ABSTRACT

Title of Document: ON THE B-SIDE: A DUB APPROACH TO DEFINING A CARIBBEAN LITERARY IDENTITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY DIASPORA

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Drawing from Jamaica's socio-politically distinct dub musical genre, "On the B: Side" argues that the literary aesthetics of Caribbean migration and history can be analyzed according to a model of dub. As I define it, the dub aesthetic is marked by erasures, repairs, re-invention, and re-creation. It is thematically and formally captured in migration and represented in the experience of dislocation and home(lessness), memory and the layering of time, political silences and cultural amplification, and the distinct social climate associated with the 21st century push toward celebrating diasporic communities and marking progress through globalization. Given these contemporary circumstances, the Caribbean subject at home locally and at home in the diaspora necessarily demonstrates an acute investment in memory recall and a strong motivation toward building cultural posterity. This dissertation, therefore, explicates how the more

recent literature reaches back in new ways that facilitate the survival of a uniquely Caribbean literary identity into the future.

This dissertation analyzes works by Ramabai Espinet, Edwidge Danticat, and Anthony Winkler to highlight the ways in which relocation and dislocation intersect for the Caribbean subject. Additionally, I examine works by Marion Patrick Jones and Diana McCaulay, who represent another category of unbelonging and homelessness in the Caribbean that is read in the middle class's exclusion from national and regional discourse on authenticity. Interrogating the space of Caribbean fiction, the dissertation moves through the deconstruction and reinvention of migration to arrive at the diasporic intersections of erasure, rupture, and repair. This is the bedrock of the dub aesthetic.

United under dub and utilizing both literary critique and social historiography, my choice to analyze these Caribbean texts acknowledges a particular kind of intra-Caribbean identification that occurs particularly in the diaspora and has implications, too, for their study of the Caribbean at home and abroad. While paying respect to Derek Walcott's pronouncement that colonialism is the common ground of the New World, my dub approach moves beyond a joint postcolonial identification to an interrogation of the overlapping histories and social realities present in the contemporary Caribbean diaspora.

ON THE B SIDE

A DUB APPROACH TO DEFINING A CARIBBEAN LITERARY IDENTITY

IN THE CONTEMPORARY DIASPORA

By

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Chapter One

Introduction: This Dub Approach

> "All of this [literature] produces a sense of celebration … that is, a sense that West Indians/ Caribbeans have the ability to 'refashion' themselves, constitute new 'selves' or 'identities' which effectively negotiate the challenges of a generally hostile metropolitan space."
> -- Curdella Forbes*, From Nation to Diaspora*

> "Jamaica […] provided in its music a template for cultural reconfiguration [and] reinterpretations. [And this] cultural 'remix' is central to the Caribbean cultural experience."
> -- Michael Veal, *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Sounds in Jamaican Reggae*

In a film and musical context one might think of the word "dub" as a verb used in the technical sense to describe an altered audio recording. For example, a film's sound engineer might "dub over" or "dub out" one voice with another voice, effectively erasing one voice and re-recording in its place another. In the Jamaican musical context, which is the context that shapes the dub approach delineated in this discussion, "dub" is a musical category all its own. Born from reggae, dub music, dub plates, and dub specials, are the altered re-recordings of familiar songs and salutes. The traditional Jamaican dub is a recording pressed on to the B-side of a vinyl record and serves as an altered, alternate production of the A-side pressed recording. In more literary terms, the B-side dub is derivative, a reconstruction of the deconstructed A-side recording meant to emphasize some elements and mute out others while always maintaining the integrity of the original. This dissertation, "On the B-Side," takes its title from this musical setting. And the dub aesthetic referenced here takes its name from this distinct music because, as ethnomusicologist Michael Veal notes in the preceding epigraph, "Jamaica provided in its

music a template for cultural reconfiguration [and] reinterpretations. [And this] cultural 'remix' is central to the Caribbean experience" (*Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Sounds in Jamaican Reggae* 217).

By the accident of birth dub is Jamaican, but the applicability of a dub aesthetic has no such navel string (umbilical cord)[1] limitations. Its re-configurative and re-interpretive qualities mark dub as uniquely appropriate for part (national) to whole (regional and diasporic) extrapolation, more so than other locally-mined literary aesthetics like reggae, soca, and calypso. Indeed as the direct relative of reggae, dub music – even with (or perhaps because of) its muted lyrics, haunting melodies, and amplified bass lines – shares reggae's capacity to connect with people beyond its production borders. As Kamau Morgan, one of the lead singers for the Jamaican reggae band Dubtonic Kru, expressed to me in a 2011 post-show interview, "Reggae music focuses on the issues of the masses. Not just Jamaicans, or Africans, or the diaspora, but it speaks to the cries of the masses worldwide and that is why […] reggae pulls so many people across the world." As a subgenre of reggae, dub music inherits this quality of inclusion. Thus, so too does the dub aesthetic speak to a broader Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic experience.

"On the B-Side" considers the Caribbean as both a space of arrival and of departure. While much of Caribbean literature still seeks to negotiate the rupture from the prior spaces of Africa and Asia, much of today's corpus continues this retrospection, only now the looking back is often to the Caribbean itself from outposts in the diaspora. The role of migration in Caribbean literature, therefore, remains central to its identity. In this dissertation I argue that the aesthetics of migration can be analyzed according to a

model of dub. As I define it, the dub aesthetic is marked by erasures, repairs, re-invention, and re-creation. The dub aesthetic is thematically and formally captured in migration and represented in the experience of dislocation and home(lessness), the naturalization of memory and the layering of time, political silences and cultural amplification, and the distinct social climate associated with the 21st century push toward celebrating diasporic communities and marking progress through globalization. Thus, while dub music developed out of the distinct socio-political climate of newly independent Jamaica as a music juxtaposing the capital city's street violence with new nation optimism, the dub aesthetic finds application in Caribbean literary texts written within the undefined subjective space between dislocation from home and late twentieth and early twenty-first century globalism.

The writers I focus on in this project – Ramabai Espinet, Edwidge Danticat, Anthony Winkler, and Diana McCaulay – are primarily contemporary writers; however, I do also give critical attention to writer Marion Patrick Jones, whose 1970s writing was, I argue, ahead of its time and presently remains under-discussed by scholars. All of these authors, Jones included, possess an insider and outsider understanding of their cultural and national Caribbean home. Using the space of fiction I analyze how they work through the ways that migration spurs reinvention through dislocation and, conversely, dislocation through reinvention.

The Birth of Dub Music

Developed in the years following Jamaica's national independence in 1962, dub music emerged in the urban capital of Kingston. Its timing was critical, as this new

musical genre's unique style and character captured the freedom and the open-ended possibilities of the political moment. However, the transfer of power from the colonial system to the Jamaican upper class was not seamless and was not without resistance from the masses. In *Wake the Town and Tell the People* (2000) Norman Stolzoff describes the site of the dancehall as the rallying space for the lower classes to vent their frustrations with the new political system. Stolzoff explains the pulse of the dancehall as a convergence of Jamaica's oppositional perspectives. In this one site were gathered people with diverse ideologies, inclusive of "militant black nationalism inspired by Marcus Garvey, the religion of the Rastafari, the rebellious youth culture of those known as rude boys[2], the influence of the American civil rights movement, and the leadership of local dancehall performers and entrepreneurs" (65). It is in this critical moment and in this eclectic socio-political space of the dancehall that dub music is born.

During the 1960s reggae music was already moving away from R&B covers and originals to a reggae with lyrics critiquing life on the ground in Jamaica. As Michel Veal describes, reggae "began to explore a wider range of social and political topics giving voice to a more critical examination of the new nation-state: poverty, class conflict, homelessness, political violence, Rastafari, the concept of 'blackness,' and a variety of other social and cultural issues" (*Dub* 33). By manipulating previously recorded reggae songs, the musical form that came to be known as dub was constructed to highlight the skills of the producer/sound engineer. Stylistically, and politically, the sound mixer/engineer creates the dub record by stripping down some to all of the vocals, enhancing the instrumentals, and employing the engineering techniques of delays, shifts, fader slides, and reverberation to create a new listening experience from the old. It is in

this inventive production process that I identify a dub aesthetic that solves the problem of sterile hybridity in the face of a globalized world. Not merely rejecting or inverting the original song, but rather by embracing creative, purposeful rearrangement and reconstruction of something old (recognizable in dub's haunting use of an original), dub, as a music of social and political resistance, creates a new space to contemplate the proverbial dismantling of the master's house.[3] In *Cut 'n' Mix* British media theorist and sociologist Dick Hebdige describes version as a modification of an original recording, noting that "a musician will play a different solo on a different instrument, […] a singer will place the emphasis on different words or will add new ones, […] an engineer will stretch the sounds into different shapes, add sound effects, take out notes and chords or add new ones" (*Cut 'n' Mix* 12). Whereas with dub, the original melody is still present and recognizable, just broken up; the drum and bass are more dramatically emphasized, the rhythm is slowed, and echo is added for impact (*Cut 'n' Mix* 83). No longer having the singer's vocals or lyrics carrying the song, dub music brings to the fore the "behind-the-scenes" players, thus giving alternative "voices," if you will, a platform to speak. It is from this musical genre that I build a dub aesthetic.

Taking Dub to the Caribbean

To begin this exploration of Caribbean literature that is crafted through a Jamaican musical aesthetic, it is necessary to consider the countries and territories represented under the title Caribbean. What does it mean to read the work of writers hailing from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Jamaica under an umbrella of Caribbean literature? These countries are also variously grouped and sub-grouped under

French Caribbean, Latin American, or West Indian headings. How have we come to define the Caribbean region such that each of these texts can fit neatly into this one canon? The explanation is usually a historical one, linked to geography, patterns of Amerindian/ Native American occupancy, and European settlement. Olwyn M. Blouet (2007) offers what is for "On the B-Side" a very useful definition that takes into consideration the migratory patterns of Caribbeans. Blouet quite literally maps the region[4] by noting that "the islands are at the heart of the region, but surrounding areas share Caribbean coasts and similar historical and cultural characteristics" (*The Contemporary Caribbean*, 9). Blouet also draws on the work of geographer Gary Elbow who suggests that there is a "'core' Caribbean area of the Greater and Lesser Antilles" and a "'fringe zone' [which] includes the Bahamas, Belize (in Central America) and the Guyanas (in South America)." Like scholar-Prime Minister Eric Williams's early definition of the region, Elbow, too, includes coastal Central and South America washed by the Caribbean Sea and notes that these "areas of Colombia, Venezuela, southern Mexico and Central America comprise [the] 'periphery.'" Echoing Kamau Brathwaite (1991), Blouet pushes his definition further by acknowledging the United States' southern tip of Florida as, in some senses, a "regional capital" for the Caribbean (*The Contemporary Caribbean* 9). This choice to include a migrant mecca in his articulations of the Caribbean bolsters, in many ways, the aim of this dub aesthetic which with its emphasis on diasporic Caribbean experience blurs the boundaries between spaces. Moreover, the reality that cities like Miami attract and house such diverse peoples also echoes the Caribbean's creolized nature and the varied ethnicities, language families, and racial categories that fall under the title of Caribbean. However, despite the seeming

inclusiveness of his map of the Caribbean, Blouet's text, in step with the majority of Caribbeanists, focuses on the islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles and leaves the Central American nations for Latin American scholars.

In order then to redraw the Caribbean borders and analyze the four countries at the center of this dissertation within a singular Caribbean context, it is necessary to reach back to the history of colonialism. As Balutansky (1998) points out and Antonio Benítez-Rojo, among others, would argue, the "sugar cane cultivation and the development of plantation economies created patterns of development that were similar in Brazil, the Guyana coast, the Caribbean islands, and the Caribbean coasts of Central America, Mexico, and Louisiana" (2). What we can understand as "the Caribbean" is, therefore, connected under colonialism and the plantation economy. Thus, one might invoke Walcott's pronouncement that "the common experience of the New World […] is colonialism" (1996: 354). What "On the B-Side" does not intend to do, however, is take this colonial imprint on the Caribbean and use it to paint the region with a neat homogenizing brush stroke.

As the Caribbean remains quite divided along the linguistically imperial categorizations of the French, English, Spanish, and Dutch nations, language and its various creolizations in the Caribbean are critical to this collection of literary works and analyses. Given the texts that this dissertation explores, I, like Alison Donnell does in transposing Carolyn Cooper's terms and proposing the term "Anglocreole,"[5] have rejected the label "Anglophone" because identifying a text like Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge* as "Anglophone" Caribbean would be spurious, as ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity have led to the vast dictionary of Hindi-English words and phrases used in

Trinidad. Similarly we have the use of kreyol-English in the mouths of characters in Danticat's text. "Anglophone," therefore, does not hold the breadth of languages present in the region, thus, I intentionally exclude it. By reading and studying Caribbean literatures in English, this dissertation avoids the murky waters of translation but is still able to authentically navigate the literature of the Caribbean region and its diaspora.

The many people of the Caribbean, the many people brought to the Caribbean, and the many people who have left the Caribbean all collectively make up a diasporic region which is too casually referred to in singular form: "the Caribbean." In so doing it makes "Caribbean" a term that simultaneously groups and excludes. The other danger of labeling the region as "the Caribbean" is its evocation of the area's prior appellation, the "New World," which is a technical misnomer hyper-privileging the perspective of the outsider. Evidenced by the varied colonial links and cultural practices, each country of the region is distinct and individual, and the title "Caribbean" or "Anglophone Caribbean" only becomes functional or applicable from the outside. In this exploration of a dub aesthetic in Caribbean literary identity, I consider it important to have an awareness of the contexts and connotations these terms carry.

The importance of diaspora to a dub aesthetic can be gleaned from author Gabriel Sheffer's *Diaspora Politics* (2003), where he explains that "the most meaningful boundaries between an ethno-national diaspora and other social and political entities in a host country are not physical or geographical. […] Rather, most important are the cultural, psychological, and social *virtual* boundaries. Those pertain to the spheres of influence of groups sharing the same identity and cultural traits" (12, my emphasis). For the Caribbean diaspora, the historical virtual boundary that links Haiti, the Dominican

Republic, Jamaica, and Trinidad is, conventionally, that of colonialism and the plantation system (Benítez-Rojo 2001). But for the region's more contemporary literature, a dub aesthetic also allows us to explore the role of layered time through memory, thus broadening the virtual boundary to connect these texts. It offers a full exploration not just of *dis*location but of *re*location. And, finally, this dub aesthetic provides us with the opportunity for an examination not only of identity and uprootment but of rerouting the path to subjectivity.

Situating the Dub Aesthetic within Historical Frameworks

What sets a dub aesthetic apart from hybridity or creolization – two of the most well-known perspectives on the Caribbean experience – is that it develops from within the artistic sphere to offer understanding of Caribbean literature and identity. We should not forget that the term "hybridity," which sociologist and cultural theorist Paul Gilroy uses in *The Black Atlantic* (1993) to describe the transatlantic flow of ideologies, people, and cultures in the New World, is a term born out of scientific anxieties about biological intermingling and sterility. In as early as 1623, the term "Hibride" was used to signify "a Hog ingendred betweene a wilde Boare and a tame Sow" and more than two centuries later it continued to describe "a mongrel or mule; an animal or plant, produced from the mixture of two species" (OED A1a). Transferred across disciplines, creolization, the widely accepted term in Caribbean and postcolonial studies made discursively popular by Edward Kamau Brathwaite (1971) and Edouard Glissant (1990), is anchored in the field of linguistics, not literature or the arts. Additionally, hybridity invites a focus on the cultural collision between the colonizer and the colonized, which limits full analysis of

the region's literary works. Rooted in its regional validity, dub provides a locally-produced analytical lens to help offset the too-often relied upon external model of Shakespeare's Caliban, Ariel, and Prospero (*The Tempest*) used by Retamar (1989) et al to describe the postcolonial condition of the Caribbean. Thus, unlike hybridity, creolization, or theoretical approaches derived from *The Tempest*, this dub aesthetic is built out of a Jamaican musical form – and thus a uniquely Caribbean space. My choice to shift from the national (Jamaican dub music) to the regional and diasporic (Caribbean dub aesthetic) could be deemed controversial precisely because the Caribbean is not the unified space that approaches to study of the region might suggest, but this fluid transition is an acknowledgment of what Kenneth Bilby, amongst others, discusses as a common African heritage presented in the variety of musical genres in the Caribbean (1985: 200). Reggae in Jamaica, calypso in Trinidad, salsa in Cuba, and zouk in Haiti, to honor just a few of the region's sounds, all display a common rhythmic heritage. But, as I mention early on in this introduction, unlike other Caribbean musical forms, dub stands alone as an admittedly evolutionary form whose primary goal is to reinvent. The transfer of African musical influences along colonial routes of import and export created a pan-Caribbean sound and in the present-day dub music continues to regenerate in lands far from Jamaica's shores. As a Caribbean literary aesthetic, dub is simultaneously aware of nation, the diaspora, and current notions of globalization.

As a bridge between different artistic forms, dub music and the contemporary Caribbean texts I explore in my dissertation are both interested in a common structure of expression that is related to diaspora. Thus, using a dub lens to read contemporary Caribbean literature, my dissertation gives a fresh perspective on Caribbean identity. By

moving beyond the strictures of national and cultural borders to focus on the constitutive diasporic practices of erasure, rupture, and repair I extend older models of analysis.

My choice to use a musical form to analyze literature is not uncommon to the literature of the black diaspora. In studies of African American literature links between music and fiction have been made for nearly a century. W. E. B. DuBois, Paul Gilroy, and Toni Morrison have all examined the connections between the spiritual, jazz, and blues and African American writing. Barbados' Kamau Brathwaite also drew connections between jazz and West Indian writing. In descriptions of the African American literary experience, music has often been employed as way of articulating the literary representations of collapsed time and the role of memory. In a similar mode, a dub aesthetic, particularly the use of reverberation, lends itself well to an analysis of the temporal intersections of contemporary Caribbean literature.

As I mentioned at the start, my use of dub carries both literal and literary significance for this analytical process; however, I am not the first scholar to turn specifically to one of reggae's musical offshoots for defining a literary aesthetic. Critical to my work, Evelyn O'Callaghan takes up the process of "versioning," dub's predecessor, in *Woman Version* (1999), but, as the title of her critical work indicates, O'Callaghan uses the musical term "version" to explore the ways in which class and race influence female gender construction in Caribbean literature. Her work suggests that "version" music — a production mode that reconfigures a reggae song into an instrumental — parallels the way West Indian women's writing re-imagines the "master discourse" of the Caribbean male narrative (*Woman Version* 10).

Indebted to O'Callaghan for her theoretical approach to Caribbean women's fiction as "version," I propose a dub aesthetic as a theoretical framework for understanding the breadth of Caribbean literary and cultural identity in the contemporary, diasporic and globalized twenty-first century. O'Callaghan's suggestion that dub music is "altering, supplementing, breaking, echoing, mocking and playing with [the] original" are descriptors that previously have been applied to the process of creating a dub record (*Woman Version* 11). In the chapters that follow, I argue that a Caribbean cultural and literary identity is forged in this same manner of erasures and repairs, reinvention and reverberation. My work, therefore, poses and answers the following questions: How is the idea of a "dub aesthetic" applicable to notions of a postcolonial Caribbean identity? How might dub provide a peculiarly Caribbean valence for the postcolonial? How can contemporary Caribbean literary works of fiction be analyzed through the lens of this critical paradigm? The answers to these questions lie in the content and form of the contemporary literature itself.

Just as one might experience what Michael Veal calls a diasporic "sound collage" in dub music, Caribbean literature similarly pieces together fragments of history in the present. The histories that are being negotiated are what have continued to change over the last quarter century. Whereas twentieth-century West Indian writers questioned ideas of Caribbean nationalism while often housed in European metropoles, and writers of the broader Caribbean considered the broken connections to Africa, Asia, and European colonizers, the contemporary writers of the late nineteen-nineties and the new millennium, occupy multiple spaces, have multiple identities and national allegiances, and recognize globalism as the diasporic "next step." All the while, contemporary writers

maintain a keen awareness of history. Writing in the diaspora is not divorced from, but is part of the historical processes and the historical migrations that are important to the development of Caribbean literature and Caribbean literary aesthetics.

Limited only by the capacity to wonder, Caribbeans with a fraught relationship to an "H"istory are free to imagine their experiences through the fiction. Similarly, dub music is boundless in its re-inventive capacity; it is able to make the old new again and again. Generally emphasizing the drum and bass elements of the original song, dub is the innovative combination of guitars, pianos, and heavy drum beats overlaid with brief moments of a familiar melody or vocal. Jamaican musician Chuck Foster defines the blended musical style as a harmonious yet "distinctive" mixing of instruments (*Roots Rock Reggae: The Oral History of Reggae Music from Ska to Dancehall* 228). Dub music, as Chris Potash notes, can draw from multiple sources, such as "Middle Eastern and industrial grooves, turntable scratching, avant-garde jazz" (*Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub* 150). But this collage-style reading of the music is not my only application of dub. Exploring one of the technical components of the music, this project examines dub's use of reverberation as a parallel to the Caribbean experience of dislocation and the continued literary need to explore the traumas of the past in present-day texts. It is dub's use of reverberation that provides a space to demonstrate the presence of history in the contemporary moment.

Reverberation in dub music is a sonic experience that is similar to echo, but more exactly it is sound reflection. Often using reverberation dub sets known melodies and vocals over unfamiliar beats in order to "tease" and "revive" the memory of the original song (Potash 146). Similarly, the Caribbean fictions I have chosen are plagued by the

haunting echoes of colonialism (i.e., race relations in Trinidad and class divisions in Jamaica) and the politically silenced traumas of the region (i.e., the dictatorship of Trujillo in the Dominican Republic or the Duvalier regime in Haiti). It is this technique and process of sonic reverberation that I apply to the literature as part of a dub aesthetic.

From El Jefe in the Dominican Republic to Haiti's Tonton Macoutes and from the white creole experience under Jamaica's black nationalist agenda of the 1970s to the attempted "dougla poetics" of Trinidad in the latter 20th century, my dissertation uses dub to bridge linguistic and colonial blocs. Danticat hails from a French postcolonial nation where both French and kreyol are spoken; and for Espinet, the Hindi language has endured in the Indo-Trinidadian community. While these authors primarily write in English, they do incorporate the language of the prior space in both the narration and dialogue of their fiction. Their choice to write and publish in English, therefore, seems to indicate their professional, economic, educational, and personal relationships to the U.S. and, for Espinet, to English-speaking Canada. To reference anthropologist Charles Carnegie, this choice to work with varied Caribbean texts "calls to mind a number of shared historical processes (colonialism, the unprecedented displacement of populations, plantation slavery, and others) and traditions of response and criticism that have helped shape a distinctive, though not homogenous, attitude toward the world" (*Postnationalism Prefigured: Caribbean Borderlands* 51). It is the heterogeneous nature of the literature that I find provocative. Thus, while I am in debt to my field's early critics – José Martí, Eduoard Glissant, Franz Fanon, Derek Walcott, and Edward Kamau Brathwaite – it is the work of contemporary critics like Silvio Torres-Saillant (*Caribbean Poetics*), Shalini Puri (*The Caribbean Postcolonial*), J. Michael Dash (*The Other America*), Evelyn

O'Callaghan (*Woman Version*), and Curdella Forbes (*From Nation to Diaspora*), whose cross-national and cross-colonial examinations have helped to shape my transnational literary analysis.

Using dub as an aesthetic umbrella, we can better understand how contemporary fictions depart from older models and, moreover, how scholars can best approach these newer texts given our increasingly more global perspective. But how does a Jamaican term enhance a global perspective? And why might I have the audacity to use Jamaican dub music to explore Caribbean literature? Kwame Dawes describes Lee Scratch Perry's "mad-scientist"-like production expertise in *Natural Mysticsm: Towards a New Reggae Aesthetic* (1999): "in this space, [Perry] is able to conjure music that is playful, insanely earnest, iconoclastic, twisted, and both profoundly Jamaican and universal" (239). How can that be? How can it be both? It is as Junot Diaz explained in a PBS Newshour interview with Jeffrey Brown. When asked whether or not he was aware of the universal appeal when writing *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Diaz, referencing Herman Melville, replied:

> The universal springs from the particular. I mean, I always say it, but you can't get around it. It's like you look at a book like *Moby Dick*, a book that we considered a foundational text in American letters, and that book is so incredibly particular that it's almost astonishing. I mean, it's about whaling. And that's the great American text? Well, because it's the particularity of it, the specificity of it, is in some ways what lends it its power.[6]

This is the premise under which I employ a dub aesthetic to the Caribbean's broad body of work.

Readers may similarly question how the dub aesthetic mode of analysis differs from an examination of post-modernism. To which I respond, rather plainly, the dub aesthetic should not be confused for post-modernism in Caribbean writing. While post-colonial writing from the Caribbean and the world does, more generally, demonstrate post-modern techniques, I agree with the late scholar and critic Hena Maes-Jelinek, who neatly puts notions of sameness between the two fiction fields to rest when she claims the following, which I quote at length:

> Post-Modernism is an essentially Western phenomenon even if it shares with Post-Colonialism a sense of disorientation and loss, a post-Second World War feature in Western societies but experienced with greater intensity in the Caribbean from the beginning of its colonization and throughout its history. Post-Modernism and Post-Colonialism share some formal and stylistic characteristics. However, the major distinction between Post-Modernist and Post-Colonial fiction, especially Caribbean, is that the collapse of former certainties, the dissolution of forms and the new strategies this entailed in the Post-Modern novel originated in scepticism and a loss of values. Caribbean fiction from the 1950s and 1960s onwards, however, has generally been essentialist and evinces a constant search for, and re-definitions of, values: from the experience of alienation, fragmentation and void to an assertion of purposefulness and potentiality. (Maes-Jelinek 95)

The dub aesthetic is a model suitable for analyzing these specifically Caribbean "re-definitions" spurred by "alienation [and] fragmentation" and steeped in "potentiality."

The Dub Aesthetic at Work

At its core, this dissertation questions contemporary Caribbean identity construction and the role of migration in formulating a self, nation, region, and diaspora. The fictions I explore wrestle with issues of belonging to and dislocation from "home" as each text negotiates Caribbean identity access. Chapter two of my dissertation, "Employing the Mixer: Caribbean Migrations and Dub Mut(e)ations," examines Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge* (2003) and considers the boundless, unfixed quality of the dub aesthetic. I situate "Employing the Mixer" in a discussion of migration, transculturation, and selective silences in the Caribbean community, particularly in regards to non-normative sexual practices. I evidence how these generational mut(e)ations and authorial silences are often politically guided and made as much in allegiance to colonial history as they are in the interest of cultural posterity.

Because Espinet's text has, in many ways, inspired the seeds of this dissertation, this chapter gives particular attention to how *The Swinging Bridge* is fully invested in a dub process. In *The Swinging Bridge* Caroni, a county in Trinidad populated predominantly by East Indian migrants and their descendants, and dub, a Jamaican musical form, are fused by Espinet, who herself writes from Canada. This negotiation of a Caribbean identity based on re-invention and dis/location aptly evidences my choice to term this literary approach a dub aesthetic. Just as dub music is unfixed, the dub fictions I analyze similarly depict Caribbean identity as an always evolving status with the capacity for infinite possibilities of reinvention. This restlessness of dub and its tendency towards recreation and reinvention of works I identify in the literature as a symptom of the Caribbean experience of dislocation. Returning to the metaphor of the sound collage

that I discussed earlier, be it dub fiction or dub music, the collage imagery represents a space both for connection and alienation where the separate elements fit neatly together yet maintain their own borders. For example, in the final section of this Trinidadian text, Espinet's protagonist offers a useful understanding of dub music that demonstrates dub as an aesthetic that is adaptable to Caribbean spaces beyond the imagined borders of its Jamaican birthplace. Having returned from Trinidad to Montreal, Canada, Mona Singh reflects:

> Like any other migrant […] I bring my own beat to the land around me. The beat I sensed early, but where it started exactly and when I cannot now say. It must have been one day when I was very young, living in that small island at the bottom of the Caribbean Sea, that I first heard that beat, never to lose it. It was made of itself, a sound not yet in its present form because even as I spoke the beat was just coming into existence. Any new beat is like that: parts of it at war with itself until the separate parts recognize the point of fusion and merge seamlessly. […] A dub rhythm, the Caroni Dub" (305).

