed by black populations in the metropole and in the colonies.⁶¹ These journalistic images of the *Windrush* generation provided another vehicle for the circulation of such moral panics. At the same time, they project the much-criticized anthropological script authored by Peter Wilson and Roger Abrahams to explain Caribbean masculinity wherein the black male finds affirmation through reputation and the male crew, and they transport this dynamic from the West Indies to the United Kingdom. In the scenes depicted in these frames, a sense of self bound up in autonomy and activity links the lone male as a daring and adventurous sexual agent in the anonymity of the city and the culture of the street as a site of asserting difference, independence, and autonomy.

Juxtaposed with this lone black man is the equally iconic lone black woman who figures somewhat differently.



"Immigrants Waiting in the Customs Hall at Southampton Docks," May 1956 (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

The first of these images overwrites autonomy with vulnerability in ways that evoke protection and caretaking. However, as Chamberlain demonstrates in her study, women were as autonomous as their male counterparts in migration, though in contrast to her male informants' emphasis on adventure, spontaneity, and risk-taking, women framed their journeys as deliberate and considered decisions to migrate, debated in the context of broader family networks and concerns. Reading against and beyond the script of photojournalism and its captions, we must also consider the second image of the same girl taken either moments before or just after, which finds her in the company of another woman. She no longer waits; she has in fact arrived. Her site of affirmation is not the protection of British paternalism but the collectivity of black womanhood. Diasporic autonomy is recovered in the context of the female networks that structured these migrations and often go unseen, undervalued, or unacknowledged in relation to a privileged male narrative of diasporic independence and singularity. These women's journeys were similarly motivated by the promises and expectations of economic opportunity and autonomy, as well as by a long-standing cultural tradition of travel and migration within the Caribbean.

The narrative of diasporic discontent in relation to and against which the cut of the Dyche portraits registers surely included as well events that occurred just fifty miles north of Birmingham in August 1958—events that emblazoned the pages of Jamaica's largest newspaper, the *Daily Gleaner*, under a headline that announced: "One Thousand Wage Bloody Battle in Nottingham Streets." The Nottingham riots followed the alleged attack of a white woman by an unnamed West Indian man, during which a police officer reported: "The riot was started by a group of 20 West Indians who set out . . . to avenge an attack on a fellow West Indian by a gang of teddy boys."⁶² These events were followed a month later by more dramatic riots in the Notting Hill area of West London. As the *Daily Gleaner* also reported, during four consecutive nights of violence between black and white youth, the soundtrack to this scene was not music but penetrating calls to "Deport the niggers," "Lynch all niggers," "Kill the black bastards," and "Keep Britain white."⁶³ Less than a year later, those cries were gruesomely realized in the murder of the Antiguan-born Kelso Cochrane—a young man attacked by a group of young white men who reportedly shouted, "Hey Jim Crow," before killing Cochrane with a single stab wound to the chest.⁶⁴ While these events present moving depic-

tions that mobilized important links of diasporic solidarity and resistance, the images they construct differ dramatically from those I have engaged in this chapter—images of a community not of its own making, and images that militate against the structure of a musical score.

Scoring the image-making practices displayed in portraits of the Dyche Studio against the visual archive of photojournalism helps us understand the significance of these images as a cultural event. The self-fashioned diasporic subjects that emerge in these photos compose improvised configurations of self and identity that demonstrate an enduring investment in and retention of West Indian aspirations against all odds. They are images that play off tempo but in time even with the negative forms of black visibility they sought to sing over, drown out, and suppress. To the extent that these portraits register the tensions within diasporic aspirations, the photography studio itself also functioned as a space that enacted these dynamics in interesting ways. For while the aspirations of many of these sitters were often thwarted in their daily lives, the Dyche Studio served as a momentary space of exception that pampered them and put them in charge. Caribbean migrants were received at the studio by the photographers' wives, who sat with them and solicited their vision of how they wanted to appear. They were offered dressing facilities, props, and accessories to help them achieve their desired look and then ushered into the studio, where their wishes were explained to the photographer as part of a collaborative image-making process. The visions and versions of themselves they sought to create catered to and were crafted both during the shoot and afterward, when they received proofs that were altered and retouched according to their wishes. These sitters were not only paying customers; they were also empowered consumers and agential subjects. The studio and these imaging practices were thus not outside the realm of politics, but instead constituted a space in which race, class, gender, and empire resignified in creative and collaborative ways.

