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## About the Cover



[Photograph: Jim Grover, 'The front room.' From 'Windrush: Portrait of a Generation.' For more information, and to find out about the book that accompanied the exhibition, see <https://www.windrushportraitofageneration.com/>]

*postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* (2021) 12, 1–4.  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41280-021-00210-2>



This photograph is one of a series of images in Jim Grover's 2018 photo-story exhibition 'Windrush: Portrait of a Generation,' which celebrated the 70th anniversary of the arrival from Jamaica of the 'Empire Windrush' at Tilbury Dock (Essex) in June of 1948.

The ship's arrival inaugurated the so-called 'Windrush Generation,' a wave of Afro-Caribbean migration to the United Kingdom. Although the labor of these Caribbean migrants was undervalued and undercompensated, it was critical to the reconstruction of British service industries after the Second World War. Members of the Windrush Generation included numerous artists, activists, and thinkers such as Mona Baptiste, Stuart Hall, Sam Beaver King, Aldwin Roberts ('Lord Kitchener'), and Samuel Selvon. Despite citizenship and settlement rights guaranteed by the British Nationality Act of 1948, many members of the Windrush Generation and their descendants continue to face challenges to their immigration status after the Home Office in 2009 destroyed the Windrush passenger records, which had previously furnished proof of circumstances of arrival. This act of destruction has had life-changing implications for many, including deportation, refusal of entry, imposition of costs for life-saving medical treatment, and legal ineligibility to work (Gentleman, 2019).

In this photograph, Grover captures the focal point of a front room in what looks like a humble Victorian 'two-up, two-down' terrace, a house built in the nineteenth century alongside others in a tight row, all to the same specifications. This particular home belongs to Soney and Monica, as the photographer tells us. Soney arrived in Britain from Jamaica in 1960; his future wife, Monica, also from Jamaica, came in 1964. They moved to this residence in 1971; they raised four children and have six grandchildren. Soney spent his working life at London Transport and British rail. For West Indian families in general, the front room was and is a place to host gatherings, to entertain, and in the cold winter nights, to huddle around the gas heater—an experience shared by many migrant families who arrived in Britain from across the Commonwealth. By the 1960s and 1970s, to live in and even own a terraced house were demonstrable signs of success, and the front room was the focal point of this pride (Brown, 2018). Here, we see three typical features of a front room, replicated from one house to the next: the extruding wall, concealing a chimney; the mantelpiece; and the gas heater. The sharp, paralleled vertical lines of the wall paired with the horizontal mantel-top and heater are a natural frame for the array of photographs, souvenirs, and items of pride displayed.

Is there something medieval about the image? The reproduction of a stained-glass window, taped to the top of the gas heater, evokes the splendor of medieval worship. In fact, the window is from an Anglican church that, like this home, is located in Clapham, a neighborhood of South London. St. James' Church, Clapham was rebuilt in 1958 after being reduced to rubble in the Blitz. Its



stained-glass window, by Arthur Frederick Erridge (d. 1961), depicts Jesus' appearance to two travelers on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13–35). Erridge studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, which developed directly out of the Arts and Crafts movement of William Morris and John Ruskin. Morris's affection for the Middle Ages and his revival of the manufacture of stained glass are well known. Here, a window that might be counted as part of the diffuse legacy of Morris's medievalism ornaments a family home.

National and religious symbols mingle in this front room: the Union Jack is furled but visible, and a cross draws the eye to the mantel's center. Family portraits of different generations adorn the wall, many in the distinctive frames used by the south London photographer Harry Jacobs, known for his portraits of the Caribbean migrant community (Jacobs, 2018; Grover, 2018). Most of the faces pictured are not white. The display calls to mind a chapel. It effects an interchange between the present and the past, the living and the dead. A still life, Grover's image artfully records the room's own art, its design of intergenerational memory and national, religious, and family identity.

A cross with nimbus in the middle of the mantel offers a geometric center to the picture. Yet the colorful tiger below provides a more visually compelling focus. An emblem of exoticism turned mass-produced ceramic, it roars between two cheerful fawns (one nearly concealed: 'Get Well Soon'). The tiger's orange glow resembles flames in the hearth. It perhaps inevitably evokes William Blake's 'Tyger Tyger, burning bright,' famously illustrated with a cat stalking in left-facing profile, not unlike the pictured figurine. The poem was published in 1794, a time of catapulting growth in industrialization and colonial expansion. Caught in this photograph, the tiger poses a riddle. Part of the menagerie of imperialism, is it recoded by its setting? What does this creature symbolize among the other more straightforward signs that accompany it? It is worth noting that the tiger has a presence in Jamaican folklore, especially in the 'Anansi' stories, which can be traced to the Akan people in what is present-day Ghana and Ivory Coast. These stories came to the Caribbean with people enslaved in the transatlantic slave trade. The most well-known such story is 'Anansi and the Tiger,' in which the trickster spider outwits Bre'r ('brother') Tiger. Two novels by Windrush-Generation writer Samuel Selvon, *A Brighter Sun* (1952) and *Turn Again Tiger* (1958), follow an Indian Trinidadian called Tiger. The tiger, then, is a multivalent symbol of the entwined histories of Africa, the Caribbean, India, and Britain. As to its resonance here, it is perhaps enough to say that among the gathered evocations of Englishness, Christian practice, Jamaican folklore, the Windrush Generation, Clapham, and a family's generations, the magnificent tiger stalks, in its silence suggesting how empire and diaspora are reinterpreted again and again within the relations that subsist there.



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