Quoted from the final section of the novel, which bears the title "Caroni Dub," this excerpt echoes what Indo-Caribbean critic Brinda Mehta (2006) recognizes as a celebration of Trinidad's African history, Indian history, and douglarization. Espinet, therefore, employs a dub aesthetic to negotiate the protagonist's understanding of her diasporic reality as a Caribbean-Canadian of Trinidadian *and* Indian origins.

In the third chapter, "Recollect, Relive, Reverb: Dubbing the Dialectic between History and the Sea," I analyze Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* (1996) as a critical exploration of dub's aesthetic form. Through repetition and the interweaving of

characters from story to story, Danticat's short story cycle borrows from the production style of dub music. Danticat's text teases the memory of the reader by recycling both characters and protagonists' experiences. Danticat's text similarly teases the memory of reggae aficionados and of Walcott and Brathwaite scholars in her use of "tidalectic" sea imagery. Because of the open fluidity of Danticat's writing, in this chapter I am able to bring reggae icon Burning Spear into conversation with Édouard Glissant to further demonstrate the reverberation quality of the dub aesthetic in Caribbean literature. And through her form (the use of the epistolary mode and the use of the short story cycle) readers experience the same effect of orienting and disorienting that is classic dub aesthetic style. In her own unique way *Krik? Krak!* opens the doors to explore how for the Caribbean, a region that is a metaphoric monument to slavery and its horrors, the cultural memory of colonial and postcolonial trauma is always ever being recollected, relived, reverberated, or, put simply, dubbed.

In the fourth chapter, "Babylon System Dub: Privilege and its Consequences," I begin with Marion Patrick Jones' *Pan Beat* (1973), a known but under-appreciated novel written by and about pre-Independence Trinidad's middle class and their inability to connect to the other classes. I identify Jones' novel as a dub, of sorts, of the middle class and middlebrow literature that came before it. I consider the various characters of *Pan Beat* as middle class dubs of C. L. R. James' protagonist Haynes of *Minty Alley.* Moving to white Jamaican author Anthony Winkler, in *Going Home to Teach* (2006) Winkler chronicles his 1975 return to Jamaica at the height of black nationalism. The nineteen-seventies, I should also note, saw the continued success of dub music in Jamaica, making artists like King Tubby and Lee "Scratch" Perry increasingly popular to the lower class

masses who were packing the dancehalls. While Winkler reflects upon his childhood and young adult years growing up as a part of the privileged minority, *Going Home to Teach* also sets up the contrast between pre- and post-independence hierarchies of race. To further this discussion of privilege I turn to Diana McCaulay's debut novel, *Dog-Heart*. I explore the Caribbean experience of social dislocation at home for the under-discussed privileged, brown minority. This chapter, therefore, provides a space for discussing race, class, and belonging post- Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). And, ultimately, this chapter exposes the stalled progress of race and class discourse in the Caribbean, as evidenced by the unshakable endurance of the colonial legacy that, unfortunately, continues to find profit in each of its dubs.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, "Advancing the Dub Aesthetic," I comment on the interdisciplinary nature of a dub aesthetic approach. I also offer for consideration the ways in which contemporary Caribbean fictions create dub narrators. I suggest that writers like Nalo Hopkinson, Junot Diaz, Pauline Melville, and Robert Antoni are writing the multivocal future of the Caribbean canon and giving it a dub aesthetic makeover.

By laying out the origins, inspirations, and definitions of the dub aesthetic, this introduction has demonstrated – to put it in the language of the dub music dancehall – just how much the theoretical arenas of Caribbean hybridity discourse and Caribbean identity discourse *calk and ram*. That said, Caribbean literary *massive* (community), let me *beg you likkle space* to show off this dub aesthetic. I offer these Jamaicanisms as a means of culturally and linguistically reinforcing the inseparables I hope to have made clear in the previous pages. The music and the literature, the performative and the theoretical, the Jamaican part and the Caribbean/diasporic whole are all inherently

connected and inseperable. *Calk and ram* translates from the Jamaican dancehall and the Jamaican nation language as a way of describing a venue that is full to capacity yet still welcoming eager revelers. The phrase evokes the imagery of exuberant, impatient dancehall patrons packed body-to-body, pulsing and gyrating, flashing cigarette lighters, raising beer bottles and plastic cups as if under a hypnosis-like spell cast by the vinyl/ cd/ mp3 of the sound system selector or on-stage deejay.

In the dancehall setting the past, present, and future collide. The patron is guaranteed to hear classic reggae and dancehall tunes, alongside the latest records and riddim tracks. The dancehall party builds in intensity; it climaxes with the most up-to-date hits spinning when the venue approaches maximum capacity. In the space of the dancehall, dubs and new songs are woven into the set where appropriate and new dances are often debuted with the crowd's response powerful enough to grant either approval or rejection of the new material. For us, however, as Caribbean literary scholars, we are a bit different. We seem to prefer the extended sets, in the figurative sense, of the hybridity discourse classics – the Walcotts, the Brathwaites, the Halls, and the Glissants – while giving the newer voices of the Shalini Puris and the Curdella Forbeses only limited airplay, if you will. As it is with the dub in the dancehall setting, in the literary venue the dub aesthetic is here to tease the memory, revive the old, and create something new for us to appreciate. The dub aesthetic serves as a new lens which we can use to closely examine the evolving contemporary literary world around us.

There is a new beat, perhaps even a *re*newed beat that booms and echoes calling us, the academic revelers, both backward to honor our past and forward to imagine our future. "*Beg you likkle space*" it whispers confidently, growing louder as it approaches.

This seemingly deferential request – *beg you likkle space* – does not translate as a plea, per se, as much as it does a command. If not immediately granted, *beg you likkle space* is accompanied by forceful fingers, sharp elbows, and unidentifiable jabs moving all obstacles out of the way to claim the needed space. This dissertation inserts itself into the growing body of diasporic literary analysis, creating a unique space for the contemporary Caribbean literature very much marked by migration. Through musical deconstruction[7] and reinvention and the diasporic intersections of erasure, rupture, and repair, this dub aesthetic is established. Examining the literature for its signification of this aesthetic, my work utilizes both literary critique and social historiography. United under dub, my choice to analyze Caribbean texts that are as Dominican as they are Trinidadian, and as Jamaican as they are Haitian, acknowledges a particular kind of intra-Caribbean identification that occurs particularly in the diaspora and has implications, too, for their study of the Caribbean at home and abroad. While paying respect to Derek Walcott's pronouncement that colonialism is the common ground of the New World, this dub approach moves beyond a joint postcolonial identification to an interrogation of the overlapping histories and social realities present in the contemporary Caribbean diaspora. So once again, "*Beg you likkle space*," I ask, to introduce this dub aesthetic, a new perspective on Caribbean literature, its forms, and its possibilities.

Chapter Two

Employing the Mixer: Caribbean Migrations and Dub Mut(e)ations

> "One of the most immediately recognizable sonic features of the dub mix is the way song lyrics are omitted and/or fragmented, on one hand, and the way successive 'generations' of lyrics are juxtaposed against each other, on the other."
> -- Michael Veal, *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae*

> "We gave in and had to include Gainder in our family history, my great-grandmother who bore Grandma Lil, who in turn produced five children, not counting the stillborn Daisy. Grandma Lil, who bore Muddie, who bore me and Babsie and Kello and Johnnie… I made up my mind that when I went to Trinidad I would search for her songs until I found them."
> -- Ramabai Espinet, *The Swinging Bridge*

The production of Caribbean art is only limited by the artist's choices and the artist makes her choices for any number of cultural, social, political, and economic reasons. In her 2003 novel, *The Swinging Bridge*, writer Ramabai Espinet chooses to represent, through narrator and protagonist Mona Singh, the reclamation of Indo-Caribbean women's silenced histories that were lost to migration and the collateral effects of migration. So too, however, does Espinet choose *not* to *un*mute the silenced homosexuality of the protagonist's brother and the novel's catalyst, Kello Singh. Under the dub aesthetic, the power of the mixer and the politics of the fader provide a particularly useful framework for making sense of a feminist historian like Mona, a selectively-closeted homosexual like Kello, and the general mut(e)ations that accompany migration from one nation and culture to another.

In this chapter I propose and apply the dub aesthetic term "mut(e)ation" to describe the intentional silencing of one story over another. I liken Caribbean literature's socio-political silences surrounding sexuality and the re/production of history to the dub

sound engineer's use of the mute button or the fader slide. I push this further by arguing that *The Swinging Bridge*'s female protagonist inhabits the role of dub sound engineer, thus, metaphorically placing Mona in dub music's exclusively masculine position. In the case of the literature as well as the music, the employment of the mute switch is intentional and a bold demonstration of agency over the record(ing). What is actively silenced is as important as what is outwardly spoken.

Espinet's lyrical style successfully captures the migration and transition tradition at work throughout the Caribbean. In fact, suspended between fiction and poetry, the Caribbean lyrical novel epitomizes the dub aesthetic. Unlike the traditional novel, which focuses on characters and events, the lyrical novel places greater emphasis on the writer's artistry. The Caribbean lyrical novel is recognizable in its deeply poetic tone, which acts as a constant reminder of the author's power over the word.[8] Much like the sound engineer who applies his artistic signature to the dub mix, the lyrical novelist teases readers by poetically crafting a literary reality. Thus, it is in the Indian- Trinidadian-Caribbean- Canadian text of *The Swinging Bridge* that I locate a navigable landscape for evidencing mut(e)ation (the muted and mutated aspect) in the dub aesthetic in contemporary Caribbean literature. My analysis begins with reading the swinging bridge as a literary trope and reading *The Swinging Bridge* as a dub record with Mona as proxy sound engineer. In the sections that follow I perform critical character studies as a way of showcasing the functionality of the dub aesthetic. I begin with an investigation of cultural dubbing sparked by migration (Hinduism and Christianity) and seen through the character Gainder. I then move into an exploration of dub location and belonging (India,

Africa, Trinidad, Canada) as seen through the character Da-Da. And, finally, I examine dub power (gender, sexuality) through the character Kello.

Dub as a Bridge

While dub functions as a swinging bridge between music and literature and between the past and the future, the bridge itself serves as the eminent trope of *The Swinging Bridge* and its manifestations within the text help to reinforce the dub aesthetic in the contemporary Caribbean diaspora. The musical bridge, in particular, gains additional relevance when analyzing the text through a dub lens. If we consider infrastructure, a bridge is a structure allowing passage over land, water, or other such impediment. In music a bridge marks a break in song lyrics and describes an interlude between parts of the song. In *The Craft of Lyric Writing* internationally respected author and songwriter Shelia Davis explains the function of the bridge as a way of building tension in a song through the use of lyrical, meter, and melody contrast (Davis 57). In this bridge space the musician or the vocalist riffs on the theme of the song. The purpose of a bridge is not to offer the listener something entirely new; rather, its aim is to enhance the listener's experience by providing a complimentary sound that is derivative of the prior. Seemingly improvisational, the bridge takes content from the lyrics or elements from the music and creates a type of brief re-mix of the overall experience. Shorter in length than a verse, but longer than the chorus, when the bridge is complete the song returns to its original composition and, as Davis suggests, it makes "the return of the final chorus more satisfying" (57). In a sense, dub music "adds dimension" and "new insight" and expands the possibilities that the bridge in popular music opens up (57). Dub, with

its root in reggae music, takes us beyond a brief riff between choruses to a full length and independently crafted re-mix. And as a Caribbean literary aesthetic, dub interrogates the deconstructive and reconstructive space that generates the re-mix.

The bridge trope surfaces in predictable ways throughout the novel but it also appears in ways seemingly meant to unsettle one's expectations of a bridge's function—a stylistic element that is similarly mirrored in dub music. While a bridge generally invites passage over an obstacle, the narrator tells of a swinging bridge that is ironically used to mark a restrictive boundary. Mona, reflecting on her childhood adventures with a close female cousin, recalls her Aunt Alice warning that the two girls "roam freely but remember not to go further than the swingbridge" (Espinet 85). At the foot of this bridge a local boy challenges Mona to cross the bridge if she is as brave as she says she is or, as Kenny phrases it, "if she name man"(86). Terrified but not willing to retreat, Mona accepts Kenny's dare. As she crosses the bridge one way and does an about face to make the return trip, Kenny grabs hold of the ropes and aggressively rocks the bridge. Frightened more than pride allows her to admit, Mona successfully makes it across. Emboldened by her courage and fueled with the intention of reciprocating Kenny's act of cruelty, Mona challenges Kenny to also cross the bridge. To her dismay, however, the plan to rattle Kenny's passage is thwarted by the appearance of a nearby watchman and Kenny is able to cross the bridge both ways unshaken. By the end of the scene Mona has endured a frightening journey across the water while Kenny, her male rival, has crossed the river with ease.

In this moment of childhood play Espinet underscores the imposed limitations of being female in a culture steeped in gender disparities, as implied in Aunt Alice's

warning that the girls "not […] go further than the swingbridge" Moreover, when Kenny challenges Mona's courage using the local but gendered phrasing, "if she name man," we see the start of Mona's subversive tendencies. Later in the Kello section of this chapter I elaborate on the importance of Mona's masculine performances; but for now, let me say that since Mona does cross the bridge, she must "name man," which is to say that she is as daring as any man. Most critics of *The Swinging Bridge* regard Mona as a character who resists the boundary restrictions placed on Indian women's bodies throughout the novel (Mehta 2006, Solbiac 2013). From her rejection of domesticity with boyfriend Roddy to her teenage relationship with Afro-Trinidadian boyfriend Bree, Mona's rebellious nature marks her rejection of a cultural legacy of Indian female subjugation. As Rodolphe Solbiac explains, through Mona "the novel addresses the female Indo-Trinidadian contemporary dilemma of choosing between a patriarchal Indian heritage or the rejection of this heritage in exchange for a westernized view of female emancipation" ("Revising Female Indian Memory" 232). Under the dub aesthetic, Mona's character is a representative of cultural mut(e)ations in the migrant Indian-Trinidadian-Canadian. Like dub music's sound engineer, Mona exercises her authority over the record(ing). Unlike dub music's sound engineer, however, Mona is female. Thus, what *she* selects for delays, reverb, and mut(e)ation, determines the B-side recording that rearranges the popular A-side record.

Importantly, this scene also demonstrates that time has not lessened Indian or Indo-Caribbean gender inequalities as the passage parallels Mona's crossing with her great-grandmother's crossing of the *kala pani*[9] or dark waters between India and Trinidad. As a novel creating bridges across time (past and present) and space (India,

Trinidad, and Canada), *The Swinging Bridge* is invested in the gaping gender divide in the region's culture and literature. To her credit, Espinet does more than re-write the masculine Caribbean novels of the mid-twentieth-century and before.[10] Telling the untold female story from the contemporary vantage point looking back, Espinet captures the long tradition of erasures and repairs that continue to muddy present understandings of Caribbean identity. Through her fiction Espinet succeeds in filling cultural, historical, and political holes present in the Caribbean literary catalog. Just as critics David Dabydeen and Kenneth Ramchand, who are casting a long-overdue spotlight on the lives of marginalized New World inhabitants by actively locating and republishing the textual disappeared, Espinet too is doing the essential work of historical recovery.

In a sense, aspects of Espinet's *Swinging Bridge* complement writing from the 19th century. In particular, Gainder's arrival in Trinidad echoes some of the experiences presented in the Indo-Guyanese love story of *Lutchmee and Dilloo*. First published in 1877, Edward Jenkins, an Englishman born in India, sympathetically writes in the role of reformer when he fictionalizes indentureship and identity in British Guiana. While Jenkins is worthy of some praise for foregrounding the "coolie" experience at a critical imperial moment, his work is limited given the condescending tone he has toward Indians.[11] Alternately, with her personal understanding of the Indo-Caribbean subject, Espinet, despite writing more than a century after the end of indentureship, writes Gainder's story of migration and transculturation with the intimate sympathy of someone who lived through the experience. It is not only Espinet's cultural connection that allows her to write with such careful insight, but by virtue of its form, the novel allows Espinet to fuse history with memory and imagination.

As a figure that offers a bridge to the past, analysis of Gainder requires some historical grounding. Emphasizing Espinet's use of history in the construction of her fictional world, Gainder is depicted as departing India in 1879, a date which temporally places her at the center of Caribbean indentureship. From 1838 to 1917 hundreds of thousands of Indians journeyed to the West Indies, but less than one quarter of these laborers returned to India upon completion of their servitude. Today this results in nearly half of Trinidad's population being Indian. And as Bonham Richardson has explained in *The Modern Caribbean*, these early migrants brought with them as much linguistic, religious, and caste diversity as did the enslaved West Africans of the prior centuries (1989: 208). And just as African traditions forged with European and indigenous practices to form a creolized culture in the New World, so it was the same for Indian new-comers. In her book *Creating Their Own Space* musician and anthropologist Tina Ramnarine explores Chutney music, an Indo-Caribbean musical form born in Trinidad, and locates its roots in Hindu traditions. In doing so, Ramnarine also views larger themes of Indian cultural legacies and sees the maintenance of these Indian traditions in the West Indian space as having helped to establish an Indian-Caribbean both/and form of identity, a theme which is evidenced and interrogated in Espinet's novel (2001: 8).

Because of the unique circumstances of indentureship, the Indian experience in the Caribbean is fertile ground for unpacking the dub aesthetic. In the face of Trinidad's colonial Christianity, the majority of Indians continued to practice their Hindu and Muslim faiths. Despite white missionaries' attempts to assimilate Indians and help "Indian children to adjust to their new societies and adopt some Western ways as well as the English language," many Indians were able to maintain the cultural norms of the

mother country (Brereton 1989: 104, 108). This capacity to preserve the past allowed Indians in the Caribbean to maintain desired aspects of an Indian identity (Ramnarine 9). Without the more comprehensive ownership trope of slavery, Indian assimilation resistance was more possible than it was for African arrivants. In a sense, therefore, early Indian migrants in Trinidad and Guyana, were not so much establishing new roots in the Caribbean as they were replanting the old. New or old, this uprooting was still a tumultuous experience of fragment and fracture —erasure and repair— for the marginalized Indians (and particularly for the women) who made the journey.

Mona Singh's matrilineal history can be traced back to India through Gainder, who was transported across the dark waters in the late 19th century. Only a girl when she boarded the Artist, a ship sailing from Calcutta bound for Trinidad, Mona's great-grandmother journeyed to the Caribbean alongside many hundreds of widowed women. Without a voice these girls and women were powerless to shape their circumstances. As was often the case, these desperate travelers did not always "realiz[e] the journey which lay ahead of them nor understand […] the contracts which they signed" but viewed "indentureship as a way of escaping harsh economic conditions and hunger, and anticipated an easier life in new lands" (Ramnarine 7). The novel crisscrosses Gainder's story with the lives of Grandma Lil, born in Trinidad; Muddie, an Indo-Trinidadian who emigrates to Canada; and, finally, the youngest of the women Mona, a late 20th contemporary diasporan who makes both a physical return from Canada to Trinidad and a metaphoric return to India through Gainder's songs. Who these women are and how these women identify is as much a question of from whom do they come as from where. With each generation adding a new layer of national affiliation and religious orientation,

the characters also reveal a century of stagnated gender subordination. *The Swinging Bridge* explores the migrant in-between space where cultural traditions fade away and popular culture fades in. But in the face of these transcultural changes the choking grip of patriarchy remains as prominent in these women's lives as are the drum and bass is in the dub mix.

In the epigraph positioned at the start of the chapter, ethnomusicologist Michael Veal uses the term "generations" to describe the omissions and fragmentation of lyrics in the creation of the dub mix. In his own words, Veal explains fragmentation in the dub mix process:

> The fragmentation of recorded material is achieved by manipulation of the *mute* switch, one of the simplest devices on the mixing console. The mute switch allows an engineer to control the audible level of an instrument or group of instruments contained on one or more tracks, placing a particular track in or out of the audible mix at the press of the button. A more gradual effect is achieved by use of the *fader* controls, sliding levers that allow the volume of an instrument to be gradually raised or lowered. These controls are central to what can be called a mixing strategy of *fragmentation*, the abrupt introduction and removal of formerly continuous musical material. (Veal 64)

As Veal makes clear, generational fragmentation takes the original lyrics, notes, and chords of a song and re-arranges them in different, unexpected, but harmonious ways; a process which mimics the similarities and differences present between familial generations. To borrow Veal's language, just as subsequent generations inherit traits from the prior, so too does the dub mix.

These “generations” are the reinventions that characterize dub music and function as one of the elements of this dub aesthetic.

Lyrically it is fairly easy to recognize fragmentation in dub music. Take for example Jamaican reggae singer Prince Allah’s 1977 record “Children of God” which was dubbed into “Israelite Children Dub” by godfather of dub and popular sound engineer and producer King Tubby. The original song presents the following lyrics:

(Chorus)

Who are they dressed in white,

must be the children of the Israelite.

Who are they dressed in black,

you know there’ll be no turning baaaack.

Oh no, no turning back.

[Repeat.]

(Verse 1)

Oh I will stand to see the sun shine, yeah.

On that bright redemption morning, yeah.

Jah will be my shield and hiding place

to shelter from that stooorm.

To shelter from that stooorm.

[Guitar riff]

Oh I will stand to see the sun shine, yeah.

On that bright redemption morning.

Jah will be my shield and hiding place

to shelter from that stooorm.

To shelter from that stooorm.

(Instruments. No lyrics.)

Yeah.

Whoa… from that storm.

I've got to get shelter from that storm.

I've got to get some shelter form that storm.

Whoooa… from that storm.

In the face of "Children of God," King Tubby's "Israelite Children Dub" is, ostensibly, a fragmented version of Prince Allah's recording. Almost a lyrical reduction, the few words that remain are presented below. Note, where the dub has muted lyrics from the original, I attempt to verbalize the instrumental performance within brackets.

Who are they dressed in white,

must be the children of the Israelite

Who are they dressed in black,

you know there'll be no turning baaaaack." (Here reverberation is added, which extends the length of time that the last word, "back," is heard.)

(The steady drum and bass beat remains.)

(The bass then enters alone and its volume is slowly increased to emphasize its tone. The bass takes over as the metaphoric lead singer. Reverberation is added, which increases the sonic range of the bass. The guitar riff from the original

"Children of God" returns, all filling the space where lyrics are heard in the original recording.)

To shelter from that stooooorm. (The lyrics enter with a crescendo getting louder as the phrase is carried out. Reverberation is added to the last word.)

(The guitar riff from the original "Children of God" returns. Taking the position of "lead singer," the bass re-enters with reverberation.)

To shelter from that stooooorm. (The lyrics are enhanced by reverberation.)

(The bass re-enters as the lead singer.)

(The guitar riff from the original "Children of God" returns and the song fades to a close.)

Repairing lyrical erasures with long instrumental riffs, the dub re-invents the original recording. The drums are singled out, the bass guitar is overlaid and the instruments are enhanced by reverberation and given solos. No longer in the background, the instruments are launched to the fore. In this lyrical example the dub aesthetic is clarified. Each erasure is repaired, not creolized. And from the shattered fragments come reinvention with a new message, not hybridity. When Michael Veal describes the sonic experience of the dub in his chapter of Carolyn Cooper's *Global Reggae* anthology, he does not discuss a hybrid of the previous with the new; he discusses, rather, a new way of

approaching and experiencing the previous such that, for example, "the sound processing can make the political songs seem heavier and harder, the cultural songs deeper and more rootsy, and the spiritual songs more sublime" ("Dub: Electronic Music and Sound Experimentation" 2012: 287). It is in this re-inventive production process that I situate the dub aesthetic. Not rejecting or inverting the original, but by embracing creative, purposeful re-creation of something old (recognizable in dub music's haunting use of an original), dub, as a music and an aesthetic interested in social and political resistance, creates a new space to interrogate Caribbeanness.

Dub from Generation to Generation

Given more than a century of West Indian writing by a predominantly Afro-New World pool of authors, Espinet's text, justifiably, hyper-privileges the female Indo-Caribbean voice. Just another way of highlighting the feminist spirit of the text, as proxy, Mona assumes power of attorney to perform the masculine task of land possession. It is in the process of reclaiming the land that Mona unravels her family's history, secrets, and silences, and unearths the Ramayana songs that tell her great-grandmother's life story.

At the heart of *The Swinging Bridge* is Gainder's story. Why this young widow left India and how her subsequent generations come to be are what fuel Mona's investigation. No stranger to research, Mona's professional life is spent as a documentarian, her current project focusing on the lives of Haitian women living in Montreal, Canada. In this line of work, Mona works alongside another immigrant from St. Lucia and the two gather the untold stories of Quebec's Haitian female population and reproduce their stories as documentary film. Laudably, the documentaries accomplish

two goals. They offer a platform for the Haitian women to speak and they also break down barriers between Caribbean populations by emphasizing the similarities between the migrants. The narrator, Mona, identifies their common ground, noting that "the different strands of our fragmented Caribbean roots [were] entwining us together" (10). Equipped with tools of the research trade, Mona is seemingly prepared for her investigation into Gainder's life; however, the limited record of Gainder's existence complicates her mission. This search for Gainder's story allows Mona to piece together the fragments of her family's existence. Thus, with a title that bespeaks the importance of transition and connections, *The Swinging Bridge* weaves together the story of four generations of women and the multiple migrations that link them.

The retrieval of Gainder's story proves to be a musical journey, a quest to re-collect her silenced songs. Within the space of *The Swinging Bridge,* the Ramayana songs, like dub music of 1960s and 1970s Jamaica, take on political power. "Singing Ramayana," as it is locally phrased, is the collective gathering of Indo-Caribbean women's experiences put into song. Improvisational by nature these songs gave voice to the loneliness, suffering, and even the humor associated with life in their new world. In language that also describes the power of reggae music in Jamaica, Mehta marks Ramayana in Trinidad as a "*kala pani* anthem of resistance, survival, and redemption" (2006: 33). For the *rands*[12] who perform this ancestral singing, the Ramayana song becomes a conduit to the past. Gainder's Ramayana songs bridge the distance between Trinidad and India in what Brinda Mehta refers to as "chutneyfication." Chutneyfication, Mehta explains, collapses the distance between the Indian past and the present Caribbean home. By singing Ramayana in Trinidad Gainder reconfigures lyrics from the Indian

past "according to their postcolonial applicability"—this is chutneyfication (Mehta 34). Falling in love with and marrying Joshua, an Indian man who is a Christian convert, Gainder believes that with him she will be free to express herself through song. Unable to escape the far reach of patriarchal rule, a month after their wedding she learns that her husband's faith is no less restrictive than the Hindu constraints she thought she had escaped (Espinet 249). Forbidden to sing again, Gainder turns inward, stops singing, and her story is cut off for generations. It is not until Mona returns to Trinidad and gathers the fragments of Gainder's record that Gainder is resurrected, in a sense, through Mona's dubs.

To continue the metaphor, Mona as sound engineer reconstructs the vocals of Gainder's record into a dub. Having recovered the literal written fragments from Grandma Lil's weathered shop books, Mona "was able to piece together the story" of her great-grandmother and, as she states, "everything about us, where we came from, our connection to despised women like Gainder Beharry, like Baboonie, the journey on those ships of indenture in the nineteenth century" (273, 274). As the production engineer of the new *dub* record, Mona now has the authority to amplify the parts of the story that she deems critical to posterity, which allows her to record a B-side to the record that Gainder's husband, Joshua, tried to keep muted. By recording her family's female history in the secret pages of a domestic shop book, Lil ensured that her matrilineal record would not be discovered and erased by a man: "Jamesie would not have come near her household records. And [Mona] wondered how much of [her] grandmother's life had been conducted in secrecy while she struggled to hold the pieces that she had lost, her mother Gainder and the songs she sang" (275). Mona's recorded dub becomes a collage

that she creates through her own dub generational mut(e)ations of being Indian-Trinidadian-Canadian-Hindu-Christian.