Here the relationship between diasporic musical cultures and image-making practices and the synesthetic linkages between the sonic and the visual offer an illuminating lens for thinking through the photographs' role in the affective practices of diasporic formation. Similar to Paul Gilroy's conception of black music as an expressive vehicle of diasporic transcendence (what he describes as "a politics of fulfillment: the notion that a future society will be able to realize the social and political promise that present society has left

unaccomplished”⁶⁵), these photographs’ aspirational registers demonstrate a similarly redemptive practice, albeit one where transcendence and redemption are neither escapist nor naive but pragmatically utopian.⁶⁶ The subjects constituted in and through these images aspired to transcend a here and now of racism, disappointment, and discrimination not as an erasure of those realities but as the foundation for building a better future for others. For what motivated the migration of both this generation and so many others was an explicit and unyielding investment in betterment and futurity—a future that would create a better world and more possibilities for their children and their communities, as well as for themselves.

Listening again to this archive of portraits, the cut of music and, more specifically, the musics of Sunday best return to resonate in yet another register. The ensemble performances this archive enacts parallels the call-and-response lyrics and rhythms of gospel in the black church. Central to the historic role of the church in black resistance and emancipation struggles in the Caribbean and the United States, gospel music hails its congregations as both subjects of their faith and subjects of a racialized cultural formation. Gospel articulates a tenacious faith in the face of overlapping histories of hope and despair—histories in which the cut of music was an expressive cultural practice of communication and connection, mourning and affirmation. Music and the cadences of gospel in particular provided a site of protest and pride, lament and resistance, whose rhythms invoke a relationality of suffering, struggle, redemption, and salvation. Those invocations do not merely reference the experience of families and communities separated and dispersed through the Atlantic slave trade but they cut back against it to produce affective connections between and among black communities in different locations and temporalities. The imaging practices of black families in diaspora mirror both these invocations and these connections, and in this way they enact the parallel tensions of diasporic aspiration and its discontents.

Break: The Shape of Things to Come . . .

LONDON, FALL 2009. It had been almost two years since I had been back to England, and it felt a bit like I had neglected an old friend. Originally planned as a conference trip, my journey was not really intended to include any research. But a few weeks before I left, my research assistant Samantha created

an opportunity that I could not pass up. Her great-uncle was a Trinidadian tailor who had come to London in 1960. After working with the Dyche portraits for almost three years, I felt that I had committed hundreds of them to memory. Their poses, their faces, their gestures, props, and clothes had etched themselves into my memory to the point where I could describe many of them with my eyes closed. But I still wanted to know more, and Samantha said her great-uncle would be just the person to talk to. Her handwritten Post-it note hung on my computer screen for weeks: “Ashton Charles, 25 Wrotesley Road, Plumstead SE18, London. He would love to talk to you!”

Ashton told me to ring him when I got to London to set a date and time to meet, and I called him dutifully the morning after I arrived. He gave me detailed instructions on how to get to his home from my hotel in Bloomsbury, but stubborn bus fanatic that I am, I decided to take the number 53 bus all the way from Lambeth and tour a few old haunts from my previous lives in London along the way. Although I arrived nearly forty-five minutes late, he greeted me with a dashing white smile and a warm hug. And instantly I knew that this man was dangerous.

I had used the time on the number 53 to outline my questions for Ashton. I had come to talk to him about the people I had nearly memorized in the Dyche portraits and intended to enlist his help in dating and describing the striking West Indians in these images. I had planned to ask him to help me identify who they were in relation to the styles and sartoriality pictured in them. But Ashton was a man with his own story to tell. He had other things in mind and, as I would learn, more important things to teach me. He was born in the village of Point Fonte, an oil town in Trinidad, and his father was a Baptist minister in the village who worked alongside Ashton’s brothers in the oil fields. But Ashton had no taste for those fields. By the time he was nineteen he had his own tailor shop with seven employees. He had gotten his start making trousers, adapting US-style slacks by changing them to look more like those he admired in old photos of his father. Rather than “drill cloth,” he made them out of gabardine. “And no pleats, more functional,” he said. “With a fob and slanted side pockets, so that when you put your money in, you couldn’t see it from the outside.” Ashton insisted that style was not just about looking good—it had to have a purpose. “Every detail must have a purpose.”