Dub and a "Dougla-nation"

Moving to an examination of the character Da-Da, let me foreground the socio-political landscape that created dub and note some of the key parallels between Jamaica and Trinidad. Dub music developed in the years following Jamaica's national independence in 1962, the same year of Trinidad's independence. Dub's unique style and character captured the freedom and the open-ended possibilities of the political moment; but there was also a darker side to pending independence. The transfer of power from the colonial system to the Jamaican upper class was not seamless and was not without resistance from the masses. Trinidad faced a similar resistance. As Mona recalls it, the atmosphere was full of "uncertainty, apprehension, and a fear of change" (70). With Trinidad's more diverse population another layer of anxiety was felt, pitting blacks against Indians. The character Da-Da, Mona's father, elucidates this tense climate of inequality that existed within Trinidad at this monumental moment of post-coloniality.

Born in Trinidad after indentureship has ended, Da-Da "saw himself as an Indian man and a Trinidadian, neither canceling out the other, a natural inheritor of the Creole culture he loved" (71). With the same re-creation and reinvention that define a dub aesthetic Da-Da sees himself as Trinidadian by birth, Indian by ancestry, and culturally both— "neither cancelling out the other." With this understanding of himself Da-Da is positioned by the narrator as participating in "Creole" culture that is in tandem with the idealistic nation building politics of 1960s Trinidad. The "Creole" discourse that the

newly independent Trinidad purports and Da-Da leans toward, I argue, is a dub aesthetic for the nation he recognizes as his own.

Under a dub aesthetic, as opposed to the colonially induced violence of creolization rhetoric (Brathwaite), the nation is united by the way its individual parts come together to make the whole. This collage image is Da-Da's vision for Trinidad. Alternately, De Doctah, who is Espinet's characterization of Trinidad's first Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, has a different approach to building the nation.[13] And while he boasts popular postcolonial rallying phrases such as, "Massa day done" and "all ah we is one," his words, like his politics, erase Indian identity in Trinidad (70). Embittered by the shift from corruption under colonial rule to more corruption under post-Independence rule Da-Da becomes increasingly frustrated with this unfair political system. As narrator, Mona voices her father's concerns: "De Doctah was in power, but to my father and many others the prime minister's partisan display of power for the benefit of the black population had destroyed any vision of oneness and equality" (72). For Da-Da, rather than celebrating diversity, De Doctah's "all ah we is one" politics muddles away unique ancestral diversity and attempts to bury "other" races under the Afro-Trinidadian majority. Effectively, De Doctah's position mirrored the violent power dynamics of creolization. Putting the black population ahead of any other race demonstrates, in Da-Da's opinion, the shortcomings of postcolonial creolization discourse. What Da-Da idealistically wants, is hybridty. But, as cultural theorist Shalini Puri explains, true Caribbean hybridity is not possible without cultural, social, political, and racial equality.[14] Cautiously, the dub approach to racial and cultural relations in the Caribbean

locally and in the diaspora aims to avoid the polarizing creolization and steers clear of the lofty idealism of hybridity discourse.

As a fictional text rooted in reality, De Doctah's words echo Williams' speeches from the 1960s. Using the familiar metaphor of mother and child to represent the nation and its citizens, Williams warns, "A nation […] can have only one Mother. The only Mother we recognise is Mother Trinidad and Tobago, and Mother cannot discriminate between her children. All must be equal in her eyes. And no possible interference can be tolerated by any country outside […] no matter what it has contributed and when to the population that is today the people of Trinidad and Tobago" (1942: 279). Seeming to respond to Williams' suggestion that citizens shed prior allegiances to prior homes, Da-Da mounts an epistolary soapbox from which he speaks not only for himself but for Trinidad's marginalized Indian population. Da-Da writes letters to the editors of Trinidad's national newspapers. In one such letter Da-Da directly engages De Doctah on the very same subject matter here articulated by Williams'. Fearful of forced douglarization and unwilling to relinquish his right to claim a homeland other than Trinidad Da-Da proclaims: "Mother India, with all of its many faults, is still our homeland. We reject coercive efforts to force us to become a mixed race of people. If this happens naturally, over time, all well and good. But national rhetoric that seeks to obliterate Indians—our ways, our appearance, our religion—is an act of racialism, and we must reject such ideas at all costs" (74). Da-Da's letter expresses his fears of hybridity. He does not want to become "mixed race" and he does not want Indians to lose their unique culture, their "ways", "appearance," or "religion." He imagines the nation as he sees himself: Trinidadian by birth, Indian by ancestry, and culturally both—

"neither cancelling out the other." Indian/African hybridity—or douglarization—would, for Da-Da, mean the racial and cultural dissolution of Indians. Using the mixer controls to turn up or subdue as necessary, the dub aesthetic recognizes the individual parts that comprise the whole and, therefore, rhetorically rescues the Caribbean nation and the Caribbean subject from multi-racial, multi-cultural dissolution.

Through the character of Da-Da Espinet exposes the class and racial tensions of Trinidad. In a poignant passage spoken to his daughter, Mona, Da-Da explains:

> I don't expect it to be easy, Mona. But [Trinidad] will change—it has to change. […] The real problem is how we fit into life here. You know people talk about Trinidadian culture and another culture called Indian culture? So Trinidadian culture don't have place for Indians too? And you know, is not only the prejudice against Indians by Creole people and white people and red people and Chinee people I talking about. Is the way Indians hate their own background. People like our family, Presbyterian people and middle class people, they hate the history that marks them as coolies. And why? Coolie people wasn't people too? It's so ridiculous. (285)

Much of the tension expressed in Da-Da's bitter awareness of national prejudice can be traced back to Trinidad's 19th century planters. Caribbean historian Bridget Brereton explains the colonizer's intent noting that an "additional reason for bringing in Indian, Chinese, and Portuguese laborers was to further divide the society: the planters and whites in general, as well as government officials, believed that these workers would be a check on the creole population. They hoped that the resulting divisions of race, religion, language, and culture would prevent the people from ever effectively uniting against

white control" (1989: 96). These racial and cultural hierarchies persist despite the cessation of slavery, indenture, and colonial rule, as its divisive legacy is evident in De Doctah's speeches and Da-Da's newspaper letters. Additionally, in this speech to Mona, Da-Da not only articulates the experience of homelessness at home, but voices a Fanonion self-hate. With some Indians choosing mut(e)ation – in this case the silencing of their own history because they are ashamed of their indentured arrival in Trinidad – Da-Da's words expose the Indo-Trinidadian's fractured relationship to the ancestral self. Sometimes, in the dub aesthetic, the erasure – or mut(e)ation – is the repair.

Don't Ask, Don't Dub?

The Swinging Bridge begins at the intersection of fiction and history, a young widow crossing the dark waters known as the *kala pani*. But, as all critics of *The Swinging Bridge* will agree, the story does not unfold until protagonist Mona Singh learns that her brother is dying, publicly of lymphoma, but privately of complications due to AIDS. From his hospital bed Kello, Mona's brother, requests that she act as his proxy and carry out the re-purchase of their family's land in Trinidad. Kello's dying wish drives the plot forward by forcing Mona to return to the land of her birth and allows her the opportunity to give voice to her silenced foremothers. What critics of this novel have not interrogated, however, is the silence that surrounds Kello's homosexual, AIDS-inflicted, dying body.

The less explored agenda of Espinet's novel is the silence surrounding Kello's homosexuality. The dub aesthetic is effective in exploring the possibility that Espinet, through Mona, doubly silences Kello as a way of subversively muting all non-feminist

stories. For Mona, who is doing the work of researching and recording the previously and would-otherwise-still-be muted histories of her family's matriarchs, Kello's story is one that cannot be uncovered out loud or put on public record. Mona first learns about Kello's affliction from her sister Babsie, who unloads the burden of Kello's secret on her:

> Kello is dying. He swore me to secrecy and you have to keep it secret too. He has AIDS, has had it for a while now. That's why he's in a hospice. He probably told me because I'm a nurse. Muddie and Da-Da, Johnnie and the rest of the family must never know—that is what he wants, all he wants. You must help me Mona, promise me that. We have to do this for Kello. (47)

According to Babsie, Kello only divulges his medical truth to her because of her profession in healthcare, not because he wanted, necessarily, anyone in his family to know. Babsie betrays Kello's trust by re-telling his story to Mona, but I read this betrayal as expected by Kello and his revelation to Babsie is, in fact, his only way to indirectly express himself to his family. Babsie goes on to tell Mona that she is not sure how Kello could have been exposed to HIV in the first place, "It's not a question I can ask and he gives up nothing. You know Kello" (47). But, as Mona's reaction to the news reveals, no one in this family actually "know[s] Kello."

Kello, readers discover, is dislocated within his family. Mona's recollections of Kello are literal collections of his parts as she uses synecdoche to describe him: "All my life I had admired Kello's *ruddy dark brown skin,*" "His *arms* were always the strongest," and, "When he laughed out loud his *whole face* broke open" (51, my emphasis). Mona says that she loved Kello "almost as if he were [her] second self" and her sonnet-like portrayal of him does suggest this, however, there is so much she does not know about

him and, more importantly, so much that he cannot share with her (51). Kello is cut off from his family because of the limited way in which they view his masculinity.

Kello left the family home as a teenager because he identified the limitations of his masculinity within the colonial boundaries of his father's home in Trinidad. But, even before his physical departure he mentally escaped following the "big row." As it is referred to in the novel, the "big row" identifies the vocal and physical battle between father and son regarding the sale of the very house on Manahambre Road that Kello wants Mona to re-purchase by proxy in the present. At the end of the violent encounter, having just knocked Kello to the ground and almost sitting on his son, Da-Da says to Kello, "Yuh little bugger, you playing man for me! I go show you who is man today!" (22). The language here, tied up in masculine power dynamics of performance, recalls Mona's encounter at the swinging bridge when Kenny challenges Mona and asks if she "name man."[15] This "big row" leaves Kello with no choice but to leave Trinidad behind and distance himself from his father. "That was the day I really left," Kello explained to Mona in a rare moment of sibling intimacy. He continues, "Da-Da always said that two bo-rat can't live in the same hole. That is why I had to leave. Either he would have killed me or I would have killed him" (16). Recalling the ground-shaking and violent encounter between her brother and her father, Mona admits that "the big row made [Kello] a man, even though he was only nine years old at the time" (16). Kello incites the "big row" because he vocalized himself. He spoke up to his father. He expressed himself fully, but the repercussions of that act were permanent and irreparable. As a result of this amplification, Kello's relationship to and with his family suffered.

On the surface, Kello flees to England for university and later Canada with the expectation of educational and economic freedom, respectively. But, paralleling Gainder's need to depart India, Kello's full subjectivity cannot survive in Da-Da's house or Trinidad. Kello must migrate. He flees first to Europe then, ultimately, to Canada. Da-Da's stifling patriarchy stands as a legacy of colonial power transported from India and also entrenched in the Caribbean. I argue that Kello's flight across the Caribbean Sea to Canada is a *kala pani* journey, of sorts. In "Engendering History" Brinda Mehta explains the Hindu beliefs surrounding the *kala pani* and clarifies that the dark waters are "associated with contamination and cultural defilement as it led to the dispersal of tradition, family, class, and caste classifications, and to the general loss of a "purified" Hindu essence. *Kala pani* crossings were initially identified with the expatriation of convicts, low castes, and other undesirable elements of society from the mainland to neighboring territories to rid society of any visible traces of social pollution" (Mehta 23-24). Of course, Mehta's discussion of the *kala pani* is grounded within her analysis of Hindu Indian women's marginality in Espinet's novel, but Kello's sexuality casts him, in the homophobic eyes of his Caribbean home, as an "undesirable element of society" or "social pollution" ready for expulsion. Thus, Kello's choice to mute his same-sex desires while in the presence of his family goes hand in hand with this choice to flee. Kello wanted to survive. It is fair, therefore, to extrapolate that migration for the marginalized Indo-Caribbean subject offers the possibility of a renegotiated or dub aesthetic identity in the diasporic community of Canada.

Mona informs readers that while living in Toronto, Kello married a white woman, fathered two children, and later carried on a partnership with a white man. It is there in

Canada, I argue, that Kello locates the limitlessness of his sexuality and, therefore, his full subjectivity. What was previously sexually impossible in the Caribbean nation, due to public opinion and politics of law, is made possible in the Caribbean diaspora. Espinet broadens the borders of Trinidad and the limits of sexual acceptance when she re-locates the Singh family into a Canadian Caribbean community in Toronto. The dub aesthetic applies to the erasures and repairs that form Caribbean identity. The erasures that develop from the rupture within Kello's family are only repaired through migration. On the one hand, by writing Kello, Espinet proves that Trinidad cannot support homosexual relationships. Kello's choice to mute his sexual identity at a young age is decided because he knows the limitations of Trinidadian acceptance. Kello can foresee the "whispering and shooshooing" that would ensue if his identity were revealed. He would be taunted as someone "taking man and battyman this and that, and heaven knows what other nastiness and bacchanal" (48). On the other hand, despite the aforementioned gossip and judgment, in Trinidad one can readily locate homosocial performances within the space of the Carnival. In *The Swinging Bridge* Espinet describes a molestation, of sorts, that takes place between Kello and a male reveler, whereby the eight-year old Kello finds himself in the hypersexualized and performatively homosexual reach of a Jab Malassie masquerader. The Jab Malassie character is "a molasses devil glistening with tar and car grease" and we see him here "rubbing his body rudely against Kello's, smearing him from top to toe" (Espinet 99).

In his often cited essay "Jahaji Bhai: Notes on the Masculine Subject and the Homoerotic Subtext of Indo-Caribbean Identity," Indo-Caribbean queer studies critic Sean Lokaisingh Meighoo suggests that masculinity lies in suspension, somewhere

between homosocial and homosexual (Lokaisingh Meighoo 79). He warns that the intersection of the homosexual and the homosocial present a danger to social constructions of gender and sexuality, and identity overall. Consider the homosocial Caribbean environment of the Carnival scene, as presented in the previous paragraph, but consider too the general prohibition on homosexuality. Kello is seemingly disgusted by the gyrations and the performed homosexual sex act (Espinet 99). Ultimately setting up the double-standard between the rejection of the homosexual and the acceptance of the homosocial, Espinet, I argue, writes Kello as a way of awakening readers to the difficult journey of coming out in an Indo-Caribbean or Indo-Caribbean diasporic community that would prefer, as the novel suggests, to mute homosexuality altogether.

Kello's journey to a fully expressed subjectivity is, however, not central to Espinet's undertaking; thus, despite the "interest" surrounding his already semi-silenced homosexuality, Kello is ultimately muted when he falls victim to the fader. He is heard at first, then his voice fades away, leaving only the memory. Put in dub aesthetic terms, after introducing Kello and casting him as catalyst for the novel, Espinet ultimately mutes Kello's voice and story in order to amplify the goals of her Indian-Trinidadian *woman's dub* of the migration and identity formation original. The homosexual Indo-Caribbean male is all too familiar with imposed silencing. Kello's dub mut(e)ation is not uncommon. Indo-Caribbean male homosexuality is an uncommon topic for fiction authors, is wholly neglected by scholars, and the "empirical" records that were maintained during and directly after indentureship do not allude to any non-heterosexual practices amongst Indians in the Caribbean (Lokaisingh-Meighoo 90). Espinet mutes Kello as an attempt to repair the imposed silence on Indian-Trinidadian women's history.

Espinet does not engage in killing two marginalized birds with one stone, so to speak. Instead, she fades then mutes Kello's story in favor of amplifying Mona's story that, for Espinet, is due to be told now.

For Da-Da's son and Gainder's grandson, Kello, his homosexuality is amplified or muted based on his location. He employs the mixer to fade out aspects of his own identity as he finds necessary to do in Trinidad and in the presence of his family. His mut(e)ation is grounded in his own survival, as his father Da-Da nearly kills him when he asserts himself fully. So too does Kello's sister, as family historian playing the role of dub sound engineer, utilize the fader to doubly mute Kello. Unlike her amplification of Gainder and Grandma Lil's previously silenced stories, Mona chooses not to amplify her brother's voice or story. Both Mona's and Kello's choices to remain silent are selfish and made, on the face of it, for the sake of propagating a traditional view of Indo-Caribbean cultural posterity. But, through a dub aesthetic of understanding mut(e)ations, Kello should be analyzed for his Gainder-like qualities, as both choose exile as a way for locating full subjectivity. He, like Gainder, roams in search of a space to live and love freely. And Kello, like his grandmother Lil, serves as a literary example of how historical and present-day silences deny us of our full Caribbean identity.

Espinet creates and positions Kello, a closeted then later selectively muted homosexual character, at the center of her novel, arguably, as a way of placing his body in conversation with Gayatri Spivak's most famous articulation: "If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow" (Spivak 3). The homosexual postcolonial subject is, in the national and cultural context of Espinet's novel, most subaltern, placed

so “deeply in the shadow” that to bring Kello’s sexuality to light would somehow negate the work of recovering and recording Indo-Caribbean women’s voices.

Understanding what Mona recognizes as both Kello’s manliness and his closeted homosexuality – the two identities functioning independently of one another within him – Kello’s departure from Trinidad is explained by the narrator as a result of Da-Da’s unwillingness to accept his son as a rival male within his home. Alternately, or additionally perhaps, Kello’s chosen exile should be read as the impossible survival of a homosexual Indo-Caribbean subject within the Caribbean. And Kello’s death should be read as an unsuccessful dub. By overtly muting his homosexual identity, he denies his own full subjectivity. A successful dub is not crafted through wanton and excessive muting. The dub should still overwhelmingly resemble the original. This is to say that the dub aesthetic mut(e)ations do not wholly deny parts of the past or present, but, rather rearrange their place in the song or adjust their amplification so that the uneasy aspects of the original become more tolerable, erased even, but hauntingly never forgotten. The metaphoric Caribbean mixing engineer knows that there is a limit to the fader’s usage, as too much muting leaves no traces of origins on the record. For Espinet, through Mona, the employment of the mixer to negotiate Caribbean migrations and mut(e)ations repairs the erasures and ruptures of identity.

The Caroni Dub Formula

The Swinging Bridge does not close as a mere critique of Caribbean identity formation in the face of migration. Espinet does offer an engineer’s blueprint to mixing a successful migration dub. In the final section of *The Swinging Bridge* Mona gives a

literary voice to the dub mix; put another way, she voices the dub aesthetic. Having returned from Trinidad to Montreal, Canada, Mona Singh reflects:

> Like any other migrant […] I bring my own beat to the land around me. The beat I sensed early, but where it started exactly and when I cannot now say. It must have been one day when I was very young, living in that small island at the bottom of the Caribbean Sea, that I first heard that beat, never to lose it. It was made of itself, a sound not yet in its present form because even as I spoke the beat was just coming into existence. Any new beat is like that: parts of it at war with itself until the separate parts recognize the point of fusion and merge seamlessly. […] A dub rhythm, the Caroni Dub. (305)

In this section the lyricism of Espinet's writing takes over. As narrator, Mona explicitly employs the word "dub" to negotiate her understanding of her diasporic reality as a Caribbean living in Canada with both Trinidadian and Indian origins.

Putting the character of Mona in direct conversation with critic Brinda Mehta, *The Swinging Bridge* echoes what Mehta recognizes as a celebration of Trinidad's African history, Indian history, and douglarization. It is the Caroni dub, not the chutney rhythm that marks not only post-indenture and post-coloniality, but Trinidad's contemporary political, racial, and cultural aesthetics. Let it be clear that *The Swinging Bridge* does not purport a post-racial Trinidad; instead it recognizes both the African and Indian heritages that presently mark Trinidad as a "dougla nation." Through a dub process it seeks to negotiate the often too wide gap between the races. Interweaving history with memory and juxtaposing silence with song, the Caroni dub sounds the experience of identity formation for Mona Singh, the contemporary Indo-Caribbean female subject. Naming

her dub identity after Caroni County, a predominantly Indian county in Trinidad where old world traditions continue in the new space of home, demonstrates the generational mut(e)ations at work. As Michael Lieber describes it some forty years ago, "One can travel through most of the villages of Caroni County and imagine himself in India. […] A resident of Caroni may not encounter a black man or woman for weeks" (Munasinghe 111). Little has changed in the population breakdown for Caroni. Furthermore, the Caroni swamp lands are home to Trinidad's national bird, the scarlet ibis. Espinet's choice, therefore, to connect Mona's dub identity to Caroni County inscribes her as thoroughly Trinidadian and re-inscribes her as thoroughly *Indian*.

Remembering that dub is a Jamaican musical form, Espinet's choice to incorporate it into the text of the narrator/protagonist's understanding of her Trinidadian and Indian origins suggests the ways in which a "Caribbean" identity develops in the migrant's external location. Interestingly, while the title of the final section is "Caroni Dub", the narrator does not use the term until she leaves Trinidad and is back on Canadian soil. There she reflects on her memories of her childhood and as those memories fuse with the generationally shared memories, the "Caroni dub" beat emerges. Mona, the narrator, describes the "dub beat" saying "parts of it at war with itself until the separate parts recognize the point of fusion and merge seamlessly," language that perfectly mirrors the descriptions of Jamaican dub music (Espinet 305). Caroni, a predominantly Indian county in Trinidad and dub, a Jamaican musical form, are, therefore, married by Espinet, who herself writes from Canada. Perhaps, like Mona, who considers the Caroni Dub while in Canada, Espinet's positioning outside of the "Caribbean" helps her to blend representations of two different nations into one, while

symbolically pointing towards the ways that cross-cultural negotiation blurs with increased distance.

From limb to limb on the family tree some traits and traditions are muted, others faded, and others still are over-emphasized or stretched. Add to this layers of migration, colonization, religious conversion, and transculturation, and the generational fragmentation present in Caribbean writing stands as a key element of the dub aesthetic. The present belongs to the past and the past can only fully be read with a dub understanding of the future to which that past has led. Paramount to Espinet's construction of Caribbean identity formation in *The Swinging Bridge*, is the notion that the culmination of the past *is* the present. Through the various migrations and exiles of the Indian and later the Indo-Caribbean subject, identity is erased, to some degree, and identity is reinvented, to some degree. The present self is a culmination of the past. Each history is generationally related to the present and a mutation/mut(e)ation of the past.

The negotiation of a Caribbean identity based on re-invention and dis/location aptly evidences my choice to term this literary approach a dub aesthetic. Just as dub music is unfixed so too are the various elements of the novel. Swinging between poetry and prose, shifting between Canada, Trinidad, and India, and suspended in both the past and the present, *The Swinging Bridge* poses existential questions of being, naming, and identifying. Ever in a state of flux both the arrival in and the departure from the Caribbean make identity an always evolving status with infinite possibilities of reinvention. This is the restlessness of the dub aesthetic. Indeed Espinet opens the novel with an image of Mona in motion. She is riding on a train through Ontario, Canada questioning the human desire to displace oneself through migration: "Why did people

leave the place they were born for an illusion of a better life? […] All of us migrants, the Chinese man, the black waiter, Da-Da never finding a place here […]—why did anyone leave?" (26). For Mona, like many Caribbean immigrants, answers to these questions are buried in three places: the rupture from the past, the optimism of the present, and the expectations of better in an uncertain future. The aesthetics of dub allows us to map how multiple migrations influence the roaming Caribbean subject and it provides a space to explore the subverted agency of dub mute(a)tions. In Carolyn Cooper's *Global Reggae* (2012) anthology, Michael Veal underscores the capacity of the dub to intentionally alter and emphasize meaning when he states that "the sound processing can make the political songs seem heavier and harder, the cultural songs deeper and more rootsy, and the spiritual songs more sublime" ("Dub: Electronic Music and Sound Experimentation" 287). The employment of the mixer in Caribbean literature shares this dub aesthetic capacity to alter and emphasize meaning. In analyzing *The Swinging Bridge* it makes historical recovery more feminist, cultural retention more political, and the search for a place free of alienation more attainable through diaspora.

Chapter Three

Recollect, Relive, Reverb:
Dubbing the Dialectic between History and the Sea

> "If fragmentation created dynamic tension in the mix, reverb […] was the cohering agent that held the disparate sounds together; as individual parts appear and disappear from the mix, reverberating trails of their presences provide continuity between one sound and the next."
> -- Michael Veal, *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs of Jamaican Reggae*

> "[T]he uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar."
> -- Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*

> "Memory believes before knowing remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing ever wonders."
> -- William Faulkner, *Light in August*

"Musical creativity cut off from the imperatives of reality becomes folkloric (in the worst sense)," writes Édouard Glissant in his brief essay in *Caribbean Discourse* (1989) on Martinique's *beguine* music. "It does not evolve towards newly adapted forms." Glissant explains that beguine music, which developed during the plantation days of slavery in Martinique, died at the turn of the twentieth century because it ceased to maintain a link with a "community that could use it to express its view of the world. It stops being a collective form of experience" (Glissant 110-11). Dub has suffered no such death. Born in the 1960s but existing within a centuries old continuum of Jamaican music, dub music embodies what Glissant identifies in Beguine as the "collective form of experience." Indeed this is because Jamaican dub music works tirelessly to remain current. Put simply, Jamaican dub music has a history and a present that inextricably tie it to contemporary reality. Always reinventing itself to reflect the conditions of the community, where Beguine died, dub thrives.

The development of music in Jamaica can be charted along its political, social, and cultural history of resistance and influence. Each musical genre can be read as a progression of the previous or; as Michael Veal[16] suggests, we may read the music as a "soundscape" projecting a "continuum of Jamaican music" (Veal 26). Starting with the African drum that survived the torturous journey across the Atlantic, Jamaica's *tambu* and *kumina* music emerged during the early years of slavery. Those African forms became infused with European religions and *revival* music pushed through the 1800s. *Mento* followed with a further fusion of cultural presences. This folk form developed near the turn of the 20th century and reflected the musicians' migration from rural to urban spaces. *Ska* follows *mento* and was, in many ways, both a response to American jazz in the 1950s as well as a reflection of Jamaican distaste for American rock and roll music. In the 1960s *ska* transformed into *rocksteady*, a new sound that was influenced by the Kingston rudeboy culture of the day. *Reggae*, the predominant and reigning sonic symbol of Jamaica, was born from *rocksteady* and it developed partially in response to the black American R&B of the 1960s and in part as a way for Jamaican musicians to create a uniquely Jamaican sound. *Dub* developed alongside reggae music and alongside Jamaica's transition to political independence and its innovative production techniques reflected the ways in which Jamaican consciousness was beginning to widen.[17] The Jamaican musical evolution did not end with dub. From dub emerged dancehall. Still a highly popular form today, particularly for the younger but not always poorer generations, dancehall music began in the 1980s as an offshoot of dub's electronic production techniques. From this brief gloss of the history of Jamaican music – from

Africa to colonial independence – one also finds the development of Caribbean identity: the dub itself is built on history. It desires it, it feeds on it, and it grows from history.

The Sea as History Dub: from Walcott to Burning Spear

Nearly thirty years ago, Derek Walcott poetically and prosaically[18] asserted that the "sea is History." "Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?/ Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,/ in that grey vault. The sea. The sea/ has locked them up. The sea is History," the poem's narrator states in a matter-of-fact tone. Indeed, Walcott's assertion is indisputable. But, if I may add to this discussion, I offer dub as another mode through which to read Walcott's sea is history. For evidence of this I turn to the musical texts of Burning Spear's "Slavery Days" (1975) and "I and I Survive" (1976). The lead singer, song-writer, and arranger of the pioneering reggae band Burning Spear, Winston Rodney, was not yet thirty years old when "Slavery Days" was recorded in 1975. Despite his young age the tone of Rodney's voice bore the weight of the hundreds of years that the African has existed in the New World. Rodney, or Burning Spear, for he has presently adopted the group name as his own, is both a Garveyite[19] and a Rastafarian and these systems of belief no doubt have informed his penetrating lyrics and haunting musical production. In many ways Spear's music captures the fluid relationship between the past and the present and between "H"istory and history that marks the dub aesthetic and makes it a critically useful tool for examining a literature that is itself dub.