Ashton said that the success of his designs in Trinidad made him want

more. He wanted to expand, but no one would rent to him. So he decided to leave. He said he never wanted to go to the United States—"never have, never will." The newsreels of life in the United States at the time, particularly of the events at Little Rock, influenced him greatly. He left for London in 1960 at the age of twenty-two. Like C. L. R. James, Ashton described arriving in a place he felt he already knew. Starting out in Ealing, Ashton worked his way up rapidly. After working for two weeks at his first job making cotton thread in a factory, he was promoted to foreman, making twenty pounds a week as the only black employee among much older white men. While walking down Carnaby Street, he described being hired on the spot by a tailor who admired the trousers his friend was wearing—trousers designed by Ashton. After a year of illness and recovery, he worked his way back into the business and was later hired by Huntsman and Sons, bespoke tailoring on Savile Row, eventually rising to the coveted position of cutter.

Sitting in Ashton's living room mesmerized by the story of his journey from Trinidad to Savile Row to Plumstead, I slowly began to insert myself back into the conversation by way of the images I had brought with me on my laptop. As I asked him about the clothing and styles these sitters were wearing, he began to rattle off descriptions and associations. He contrasted the straight-legged, narrow trousers of the 1960s with "ali-baba" or balloon trousers. "The balloon trousers were the ones they brought with them from the West Indies," he said. The 1950s zoot suits were meant to distinguish them from British suit style, though he added that in Trinidad the zoot suits were cut smaller and a little narrower. Of a man in a belted overcoat he pronounced, "Most of the time they're belted in the back. He's just showing off." He said the same of a man in a single-breasted, two-button jacket, who he explained was trying to look like an Englishman. There was the man wearing what he called a "lumber jack" dressing to look smart, and another wearing a sweater and ascot trying to look studious. He had terms for each of them that described not just what they were wearing but why they were wearing it, and what their aspiration meant.

But it was when we came to the suits, Ashton's stock in trade, that the full depth of his words became clear: "In the early 1960s, we bought suits on credit. No one had the money to buy a suit all at once. You might have it at home. You might even wear it. But you were still paying for it weekly. You

even borrowed money for suits or to go home for carnival." As Ashton explained it, West Indians expressed themselves through style. His generation had come to England to "do better"—to make and have homes and to elevate themselves from working to middle class. And style was part of doing better. The portraits from the Dyche archive were what he described as "packaging." As he emphasized, "It was important that you sent home good packaging," and the photo was the packaging of affluence.

But it was also much more. For what Ashton made clear was that if these portraits were staged performances or packaging, there was still something beneath it. And for him, the suit was the key to understanding what lies beneath the pretty covering. Looking at a series of portraits of couples, Ashton remarked that these photographs also registered a change between "home and here." "The men in the photos could go into a shop and buy a suit. That wasn't possible in the West Indies. First of all at home, we only wore trousers and a shirt. But a suit makes you look completely different. Look at these people. Look at their faces and their bodies. Every face is smiling. Every stance is proud. And look at these couples. Look at how they're standing. We never had this closeness. The only time couples got this close was on their wedding day."

Ashton went on to explain what he saw as the relationship between the experience of migration and what he described as the "feeling" of these images. To him, the status shift his generation experienced in migration, while it did not always materialize economically, manifested as a feeling. And it was this feeling that these photos were made to show. Clothing was the package for those feelings and photographs were their medium of display and connection to folks at home. As I quizzed him to further describe what these individuals were wearing and to try to date them on that basis, Ashton indulged me, but at a certain point, he resisted. Rather than simply looking at the clothing, he insisted that I look beyond what I saw to see instead *the shape* of people in the photographs: "It's not just the style of clothes, it's the whole *shape* of people: their smiles, their shoulders, their back. Even how you put on a jacket says something about you. You see, the *shape* of people changed when they got here. It changed when they put on a suit they could buy in a store, even if they couldn't pay for it all at once. And it changed when they got the feeling of where they were standing."

I sat in Ashton's living room and listened eagerly as he taught me how to see these images as he did—through textures and cuts, fit and hang. I focused intently on “seeing feeling” not only through the details of clothing and style but also and equally important, through shape. Ashton also saw the cut of repetition in these images. It was a cut back to the multiple forms of respectability these West Indian subjects brought with them to the United Kingdom and adapted and reappropriated on arrival. It was also the cut of diaspora—a cut that picked up on the other side of the ocean to move forward from a new aspirational place. It was a place that Ashton recognized in the cuts he knew best: in the shape of a person and the cut of a suit.