"Slavery Days" highlights the vibe, so to speak, of black consciousness that began rocking Jamaica during the 1960s and 1970s. Just as it always was in the oral tradition of African and African diasporic peoples, this was a vibe that was carried through song.

The Jamaican writer and social scholar Erna Brodber describes this dissemination of black consciousness in an 1985 article where she explains that the black pop-singer had the "loudest voice in the oral tradition" and "armed with the appropriate technology continually reinforced […] a black aesthetic allied to a black-centred religion" (Brodber 56). Examples of these powerful pop-singers include James Brown and other soul singers in the United States, South African singer Miriam Makeba, and Rastafarian reggae artists such as Burning Spear and Bob Marley and the Wailers. The black singer, as a bearer of the oral tradition, therefore, held a prominent role in spreading and encouraging racial solidarity and upliftment, be it religious or otherwise. Music and orality, two of the Caribbean's greatest ancestral links to Africa, are reified by the Jamaican dub genre. The links between musical and literary tradition have been made by other scholars, notably by Guyanese Gordon Rohlehr, Jamaica's Mervyn Morris, and England's Stewart Brown in their joint literary production, *Voiceprint: Oral and Related Poetry from the Caribbean* (1989) and by Carolyn Cooper in *Noises in the Blood: Orality Gender and the 'Vulgar' Body of Jamaican Popular Culture"* (1993). In *Voiceprint*, Rohlehr, Morris, and Brown include musical forms like reggae and calypso, producing the lyrics in print but not the musical score. Cooper transcribes and analyzes dancehall lyrics in much the same method. This dissertation pushes the boundaries of these earlier works by engaging with tropes associated with the music.

Rather than *imagining*, which emphasizes a fictional recounting of the past, "Slavery Days" instead *remembers* that peculiar institution in ways that challenge Western notions of time. In the space of just over three and a half minutes, "Slavery Days" manages to transcend the abstract and time-static slavery of history books by

remembering the centuries of human bondage as a lived experience that continues to haunt the cultural memory of slavery's descendants, those who survive today. This collapsing of present and past is possible because, as scholar Mieke Bal explains in the introduction to his collection of critical essays on the subject, *Acts of Memory* (1999), "cultural memorization [is] an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and re-described even as it continues to shape the future. Neither remnant, document, nor relic of the past, nor floating in a present cut off from the past, cultural memory, for better or for worse, links the past to the present and future" (Bal vii). Through song, Burning Spear effectively mirrors the ways in which slavery is ever-present in an exploration of Caribbean cultural memory and identity.

In its linguistic structure "Slavery Days," like slavery itself, curiously exists in an ambiguous space between the past progressive and the simple present. To help make sense of this temporal phenomenon of social and cultural trauma that has more often been analyzed using Caribbean literature,[20] I have reproduced the lyrics to "Slavery Days" below with parentheticals displaying the song's haunting refrain. My analysis of the lyrics is interwoven with the lyrical presentation. The song opens with a question that is repeated twice as a part of the chorus and twice more as an echo in the refrain:

Do you remember the days of slavery?

Do you remember the days of slavery? (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

Do you remember the days of slavery? (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

The word "remember" indicates the recollection of some past action, experience, or event in the present. But attached to a contemporary "you" and repeated four times, "remember" seems to transcend its commonly defined parameters, as no contemporary

listener/reader would be able to personally remember capture in Africa, the Middle Passage, or labor in the New World. This remembering must, therefore, recognize a collective or cultural remembering of the past, one that would have to have been layered and sustained from generation to generation.

Burning Spear then introduces the song's first verse, a minimally stated but linguistically complex description of slave labor and abuse. He sings:

And they beat us. (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

And they work us so hard. (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

And they use us. (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

Till they refuse us. (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

Do you remember the days of slavery? (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

Though slavery formally ended in Britain's Caribbean colonies in 1834, Spear's verb tense does not appear in the past but, rather, in the simple present. When the implied past, represented in the refrain of "do you remember…?," is paired with the simple present the singer creates what seems to be grammatically induced temporal tension in each line of the song. This tension is due to the collision of standardized English language rules with the Niger-Congo cultural sources that inform the linguistic codes of Jamaican language and many of the nation languages present in the Caribbean. The collision present in Burning Spear's lyrics is heard/read against the static history and contemporary reality extant in the country. That withstanding, the listener/reader is rendered unable to determine with any clear certainty if the absent past tense indicator "-ed" at the end of the words "work," "use," and "refuse" are meant to evidence a metaphoric slavery in the present, or an undying cultural memory that is passed down

like DNA generationally, or if the lyrics are more simply describing the historical past using the linguistic structure that marks the Caribbean language's past tense. What is certain from this example, however, is that language, moreover, orality has the capacity to blur distinctions of and in time.

It must be highlighted that "Slavery Days" does not begin in Africa. The questions and remembering begin in the Caribbean space. The second verse then shifts backwards from the work on the plantation to the experience on board the slave ship. That move from landed life to that experience of the Middle Passage takes the listener/reader on a chronologically accurate remembering of the past. Spear presents images of rowing, the wearing of manacles, and the tight proximity of the human cargo. Once again the "-ed" markers of the past tense in standard English are noticeably absent. Burning Spear sings:

(Mmm Mm) The big fat boat.

(Mmm Mm) Usually pull it, we pull it.

(Mmm Mm) We muuuuust pull it.

(Mmm Mm) With shackles around our necks.

(Mmm Mm) Believe me and we sit so close.

Do you remember the days of slavery? (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

The content of this verse tells of the African's journey across the Atlantic Ocean to New World outposts. This critical journey marks the creation of the African diaspora. Through the verb tense of his lyrics Spear is able to highlight that a linguistic connection to Africa remains and was not severed by time or distance. Other Caribbean intellectuals have analyzed continuities between Africa and the Caribbean. To acknowledge such

continuities and not privilege the European language which colonialism has bequeathed as the official languages of the region, Edward Brathwaite uses the term "nation language." The language presented in the Burning Spear lyrics is nation language, as one can detect the "survivals of African languages" in the structure of Spear's lines (Brathwaite 1993, 260).

When the singer reaches the song's third verse the lyrical tension and my analytical focus shift from verb tense to pronoun use. The listeners/readers are able to recognize a new connection between past and present through the use of the neutral pronoun "it." In verse two "it" is used to reference the "big fat [slave] boat," but in verse three the singer moans, "My brother feels it" which is followed by the persistent, questioning refrain, "Do you remember the days of slavery?" Spear sings once again in a moaning pitch, "Including my sisters too," and it is clear that the reference is no longer to the slave vessel but to the subject of the refrain. "It" now stands in for the memory of slavery. Thus, when Burning Spear opens verse three he is telling listeners/readers that his brother "*feels*" the memory of slavery as do his sisters (my emphasis).

But how does and why should one "feel" the memory of slavery? And who has the capacity to "feel" it? Here I present that third verse in full followed by the closing pleas and the repeated refrain:

> Some of us survive. (Do you remember the days of slavery?)
> Showing them that we are still alive. (Do you remember the days of slavery?)
> Do you remember the days of slavery? (Do you remember the days of slavery?)
> History can recall, history can recall. (Do you remember the days of slavery?)
> History can recall the days of slavery. (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

Old slavery day! (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

Old slavery days! (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

Try and remember; please remember! (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

Do you, do you, do you, do you, do you, do you? (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

Old slavery days (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

Old slavery days (Do you remember the days of slavery?)

The use of "feel," as I previously clarified, takes on the new meaning of a physical or bodily capacity to remember. In this scenario "feeling" is used to convey the generational transfer of memory such that it does not erode, degrade, or in any way become forgotten over time. The use of "recall" and "remember" also take on an altered meaning. By using three different verbs to express a relationship between experiencing the past in the present – "feel"ing, "remember"ing, and "recall"ing – and by identifying three different agents to carry out these actions – the descendants of the millions of Africans brought to the Caribbean/ the New World as chattel, conscious (or empathetic) listeners, and history books, respectively – Burning Spear's "Slavery Days" makes a critical statement about how we access our Caribbean history with regard to the impact of oral versus scribal history. The reach of the artist goes beyond the narrow Caribbean post-colonial "nation," and for this reason this musical lens, this dub approach is pivotal.

Considered from within its own temporal context, in "Slavery Days" Burning Spear calls out to "you" the contemporary 1970s listener in the Kingston dancehall, "you" the student at any of the University of the West Indies campuses, and "you" those tuning in from all across the Caribbean via radio programs like the one hosted by "the

Groove Governor"[21] out of Guyana, who played reggae sets that could be heard as far as the Eastern Caribbean. He calls out to all of "you" in Jamaica, throughout the region, and across the diaspora who share this slave past. Spear calls out wanting to know if it is possible to "*remember*" the days of slavery. And that same "you" that would have been listening in record shops and rum shops, was the "you" being pleaded with to "Try and remember; please remember!" the days of slavery.

Metaphorically, those "slavery days" were more familiar than any newly independent Trinidad[22] or Jamaica,[23] for example, would have wanted during the violent and frustrated 1960s and 1970s. Those under- and unemployed Trinidadians and Jamaicans of the lower class, those that are the descendants of African slaves, the Afro-Creoles of Trinidad, were able to "feel" and "remember" slavery days in the color and class inequalities that lingered despite Independence from Britain in 1962. And these inequalities could be felt by those of every Independent and soon-to-be Independent nation in the Caribbean. This "feeling" is the legacy of the plantation system that was born from slavery.[24] Just as it was for Erna Brodber, this physical feeling of memory would also exist for the conscious listener hearing roots reggae music as she/he would "feel" the ancestral memory of Africa present in the reggae drum, bass, horns, and singing/chanting style of Burning Spear's music. For any Burning Spear listener, in his immediate Jamaican public or further afield, the haunting voice of the singer and the cardiac rhythm of the drums marks roots reggae and its dubs as a musical manifestation of Jamaica's memory of a West African a priori.

Conversely, however, and this should be a notable conversely, it is a neutral, faceless "history" that Burning Spear says can "recall" the days of slavery when he sings:

"History can *recall* the days of slavery" (my emphasis). While written history can recall, it lacks the capacity to express the feelings and emotions that slavery ought to evoke. This is perhaps why historians like Marcus Rediker[25] and Antonio T. Bly[26] have balanced their historical texts with their own words of historical fiction. Using fiction these two scholars of the Atlantic have bridged the sterile accounts printed in record books with the emotionally rich primary source accounts of sailors, slaves, and abolitionists. Thus, as we continue to reflect upon the past, this balance of scribal and oral history can only be achieved creatively through fiction. They seem to recognize what Mieke Bal explains, and I quote from, as the fiction generated from cultural memory. He writes that cultural memory is:

> Made up of socially constituted forms, narratives, and relations, but [it is] also amenable to individual acts of intervention on it, memory is always open to social revision and manipulation. This makes memory an instance of fiction not imprint, often of social forgetting rather than remembering. Cultural memory can be located in literary texts because the latter are continuous with the communal fictionalizing, idealizing, monumentalizing impulses thriving in a conflicted culture. (*Acts of Memory* xiii)

The dub aesthetic, like dub music, recognizes the amenable quality of history and the need to balance the records. In a sense, Caribbean writers and lyricists like Burning Spear are providing a counter response to the old African proverb: until the lions have their own historians, tales of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. Burning Spear, as a musician, does what Caribbean writers of poetry and prose, and the aforementioned historian/storytellers have always sought to do: give a voice to the voiceless. To borrow

the words of Burning Spear's Jamaican contemporaries, Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, "half the story has never been told."[27] Or, as the Rasta dancehall artist Buju Banton reiterates some twenty years later, "I could go on and on, the full has never been told."[28] These musicians, scholars, and writers all share the goal of wanting, sometimes needing, listeners and readers to have a deepened response to the nearly four hundred years of slavery and its traumas. Dub music can bear this weight and the dub aesthetic records these memories. For this, dub is history.

Dub music, like the literary dub aesthetic I propose, is an active and critical engagement of memory, as dub itself reflects a respectful attentiveness to the past and a keen consciousness for the present. Evidence of this recollective quality of the dub aesthetic holds from one Caribbean space to another. As I have shown in the Anglophone setting of Jamaican reggae band Burning Spear, the Francophone work of Glissant, so too can it be seen in the work of Latin Americanist Juan Flores who offers a critical assessment of Puerto Rican cultural identity and the "broken memory" of the *boricua* people in *From Bomba to Hip Hop* (2000). Flores describes the role of memory in the Puerto Rican's fractured identity in terms that have strong echoes with dub and the dub aesthetic. He writes: "Historical memory is an active, creative force, not just a receptacle for storing the dead weight of times gone by. *Memory* has been associated, since its earliest usages, with the act of inscribing, engraving, or, in a sense that carries over into our own electronic times, "recording" (*grabar*). It is not so much the record itself as the putting-on-record, the gathering and sorting of materials from the past in accordance with the needs and interests of the present" (Flores 49). With links back to Glissant's concerns that music represents a "collective form of experience," Flores' use

of the verb "*grabar*" ("to record") helps to develop an understanding of memory as a collision of the past, present, and future. But it is the dub aesthetic, by virtue of its roots in dub music, which allows us to approach memory as simultaneous collage and, in a sense, palimpsest[29].

If we return now to the music of Burning Spear, we note that each of the tracks on that *Marcus Garvey* (1975) album, which featured "Slavery Days," was dubbed and released four months later on the dub album, which was fittingly named, *Garvey's Ghost* (1976). The dub of "Slavery Days" appears on *Garvey's Ghost* under the title "I and I Survive" and it hauntingly demonstrates how memory and orality survive the *de*construction and *re*construction of dub, much in the same way that memory and orality survived the *de*culturation and *trans*culturation of slavery in the New World. Whereas I presented lyrical analysis of the original "Slavery Days" recording, its stripped down dub does not allow for representation in the same manner. Paired down from the original, the "Slavery Days" dub opens with only the triumphant call of horns. The brassy sound is familiar, but arresting. It is the same series of chords heard in "Slavery Days," but it is out of place at the start of "I and I Survive." Unsure of what to expect next from the dub recording, the mind intuitively searches for any familiar footing and finds it in the *abeng*[30]. Just as the *abeng* horn was used by Jamaica's Maroons to communicate meaning and warnings, the trombone heard at the start of the dub similarly calls the listener to attention and once again the dub collapses time through connected sound. In classic dub fashion the new song plays on with a heavier, deeper tone to the kick drum and the bass guitar. The listener continues to search the dub for traces of the original but the only lyrics that are present in the dub are: "Some of us survive/ Showing them that we

are still alive." Fittingly, these two lines – just eleven words— are all that "survive" the dub process and they show that the original message is "still alive." Not audible until minute two of the four minute recording, the limited lyrics are followed by a few seconds of the original instrumentals, then an abrupt shift is heard in the recording and for a brief moment the drum and bass are the only instruments one can hear. This aural shift is quick but somewhat jarring, as it gives the listener the impression that a production error has caused the song to start over from the beginning. Soon enough the other instruments are brought back into the recording. Guitars, horns, tambourines all return and the keyboard carries the familiar melody that played in the lyrics of "Slavery Days." The song comes to a close by way of volume fade-out, leaving the listener with the presumption that the song continues, albeit, just out of ear-shot. This fade-out, in many ways, echoes the openness of memory, for, as Flores suggests, "the process of memory is open, without closure or conclusion: the struggle to (re)establish continuities and to tell the 'whole' story only uncovers new breaks and new exclusions" (Flores 49). As I have attempted to demonstrate, Burning Spear plays on memory to bring history into the present. Or, put another way, "Slavery Days" and "I and I Survive" dub the traumatic sea experience of the Middle Passage. Spear urges the listener to remember the torture aboard that "big fat boat" bound for the New World. The boat, obliquely referencing the sea, is a potent image in this memory of trans-Atlantic journeying.

In music as it is in the literature, the sea has surfaced as a fitting metaphor for examining the Caribbean experience. In his essay, "Literary Theory and the Caribbean: Theory, Belief and Desire, or Designing Theory" (2006), Caribbean scholar Edward Baugh summarizes in a series of carefully chosen references by Wilson Harris, Édouard

Glissant, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, Derek Walcott, and Edward Brathwaite, the usefulness of the sea metaphor. Baugh's words, quoted here at length, capture why we have accepted these aquatic theories and looked to the sea for perspective:

> It seems only natural that the sea should have proven to be so appealing a metaphor to these writers for conceptualising Caribbean culture – the never-resting sea, which, at the end of Walcott's Omeros (1990), "was still going on" (325) – the protean sea (to borrow a name from another myth), "the noon's / stunned, amethystine sea" (Walcott *Collected Poems*, 309), "the infinite, boring, paradisal sea" (*Collected Poems*, 128), the sea of hurricanes and wild horses; the sea that unites and divides; the Caribbean Sea, now miscast as a basin by neo-colonialism – a curved space, circle of sorts, closed but open, receptacle of migrations, rippling back outward with new and reverse migrations, the sea that speaks of "all of the voyages" (*Collected Poems*, 286); beach that receives the seed and driftwood from across the seas; womb (Harris) of possibility, spawning the islands, "he repeating island;" curved mirror in which each can see herself (distorted), the face of her identity, but an identity that is inevitably refracted; the sea that becomes a metaphor for Walcott's idea of history. (59)

The sea represents arrival and departure for those of us who anchor our identities in the region despite our homes in the diaspora. Certainly this is why Caribbean scholars and creative artists have for so long turned to the sea. But, as Baugh pointed out some ten years ago, there has been a marked shift in scholarly approaches to theories of Caribbean identity. And it is Baugh who cites this shift not only as a sea-change but as a necessary shift away from the sea and towards "folk and vernacular expressive arts" (Baugh 60).

This dub aesthetic meets Baugh's challenge by bringing the "'literary' and the 'popular' into active relationship" (Baugh 61). As communities become increasingly global, honoring the local too becomes important. The dub aesthetic creates a space for Caribbean critics to forward the past into the present, to blend the national with the regional and diasporic, and brings the oral into the scribal, all without statically memorializing a living past. This is why it is a useful endeavor for contemporary Caribbean theory to begin incorporating into the idea of the sea as history the temporal shift suggested by the notion of a dub aesthetic as recognizing and interrogating history.

Even as the Caribbean subject continues to arrive at different diasporic outposts, typically urban centers either within the Caribbean nations or in North America and Europe, the metaphor of the sea remains attractive. Though sea travel is no longer the mode of migration, because the sea facilitated European colonization and the importation of enslaved Africans and indentured Asians, it forever remains a part of cultural memory, one that Caribbeans take with them to their diasporic outposts. For many of today's contemporary writers the airport or airplane, rather than the sea or boat, is the site to represent contemporary transnationality and the potential for economic and physical migration; but, this is not to say that the sea has altogether been abandoned as a mode via which to exit or move around the Caribbean. Indeed with no other means of departure, over the last two decades, tens of thousands of desperate Haitians have taken to the sea bound for the United States.[31] And as April Shemak points out in her recent work, *Asylum Speakers: Caribbean Refugees and Testimonial Discourse* (2011), the sea, for boat refugees continues to be a complex site that represents "the only option for survival and holds within it the possibility of death" (22). Through the dub aesthetic, the untold

stories of Haitian boat refugees of the 1990s make current the sea of the Middle Passage, thus cutting a new record, a new dub.

Recollect and Relive through the Literary Reverb

The dub aesthetic's capacity to analyze contemporary fictions that are in conversation with other fictions as much as they are in dialogue with actual historical accounts and present-day Caribbean realities pushes the limits of intertextuality and inter-genre thinking. Additionally, the dub aesthetic opens up the analytical space of intertemporality[32]: past, present, and future. To highlight the dub aesthetic's ability to bridge texts, genres, and time, I shift now to the literature, in particular Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat's short story cycle, *Krik? Krak!* (1996). Each of the nine stories in *Krik? Krak!* lends itself admirably to analysis of the dub aesthetic's form and construction, but for the purposes of this chapter my analysis focuses on *Krik? Krak!*'s two epistolary stories, "Children of the Sea" and "New York Day Women." Every successful dub is an exercise of memory for the listener who, upon hearing the dub (or, in the literary case that I first presented with the use of Burning Spear lyrics, upon reading the dub) both consciously and subconsciously begins to search for connections to the familiar. Memory of the original implores the listener to search for traces of familiar chords (characters), lyrics (settings), and melodies (themes), all of which are locatable within the cycle.

Despite a two hundred year gap between events, Danticat handily places critical political and theoretical moments in New World identity formation in haunting dialogue with one another. We see this overlaying in the Haitian boat refugees of the late 20th

century and the Africans who endured the Middle Passage, as they are linked over time through a shared experience of aquatic trauma. Further examples from Danticat's text include, a young boy who stirs change in his father as he recites the words of the great catalyst of the Haitian Revolution, Dutty Boukman; the quiet strength of Haitian women under a corrupt Haitian regime is foregrounded against the Dominican Republic's bloody massacre of 1937; and the fictional story of a young Haitian woman who gains United States citizenship is set against the personal transnational narrative of *Krik? Krak!*'s author. The dub interrogates and expresses history and the contemporary Caribbean short story cycle is evidence. As I analyze Danticat's work I show that it is possible to compare highlights in the stories with that surviving line, to borrow the Burning Spear phrase, in the dub reproduction.

Like Burning Spear's "Slavery Days" *Krik? Krak!* begins, albeit indirectly, at that same site as an important point of departure for shaping an African diaspora: the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. In the first short story in the collection, "Children of the Sea," the plight of a late twentieth century Haitian refugee is overlaid with the haunting melody of the Middle Passage experience, an intertemporal possibility made possible by Glissant's "Open Boat" (1997: 9). "The Children of the Sea" reconstructs orality through the use of the epistolary mode in order to tell the story of a young Haitian couple separated by political strife. The capacity of the epistolary form to offer readers access to both public and private perspectives makes it an alluring choice of form and I examine this choice in greater detail later in the chapter.

Danticat's short story is, presumably, set in the early 1990s following the military coup that removed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power and sent him into exile

abroad. Militia groups of revived Tonton Macoutes began, once again, terrorizing citizens. Anyone who voiced opposition or who was thought to be connected to those who opposed the new government was in danger of death. As "Children of the Sea" makes clear, death or exile, be it internal or external exile, are the only possible modes of escaping the reach of the rebels. But exile does not guarantee survival or happiness. And death cannot bring about change. On the one hand the fictional female character, along with her family, seeks exile in a country village. And on the other, despite the political and bodily risks, the story's male lover takes to the sea with thirty-six other desperate escapees. Pregnant with hope and fear, the voyage of these fictional refugees away from Haiti revives the diasporic memory of the Middle Passage. "Children of the Sea" gives voice to all of those hopefuls who took to the sea, and instead of finding brighter shores in new lands, found new life in death.

"They say behind the mountains are more mountains. Now I know it's true. I also know there are timeless waters, endless seas, and lots of people in this world whose names don't matter to anyone but themselves" (Danticat 3). These are the poetic opening sentences written by the male lover in "Children of the Sea." He has only recently boarded a flimsy sailboat bound for the United States, but these words to his girlfriend highlight the referential shift that takes place when he moves from land to sea. Haiti or Ayiti, which is the original Taíno spelling of the country's name, is named for its mountainous landscape. At sea, though, land references lose metaphoric value and water represents the continuity of time. But his words also speak to the way that a chronologic distance of three hundred years can so easily be collapsed. In *Poetics of Relation* (1997) Glissant likens the Middle Passage, that journey aboard the slave ship from Africa to the

New World, to a womb boat or "womb abyss" such that the sea represents the beginning and the end of life previously known (Glissant 6). Glissant describes the "belly of the boat" in terms that subvert our conception of the maternal womb (Glissant 6). Rather than the womb as a space of nurturing and preparation for life, the "womb abyss" is a dangerous space that grows hostile and expels its inhabitants. The slave vessel too is spacious and accommodating, until it becomes crowded and cannot support the African lives within. Ultimately, as it becomes a burial ground for Africans seeking an escape from slavery, the sea too becomes a womb abyss because of its never-ending depth. It is a vacuous space that is always able to take in more bodies because of its immeasurable depth. The "big fat boat" of Burning Spear's "Slavery Days," expels the bodies for the purposes of its own survival.

The title "Children of the Sea" is itself evocative of the "womb abyss." The short story names those fluids which create life "semen" (3), sustain life "blood" (3) and a young mother's "water sack" (17). With double purpose, "the sea," or water, can both create and take life (28). Beyond these conventional understandings, the story also treads the fluid line between life and death such that those Africans and African descendants who drown at sea live once again beneath the water's surface "with [the Haitian sea god] Agwé at the bottom of the sea" (28) in those "timeless waters, endless seas" (3). The sea, therefore, is not a site of death but rather a site of tragic rebirth. The male lover's descriptions echo the disorienting boundless nature of the sea from his vantage point within the boat when he writes, "I can't tell exactly how far we are from [Miami]. We might be barely out of our own [Haitian] shores. There are no borderlines on the sea. The whole thing looks like one" and later "at night, the sky and the sea are

one" (6, 9). Politically potent, Danticat's ability to connect to critical perspectives on borders and nations like those explored by Anzaldúa (1987) and Brathwaite (1996), among others, is powerful as the male's epistolic voice comes to us in a tone that captures the fluidity of the sea. And, more applicable to my purposes of explicating a dub aesthetic, as the possibility of death becomes ever certain, the young man's words increasingly echo Glissant's "Open Boat" approach. Thus, just as Michael Veal outlines in *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae*, reverberation in dub music allows for "spatial dimension within a recording," such that a studio recording can sound as if it were simultaneously being performed "in a theater, arena, or cave when it was in fact typically recorded in the acoustically 'dead' (that is completely dampened) environment of the recording studio" (Veal 71), literary reverberation allows a critic to use Glissant's "Open Boat" to explode the temporal boundaries between the Middle Passage and Haiti's boat refugees such that one can analyze the two sea events simultaneously, despite the multi-hundred year distance between them.

Glissant writes poetically of the African who chooses to leap to his death rather than to live aboard the womb boat/ slave ship: "straight from the belly of the slave ship into the violet belly of the ocean depths they went. But their ordeal did not die; it quickened into this continuous/ discontinuous thing: the panic of the new land, the haunting of the former land, finally the alliance with the imposed land, suffered and redeemed. The unconscious memory of the abyss served as the alluvium for these metamorphoses" (1997: 7). Similarly, the male lover writes of his fellow refugee's disposal of her stillborn child and her own sea suicide: "She threw it overboard. I watched her face knot up like a thread, and then she let go. It fell in a splash, floated for a

while, and then sank. And quickly after that she jumped in too. And just as the baby's head sank[33], so did hers. They went together like two bottles beneath a waterfall" (26). The fluid imagery of Danticat's text is broad and complicated. So too is it in Glissant's sea where water is destabilized and represents a host of incongruous realities: fluid space and time, eternal life and certain death, and infinite freedom and captivity. The dub aesthetic makes sense of the tension present in the writing such that we may read Glissant in Danticat's work as well as that occasional intense line of the dub. To demonstrate this I apply the dub sound engineer's techniques of cutting and mixing different records together and overlaying lyrics from one song onto another as a way of dubbing the aforementioned Glissant quote (presented below in bold type) with various passages from "Children of the Sea." Dubbing one fragmented text over the other we see how fluidly the poetics seams together and flows with the fiction and how much the one informs the other. "[**S]traight from the belly of the slave ship into the violet belly of the ocean depths they went**" (Glissant 7) … in a boat no longer able to withstand its many cracks, the drowning male lover writes, "I go to them now as though it was always meant to be, as though the very day that my mother birthed me, she had chosen me to live life eternal, among the children of the deep blue sea, those who have escaped the chains of slavery to form a world beneath the heavens and the blood-drenched earth where you live" (Danticat 27). "**But their ordeal did not die; it quickened into this continuous/ discontinuous thing:**" (Glissant 7)… the two lovers write to each other even though their letters will never be sent or received and before the male lover drowns he, for the sake of communication, hope, and posterity, continues writing one final letter to his girlfriend in Haiti: "I asked for a few seconds to write this last page and then promised that I would let

it go. I know you will probably never see this, but it was nice imagining that I had you here to talk to" (Danticat 27).

Glissant writes of "**the panic of the new land**," (7)… and in the hurried fear of her staccato and lower cased sentences, the female lover's letters express both her anxiety under the new militia in her village-exile and her loneliness without her boyfriend, "i can't sleep. i count the bullets in the dark. i keep wondering if it is true. did you really get out? i wish there was a way i could be sure that you really went away. yes, i will. i will keep writing like we promised to do. i hate it, but i will keep writing. you keep writing too, okay? and when we see each other again, it will seem like we lost no time" (Danticat 8). The panic of the new land collides with "**the haunting of the former land**," (Glissant 7) … the boat refugees are haunted by their love of country when they sing "*Beloved Haiti, there is no place like you. I had to leave you before I could understand you*" (Danticat 9). But the escapees are equally haunted by their fear of Haiti, as we see later in the character Célianne. By producing this Middle Passage dub, if you will, a dub re-expression of Glissant's "Open Boat" fused with the Haitian experiences of trauma and forced exile, both texts offer up new meaning. With the dub aesthetic approach, there is a reciprocal relationship between categories of time: history informs the present and the present informs history.

As the "Children of the Sea" continues we learn that Célianne, mentioned briefly above, gives birth to a stillborn baby girl while aboard the sinking vessel, and both Célianne and her daughter serve as physical reminders of the horror of Haiti's unstable government and corrupt militia as this stillborn daughter is the product of rape by a Tonton Macoute. Like the stripped lyrics presented in the "I and I Survive" dub, memory

hauntingly endures. The repetition of the feeling of horror travels with Célianne aboard this contemporary Middle Passage of the 1990s and links the Haitian refugee's struggle with the African's. This is the haunting quality of the dub. The fragmented Haitian stories transcribed by the female and male lovers and doubly reproduced in Danticat's fiction merge with fragments of Burning Spear's dub lyrics: "Some of us survive/ Showing them that we are still alive." The Middle Passage dub of "the Open Boat," that I began a few paragraphs ago, continues here. Taking Edward Baugh's charge seriously, the dub aesthetic places the "'literary and the 'popular' into active relationship" (Baugh 61). Clutching her deceased child as she too nears death, Célianne relives the horror of her rape when she "keeps repeating the story [of her gang rape by the militia] now with her eyes closed, her lips barely moving" (23). "**[F]inally**," writes Glissant, "**the alliance with the imposed land, suffered and redeemed. The unconscious memory of the abyss served as the alluvium for these metamorphoses**"... the male lover an African descendant but generationally Haitian, ultimately decrees: "Yes, I am finally an African" and though he says this as a double-edged reference to his darkening skin, via the refugee boat his words recall the womb abyss.

The womb abyss, that haunting space that is both the beginning of life and the end of life previously known, is critical to understanding the dub aesthetic. The collision of opposites that we find in Glissant's womb abyss – a confrontation of comfort and discomfort, familiar and unfamiliar, fear and curiosity – can similarly describe one's sonic experience when listening to a dub record. The dub aesthetic, therefore, reframes the womb abyss by moving away from the Caribbean seascape and toward the Caribbean soundscape via the powerful and persistent drum and bass of history remembered. As

Derek Walcott proclaims that history has been submerged in the grey vault that *is* the sea, and *Krik? Krak!*, I argue, recognizes the sea vault that contains the deceased lovers but it also, through the dub aesthetic, unlocks that vault to give history contemporary relevance. *Krik? Krak!*, in effect, resuscitates the heart beat rhythm of cultural memory and history repeated. Textually, we see this in *Krik? Krak!*'s recycling of characters, settings, and themes. The short story "The Children of the Sea" becomes, as I have been suggesting, a Middle Passage dub. When the male lover surrenders himself to the sea, time collapses and his martyrdom recreates the Middle Passage through dub layering. Through the dub's "timeless waters, endless seas" it is possible for the drowned, contemporary, exiled, Haitian male to connect with his lover on land and reconnect with the nearly two million transported Africans who sailed as cargo before him but but died with dignity (3). Through the dub aesthetic he can "go to them now as though it was always meant to be, as though the very day that my mother birthed me, she had chosen me to live life eternal, among the children of the deep blue sea, those who have escaped the chains of slavery to form a world beneath the heavens and the blood-drenched earth where you live" (27). Connecting 17th century slaves and 20th century Haitian bodies floating towards American waters,[34] Danticat's short story highlights how little has changed with regard to how black bodies have been silenced and ignored in the Atlantic Ocean. It is in this process of recreating the mix through fiction, that Danticat gives voice to those whose voices would have otherwise been drowned out by their perceived political inconsequence.

Giving voice to these brave exiles is one of the more intriguing dub layers in this story of nameless characters. Nameless, the young man and young woman in "The

Children of the Sea" represent the millions of Africans and Haitians who were swallowed up by the ocean with names that "don't matter to anyone but themselves," those whose names will forever be locked up in that grey sea vault (Walcott). But anonymity also has another effect that when paired with the story's epistolary form allows these two protagonists the space to more safely critique their immediate and dangerous circumstances free of traceable retribution. It is as feminist scholar and cultural critic Linda Kauffman explains in *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction* (1992), for the epistolary genre, particularly in fictional love letter correspondence like what we see in Danticat's story, "desire is shaped by politics, economics, and commodity culture in a specific historical moment." And "by sustaining the illusion of writing-to-the-moment," Kauffman explains, "each text highlights the partiality (in both senses of the word) of all constructions: politics, history, and aesthetic principles alike [and] the dichotomies between 'high' and 'low' culture, between private and public break down" (Kauffman, xxii). Likewise, the illusion of hand-written letters in *Krik? Krak!* is employed in "The Children of the Sea" short story in order to blur the narrow divide between politics and love, between public and private, all while emphasizing the immediate present of the characters. Through the epistolary form the lovers sustain the "illusion of writing-to-the-moment" which both creates distance from the lived moment but also forces the lovers to relive these trauma-producing moments with every word they write. This is the reverb. The recollection of experiences into words and putting them down on paper is the reliving. The recollection of the past in the present, the reliving of the past in the present is all what I term dub aesthetic reverb.

Danticat makes palpable the far-reaching effect of Haiti's broken government. The short story epistle demonstrates that political instability is not limited to the capital city of Port-au-Prince as the female lover writes of her continued suffering in the rural setting of Ville Rose. And as he writes on waters bound for the United States, the male lover becomes evidence that this political turmoil is not restricted to Haitian soil but is yet another international crisis in a region with a long history of sea trauma. It is under the guise of love letters that Danticat is able to amplify the counter-national voices that would otherwise have remained silenced. Certainly the young female lover's letters do more than express longing for her departed love. Her letters more subtly tell the story of the "radio six," those young people who bravely took to the airwaves in order to create a space where, as her lover explains, "we could talk about what we wanted from government, what we wanted for the future of our country" (6). In fact, it is as a direct result of his being a part of the "radio six" that the story's male protagonist is propelled out of Haiti. His anti-government remarks made on this underground radio program make exile his only hope of survival. In contrast to the male's daunting escape we are given the alternative outcome, what might have happened had the male lover not been able to escape. Those other members of the "radio six," those who did not board decrepit boats more likely to sink than to sail, are said to have "disappeared," expressing that they too may be in exile, or have more likely been jailed or killed by the government for voicing their oppositional views. By journaling privately to her lover, the female protagonist also tells the story of those suffering on Haitian soil. She writes about the atrocities being carried out by the Tonton macoutes, the government's killing forces. She writes of how they terrorized her neighbor, Madan Roger, whose son was suspected of

being traitor. She *writes* the words that the corrupt Haitian government does not want outsiders to *hear*. She paints the picture that the Haitian government does not want outsiders to see. As the female lover collects her thoughts onto her journal paper, we, as readers of these epistles, are re-collecting them and re-living her experiences, vicariously. Time and space are collapsed and, as readers, we are brought into that present-tense "moment" in the past that the writer is recording. This is the dub aesthetic's literary reverb at work.

She writes of how the night soldiers from the national army arrive at Madan Roger's home and demand answers: "did your son belong to the youth federation? wasn't he on the radio talking about the police? did he say, down with tonton macoutes? did he say, down with the army? he said that the military had to go; didn't he write slogans? he had meetings, didn't he?" (15-16). They call Madan Roger's son a traitor and demand that she name his co-conspirators. When she finally confesses that her son, whom the tonton macoutes have since killed and decapitated, was indeed against this Haitian government that could carry out such cruel acts of violence against its own people; when she refuses to name her son's friends and curses the soldiers for their actions, they pummel her with the butts of their government issued weapons. The female lover is our only access to this information. As she and her family fearfully hide in the outdoor latrine, drowning in the stench of "rotting poupou," she and her family bear witness to the abuse but are powerless against it: "they pound at [Madan Roger]. you can hear it. you can hear the guns coming down on her head. it sounds like they are cracking all the bones in her body" (15, 16). The epistle, though, is set in contrast to this scene of silence. By writing Madan Roger's story to her lover, the female protagonist *and* Danticat are

recording the rallying cries of the small but ambitious youth movements trying to organize for change but she is also amplifying the oppressive voice of the Haitian government that the government was simultaneously trying to keep from reaching international ears. Masquerading as personal letters of love, "The Children of the Sea" ultimately gives voice to those suffering in silence and it illuminates a horrifying system of injustice.

Cut and Mix: The Inter-/Intra-textual Dub

Within these letters there are various, simultaneous conversations taking place: one between the female and male lover, between the past and the present, between love of nation and love of person, and each of these conversations is also in dialogue with the others. This conversational aspect of the short story leads into a discussion of dub music's talk-over and its presence in the literature. The talk-over of 1970s Jamaican dub is historically linked to a Caribbean community as an extension of the calypso boast songs of 1940s Trinidad. Both of these Caribbean musical forms are diasporic offshoots of traditional West African call-and-response boast songs. The survival of West African orality in New World cultural representations is what links dub and Caribbean literature and is what culminates in the dub aesthetic.[35]

Talk-over or toasting describes when the deejay talks over a pre-recorded song in a dancehall setting or in the studio for a dub recording. The deejay's talk-over can either emphasize or deviate from the message of the original record based on how much and what parts of the original lyrics are muted to allow for the talk-over. Talk-over is not a duet. While the talk-over deejay's words can better clarify or further complicate the

words of the previously recorded speaker, because one voice has already been recorded, *it* cannot hear the new voice of the deejay. Putting the two voices together and what the voices "say" to each other is determined, to a large extent, by the dub sound engineer. Their ability to cut and mix the old with the new, creates the diaoligic effect of the new dub. To think of it another way, if the singer is in dialogue with the instruments, the song is in dialogue with the listener, and the dub is in dialogue with the original, with the addition of talk-over, the producer, via the deejay, is in dialogue with all components of the record.

Musically, an apt example of dub talk-over can be heard/read in the progression of Jamaican reggae singer Linval Thompson's record "Don't Cut Off Your Dreadlocks" (1975), which gained new meaning through each of its dubs. The main feature of difference between this first dubbing and the original is the absence of lyrics, as dub producer and pioneer Osbourne "King Tubby" Ruddock muted out much of the lyrics in order to have greater sonic room to play with the record's instrumental quality. Later in the same year, however, King Tubby created yet another dub of the Thompson record and titled this dub "Joyful Locks," and this recording came with both the producer's mut(e)ations[36] and the talk-over of popular dancehall deejay and toasting pioneer Ewart "U Roy" Beckford replacing much of Thompson's original lyrics. With an unusual style that subculture theorist Dick Hebdige describes as "wild" and "weird rambling monologues," U Roy would usually "take a popular rhythm track, phase out the singing and add his own stream of screeches, yelps and muttered catchphrases" (84). This was also the formula used for recording the "Joyful Locks" dub. Below I provide a comparative representation of a verse from the Thompson original and a verse from the

King Tubby and U Roy dub. Presented first is Thompson's "Don't Cut Off Your Dreadlocks":

(Verse)
Sampson was a dreadlocks

And he played the fool.

Sampson was a dreadlocks

And Delilah betray him

(Chorus)

Don't you cut off your dreadlocks

because Jah-jah will chastise you

he will hurt you

whooa yoooow

Next, in King Tubby and U Roy's dub "Joyful Locks," the meaning of the original, like the drum and bass, is amplified. The new "Joyful Locks" dub ultimately functions as two songs layered onto one another, or intertwined. Where the original lyrics to Thompson's "Don't Cut Off Your Dreadlocks" were brief, specifically religious, and somewhat repetitive, the U Roy lyrics extend Thompson's message to stand firm in one's Rastafarian beliefs by giving greater social depth to the original's message. In the talk-over lyrics presented below, U Roy's voice is predominant in the verse, with only one line of the Thompson original surviving King Tubby's dub mut(e)ation:

U Roy: Got to be hopeful and got to be truthful most of all to Jah, yeah 'cause Jah see every little thing, you know.

So don't, don't you cut off your natty dread,

Let it grow, Rastaman, let it grow. Yeah.

Sampson was a great lad but played the fool, maybe ‘cause he didn’t go to no good school, y’all

Let me tell you say, don’t do it for brother-man, let it go, let it grow.

I tell you so, wahh, good God. Wahh!

Don’t cut off your natty dread, yeah, you know, that’s what the man say –

Linval Thompson: (his voice breaks in and is hauntingly heard singing the refrain as if from somewhere in the distant background): *Don’t you cut off your natty dreads* –

U Roy (his voice returns from the interruption)**:** – Got to obey

‘cause it’s the order of the day

So don’t you do it my sister, don’t do it for brother,

Don’t let Satan lead you away.

I will trample down the devil

I will trample down Satan. [Repeats]

Don’t let it go Rastaman. [echoed]

I will trample down Satan. Wahh!

With his stream of consciousness warnings, U Roy’s style of talk-over is unique and “wild,” to borrow Hebdige’s word choice. In this dub mut(e)ation, Thompson is silenced in favor of amplifying the voice of the toasting deejay because U Roy’s message, as an update to the old message, accesses the listener in new ways. By silencing Thompson’s familiar words that rely solely on scripture and the fear of God to strengthen the Rastaman’s resolve, the dub is able to reach the Rasta community on the level of public scrutiny *in addition to* Jah’s jugdement. His stream of consciousness delivery style

lessens the force of his warnings without detracting from the seriousness of the matter. U Roy's effective ramblings, successfully communicate a foundational principle of Rastafarianism: the Rastaman should never compromise his Rastafarian beliefs for any man or woman. In fact, U Roy's message is delivered in such a way – free of Rastafarian Dread-talk[37], but full of nation language, and all delivered in an up-beat tone – that his intended message to Rastafarians about the maintenance of their hair also has an impact on non-Rastafarian listeners. Surely all listeners, no matter their religion, can benefit from the secular and most basic moral of U Roy's lyrics: one should not change oneself to please another.

"Don't Cut Off Your Dreadlocks" takes a significant lyrical and production journey to arrive at "Joyful Locks" and the dub is largely successful in its capacity to connect with a larger audience than the original. Even today, forty years after its vinyl release into Jamaican dancehalls, "Joyful Locks" is still a popular record. Like U Roy's dub, the individual's love letters in "The Children of the Sea" are received by a much larger audience than the letter-writers intend, and certainly has had an enduring audience, lasting long after the male lover has gone to that grey vault at the bottom of the sea. Charting more similarities between the dub record here and the dub aesthetic at work in this short story, U Roy and the male lover (via Danticat) make public, orally and scribally, respectively, their private thoughts and by doing so the dub form and the postcolonial Caribbean epistolary both work to negotiate the blurry in-between space of the public/private dialectic. For Jamaica, Haiti, and for the Caribbean diaspora in general, this negotiation is further complicated by the question of belonging and identity. Writing letters from somewhere between Haiti and Miami, Florida, the male lover in

"The Children of the Sea" becomes the embodiment of the contemporary Caribbean's struggle for representation in multiple spaces: at home and in the diaspora. The sea receives his letters and we, the readers, are left to respond to the atrocities he put down on record. Danticat, like the dub engineer, has created a record to move the people to action.

The dub recording is, in its simplest explanation, a collection of fragments that maintains, if nothing else, the heartbeat rhythm of the drum and bass and the memory of a previously known melody. Taking the familiar "sea is history" and "Open Boat" and cutting and mixing the familiar history of the Middle Passage with the contemporary perils stirring in the Caribbean Sea, Danticat teases cultural memory. With the addition of deejay talk-over, the recording gains and offers new perspective on the subject. Similarly, Caribbean (literary) identity is, in its simplest explanation, a collection of fragments that maintains, if nothing else, the heartbeat rhythm of belonging and identity, and the memory of a continental home in Asia, Africa, or Europe.

Like the talk-over form in dub, the epistolary form in Danticat's short story represents an alternative representation of orality as the letters are, in effect, a conversation on the page or call and response presented in print. In *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (2007) Elizabeth DeLoughrey suggests a link between the letters and Brathwaite's "tidalectics," and there are still other ways to make sense of the genre's use in Danticat's contemporary text. Turning to some of the more recent debates on epistolary writing, many critics are inclined to argue that epistolary fiction was abandoned by writers in the 18th century because of its more obvious way of presenting character insight and subjectivity through whimsical streams of consciousness, but book history scholar Joe Bray in *The Epistolary Novel:*

Representations of Consciousness (2003) goes against this critical norm to suggest that the epistolary mode had a profound impact on the contemporary novel (1). And though the debate on what prior forms influenced the contemporary novel is an intriguing one, it is more germane for me to here examine why a contemporary Caribbean author would choose to present a short story in what Bray notes has been deemed a dead form. In his examination of consciousness in the epistolary novel in English, Bray argues that epistolary texts demonstrate a unique perspective on "the anxieties of identity and self," pointing out that they are able to "probe the recesses of their characters' minds in complicated depth, exploring with subtlety some of the critical tensions within, in Bakhtin's words, 'the internal life of the individual person'" (qtd. in Bray 20). This could have been Danticat's lure, as identity formulation and subjectivity are common tropes in Caribbean writing.

As I noted much earlier on in this chapter, "Children of the Sea" is not the only epistolary story in the *Krik? Krak!* collection. In "New York Day Women," the eighth story in the short story cycle, readers are met by a disorienting dialogue of interiority between Suzette, a daughter, and her unnamed mother. In this story the mother, a nanny, is unknowingly being observed by her daughter. As she observes her mother from a safe distance traversing the city and caring for her white male charge, it stirs Suzette to reflect upon her own complicated relationship with her mother and, through metaphor, Haiti. On the page, in an epistolary-like presentation, the daughter's descriptions record her mother's actions in a first person, present tense voice: "This mother of mine, she stops at another hot-dog vendor's and buys a frankfurter that she eats on the street. I never knew that she ate frankfurters" (150). The reader becomes disoriented, however, when the

daughter's stream of consciousness seems to float away from the present unfolding in front of her to a linked, remembered experience. Textually, these time lapses seem to trigger the entrance of the mother's voice on to the page, usually in the form of a Haitian folk saying or some other more deliberate note of comparison on Haitian traditions compared to American ones. Take for example a scene where Suzette sees her mother at a crosswalk and overhears a taxi driver yelling to another, Suzette comments: "My mother waits patiently for this dispute to be settled before crossing the street," the patience observed, of course, is partial to Suzette's perspective (146). Following this observation is the mother's voice: "In Haiti when you get hit by a car, the owner of the car gets out and kicks you for getting blood on his bumper." Then Suzette, now describing her mother when she said the aforementioned quote and not describing her mother who is currently at the crosswalk, states: "My mother who laughs when she says this and shows a large gap in her mouth…" (146). The insertion of the mother's voice confuses time, as it is not clear when the mother is making these remarks. The daughter's words betray her concerns for her mother's out-of-place-ness in an urban metropolis, but they also evidence her own fears of a lost Haitian cultural identity. The mother's voice, on the other hand, confidently uses the second person voice and seems to be in direct communication with her daughter regardless of time. "New York Day Women" creates a dub-like disorienting reader experience.

Like the epistolary form, the short story cycle too is an uncommon way of presenting contemporary fiction, but both continue to find some footing with Caribbean authors. Rocio Davis writes in *Telling Stories* (2001): "Choosing to write a short-story cycle is emblematic of the creative position of postcolonial writers, one that is almost an

optical illusion, being two things at the same time and creating total novelty; a metonym for their task of negotiating identity" (324). He goes on to draw links between the postcolonial short-story cycle and how the postcolonial subject is repeatedly building new communities. Davis demonstrates that "in its dynamic structure of connection and disconnection" a short-story cycle like *Krik? Krak!* effectively mirrors both the author's and the characters' existence within multiple communities. The cycle, as Davis puts it, paradoxically "struggle[s] between cohesion and fragmentation" (324). Quoting Davis at length, one may read the formal similarities between the reverberation quality of the dub aesthetic and some formal principles of a postcolonial short story-cycle like *Krik? Krak!*:

> While the fusion of the stories in the reader's imagination may effectively create a vision of community, the actual fact of the stories' independence, their individual closure and completion, may suggest the incapacity to unite. The concluding story of a cycle is the one that presents the most serious challenge, since it brings to fulfillment the recurrent patterns of the cycle and restates the thematic concerns of the preceding stories. Many of these are called 'return stories' and their concern is the passage of time, change and identity. (324)

While this dissertation does not focus on an exploration of the various possibilities for connecting the characters of each story, I will note that the final installation of *Krik? Krak!*, "Caroline's Wedding," which takes place in the Haitian diasporic space of Brooklyn, New York, brings together many of the disparate but inherently connected threads of the collection in all of the ways that Davis notes above. Readers receive an update about a boat that sailed away from Haiti bound for anywhere that held a passenger either very much like Célianne or who is the Célianne of "Children of the Sea." "We

make a special call today for a young woman whose name we don't know," says the priest in the Brooklyn church, "A young woman who was pregnant when she took a boat from Haiti and then later gave birth to her child on that boat. A few hours after the child was born, its precious life went out, like a candle in a storm, and the mother with her infant in her arms dived into the sea" (Danticat 167). "Some of us survive," reminds Burning Spear on both the original and dub version of "Slavery Days," and here too we must consider who or what might have survived. Indeed if this information and these details about this young woman's ordeal on that boat survived, the question to follow must be who (which passengers?) or what (was the male lover's journal found?) survived to tell this story? By reviving the memory and details of Célianne from "Children of the Sea," "Caroline's Wedding" can be read as a dub of the cycle's first installation. As but one example of the kinds of connections that can be made, one can see that the possibilities of reading a short story cycle through a dub aesthetic lens are limited only by the connections one can draw and the memories that are recalled.

Certainly the sea is history and the trope of the sea are powerful images for any scholar of the Caribbean, national of the Caribbean, or diasporan with roots in the Caribbean. Dub too has powerful imagery that can serve as inspiration and can stir feelings of return for Caribbeans abroad and for those adrift at home. The beat of the drum and the pulse of the bass in dub music echo the heart's rhythm. That dub sound is the womb sound and is the listener's earliest unconscious memory. Dub sound is, therefore, that which is most familiar to everyone. Not only is there the heart beat sound, but with the sonic layers of lyrics, melodies, and special techniques, – like stretching and fading, the talk-over of a deejay, the insertion of public sounds like a car tire screech, and

private sounds like a crying baby, or a bottle breaking – the sounds of familiar life are recorded on to the dub and played back for the listener in unfamiliar and unexpected ways. The layering of the known with the unknown, the familiar with the unexpected, the present with the past creates a Caribbean literary dialogue of a different sort. Here the Middle Passage experience is relived in *Krik? Krak!'*s "Children of the Sea" and the reader's teased memory of one of "Children of the Sea's" protagonist's marks the story "Caroline's Wedding" as a literary dub. Like so much contemporary Caribbean fiction, *Krik? Krak!* is fertile ground for applying the dub aesthetic lens, a lens that interrogates history and identity and recognizes the intertextuality and intertemporality present in a Caribbean existence.

Chapter Four

Babylon System Dub: Privilege and Its Consequences

> "The enemy is the past, of slavery and colonial neglect and a society uneducated from top to bottom; the enemy is the smallness of the islands and the absence of resources. Opportunism or borrowed jargon may define phantom enemies [….] But at the end the problems will be the same, of dignity and identity."
> -- V. S. Naipaul, *The Writer and the World*

> "In the West Indies generally, in Jamaica specifically, the label of colour can refer not only to blood, and not only to phenotype, but also to behaviours and, most critically, to social class, and social and economic power."
> -- Kim Robinson-Walcott, *Out of Order! Anthony Winkler and White West Indian Writing*

"Oppressive Dub," the working title of this chapter was revised in favor of "Babylon System Dub" for two reasons. First, rather than describing what I claim to be dub subject matter that focuses on systems of oppression, the considered title misleadingly described the dub sound as the oppressor. And, second, the former title did not gather the Rastafarian/ Jamaican/ global community of sufferers that "Babylon" evokes. For readers of the Old Testament, Babylon is the empire that conquered Israel and captured the Jews. For writers of the New Testament, Babylon becomes a metaphor for oppression. It is in this metaphorical space that Babylon continues to exist today, particularly for the global Rastafarian community. For Rastas, influenced by both the Bible and the repatriation philosophies of Marcus Garvey, Babylon describes all systems that subjugate black people.

Stepping into the voice of the Rasta, in *Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica* (2000) ethnographer and dancehall fan Norman C.

Stolzoff asks: "Was it not true that 90 percent of [Jamaica] was black, that blacks had built and suffered for the country, and that they had created the common culture of the society?" He answers the rhetorical question saying, "The only solution was to leave Babylon (the West and its utterly bankrupt system), in order to find Zion (heaven on earth) in the land of Ethiopia (sub-Saharan Africa)" (79). With an intentionally absent apostrophe "s" after Babylon that is meant to reflect the Jamaican language from which the phrase is born, this "Babylon System Dub" chapter takes all of this Rasta discourse into consideration.

The invocation of a privileged class in the chapter's subtitle is meant to indirectly highlight the existence of an underprivileged group. In Jamaica, for example, as Stolzoff points out, the 90 percent majority of the population is black and working class or below. Thus, arising from the oppositional framework that defines so much of Jamaica's and the Caribbean's colonial legacy[38], the consequence of having economic privilege in the Caribbean is discernable in the intense suspicion of brown and white[39] Caribbeans by the poor, black majority. Without material comforts or economic security, this majority group is poor but not bankrupt. The Caribbean elites recognize that the impoverished masses are the ones that, again, borrowing Stolzoff's language, "created the common culture of the society." From the Rasta community to the dancehall to C. L. R. James, Roger Mais, and Louise Bennett and the canonical Caribbean literary community, cultural production has been the dark, peasant majority's wealth. But what is the penalty of *this* privilege? In dub aesthetic terms, the consequence is relegation of middle class, brown, and white Caribbean experiences to the "B-side" of discourses of Caribbean authenticity.

The existence of a middle and upper class Caribbean coincides with the advent of a Caribbean literary canon. Unlike in the past, in the contemporary literary context black and brown middle class Caribbean writers no longer feel required to write the authentic experiences of the peasant and lower class. Instead, contemporary Caribbean writers and artists are giving their class stories; stories that *acknowledge* – without privileging one over the other –the multiple classes of their nations. Because of the history of working class authenticity, any examination of the Caribbean's middle class, therefore, is simultaneously an examination of the question what does it mean to belong to the Caribbean and is there something that is, discernibly, Caribbean authenticity. In my interrogation of the Caribbean's middle class, privilege, I suggest, has its consequences, namely the consequence of alienation and exclusion. This chapter examines race and class hierarchies as drum and bass constants that Caribbean authors find difficult to set aside.