Coda

In her 1999 essay on the Dyche collection, “What's Missing from This Picture?,” Courtman cautions that these images' anonymity almost invites fictionalization. She warns that the creation of narratives about their sitters has problematic implications and reminds us that such objects are always about the people they figure and that the agency of members of these communities to define their own self-presentation was historically quite limited.⁶⁷ Yet as I have argued throughout this book, it is equally important to theorize how such photographs function as images and as practices of social and cultural enunciation that exceed their biographical details. What is central to my own approach to these images is the conviction that understanding their significance as sites of enunciation requires modes of interpretation that engage their affective and semiotic capacity to marshal and transport the desires and imagination of their sitters and their viewers in ways that both did and did not always correspond to their intentions. This was true at the time of their production and circulation and continues to be the case today with respect to contemporary audiences both within this community and in other interpretive settings—settings that include the diverse publics of the museum, the archive, and the academy. Like the black German family archives explored in the preceding chapters, the Dyche archive is similarly subject to multiple haptic temporalities that circumscribe both the limits and possibilities of knowing the full complexity of their affects.

Let me conclude this chapter by posing the obvious question: Why reach so far afield to think these images through the idea of a score or the struc-

ture of music? The answer lies in the character of the archive in question and the structure of these images' production as what we must consider a cultural “event.” Music offers a generative way of accounting for three particularly salient features of this collection: its *serial character* (continuity of form); its *simultaneity* (the collective production and circulation of images at and around the same time by a group of people as a culturally coordinated practice); and *the volume* of its production as an eventlike phenomenon of the historical past and as a set of images we encounter less as individual portraits than as an archive viewed retrospectively from the present. Music and score allow us to engage the aesthetic experience of these images (both present and past), as well as their common structural patterns while refusing to reduce them to genre or form alone. They give us access to some of the patterns that resonate across the sonic and the visual and allow us to see their repetitions as an interactive seriality that resonates within this collection of images in ways that connected their sitters, viewers, and recipients through improvisations that make them register with particular affects. The rhythms, hum, and patterns that these portraits evoke are produced through their repetitive predictability, yet it is also produced temporally through their consignment and domiciliation as an archive and a set. The multiple temporalities of their rhythms and their hum was created as well at the moment of their production as images that sought connection—images that wanted to brag, wanted to front and show off, and yet still yearned to hug and touch, weep and hide, return home and to stay away at the same time. Their rhythms and their hum confront us in this way with an intricate correlation between affect and archive.

And where does this emphasis on the cut of music and the serial registers of these images leave us? In the postwar Caribbean community, studio photography and portraiture resignified black people's everyday image-making as an active process that created the subjects we recognize within the frame. Like ensemble performers, Caribbean migrants used studio portraiture to improvise and instantiate themselves as British subjects in relation to a Britishness that both actively invited their membership and participation in English society and rejected them on arrival. Engaging these images through their musics—their rhythms, harmonies, synchronies, and pitches—allows us to access their meanings not merely as documents but as animate and affective sites of performance, projection, desire, and improvisation of the selves, sub-

jects, status, and social relations they appear to record. Off tempo but in time, these images' musicality voices some of the diverse meanings and practices of self-fashioning that created the possibility for the articulation we now call black Britain. They voice, as well, a further and resounding affirmation that the image is and will remain a serious matter for black folks.

EPILOGUE

I heard he sang a good song
I heard he had a style . . .

On the night my mother died, we ate Kentucky Fried Chicken for the first time. A lot changed in the moment of her death, but at the time, Kentucky Fried Chicken was for me the most vivid and immediate marker of that shift. A nurse anesthetist by profession and, by many accounts, quite stoic to stories that would shock or repel most people, my mother was one of the true believers in the urban legend that the Colonel had fried up a rat and sold it, and that black folks had died eating it. Kentucky Fried Chicken was neither purchased nor allowed to cross our threshold while Mommy was alive. But everything changed in the week she died. We got to stay home from school, watch TV, and wear our pajamas for most of the day, and our house was full of people. Neighbors, church folks, and friends stopped by at what seemed like all hours, and family members drove in from far and wide. And as I would witness time and again at the passing of other family members, they invariably brought tons of food. Of the vast array of sweet and savory dishes that filled every available space on our kitchen counters, we gravitated immediately to the red and white stripes of that majestic cardboard bucket. My sister, brother, and I whispered conspiratorially as we stealthily snatched our first pieces. I secretly feared our mother might strike us down from on high as we ate, vengeful at such a betrayal so soon after her departure. As I licked my fingers and savored