When we consider the Caribbean's culture and arts, it is important to keep in mind the centrality of class in measuring authenticity. The traditional view grants the peasant class the privilege of producing cultural artifacts, while the elite class stands in opposition to this as European mimicry. Until Belinda Edmondson's recent study, *Caribbean Middlebrow: Leisure Culture and the Middle Class* (2009), little critical attention has been cast on this underappreciated segment of the Caribbean population. Edmondson posits that the middleclass, a term used to describe those more privileged economically, operates on two axes: "aspirational culture, or a desire for higher social standing; and authenticating culture, or a desire to connect with working-class culture. These aspects are sometimes the same thing, though not always" (10-11). She argues

that there are alternative representations of culture that exists in the underacknowledged space between the rooted peasant class and the European-minded elite class. As a class "dissociated from many of the 'lowbrow' cultural traditions of the black peasantry," Edmondson explains, "they were also at odds with the politics and attitudes of the white ruling elite" (23). Thus, in the same way that I argue a need for a dub aesthetic lens, Edmondson makes the claim for toppling this cultural production binary in favor of locating Caribbean authenticity across the board and, more to her purposes, in that middle ground that "combines the literary *with* the performative" (6, my emphasis). Contemporary Caribbean writers, like author Colin Channer, upon whom Edmondson relies heavily, have been departing from the working-class authenticity model of the canon's literary history toward a representation of Caribbeanness as being inherent in all nationals and diasporans. In that vein and in regard to reading and writing in particular, Edmondson goes on to note that middlebrow "leisure culture" and literature, that which is produced by and representative of the middle class, has a critically worthwhile capacity to reflect "the myriad and interlocking facets of the Caribbean class and culture dialectic" (10).

Despite her middle class background and her middle class writing, Trinidad's Marion Patrick Jones is not mentioned in Edmondson's study of the Caribbean middlebrow. As a fiction writer Marion Patrick Jones tackled middlebrow leisure culture and questions of authenticity in the Caribbean's minority middle class population some thirty years before Belinda Edmondson's study. In this chapter, I make the claim for a re-exploration of a text like *Pan Beat* (1973) as an essentially middle class and middlebrow literary investigation. As a black middle class, the characters of *Pan Beat*

demonstrate the alienated side of class privileging. The dub aesthetic gives scholars the opportunity to make sense of privilege along a continuum of change rather than that of progress. By establishing *Pan Beat* as a complementary rather than alternative "B-Side" text, I argue that Jones' unique perspective on Caribbean, but specifically Trinidadian, authenticity dubs old *Minty Alley*-like records by muting previously idealized peasant harbingers of authenticity and amplifying the middle class's voice. *Pan Beat* also, arguably, creates middle class characters that serve as dubs of Haynes' middle class original. Earline, Louis, Denise and the other characters of *Pan Beat* might be read, therefore, as "successive generations" of a Haynes type (Veal 64). Even though Jones' middle class characters are not perfect, *Pan Beat* provides, what I term through the dub aesthetic, an "outcasts' dub" and is valuable as a critique of a fledgling middle class full of possibilities in pre-Independence Trinidad.

I move the discussion of privilege from a Trinidadian middle class to a Jamaican middle class with white Jamaican author, Diana McCaulay. McCaulay is the author of *Dog-Heart* (2010), a gritty and emotional novel set in the very recent past of Jamaica's post-Independent new millennium. The story is voiced by both a middle class brown woman and a ghetto black boy. The two characters meet in a car park under typical circumstances and the im/possibility of binding each one's life to the other dredges up the colonial binaries that seem never to have left in the first place. McCaulay's "B-Side" portrayal of this unlikely and certainly forced inter-class relationship gives readers a new perspective on an old topic. Similarly, from his racially privileged position as white, Jamaican comic author Anthony Winkler's work should be deemed "B-Side" literature in that his very authorship explodes the "A-Side" elite/peasant binary. Winkler's

indisputably Jamaican – that is, black, working-class Jamaican[40] – narrative voice is complicated by Winkler's white skin in his autobiographically in formed *Going Home to Teach* (2005). Using the dub aesthetic to analyze these texts reveals that there are limited behavioral models for the Caribbean subject who is in the alienated position of being racially and economically privileged: either celebrate one's position of legitimate privilege, suffer under the guilt of trying to right the wrongs of an inherited legacy of inequality and brutality, or fully accept the history of colonialism as a past from which to move away. All three writers express the difficulty of divorcing oneself from the colonial imprint and they question the designation of racial and economic privilege that is assigned to their white and brown bodies. The consequences of privilege outweigh the material rewards.

Using a dub approach to examine contemporary Caribbean fictions that express a distinctly middle class or white/brown Caribbean experience, one can better recognize the limited progress being made in Caribbean communities at home and abroad with regard to racial and economic perception and equality. Put another way, when it comes to race and class relations, the "Babylon System Dub" features limited mut(e)ations and limited repairs because the colonial legacy remains.

The Outcast's Dub

I begin this chapter's literary analysis with a critical interrogation of Marion Patrick Jones' grossly underappreciated novel *Pan Beat* (1973). While it is not a recent publication, my analysis of Jones' work is lengthy as I regard her exploration of middlebrow subjects and their pre-Independence anxieties about rootlessness and

belonging as an essential B-Side perspective on middle class alienation. By their very positioning outside of the majority, the middle class record is an outcast's dub. Marion Patrick Jones, a Trinidadian author who like her characters is born into her middle class positioning, presents in *Pan Beat* an uncommon view of marginalization: the fledgling black middle class. Superficially, it is about a circle of friends, or more accurately, several couples whose lives were once joined through steel pan and puppy-love but later merely run parallel to one another. In a moment of interiority, however, the former beauty queen and purveyor of "modern West Indian" paintings, Denise Jenkins, who also happens to be the widow of the lower class ally Louis Jenkins, wonders if she and her husband were born at a time that trapped them between their grandparents' poverty and an undetermined future of potential. Denise wonders: "If we had had the poverty of our grandparents, then we would hardly have time for the frustrations we all go through. It is just that Trinidad is not yet our own place, we love it and feel for it and work in it, but we still have the feeling that in this world we are really only outcasts" (138). Viewing herself as an "outcast," Denise bespeaks the unguided experience of being a part of Trinidad's black middle class in the 1960s. Long since freed from the bondage of slavery, and two generations removed from economic depravity, Denise and her peers represent a middle class teeming with potential but lacking direction. Paralleling this "middled"-class confusion is the limbo-state of Trinidad: not wanting to tread backwards, but still uncertain of how to define its presence in the future. For the no-longer poor but not-quite rich middle class and for the not-quite a colony but not yet independent Trinidad, the 1940s stand as a critical historical moment in which self-definition is paramount. Both Trinidad and her middle class yearn to move beyond the legacy from

which they came and wish to resist the dominant forces that have the power to subsume them. This leaves both Trinidad and her middle class with the task of identifying "meaning in [their] existence (138).

Marion Patrick Jones' text explores a host of Caribbeanist tropes: class and national identity, gender inequalities, domesticity, and the role of women in nation building and politics. Despite, however, the diverse and traditionally Caribbean literary themes presented in her novel, Jones' work remains under-read. The dub aesthetic brings new attention to this text and analyzes it as both a dub of prior middleclass/ middle brow writing, and also as a template for middle class examinations that followed *Pan Beat*'s publication. Within the framework of post-colonial scholarship and the canon of Caribbean literature, *Pan Beat* examines the "ex-colonised subaltern class" and the potential they possess (Donnell 3). Unlike many of her wider-known contemporaries who contribute to the canon literature with a working-class perspective, Marion Patrick Jones re-imagines marginality and considers the peripheral-nature of the 1940s black middle class through a middle class perspective. While critics such as Harold Barratt describe Jones' work as "authentically Trinidadian;" unfortunately, there remains little criticism written on *Pan Beat* or her second middle class work, *J'Ouvert Morning* (1976) (239). In fact, both have been out of print for decades. As a result *Pan Beat* has not received sufficient critical study.

By focusing on the middle class Marion Patrick Jones' *Pan Beat* offers a distinctly non-working class view of life and struggles in Trinidad. This novel characterizes the middle class at a particular decade in the specific location of Trinidad. The intentional narrowness of the novel's perspective echoes the limitations of the

characters. Facing independence, the nation is expected to define itself for and defend itself against the world; and this is the microcosmic task of the middle class in Jones' text. Just as the middle class focus in *Pan Beat* bespeaks the anxiety of defining identity and belonging in a nation on the brink of independence, this class' experience also raises questions of positionality in a wider Caribbean. What it means to belong to a Caribbean literary canon is to interrogate regional identity, national citizenship, linguistic histories, colonial legacies, as well as class and race politics. While on the one hand Marion Patrick Jones' *Pan Beat* is representative of a *Caribbean* middle class experience, it is the middle class's marginal demographic representation that serves to marginalize this text from the canon. Because literary canons are created under the auspices of broad incorporation across time and place *Pan Beat*'s narrow perspective on a class group that is already itself marginalized, has, arguably, led to its exclusion from study. On the other hand, the twentieth-century canon of Caribbean literature has developed along the same time line as the development and questioning of the nation, thus privileging inclusivity and majority perspectives. Including *Pan Beat* within the canon is necessary not only because of its unique middle class perspective but because of the novel's parallels with the nation. Reading *Pan Beat* under these auspices should encourage critics to seek out other under-acknowledged texts for inclusion in studies on the difficult position of privilege in the Caribbean region and its literature. Belinda Edmondson's *Caribbean Middlebrow* proves to be a laudable first step, but more recovery must be done. Reading the middle class as a mirror of the almost-nation, this text complicates what it means to belong to either. I employ the dub aesthetic as a framework for altering the record on

middle class marginalization, consequently moving *Pan Beat* from the B-Side of the Caribbean canon, if you will, to the A-Side through focused analysis.

Pan Beat records the struggle of the burgeoning middle class. The intrigue of the novel resides in the temporality and locationality of the novel and its characters. Set in Trinidad on the cusp of independence, the novel allows Jones' to put the middle class under relentless scrutiny. Unlike traditional Caribbean texts that look back to the protagonists' ancestral beginnings, *Pan Beat* explicitly interrogates the contemporary moment of the 1940s for the lower middle class Trinidadian. It is in this historical moment that the protagonists, a group of "sixth form middle class" young men, make the rebellious choice to ignore class restrictions and form a steelband (2). Today, the choice of a middle class or otherwise privileged group of young men or women to form a pan group would be wholly unremarkable. But, at a time when pan was still associated with the lower classes and not yet incorporated as a respectable Trinidadian national (in the most inclusive and equalizing sense of the word national) form of expression, the protagonists' choice to form a pan group is a bold one. Despite, however, the political consciousness made evident in their extra-curricular activity, Jones' middle class characters fail to assert agency. In his introduction to the novel Andrew Salkey identifies this as exemplifying the "abject failure of the new Trinidadian middle class" because of their inability to authentically define and unite themselves or focus their economic and political potential toward a life of "meaning in existence" (138). Marginalized within a pre-Independence Trinidad, the middle class characters of *Pan Beat* interrogate identity and what it means to belong. Thus *Pan Beat* asks the question: how can the middle class belong to a nation that does not yet belong to itself?

Highlighting the under-read work of Marion Patrick Jones takes on greater importance today as the literary canon continues to wrestle with issues of representation and belonging. As a retrospective canon, Caribbean literature has consistently been haunted by the prior space. Be it India or Africa, much of the twentieth century's Caribbean texts make strong acknowledgements of the broken past, uprootings, and migrations. Defining the place of history in the literature remains the fundamental point of contention between Caribbean giants Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott. While Brathwaite privileges creolization as a process that recovers the past and the authentic Afro-Caribbean cultural experience, Walcott asserts the necessity of Caribbean mimicry of all models of influence (Pollard 32-40). In "Muse of History" Derek Walcott posits that the New World man is "Adamic" (37) and because of his beginnings in the New World he should embrace his full New World history and the various cultures and histories that created the New World by not privileging one continental influence over another as Brathwaite does. For Walcott, there are many pasts that contribute to the Caribbean, thus, to borrow dub aesthetic terms, to amplify an African past to the detriment of European influences is an inaccurate revisionist mut(e)ation meant only to subvert colonial privilege. In *Pan Beat* Jones puts forth a middle class that is, ostensibly, Adamic, as its potential is in its present existence. However, as a text that fails to display an awareness of history and as a novel that cannot successfully locate an Adamic middle class voice, *Pan Beat* positions itself tenuously between the viewpoints of Brathwaite and Walcott. The writer's connection to these canonically prolific authors does not stop there as *Pan Beat*'s aggressive break from the past coupled with Jones' use of the stream of consciousness form, a writing style that Salkey describes as "disjointed, abrupt and

fragmented," also works to position Jones *amongst* Walcott and Brathwaite as a modernist writer. The recent interest in postcolonial modernism by scholars such as J. Michael Dash (1998) and Charles Pollard (2004) gives credence to a need for the re-examination of Marion Patrick Jones' outcast text.

Pan Beat's middle class characters are defined by their education and material possessions. Their parents' economic successes afford them the middle class privilege of not knowing what it is to suffer or struggle. Alternately, this privilege also comes with the curse of rootlessness and unbelonging. While all of the characters are economically privileged, Jones' novel portrays a failed and fractured class. Earline Hill, the character around whom the bulk of *Pan Beat* unfolds, raises questions of home and rootedness only after leaving the "claustrophobia" of Trinidad for the anonymity of London and New York (11). The novel takes off when she returns to the island with the desire to revisit her memories of the space. Through one-on-one dates with only a few old band members, Earline uses gossip to assess the successes and failures of the rest of her former friends. Yet she never attempts to reassemble the band of friends she once adored— the Flamingoes. Never again re-membered, the group disappears and the fragments of information she gathers and the fragmentation of the group represent the novel's critique of the middle class.

Their inability to unite hinders their ability to succeed as a group and it is often through a mediated perspective that we learn the lives of the other central characters. Alan and Marjorie Hastings and Tony Joseph live complacently in Trinidad. Dave Chow went to England where he studied and published, but later committed suicide. Leslie Oliver, seemingly as a result of Dave's death, became a priest in Trinidad. These

characters, with little or no political interests and barely able to assert agency over their own lives, exemplify the stagnation of the class. But Louis Jenkins and his wife Denise, the two characters I will focus on in this essay, choose art as a vehicle through which to pursue "meaning in existence" (138). Ultimately, though, just as with their less political friends, they too fail. Using art as a vehicle for asserting both class and national identity, *Pan Beat* complicates the criteria for belonging by suggesting that imitation is not a viable route to self-definition. Class identity, like national identity, cannot simply be mounted on the beliefs of another. The grass-roots or folk-class' historical longevity make it an appealing anchor; but when the middle class inserts itself in the traditions of the lower class it fails. When the middle class attempts to fit itself onto the dominant framework of Europe or America it fails. Not daring to assert a voice of its own, the potential of the middle class is silenced. Providing an alternative representation of marginalization and voicelessness, *Pan Beat* depicts a middle class searching for agency, identity, and belonging in art.

Beating a steel pan or steel drum has roots in a defiant and politicized history. Traditionally an instrument of the impoverished lower class, pan beaters throughout the late 19th and early 20th century played pan as a way of circumventing the Peace Preservation Ordinance of 1884, which banned the play of traditional African drums made of goat-skins (Stuempfle 30). With upper class resistance to the art form pan thrived in the lower ranks of society. In the decades leading to Trinidad's independence, steel pan orchestras gained in numbers and made headway in its acceptance into the mainstream, national consciousness. In fact, as I alluded to earlier, the pan music and calypso music that today are synonymous with Trinidad were built out of a rebellious

creativity on the part of the lower class and a self-serving series of negotiations on the part of the controlling powers. In *The Steelband Movement* (1996), ethnomusicologist Stephen Stuempfle explains that the upper classes had little power to silence the vibrant musical revelry that has come to represent Trinidad's identity today. Instead of continuing to fight small and impossible battles against the varied lot of Carnival percussionists —ranging from bamboo stick players (bamboo tamboo) to steel drum beaters— the "chaos and threat of grass-roots street festival could best be controlled by redefining the event [Carnival] as a traditional Trinidadian celebration suitable for the enjoyment of the general public" (31). By 1946 advocates of pan music began anticipating the steel pan's importance to Trinidad's national identity (83). Thus, rather than continuing to oppose pan, the upper classes elected to absorb pan into a national art form born of the people. Given this history the fictionalized development of *Pan Beat*'s Flamingoes band cannot be read casually, rather it must be read as a political gesture.

By establishing the Flamingoes, the seemingly non-threatening name that the protagonists give to their steelband, these middle class friends directly engage in a culturally rooted and colonially provocative folk tradition. In "Researching Steelband and Calypso Music in the British Caribbean and the U. S. Virgin Islands" (1994), renowned calypsonian and scholar Hollis Urban "Chalkdust" Liverpool explains that in pan as it is in calypso, the band's choice in name is as important as their choice to play because the name that the calypso or pan band selects represents how they view their "role and function" in the society, the pan yards, and if successful enough to qualify, in the Carnival performances (Liverpool 190). Prefiguring independence by naming the band "Flamingoes," *Pan Beat* directly inserts these middle class young people into

representations of national identity as the flamingo, or Scarlet Ibis, is not only indigenous to Trinidad but in 1962 found permanence on Trinidad and Tobago's coat of arms. Similarly, Marion Patrick Jones subtly inserts that Louis, the unspecified organizer of the Flamingoes band, has a steel pan that is decorated with "red and black stripe[s]," the very colors and pattern that have represented the people and the nation on the flag[41] of Trinidad and Tobago since independence in 1962 (*Pan Beat* 2). Of course these coincidences are not coincidences. The Flamingoes pan band becomes an artistic vehicle for exploring black middle class apprehensions and questions of identity and belonging. These middle class pan players want to be included in the shaping of the nation but, as Hollis Liverpool ("Chalkdust") makes clear, this pan history is steeped in working-class traditions. Laudably, the Flamingoes desire cultural representation: however, the band fails because they neglect the working-class history of pan and offer no uniquely middle class symbol for the nation.

With no worn paths or predecessors to model, Denise's earlier monologue identifies a middle class that has the desire to fit into the nation, but is paralyzingly "self-conscious" of how to do so most apparently because they fear public scrutiny, which in *Pan Beat* is portrayed in the judgment of gossipers. In fact, if the experiences of Earline Hill, the central character who has returned to Trinidad after ten years of dividing herself between New York and London, are any indication of national symbols, gossip would rank above all else as the class leveling marker of national identity. Claiming to have returned to Trinidad to find herself and discover her roots, Earline spends her extended stay in Trinidad gathering and comparing second-hand and out-of-date information about the lives of the former members of the Flamingoes (10). Writing to her secretly

estranged and homosexual husband, Harold, Earline echoes Denise's "self-consciousness," by vulnerably stating in her letter that she is confident that her old friends "must be gossiping about [her] and the things [she has] done or failed to do when [she] was away" (17). Showing technical range, the epistolary form in *Pan Beat* further highlights the ways that private moments are constantly made public in the Trinidad space. Earline continues her letter by acknowledging gossip as the "most disgusting thing about we Trinidadians" (17). Her complicity, of course, lies in her willingness to contribute to the oral pandemic; but, interestingly, the pairing of gossip with Trinidadianness tethers her comfortably and securely to a national community and makes her equally "as bad as the rest" (17).

As the upper- and middle classes perceive it, pan beaters played because they lacked monetary access to colonially-approved string instruments. Not the case for the Flamingoes,[42] they scheduled time outside of school, outside of Latin homework and French poetry to play pan for the pleasure of the sound, the challenge of creating new beats, and, more importantly, so that they might belong to a national legacy. Liverpool contextualizes the resistance history of pan music and calypso as originating in the West African griot tradition whereby song was often used to express protest against or praise of the ruling class (180). Out of this tradition that survived the cross-Atlantic enslavement and colonial bondage in the New World, the steelpan or pan came into existence. The sound that Louis sought to produce in the Flamingoes and the music that makes Earline "dizzy and weepy with emotion" is the music of the almost-nation (*Pan Beat* 16). Liverpool describes the care and precision needed to produce a pan, starting first with "oil drums [or, as seen in *Pan Beat*, dustbin lids], burned, grooved, and tuned to concert

pitch with pans ranging ambiguously from bass, baritone, and alto to the tenor and soprano" (180). He then moves into a discussion about the art form's ties to neo-imperialism and commodity: "By the 1940s [dustbins] gave way to drums of steel (*Port of Spain Gazette*, February 2, 1940, 7), which were found to possess better resonance and tone and which were discarded by the oil companies and the U.S. military forces stationed in Trinidad. Here again one can see a link with the outside, for as U.S. and British corporations then monopolized the British Caribbean oil industry, they provided the citizens with large oil drums that were turned by the lower classes into musical instruments" (189). This additional layer of pan development gives further credence to the pan as a symbol of national identity as pan drumming reminds the nation of the cultural legacy. Their ability to transform refuse into a unique brand of music bespeaks the resilience of the people. The steel pan holds enormous symbolic value for the nation and leaves little room to wonder why the Flamingoes wish to belong to this history.

In *Pan Beat* art becomes the vehicle through which the characters can move in *and* out of a national identity. The pan and the pan player therefore provide a lens through which one can examine both class and national identity. Critical to this argument is that the Jenkins couple lives Behind the Bridge (a fictionalized Port of Spain) amongst the urban poor. In this living environment the two live in a house that is built "near to the street" and suggestive of Louis' desire to be with "the people" (124). Interestingly, Louis and Denise's move to Behind the Bridge draws distinct parallels to Haynes' move to the Minty Alley barrack-yard in C. L. R. James' *Minty Alley* (1936), a critical canonical antecedent. Out of place as a middle class character, Haynes migrates down the social and economic ladder because he can no longer afford to pay for the house left

to him by his mother. Occupying a single-room in a boarding house, Haynes' perspective mediates the readers understanding of intimacy and poverty in the lower class lives around him. His middle class vantage point is often represented in his observation of activities through a peephole or listening to the sounds beyond his door. In *Minty Alley* Haynes' view as an outsider and his higher class position serve as a reminder of the middle class' narrative power and responsibility. Kenneth Ramchand, in his introduction to *Minty Alley*, highlights the novel's ability to show the educated West Indian's alienation from the people (13). Moreover, the fact that middle class author C. L. R. James himself moved to a barrack-yard for the ethnographic purpose of living amongst the lower class to which he did not actually belong but about whom he wanted to write, is viewed as "middle class slumming" by Ramchand (13). Not working-class himself, James saw great national and social value in exploring working-class lives because the "grass-roots people," he believed, were the lifeblood of the Trinidadian culture (Dance 232).

To better contextualize C. L. R. James' writing choices it is worthwhile to note that his career followed on the heels of the Afro-West Indian intellectual boom in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As Roberto Márquez (*Modern Caribbean* 1989: 304) points out, the elite group of Afro-West Indians emerging at this time was keenly aware of systematic attempts to racially subordinate them, while also being proud descendants of the formerly enslaved masses. As such, James worked and wrote to give voice to the unheard masses. Seeking social reform and unselfishly representing the voiceless majority, the Afro-West Indian intellectuals are the class of people who later challenged the colonial system and put Trinidad, among other colonies, on the formal road to

independence (305). Out of this historic class of intellectuals emerged C. L. R. James. His early career and the working-class subject matter of his literary works in many ways provided a model for future Caribbean writers. The first half of the twentieth-century's literature, inclusive of James, displays a non-colonial sentiment that privileged the previously unheard dialect voice of the yard- or the barrack-dwellers (Donnell 1996: 29). As a predecessor to Marion Patrick Jones and a key figure in the establishment of Caribbean literature, James uses his middle class privilege to make visible the experiences of the proletariat masses – thus setting him in stark contrast to Jones and her middle class interests. Marion Patrick Jones' emergence later complicates this schema. Groundbreaking in her own right, Jones writes in the 1950s and 1960s and publishes *Pan Beat* post-independence with what I believe to be the goal of inserting a literary voice that had a middle class perspective *on* the middle class itself.

Pan Beat gives voice to the middle class' own struggle for identity and belonging despite being set in a time when middle class writers were busily giving voice to the lower class. In *Pan Beat* Louis Jenkins is, in many ways, a re-imagining of the risk of being the outcast and the out of place middle class artist/activist that is put forth in *Minty Alley*. In *Minty Alley* Haynes inserts himself into lower class discourse by attempting to quell relationship squabbles in the boarding house. More provocatively, as a member of the Flamingoes, Louis in *Pan Beat* wants to belong to a national tradition. As a community advisor he directly engages with the lower class authentic pan players. Louis held meetings in his home and sparked debates on the streets, all with the goal of bettering his community. But despite Louis' suggestion that the pan men not fight to gain Carnival rights, the John John neighborhood pan men still chose to attack Piccadilly

neighborhood band and the casualties were high (139). With broken bottles and machetes the men fought blindly to assert power and determine which camp would play at carnival. Unfortunately for Louis and his cause, John John attacked Piccadilly in Louis's home where Piccadilly had gathered for a peaceful meeting. Louis received a blind blow from someone, a slash across his face, and died with a knife in his back (140). Seemingly betrayed by those whom he longed to belong to, Louis' death magnifies the danger of claiming a space which is not one's own. He moves to Behind the Bridge and attempts to insert himself into the possibilities – and the problems—of the lower class but as a middle class man, he does not belong.

Having traveled throughout Europe, Latin America and the United States, Louis returned to Trinidad with the intention of dedicating his life to help build a nation worth living in, one with a more equal society. But Louis, despite his potential and goals, was, as Denise describes, "a boy with a hell of a lot of talent [that] had just fizzled out along the way" (130). "He nearly got a scholarship, he nearly got through his American degree: he was as brilliant as the rest of them, he was just one of those people who never quite made it" (130-1). Louis' potential, like the middle class' potential, is not enough to change reality. He is unable to securely position himself within the nation because at this time, still under colonial power, Trinidad's middle class lacks a political voice. Louis Jenkins, the middle class man who consistently aligned himself with the consciousness, artistry, and strife of the folk, arguably dies not just because of his imitative communist ideals, but because of his imitative lower class beliefs. *Pan Beat* argues for an authenticity that Louis does not have. He appropriates lower class pan playing and he inserts himself into their community in order to find himself. Louis' death, therefore,

represents the impossibility of imitation to produce a middle class worthy of incorporation into the nation. His lack of authority to enforce change within the lower classes demonstrates a middle class not yet ready or able to lead; which carefully parallels a Trinidad that is on the cusp of independence and working through its own leadership anxieties. He envisioned for the future of Trinidad a perfect society free of hierarchies and full of equality, one where "we would all work for nothing and build a community to be proud of" (131). As a further critique of national identity and class stratifications, Louis' death can likewise be interpreted as the impossibility of a communist regime in Trinidad, given that the success of communism would ideally result in the death of all classes.

After his death the public scrutiny and gossip-like judgment of the national newspaper, the *Guardian*, inserts another layer of betrayal. Dismissing Louis' attempt at a life of meaning (albeit imitative), the paper publishes a dismissive account of his sudden death. Referring to Louis Jenkins as a "well known trouble-maker" because of his communist leanings, they blamed him for the violent and frequent quarrels that had erupted in the lower class yards. With his death, the *Guardian* writes of a return to order in the yard: "the men at John John and Piccadilly would return to useful jobs instead of spending their time idling and beating pan" (140). Suspicious of his motivations to live amongst a class not his own, the newspaper report boldly asserts that Louis' removal from the yard would return stability Behind the Bridge. Having adopted communist perspectives through his travels in Europe, Latin America, and the United States, Louis attempts to insert the political views of outsiders into Trinidad and fails. Longing to be a part of what C. L. R. James considered the lifeblood of the nation, Louis moved to the

yard but this did not result in the desired incorporation. He is instead expelled. Drawing from the multiple sources and the varied legacies that make his Trinidad, Louis chooses to imitate the art of the pan playing lower class and he subscribes to the politics of the Europeans. Arguably, Louis takes up Walcott's proposal of the Adamic New World man. But even if on an individual level Louis does represent a Walcott model for negotiating Caribbean identity, Louis's death is symbolic of the *middle class's* failure.

Following his death, Louis' widow, Denise Jenkins, does not remain in the barrack-yard of Behind the Bridge. Though she chose to marry Louis because of his principles and his promise to give her a "whole new Trinidad," without him she flees the yard (131). Denise accepted Louis' promise because she believed in the idea of political and national change, and as long as he was alive the potential for change seemed possible. The death of her husband at the hands of the lower class, however, shifts Denise's confidence. She removes herself from the lower class space and returns to the middle class home of an aunt where she maintains distance between herself and the life her husband lived amongst the folk. She widens the space between herself and the yard masses when she refers to them as "no-good niggers" and sees Louis' dream as foolish (142). As quickly as she abandoned her home, she abandons Louis' idealism and in the new space of the suburbs, Denise does not look back to her past life again.

Denise's retreat from the yard is also the moment that she chooses to give up her successful career as a painter, drawing the suspicion that her inspiration for art came from her proximity to the lower class community. As readers we never get full descriptions of Denise's paintings but Earline mediates that Denise's art simply transitioned from being depictions of "little girls with yellow hair and pink stockings" to paintings of yellow

haired little girls in brown stockings (65). This scene recalls for me V. S. Naipaul's reaction, in *Middle Passages*, to art and billboard advertising in Trinidad and the Caribbean. At an Art Society Exhibition Naipaul describes local painters as moving from "primitivism to modernism" in their color choice (Naipaul 58). Naipaul quotes Jamaica's Edna Manley, who in judging a local art exhibit could not believe that the artist drew market vendors with "yellow hair, pink faces, and even blue eyes," given that Caribbean market vendors were almost exclusively brown and black in hair and skin color (Naipaul 59). In the fictional Trinidad of *Pan Beat*, Denise garners attention for her choice to shift colors from pink-legged girls to brown-legged girls. This ultimately wins her a write-up in the national newspaper, where the *Guardian* lauded her as "one of the most important of the artists representing the New West Indian school," calling her paintings "mulatto art" because it "combined the best of the old world with the best of the traditions of the negroes" a description not unlike those given to pan as a creolized music (65). Her art is praised as mirroring the people of the nation because she now reflects the yellow-hair and brown legs of creolization, not the pink-legged girls of Europe. Like in Naipaul's observations, Denise chooses to modify the traditional colors and elevates her art from "primitivism to modernism." She chooses to call her art "*modern* West Indian art" (65, my emphasis) and reinserts questions of modernism in *Pan Beat* soliciting the question: would *Pan Beat* also receive the title "modern West Indian art"? As the introspective character in the novel, Denise often highlights the potential not only of the middle class but of the text to provide alternative readings of the nation and the region.

Returning now to Denise's interior monologue mentioned at the beginning of this exploration of *Pan Beat* essay, it is Denise who identifies the challenge of establishing a unique middle class position in a society that is not yet a nation. Denise speculates:

> If we had had the poverty of our grandparents, then we would hardly have time for the frustrations we all go through. It is just that Trinidad is not yet our own place, we love it and feel for it and work in it, but we still have the feeling that in this world we are really only outcasts. […] With us lies the most difficult task of all: breaking through the barrier that still lies between us and a life of meaning. […] We were the first ones with a real chance, and most of us have got all the material things of living, yet we thresh ourselves about, wearing ourselves out, trying to build up our little selves by the foolish process of changing our cars each year or getting a new fridge. […] Some future generation […] will not need to be self-conscious about art, or about music, nor to be ashamed of them; they will simply be part of the pan and the calypso and our hills and our stars. (138)

Denise critiques the mindset of pre-Independence Trinidad's middle class as having a misguided investment in the material possibilities of disposable income and a lesser interest in developing a nation of inclusion. The "barrier between us and a life of meaning" that Denise references is the barrier that keeps the middle class from a feeling of belonging within this pre-nation still divided by class. Because of this they become passively alienated from the other classes and from the nation that is slowly building and changing around them. Unsure of how to change the ideology that positioned them here, they turn to consumerism to change what they can. They buy car or a "new fridge" and they passively plan to sit back and wait for inclusion if not for themselves then for "some

future generation." For Denise Jenkins and for *Pan Beat* what it means to be a black middle class Trinidadian in the 1940s is frighteningly unguided. Similarly, so is Trinidad's march to sovereignty (Haiti's independence left no mold to follow in the twentieth century). Denise's postulations solicit questions not only of class identity (i.e., what does it mean to be middle class?), but, moreover, questions of responsibility (i.e., what *should* be the responsibilities of the middle class?). Ultimately, Denise wonders if in pre-independence Trinidad it is possible for the disconnected middle class to find "meaning in [their] existence" and establish a position that is neither imitative of the lower class nor imitative of European models (138).

Pan Beat advocates for a middle class authenticity but this middle class fails because it fails to realize its potential. Jones' novel removes the C. L. R. James inscribed grass-roots, proletariat as the mirror of national potential. The working-class protagonists consistently found throughout the post-1930s canon in the works of writers such as Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, V. S. Naipaul, and Erna Brodber, to name but a few, are replaced in *Pan Beat* by a group of educated, middle class friends. While *Pan Beat* presents failed claims to a middle class identity or middle class agency, Jones' text should be recognized for its daring leap into unchartered literary territory. In his discussion of Derek Walcott, Roberto Márquez refers to the "tension between alienation and opportunity" that underscores the Caribbean experience (*Modern Caribbean* 1989: 293). The dialectic of this tension surfaces, he suggests, when the Caribbean subject – be it nation, class, canon, or individual— lays claim to a particular identity. By exploring class identity, *Pan Beat* treads the line of this tension though it never quite resolves the question of belonging.

Just as the white creole experience in the Caribbean differs extensively from the black creole's history, *Pan Beat* emphasizes the class heterogeneity within creolization by representing the atypical narrative perspective of the middle class *on* the middle class. The last one hundred years of the canon reflects shifts in what Édouard Glissant (1997) names the "poetics of relation." Moving first from the center to the periphery Caribbean literature began with white Caribbean writers whose work expressed no interest in the working-class. The trajectory, as Glissant explains, then shifts direction and moves from the periphery to the center. Thus, with the second wave of literature in the 1930s, non-white Trinidadian writers took up the task of giving voice to the subaltern folk. By the 1950s and 1960s migration literature reflected the authors' patterns of flight. Marion Patrick Jones, publishing in 1973, inserted herself into the Caribbean women writers' movement. Unlike the majority of writers who published post-1930, Jones' text does not explore issues of poverty, links to prior spaces, or explicit colonially installed oppression. Jones writes instead in a telescoped present that is uncommon to the canon; perhaps so uncommon that it gets cast aside. This singular representation of an outcast and undefined middle class in her writing does, however, link to Glissant's ultimate trajectory in the poetics of relation such that the writer's word "makes every periphery into a center" (29). By using a dub approach to analyze the middle class's shortcomings and aspirations in Marion Patrick Jones' *Pan Beat*, I re-position who in Caribbean literature is read/heard in the foreground and who can literarily represent the nation.

Same Class, Same Dub

Published some thirty-five years after *Pan Beat*, Diana McCaulay's *Dog-Heart* (2010) fictionalizes Jamaica's brown middle class as having as awkward a connection to nation and the other classes as Jones's Trinidadian black middle class has. Set in Kingston in the new millennium, *Dog-Heart* is, on the surface, a novel about an orphaned "uptown brown woman" who, after an encounter in a car park with a beggar youth, decides to invest in bettering the life of a "*black ghetto boy*" (McCaulay 40). As readers, we are initially drawn in by the possibility that, following her maternal instinct, protagonist Sahara Lawrence is simply devastated that a child has to beg for money for his family to eat each day; thus setting up a rationale for why Sahara opts to feed, clothe, and educate Dexter, a pet name of her self-chosen charity-case, Raymond Morrison. But, for her generosity, McCaulay does not cast Sahara in the warm light of a hero to the poor.

As we learn more about Sahara, who as a child was abandoned by her English father, orphaned upon the death of her black Jamaican mother, and unwanted by her relatives, and who as an adult sees herself as a brown middle class woman "with no social status [and] little money" (30), it is psychoanalytically easy to locate the self-healing intentions at work in her assisting Dexter. However, either of these motivations would be, at most, tangential to *Dog-Heart*'s main evocation, which I argue is the examination of the causes and effects of middle class liberal guilt in a predominantly working class Caribbean country like Jamaica. In the end, *Dog-Heart* shows that even into the 21st century, it is difficult for the middle class Caribbean to establish a position of meaning and lasting influence, one that is neither imitative of the lower class nor imitative of Babylon system's models of couched oppression.

My reading of Sahara as a middle class representative is largely guided by the critical work of scholar and media giant, Aggrey Brown and his seminal text *Color, Class, and Politics in Jamaica* (1979). Brown argues that the plantation legacy limits the potential of a full-fledged, would-be middle class and the definition of this class is challenging, to say the least. Here I use *Dog-Heart* to evidence the difficulty of middle class positioning in post-Independence Jamaica and the Caribbean, just as I used *Pan Beat* to do so for pre-Independence Trinidad and the Caribbean. Brown suggests use the term "status" to describe this middle economic group that is not quite lower class and not quite upper. Rooted in the plantation system, the competition between the classes (or statuses) persisted into Brown's contemporary setting of the late 1970s and, unfortunately, all the way into the 21st century of Diana McCaulay's novel. The systems of competition that are put in place through the plantation system of slave (lower class), overseer (as the middle group), and plantation owner (ruling class) find their legacy, according to Brown, in the Caribbean (English) school system. Education, therefore, may be the key to ascending out of one class/status and into another, but the educational experience may prove arduous and punishing. The protagonists of *Dog-Heart*, Sahara and Dexter, respectively, uphold these slippery categories of social and economic stereotypes.

Written in the first person voice, Sahara narrates her life after meeting Dexter. Also presented in the first person is Dexter's voice starting from his moment of contact with Sahara. After making quick assessments of the movie theater patrons returning to their cars, Dexter decides on what he perceives to be a non-threatening "uptown"[43] woman, a "brownin"[44] (15). "Beg you some money for school," he says to Sahara and,

after an unexpected round of personal questions, Miss Sahara, as he will come to call her, gives him five hundred Jamaican dollars, an amount that "Nobody ever-*ever*" gave to him (15, 17). The novel begins with this postcolonial encounter. The two characters each present mirrored experiences, oscillating chapter by chapter from Dexter's perspective presented in Jamaican nation-language, to Sahara's viewpoint written in the English that tethers her to a middlebrow aesthetic. Within the Jamaica that McCaulay constructs, Sahara is the imposing force, judging Dexter and urging him to accept her help and her way of living as his own. But for the reader, it is Dexter's language that forces us to accept his way of speaking as our path to knowing.

On the A-Side is Sahara's record of the events that unfold post-car park and as readers we are made to identify with her perspective as benefactor. On the B-Side, Dexter's record dubs Sahara's record. His use of Jamaican language is audible through the pages and works like dub's literary talk-over, adding new dimension to the A-Side. Through Dexter's dub, Sahara is revealed to be something of a neo-colonizer. With Sahara placing unspoken conditions on every offer of support that Dexter accepts, Dexter unknowingly enters into an agreement, of sorts, with Sahara. As a beggar Dexter's only intention is to get money to take care of his family's immediate needs. If begging yields thin or no results, he may lie or steal to acquire what he needs to survive. When he begs money from Sahara and he receives five hundred dollars from Sahara, he sees the gifted "transaction" as complete when he says "Miss, thank you" (17). Put another way, he begs, she gives, he expresses gratitude, the two part ways and the transaction is complete. For Sahara though, the five hundred dollars is her down payment or investment in Dexter's future. She does not buy him, but she buys her way into building his future.

Just a few days after meeting Dexter, Sahara waits for him in a pharmacy parking lot and confesses that she had tried unsuccessfully to find him at the false home address he provided to her. As she sits next to him on the curbside, completely out of place for woman of her class status, she tells him, "I would like to help you go to school, pay school fees and buy books and shoes" (40). Dexter agrees to this, admitting that his ears were most focused on the new shoes. If his mother will agree to it, Sahara tells Dexter that she can have him out of Nightingale All Age school and enrolled in what she sees as a good school by the start of the new school year. She delivers on her promise and enrolls Dexter in Holborn Prep, a "good prep school in Kingston" (55). Almost acting as a patron, Sahara uses her means to encourage and finance Dexter's education because Dexter seemed "hopeful," she says, but also because he is emblematic of the thousands of boys like him and he represents the millions of Jamaicans who share his class and color status (22). Unfortunately, the hope that he inspires in Sahara is the scorn that his dark body musters for others which leads to Dexter's inability to feel a comfortable sense of belonging amongst his more elite schoolmates at Holborn. Aware of his own class and color and the ways that the two overlap in Jamaica (just as they do throughout the Caribbean and throughout the world), once at the "good" school that Sahara selects for him, Dexter has more personal awareness of his difference, much like the moment when Sahara sat next him on the curbside. Shielded, to some degree, by the long-distance of gazing at the uptown brownins who strolled by or drove by ostensibly ignoring him on the streets, Dexter had only limited interaction with the well-to-do of the city. At Holborn, that proximity is collapsed and the well-to-do are his schoolmates: "Them is uptown children; you can tell that. Them is brownins, some light, some dark. None a

them is black" (98). Through a dub aesthetic one can read this awkward relationship between Dexter and Sahara as a middle class attempt at nation-building, insomuch that Dexter stands for the nation.

"The streets of Kingston were often full of children – children erupting from schools, children walking three abreast in the road, children begging" (21) – yet Sahara's middle class guilt does not compel her to support all of these children. In fact, as one beggar child approaches her car at a traffic light, she verifies that her purse was far from his reach then tells him, simply, "Sorry […] Can't help. Go to school, son" (21). This had been Sahara's standard response to the capital city's undereducated vagrant youth. And, critically, this continues to be Sahara's response following her encounter with Dexter. Meeting Dexter in the car park does not revolutionize how Sahara views all beggar-children; it is singular and their relationship is unique. And it is, nevertheless, built out of a colonial legacy of inequality and oppression, or to put it in dub style, Babylon system is to blame.

Sahara recognizes the immediate needs of Dexter and his younger siblings. She laments their condition and, simultaneously, laments her middle class position, to her only friend, Lydia, saying: "They're children, Lyds, and they're hungry and probably only being half educated and how come that's just how it is? How come we [the middle class of the nation] just accept it? How would we have turned out if we'd never had enough to eat and lived in a board house?" (54). Sahara's sense of national responsibility is housed in this one black ghetto child, not her own son, Carl. Carl, whose father is a wealthy white Jamaican with active ties to England, does not signal, for Sahara, a call to national duty. When she asks "how come that's just how it is?" Sahara is recognizing the

inequality that has always surrounded her. Lydia asks her why she is trying to save this young man, to which Sahara has no verbal answer. But, in her mind she thinks of Carl "who needed things too. Of course," she continued, "the things Carl needed were of a different order. An iPod. Fashionable clothes. Steak, instead of chicken" (55). Post-Dexter[45], the B-Side is becoming audible to her ears and a new message is present in the reconstruction of the old record that had been spinning her whole life.

Sahara, as a representative of the middle class, fails Dexter and fails as a literary hero for one reason: she held unrealistic expectations of Dexter. She believed that he would automatically succeed if only she could provide for Dexter the resources that an unequal system of oppression had denied him. Sahara never considers the social or political past or present that govern day-to-day survival for Dexter. Dexter lives with his mother and younger siblings in a fictional squatter's community in Kingston called Jacob's Pen. They live "at the bottom a one hill, near the bus stop, in a board house some white people from foreign build" (41). Much like the famous West Kingston tenement yard of Trenchtown, formerly Trench Pen, where as a child Bob Marley and his family settled after arriving in the capital-city from the countryside of St. Ann parish, Jacob's Pen is a violent landscape to navigate. Unlike the peephole perspective granted by Haynes in *Minty Alley*, and more like the wide open *Brother Man* (1954) view of "The Lane" in Roger Mais' seminal text, the dual perspectives of Dexter and Sahara grant readers insight otherwise unavailable to us and reminds readers of the privilege of being able to have poverty and violence mediated, not lived and alerts readers to the ways that economic privilege is, at times, its own burden.

For residents of Jacob's Pen, where the homes have no running water, even a trip to the standpipe can be a life threatening performance of territorial defensiveness, masculine bravado, and pure bullying. Dexter's little brother Marlon is terribly afraid of these daily daybreak trips to the standpipe, and, as Dexter narrates, we see why when a fight erupts at the water site. "Move over, bwoy," says Rayton, a troublemaker in the community, to another young man, Curtis, who is filling his second bucket with water. Curtis tries to project bravery, cursing back at Rayton, "Come out a my face, rass hole," but, as Dexter tells it, "even though him sound tough, I know him just want get away, even with one bucket not full-full." The situation escalates when Rayton kicks over Curtis's buckets then blames Curtis for the water that splashed on his own foot. After another attempt at cursing away Rayton and his three troublesome friends, Curtis is struck in the face with an empty water bucket, knocked to the muddy ground, and told to "drink di water like di donkey you is." Frozen, Curtis does not drink, so Donny, Rayton's accomplice, draws a knife and "put the knife to Curtis throat" demanding that he get down and lap up the water. Curtis then begins crying, which solicits disappointment from Curtis's advocates and solicits anti-homosexual taunts of "batty boy and mumma boy" from the four menacing boys (25). This is one of the more benign terrors of living in Jacob's Pen. This is the life from which privilege protects Sahara.

Despite Sahara's belief that education is the key to betterment, Dexter cannot escape the life that Babylon's crushing weight lays out for residents of Jacob's Pen. Dexter completes Holborn Prep and advances to St. Stephen's School, thanks to his focused work. After a short time at St. Stephen's Dexter's enrollment is brought up for review because of an accusation that Dexter has set fire to a restroom. Going into a

meeting with the school principal, Sahara recalled a similar case of finger-pointing involving an elite family. In that circumstance, the "government stepped in and told the school board to reinstate the boys" (193). For Dexter, however, Principal Bancroft defended his position to release Dexter, giving the following elitist excuse: "We tried with the boy. He didn't take advantage of the opportunity to be at St. Stephen's. I know you mean well Mrs. Lawrence, but it's hard to help *these people*. In all my years of teaching, I've only seen a handful of boys like Raymond Morrison take school seriously and do well. It comes down to character and not many *of them* have it" (194, my emphasis).

Dexter's class background and dark body close more doors than they open, despite what Sahara tries to undo with her educational connections. Even before his dismissal from St. Stephen's, at Holborn Prep Dexter was no stranger to the principal's office and he was all too familiar with the experience of being judged as bad or wrong because his color and class are wrong. Dexter is reprimanded at Holborn for answering a classmate's curiosities about "blue [pornographic] movies." He understands that race and class place him in trouble while Anastasia, the "pretty girl, some part chiney, some part coolie, some part white" with "smooth brown skin, not too dark, and shiny black hair" maintains a pure record (136). In the closed-door space of the principal's office the principal warns Dexter to stay away from the girl so that he might avoid further sanction. Dexter agrees to do so as he reminds himself of all that he has agreed to do by attending Holborn Prep: "Stay away from Anastasia Gilbert. No sex talk. Fit in. But I *can't* fit in, will *never* fit in" (138-9). As readers we are privileged to have access to Dexter's internal monologue through *Dog-Heart*'s exploration of Dexter's interiority. Much of

what we know about him, which is more than Sahara knows, comes to us through Dexter's internal observations to himself. Emphasizing the marginalized status of his body and what it represents because of a colonial system of oppression, his words go unheard, or at least unrecognized: "Mrs. Carpenter don't say anything to that and I know she a pretend she don't hear the last part. She just pick up paper and put them in file on desk. She just a try look busy" (139). Turning a blind eye will change nothing. Guidance counsellor, Mrs. Carpenter's choice to "pretend she don't hear" is why the inequality continues. These incidents of wrongful accusation, willful ignorance, and presumed guilt demonstrate that long even before his expulsion from St. Stephen's, Dexter's spirit was waning piece by piece with each attempt he made to "fit in" being met with a reaction that verified that he could "never fit in." Broken by these attempts to be a part of Holborn Prep School or St. Stephen's, he begins resigning himself to life on the streets. Long before his forced and unfair expulsion, Dexter and his brother Marlon, who is also a beneficiary of Sahara's guilty generosity, begin to question the end-product of his educational pursuits: "When this school business finish, where we going belong? Uptown people don't want us at school, not going to want us in any office job. And now our own people – people who know us from we a baby – don't want us around" (127). To Dexter, education will not remove the social prejudice nor will it remove the stigma of his skin color.

The Jamaica of *Dog-Heart* is not ready for progress. *Dog-Heart* does not present a Caribbean nation that has moved away enough – if it has moved away at all – from colonial models of oppression. Dexter recalls the clock tower at the square at Half Way Tree, the designated city center for Kingston. The clock tower rarely reports the correct

time. The clock is not slow; it is not losing time. The clock is out of order. It is stuck displaying six o'clock. As his only reference for analog time reporting, as opposed to activity based time, Dexter thinks of the capital city's clock tower, with its little hand on the six and the big hand on the twelve and he recalls "the only time it tell the right time is about two weeks last year when some foreigner fix it. Is some history thing; foreigner say clock must look after. But argument bust 'bout whether them can use digital clock or have to use old-time clock. Argument don't sort out yet, so clock still wrong" (51). As a main thoroughfare for the Jamaican capital-city since the 19th century and as a location where uptowners and downtowners intersect and carry out business alongside one another, to think of this Victorian-era clock tower being out of order is equivalent to thinking of the postcolonial nation frozen in time.

Reading the broken clock as the stalled progress of inter-class and interracial cohesion, the perpetual display of six o'clock mirrors the stagnation of equal access discourse. To further extend the metaphor, much like the two-week period during which the clock worked, Dexter's life, under Sahara's imposition, advanced forward. But, not surprisingly, after expulsion from school, Dexter returns to the happenstance life that would have unfolded for him had he never encountered Sahara. In a sense, without the outside investment that teachers were making in him, life goes back to being six o'clock. Dexter disappears from Jacob's Pen and disappears from Sahara's radar. He and his vagrant, dog-hearted friend, Lasco, take short-term illegal jobs and squat in parks and in dilapidated buildings. Dexter's world begins closing in on him and, the novel reaches its climax when Dexter's younger brother Marlon is killed by the police during a home invasion in pursuit of Dexter and his criminal friends (197). After this Dexter has all but

given up. He signs himself over to the world of gangs and neighborhood dons and even kidnaps Sahara, albeit unintentionally.

With Sahara tied up in the trunk of their car, Dexter and Lasco carry out a mission that should grant them admission into a Kingston gang, Merciless Crew. With the memory of the dreams that Sahara tried to offer him and the miserable, stifling reality all around him, the narrator tells Dexter's thoughts: "Dexter thought of his own time in the trunk of the police car, the nausea, the fear, the pain of his broken ribs and beaten face. He hardened his heart. Why should anyone escape such journeys? Where was the justice in a world that issued him a life of struggle and failure, while others never went to bed hungry a day in their lives?" (234). Echoing in tone a similar passage I quoted Sahara as saying earlier on in this section, Dexter questions why Sahara had a life free of misery. He could find no inherent reason for why she might be better than he is such that should allow her to "escape such journeys" of fear and terror. The world that "issued him a life of struggle and failure, while others never went to bed hungry" is the world created and maintained by Babylon's system, that universal system of oppression.

"Dub Those Crazy Baldheads Out of Town"

Babylon system, without an apostrophe "s" after Babylon, is how Rastas identify governance that works to suppress the black population and maintain blacks in a position of economic, political, educational, social, etc. inferiority. The term "baldhead" is a Rastafarian term used to identify individual supporters of Babylon system. It is meant to highlight the key differences between Rastas and their opposition. On the one hand is the

dreadlocked head of the enlightened Rasta, and on the other is the bald head of the closed- or colonially-minded oppressor. The term "baldhead" is not, technically, limited by race – though it is most often applied to whites because history has warranted such racially reductive thinking. And while "baldhead" is not explicitly a gendered term either, it typically describes men, for the same reason that the term tends to describe whites (tradition has placed white men in the positions of power that allow them to withhold agency from others). As a derogatory descriptor, "baldhead" can be used to describe, therefore, any white man, brown man, or black man that supports Babylon system of oppression. As such, I would argue that Rasta beliefs attempt to topple colonial discourses on race. Colonialism introduced Babylon system to the New World and neo-colonialism maintains it, but Rastafarians use history to restore and establish belief in black superiority. This I offer as a foundation for my exploration of a notion of the "Babylon System Dub."

In the introduction to my dissertation I proposed various dictionary definitions of the word "dub" ranging from an abbreviation of the letter "w" to a verb used in the technical sense to describe an altered audio recording. I also explain that in the Jamaican and Caribbean context, dub is a recording pressed on to the B-side of a vinyl record and serves as an altered, alternate production of the A-side pressed recording. In more literary terms, the B-side dub is derivative, a reconstruction of the deconstructed A-side recording meant to emphasize some elements and mute out others while always maintaining the integrity of the original. So what then does it mean to put dub together with Babylon? What does it mean to "dub those crazy baldheads out of town," a title which I borrow from master dub innovator Lee "Scratch" Perry? With all of the terms

clarified (“baldhead”, “Babylon”, and “dub”) one must begin at the musical and lyrical beginning.

I turn attention to Bob Marley and the Wailers’ original (or template) record titled “Crazy Baldhead” (1976). Recorded in Kingston, Jamaica for the album *Rastaman Vibration* and released on an American record label, “Crazy Baldhead” is a song of revolution. I reproduce the lyrics to “Crazy Baldhead” in full below with interjections of analysis in order to demonstrate the power of dub. The track opens with Marley’s cynical almost maniacal laughter. The drum and the bass kick in then Marley’s distinctive sound is heard:

Dem crazy, dem crazy

We gonna chase those crazy baldheads out of town

Chase those crazy baldheads out of our town

In the opening lines above, Marley gathers listeners – fellow Rastas and fellow downtrodden masses – and warns any eavesdropping baldheads about a plan to “chase *those* crazy baldheads out of *our* town” (my emphasis). Marley immediately sets up a “we” versus “dem”/“crazy baldheads” dichotomy all while reminding both sides that this town – be it Jamaica, any Caribbean nation, or any postcolonial people under pressure – is “our” town to take back.

(Verse 1)

I and I build the cabin

I and I plant the corn

Didn't my people before me

Slave for this country?

Now you look me with that scorn

Then you eat up all my corn

The first verse connects the marginalized black people of the 1970s to the marginalized enslaved Africans of the colonial era. Marley's lyrics point to the "cabin" and the "corn" as infrastructural and agricultural evidence of the black people's unpaid and underpaid labor in this land. His words are a forceful reminder of that wretched history of imposed labor.

(Chorus)

We gonna chase those crazy…

Chase them crazy

Chase those crazy baldheads out of town

[Scatting]

(Verse 2)

Built your penitentiary

We built your schools

Brainwash education to make us the fools

Hatred your reward for our love

Telling us of your God above

Indeed "Crazy Baldhead" is a call to action by black people suffering at the hand of Babylon. The visual imagery of black masses chasing the few but powerful "crazy baldheads" out of government, out of business offices, out of the country is captivating. In *Noises in the Blood* (1993) the University of the West Indies, Mona, Reggae Studies Unit co-founder, Carolyn Cooper, notes that the second verse of the song showcases how

"the social institutions of Babylon – the inter-related religious, educational and penal systems, are perceived as dysfunctional." "Brain-wash education," Cooper explains and I agree, "must be subverted and the con-man/ crazy baldhead put to rout" (Cooper 122).

(Chorus)

[Instrumental breakdown]

(Chorus)

(Verse 3)

Here comes the conman

Coming with his con plan

We won't take no bribe

We've got to stay alive

(Chorus)

Babylon's crazy baldheads aim to keep black people in positions of inferiority. But Marley warns that the manipulation of the past is over; "We won't take no bribe" from the "conman" anymore. "The central ideological concern of Bob Marley's songs is indeed radical social change. The existing social order, metaphorically expressed in Rastafarian / New Testament iconography as Babylon […] must be chanted down," explains Cooper (121). This was the timely message that Bob Marley and the Wailers offered to Jamaica and to the world in 1976.

Then in 1989, master dub technicians returned listeners to the Marley record through a unique dub of the original. "Dub Those Crazy Baldheads" was produced and recorded by two of the genre's most notable producers: Lee "Scratch" Perry of Jamaica and Neil "Mad Professor" Fraser of Guyana. Interestingly, the Mad Professor did not

gain his introduction to reggae music directly from Jamaica, per se, but via a British Virgin Islands radio program called "the Groove Governor,"[46] which played reggae hits across the airwaves of the Caribbean during the 1960s. Ultimately, the Mad Professor and Scratch teamed up to record and cut the song in England. This dub duo/duet represents the regional, diasporic, and global pull of dub.

"Dub Those Crazy Baldheads" takes the familiar and famous Marley song and stretches its imaginative scope. The necessity of the dub lies in continued existence of "crazy baldheads" or oppressive systems continuing to suppress the masses; but more than ten years later, what does the Scratch/ Mad Professor dub offer to the baldhead discussion? Below I reproduce the first verse and the chorus of the dub. With his signature eerie opening Scratch begins the song:

Drives me mad… [digital drum beat is heard]

[sic] Wolfs in sheep's clothing [the familiar lilt of "Crazy Baldhead" enters]

You're gonna get a beating

Wolfs in sheep's clothing

You're gonna get a beating

(Verse 1)

Didn't I build the cabin?

Didn't I plant the corn?

And now you want to look me

Look me with your scorn

(Chorus)

We gonna dub them crazy baldheads

We gonna dub those crazy traitors

We gonna dub those crazy back biters

Out of my sound

The transcript above shows that the lyrics, in this first part of the song, are not dramatically different from "Crazy Baldheads." And the lyrics are rather consistent in the subsequent verses as well, hence my decision not to transcribe more here. The few changes that are present, however, alter the listener's reception of the song. Whereas the Marley record solicits what I call bodily agreement – a natural nodding response in time with the beat and pulling you deeper into the song and its message – the Scratch/Mad Professor dub is unequivocally unsettling. The bass is not as heavy, the drum is not as pulsing, but Scratch's words, though very much consistent with Marley's, are best described as introverted. Rather than drawing listeners in, Scratch and the Professor seem to sonically capture thoughts on record as the lyrics can only be described as words moving across a soundscape. The familiar words, the familiar rhythm, the unsettling delivery leave listeners with a haunting experience. When the chorus enters there is no reprieve from the off-putting tension as each line of "We gonna dub them crazy…" is repeated as if an echo of itself. Add to that the return of the phantom phrase "Wolfs in sheep's clothing" and the entire song becomes a sonic vision of madness. But, still, this is a powerful dub. Through rearrangement this re-invention transforms the original song and its meaning. No longer "chasing" crazy baldheads, Scratch tells of dubbing crazy baldheads. To dub is to alter, to mute, to stretch, to fade, and in the case of this dub, to make the familiar new and strange. Employing dub as a verb that has action outside of

music, Scratch speaks of dubbing an entire institution, an entire system of oppressors. Scratch politicizes the dub sound engineer (people like himself and his partner the Mad Professor) and, as a result, Scratch also politicizes the dub song. The crazy baldheads' power is usurped by the dub engineer. The crazy back biters' agency is usurped by the dub mixer.

In my second and last example of a Bob Marley and the Wailers' "Crazy Baldhead" dub, legendary Jamaican producers Sly and Robbie, deejay Beenie Man, and reggae singer Luciano presented "Crazy Bald Heads" (1995) to a new generation of listeners. Released twenty years after the original/template, the success of this dub recording is suggestive of a lack of systematic changes in Jamaica, the Caribbean, the diaspora, and the globe. This dub accomplishes two tasks. One, it expands the original to a new, younger audience that is interested in the progeny of talk-over and dub, dancehall. And, two, it lyrically tells a more detailed story of exactly what kinds of oppression the baldheads of Babylon are presently inflicting upon the already downtrodden masses. The first verse and chorus of this duet of a dub are presented below:

[Beenie Man] (A slightly sinister laughter and adlibs)

Chorus:

[Luciano] Dem crazy, Dem crazy

We gonna chase those crazy baldheads out of town

[Beenie] Well I say nuff a' dem a circus clown

[Luciano] Chase those crazy baldheads out of town

[Beenie] Babylon you betta get outta town

(Verse 1)

Cause I and I build the cabin

God knows!

And I and I plant the corn

Teach dem, teach dem!

Didn't my people before me

(Laughter)

Slave for this country?

Well Beenie sing dat I'm a black king Christen like a white kid, then

Living in a white man world

False education, destroy we nation (do what?)

Mashing up we boys and girls

Cause on de rich man face is only madinization

While di yout' man inna de ghetto face pure sufferation

Man no have no job fi get, dem hand inna dem right hand

Fi mind all demselves with dem pickney and dem woman

Yout' dem have a tendency fi turn to de M-1

Yout' put down you' gun and put you' trust in de all mighty one

Luciano mi breddren, come down and sing you' song

So sing along!

Beenie Man and Luciano's words flow one to the other as if in dialogue or in translation. Luciano, as one might recognize, presents the same lyrics as the original, but heard next to Beenie Man's deejaying, those original Marley lyrics are reinvigorated. Beenie takes

up the Rasta itinerary: down with Babylon and up with Jah/ God. The religious con that baldheads impose on black people denies histories of African royalty with a palimpsest of white Chrisitanity. The "brainwash education" is "mashing up" and destroying the nation, the boys, and the girls. Beenie Man urges the ghetto's young listeners to put down Babylon's weapons and put "trust in de all mighty" God.

As the music demonstrates, over the decades, the critique of Babylon's baldheads changed very little from the Marley original to the Scratch/ Mad Professor dub to the Beenie and Luciano dub produced by Sly and Robbie. These records reflect the sentiment felt by Jamaica's majority population of urban, black poor people who, after coming down from the enthusiastic economic growth of Independence from Britain in 1962, in the 1970s began to question why the economic prosperity was not trickling down[47] to them. The distance between Jamaica's poor and powerful looked strikingly similar to the unequal distribution of wealth seen pre-Independence and seen during colonial rule, both pre- and post- Emancipation. Lee "Scratch" Perry called them "wolfs in sheep's clothing" because 18th and 19th century colonizers were replaced by the neo-colonizers and the Babylon baldheads of the 20th century. With colonial reminders present at every pass it becomes clear that the same issues of inequality persist just under different terms. We merely shift from "chas[ing] those crazy baldheads" to "dub[bing] those crazy baldheads."

The difficulty with the reductive thinking that blames baldheads for the black man's woes is that it further agitates the already troubled waters of colonial/ post-colonial race relations. Returning to the notion of privilege and its consequences, being white in the Caribbean, therefore, continues to be a lonely existence, toeing the line between

wanting to fit in and the difficulty of belonging. For the white Caribbean minority living in a region that turned to revolution in order to "chase the crazy baldheads out" of Saint Domingue to usher in an independent Haitian Republic in 1804 and during the 1970s attempted to "dub those crazy baldheads out" of Jamaica, one is always ever aware of his/her skin color as a mark of colonial privilege and oppression. How the white subject comes to identify himself/herself and how other Caribbeans identify the white individual, determine how the white Caribbean relates to his/her only known home.

Privilege, however real or perceived, has its consequences in the postcolonial Caribbean. Thus, a freedom from history – a dubbing of history – is what white Jamaican authors Anthony Winkler and Diana McCaulay search for in their more contemporary and autobiographically informed fictions. Their works express the need for a dub departure from inheritance and legacy, while they simultaneously highlight the difficulty of such a task. As it has been since slavery days, whiteness in the Caribbean signals power as much as it solicits contempt. The reasons why have been examined and re-examined by countless critics and authors over the centuries. But, as one black Jamaican put it, albeit in the literary context of Anthony Winkler's *Going Home to Teach*, "The white man day is done" (Winkler 34).

The celebrated comic novelist and short story writer, Anthony Winkler, a white Jamaican living in Atlanta, Georgia, writes honestly and humorously about all facets of Jamaican culture from politics and religion to class, colonialism, and race. In *Going Home to Teach* Winkler reflects on his 1975 return to Jamaica, the country which despite birthing him often rejected him as a child and questioned his claims to nation identity because of the color of his skin. Early on in *Going Home to Teach* Winkler tells the story

of being chased and bullied by a few black boys as he was returning home from school one day. "Sometimes they would walk beside me and flail at my back with switches; sometimes they would pinch my arms or kick or thump me all over. But I never fought back against them," he writes (Winkler 19). Winkler confesses to readers his feelings of white guilt for existing in a black country. He admits, "I could not tell him that in my heart I felt that I deserved their abuse and beating, that if I had been born black and poor in one of Jamaica's mephitic slums, I too would have hated the sight of a white skin and be just as inclined as they to kick and thump and abase me on the street" (19-20). In one of her numerous publications on Anthony Winkler, Winkler scholar, Kim Robinson-Walcott suggests that Winkler's "embrace of blackness in his fiction—is unique" because of his Lebanese background ("Claiming an Identity," 108). Not historically linked to the colonial plantocrat society, Winkler's ancestors survived at the lower end of a thin Jamaican middle class. His family's skin color was a better anchor into a Jamaican middle class than their money and possessions

Winkler's pulse on Jamaican race relations is not limited to an examination of whiteness. With emotional accuracy, Winkler vividly captures the 1970s disgust that middle class Jamaicans of varying shades of brownness had for their increasingly socialist homeland. In the week prior to his own return to Jamaica Winkler is advised by a fellow countryman in Miami. Set at the height of Michael Manley's democratic socialism, which was Jamaica's great attempt at rectifying class inequality and the unequal distribution of access and limited but growing wealth, Winkler writes of his awkward reunion with his Jamaican compatriot:

> They came bearing grim news. Things were not the same in Jamaica as they used to be; things were bad, very bad. There was crime in the streets, senseless violence against white people; rape was commonplace; one dared not venture out after dark. You couldn't find a dog bad enough to protect you from the burglars, thieves, murderers. You slept with a gun under your pillow; you drive with your windows and doors locked; you did not pause at stop signs. The island was haemorrhaging its middle class. (Winkler 33)

Middle class Jamaicans feared that they would lose all, including their lives, under Manley's socialist plan for the country. To the brown and white middle class, freedom from poverty equated to the literal death of the wealthy. Not willing to sacrifice life or property, thousands of middle class, professional Jamaicans fled the country at this time and the impact that this exile left on the business sector can still be felt today.

The poor and working class sympathies that Caribbean authors demonstrated throughout the first half of the twentieth century, give or take, is absent in the mouths of many of Winkler's middle class characters. *Going Home to Teach*, originally published in 1995, forgoes peasant-privileging and emphasizes the ways in which old racial fears resurfaced with heightened intensity during the decade of the 1970s. The poor man was synonymous with the black man and the poor man's plight was at the center of the political stage. As the late Prime Minister Manley, himself explained it before an international audience in 1977 in Mozambique, "Where political sovereignty has been conceded but economic power remains untouched, equality remains a myth, social justice proves unattainable and even freedom becomes an ambiguous phenomenon."[48] The Manley administration's attention to the nation's majority population as deserving of

equal respect and equal opportunities is what prompts, as I quoted earlier, a black Jamaican to warn the author that "the white man day is done." Importantly, the "white" here is not a color exclusive descriptor. Rather, it is used to exclude Jamaicans who are privileged because they are *not* poor. The man is warning Winkler of the dangers facing all non-poor Jamaicans, and the increased threat against whites, whether wealthy or not, for having a skin color that historically represents privilege. Notably, the perspective here suggests that, as a brown man himself, Manley's political agenda is "dubbing [all those who are perceived to be] crazy baldheads" out of the country.

The color prejudices ascribed to white and brown Caribbean bodies are similarly imposed on black bodies, as I made clear earlier in this section during my examination of the character Dexter in Diana McCaulay's *Dog-Heart*. The middle- and upper class perception of the working class, black Jamaican has changed little over the centuries. It is the same song repeating again and again. As another of Winkler's baldheaded Jamaican, expatriate encounters outlines, the poor Jamaican man is lazy, lewd, lascivious, and predisposed to drunkenness. In *Going Home to Teach*, an unnamed exile speaks boldly to Winkler from Miami, Florida, and describes the poor Jamaican man with a broad and unflattering brush-stroke: "He wants to do two things. First he wants a woman he can breed. […] Second, he wants rum to drink on a Saturday night. […] He'll work for you from Monday to Friday [….] I don't say he'll do a good job because God knows that basically he's a lazy fellow, but if you watch him he'll do a passable job" (Winkler 37). Some forty years after Anthony Winkler's initial return to Jamaica that prompted the aforementioned colonially-informed comments, in the new millennium setting of *Dog-Heart*, Sahara's best friend, a lower middle class black woman named Lydia, warns

Sahara of the dangers of interfering in poor people's business. Creating her own narrative of Dexter's life, likely based on sensationalized media stories of isolated incidents, she tells Sahara that Dexter's "mother *probably* has a violent criminal for a baby father and you'll be the next one found in a gully with your throat cut" (McCaulay 22, my emphasis). This regrettable refrain of inequality and stunted racial progress is repeated, a la Antonio Benítez Rojo's articulations on repetition toward "nothingness" (*The Repeating Island* 3), across the Caribbean and across the literature. It stems from colonial stereotypes and prejudice and it demands to be dubbed out, a la Lee "Scratch" Perry and the Mad Professor, so that Caribbean subjects residing in the nations, the region, and the diaspora might finally be included in global progress discourse.

The low expectations of blacks, the presumed wealth and elitism of whites, and the assumed ambivalence of "brownins" are the Caribbean stereotypes that Caribbean writers are hoping to explode through their writing. Unlike in the past, in the contemporary literary context black and brown middle class Caribbean writers no longer feel required to write the authentic experiences of the peasant and lower class. Instead, contemporary Caribbean writers and artists are writing the stories of their own class; stories that *acknowledge* – without privileging one over the other –the multiple classes of their nations. Because of the history of working class authenticity, any examination of the Caribbean's middle class, therefore, is simultaneously an examination of the question what does it mean to belong to the Caribbean and is there something that is, discernibly, Caribbean authenticity.

Using a dub approach to examine contemporary Caribbean fictions that express a distinctly middle class or white/brown Caribbean experience, one can better recognize the

limited progress being made in Caribbean communities at home and abroad with regard to racial and economic perception and equality. Put another way, when it comes to race and class relations, the "Babylon System Dub" features limited mut(e)ations and limited repairs because the colonial legacy remains.

Part of the power of the dub response record was that it was a nearly-immediate recorded response to a popular song in the dancehalls. While the original was still rocking dancehall patrons, a dub supplement was being cooked up in a mixing lab. The original would be stretched, overlaid, echoed, talked-over, muted, recorded, then released back out into the same dancehalls to disorient and re-captivate audiences anew. This process was usually quick, keeping up with the latest and most popular songs. It is not typical for a dub to be made ten years after the original. Sly and Robbie produce their Beenie Man and Luciano dub of "Crazy Baldheads" a staggering nineteen years after Bob Marley and the Wailers' release the original. This long gap between release dates underscores the continued relevance of a song and message like that of "Crazy Baldheads." When the subject matter and the circumstances change very little, the track needs little updating, little dubbing. When released nearly twenty years later, the producers added to the original, but muted nothing because the original lyrics remained pertinent.

Using the dub aesthetic to analyze these texts reveals that there are limited behavioral models for the Caribbean subject who is in the alienated position of being racially and economically privileged: either celebrate one's position of legitimate privilege, suffer under the guilt of trying to right the wrongs of an inherited legacy of inequality and brutality, or fully accept the history of colonialism as a past from which to

move away. All three writers express the difficulty of divorcing oneself from the colonial imprint and they question the designation of racial and economic privilege that is assigned to their white and brown bodies. And all three texts communicate the understanding that the consequences of privilege – unbelonging and alienation – painfully outweigh the reward of access. Through a dub aesthetic critics can now make new sense of the various oppressive systems that have been dubbed and dubbed again across the Caribbean from the analytically important, inherently complementary "B-Side" of the Caribbean identity record.

Chapter Five

Conclusion:
Advancing the Dub Aesthetic

> "Today, the sounds and techniques of classic dub music have been stylistically absorbed into the various genres of global electronic popular music (such as hip-hop, techno, house, jungle, ambient, and trip-hop), and conceptually absorbed into the now commonplace practice of song remixing."
> -- Michael Veal, *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaica Reggae*

> "Now true me live inna di ghetto/ Show me nuff respect/ Because dis is a fact/ Me haffi confess/ To all a di ooman/ Man fi due respect…"
> -- Lady G., "Nuff Respect"

Through the dub aesthetic this dissertation has provided new perspectives on common tropes in Caribbean literature: the role of history, the colonial imprint, the rewards and failures of Independence, the myth of multiculturalism, gender disparities, racial hierarchies, class hierarchies, color hierarchies, belonging, identity, authenticity, and diaspora. In creating this list I am not suggesting that dub embodies the only means to this aesthetic locus. Twenty years ago now, Evelyn O'Callaghan laid down her appeal for reading West Indian women's writing as a reggae/dub "version" of men's writing. And almost fifteen years ago Kwame Dawes called out for a reggae aesthetic to trace the music's influence on Caribbean poets and writers. And, of course, Carolyn Cooper's work on dancehall and poetry and on dancehall deejays *as* poets is a direct request for other critics to follow suit. Looking outside of Jamaican music, the calypso aesthetic and the jazz aesthetic also offer themselves as critical and influential aesthetics for analyzing the region's literature. These scholars and these aesthetics have very much inspired my work.

This dissertation, in its grounding alongside established perspectives on Caribbean literature, attests to the fact that there is no single best method for analyzing the region's literatures. The Caribbean voice like the Caribbean experience, is not singular. The usefulness of the dub aesthetic in approaching the multivocality of the writing is that dub, too, is multivocal. Dub too is fragmented. Dub too is the unification of many sounds not always coming together harmoniously, but sharing the same space nonetheless. Dub is the process of moving away from the past, but holding on to the past. Dub is the experience of being on the threshold of the future. Caribbean literature has long since parted ways with mimicry and has already begun distancing itself from the days of writing back[49]. The forms discovered through and clarified by a dub aesthetic serve as useful tools to investigate the work of writers who are creating in a local or diasporic postcolonial space in which the existence of a distinctive, authentic, and unique voice is critical to the realization of an independent Caribbean literary tradition. My task, in writing this dissertation, has been to demonstrate that reading through this lens has the capacity to be both enlightening and truly satisfying. My wish is that other critics will take up this task of mapping the dub influences in the works of Caribbean writers.

Fitting to a discussion of the timeliness of dub, Lee "Scratch" Perry, whose production skills I reference with frequency in this dissertation, was honored on October 16, 2013, with the Jamaica Institute's Musgrave gold medal for eminence in the field of music. In the weeks leading to the award ceremony, *The Jamaica Gleaner* published an article announcing each of the Musgrave recipients. Written by the Institute, the article recognizing Lee "Scratch" Perry, served to illustrate to readers why this long-time dub producer, singer, and reputable dancer in his day, was worthy of such a prestigious

national award. "Perry's techniques," the announcement explains, "allowed for the manipulation of musical notes and rhythmic patterns, which were distorted, delayed, contorted and sustained to create a new soundscape in reggae, a sonic dimension not previously explored in the music."[50] In Perry's distorted and contorted techniques, I locate parallels with the works of contemporary Caribbean writers, such that the writers are creating narrative tricksters that perform in many of the same ways as the dub talk-over deejay.

My interest in Caribbean narrators has been provoked more in recent years. I am suspicious of them on the whole and often question their motives. Since my first encounter with Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), whose narrator frequently breaks character to confess his manipulation of the record, I have grown infinitely more untrusting of Caribbean narrators. The dub aesthetic offers a point of entry into the possibilities for why a narrator might behave in shifty meta-narrative ways and the reasons, arguably, are wrapped up in the goals of Caribbean storytellers and tricksters. (Moving beyond the dissertation I am most eager to explore these kinds of texts for their more performative and orchestrated aspects of the dub aesthetic.) I read the storyteller/trickster voice in contemporary Caribbean writing as a dub narrator doing the work of the talk-over deejay. The talk-over deejay and the dub narrator act as liaisons between the record/text and the audience/reader. The talk-over deejay, in the live space of the dancehall and working alongside the sound system's record selector, interacts with the audience to both interrupt and advance the dancehall experience. All rooted in the West African oral tradition, the dub aesthetic can be used to merge the musical narrator with the literary narrator, each functioning as a trickster figure.

In Jamaica, the word "banton" is adopted by dancehall deejays, like Burro Banton, Buju Banton, and Mega Banton, to describe themselves as gifted lyrical storytellers. Across the archipelago in Trinidad, "bantons" of a different kind use calypso as their medium for musical storytelling. One of Trinidad's best known storytellers, the Mighty Sparrow, has been performing what is one of his most popular and beloved calypsos, "Congo Man," for nearly half a century. Sparrow's "Congo Man" strikes my ear as being similar to a dub, in a sense. Interjecting human sound effects (giggles, screams, and other sounds) between the verses and lyrics, I find that the sounds perform the same function as the city sounds (tires screeching, car horns blaring) and talk-over utterances overlaid on a dub track. First introduced in October of 1964, "Congo Man" is playful with its politics as the story calls attention to the post-independence claims of cannibalism in the Congo. Sparrow tells the story marvelously: two white women adventure deep into Africa and encounter the (wo)man-eating Congolese man, Umba. Umba cooks one woman and "eats the other raw." Sparrow, as narrator, sings from the perspective of Umba's brother, who is watching the preparations and consumption from a bush nearby. Sparrow performs with abandon, even adding hearty grunts, roars, screams, and laughter to make the tale of this insatiable African cannibal more realistic to a 1960s audience familiar with stereotyped images of African populations as primitive and backward. The song makes listeners feel giddy; it makes listeners laugh for reasons they are unwilling to say aloud. Sparrow, the trickster narrator, has full control of the listener's experience.

In his 2005 article "Carnival Cannibalized or Cannibal Carnivalized," Gordon Rohlehr deftly analyzes "Congo Man" for its contemporary through present day capacity

to blend carnival with cannibal. He also suggests that Sparrow as narrator stands as the quintessential "macco" (Rohlehr 1) for he not only eavesdrops in order to gain access to this cannibal encounter, but he also gossips the story to us, the listener/audience. Each verse of the song tells us more about (the alleged cannibal) Umba's meal; but the refrain that lingers is the more important reminder that the *narrator* "never eat a white meat yet." Yes, Sparrow as the "Congo Man" narrator is a true Trini macco: he gossips about others in order to both deflect attention away from and, contradictorily, bring attention to himself. More than being about the cannibal, the song, it seems, is about the narrator's preoccupation with being sure that listeners know that *he* has not consumed white female flesh, a thinly veiled sexual metaphor. By the fifth or sixth repetition though, one cannot help but think that the narrator doth protest too much. But with all of the laughter, the cackling, and the spectacle of performance, can we ever trust the troublemaking macco figure? Can we ever trust the calypso's narrator?

Trinidadian calypsonians and Jamaican dancehall deejays, are musical examples of performative narration, but for a more traditional narrative example I turn to Caribbean poetry. Poetry, in many ways a natural bridge between the musical and the literal, offers itself as another platform for exploring the question of narration in Caribbean art. During a March 2012 performance[51] of her acclaimed poem "Crick Crack,"[52] poet Merle Collins was at home in the role of provocative trickster storyteller. She called out "crick!" and her knowing and eager audience yelled back "Crack!" Then in sing-song Grenadian pitch she leaned into her poetic tale with a warning: "Monkey break he back on a rotten pomerack." Sitting in that audience you are lured in again when she repeats the call "crick!" and you cannot help but reply "Crack!" You bubble with anticipation as her

voice, jubilant and expressive, latches on to something you believe you remember hearing somewhere before. A dub moment is felt in that experience of jogged memory mixed with unknowing. Six lines or one stanza into her poem, she asks you: "What is the mirage and what reality? Do we know what is truth and what is truly fiction?" You are stumped. You do not know. But you want to know. You want to trust that she will tell you. You want to trust *what* she will tell you. You listen for clues. But there is so much sing-song. There is too much sing-song for it to be true. There is so much smiling. Yet there is so much warning in her voice. She completes the tale. She spoke of Africa, of history, of la diablesse, of lions. You walk away from the poem and the words "truly fiction" stick with you. What is *truly* fiction? What is reality? And how does the narrator mediate these experiences and understandings? The dub aesthetic answers these calls.

Perception, proximity, and experience influence our understanding of reality. What we value and believe in determine what we accept and discard as truth. For Collins, the colonial imprint often dictates what we call the mirage and what we see as reality. For Buju, the ghetto youth's story was for so long untold because the rich discarded its value, its truth. For Sparrow, his distance from the Congolese crisis allowed him to inject carnival humor into a horrific reality. Indeed a successful storyteller complicates Collins' question of "what is *truly* fiction?" (my emphasis). If he/she is good at it though, the successful storyteller has the power to create a fictional reality that can be as influential on a reader/listener as a lived experience. Like the talk-over in the dancehall, the deejay and dub narrator manipulate experience. This is what the dub aesthetic can illuminate. The Caribbean dub narrator, as I have termed it, constructs

realities so deftly that readers will suspend their disbelief even if only for the time that they enter the fictional, metaphoric dancehall.

The dub narrator, who is an amalgamation of the macco, watcher, voyeur, trickster, calypsonian, and banton, is as integral to the text as the dub producer is to the dub record. Sometimes quietly and sometimes boldly, she makes her presence known as the one controlling your experience. And because history is the story that endures, the storyteller/narrator is a powerful figure. "Believe in me," demands the trickster narrator in Pauline Melville's *Ventriloquist's Tale* (1998), "I am the one who can dig time's grave" (Melville 2). But as Chico, the narrator, continues to introduce himself and his story, suspicion begins to cloud our vision. Chico's grandmother warns him that "all writing is fiction" and that "variety" is "so much more important than truth" (Melville 3). Chico is the voice, and these are the voices of the dub aesthetic. The variety that the dub aesthetic provides through its multiple perspectives on individually unique but regionally shared histories, traumas, alienations, and diaspora building make this approach a useful tool for the Caribbean critic.

Multiple narrators, multiple voices, and multiple perspectives both communicate and complicate meaning. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, *The Salt Roads* (2003), *Divina Trace* (1993), and *Ventriloquist's Tale* all privilege multiplicity as the conduit to understanding. Putting the dub aesthetic together with Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of heteroglossia[53] I would push against the obvious readings of Caribbean literature's multivocality as a symbol of the Caribbean as melting pot, the Caribbean as callaloo, or any of the myriad other ways of describing the African, European, Asian, and indigenous influences in/on the Caribbean. Muting, to some degree, a discussion of racially- or

colonially-based motivations, I would focus on how genre identification is being complicated and blurred. Ultimately the question to tackle is whether or not there is a neat category in which to place any of these contemporary Caribbean trickster tales as these fictions seem to slide between the expected and the unexpected as they move away from more "traditional"[54] narrative realism and linear fiction towards science fiction, the marvelous real, or Caribbean fabulist fiction.

Bringing in the use of talk-over and the relationships that create the dub record, the use of meta-narration becomes critical to examining this aspect of the dub aesthetic. In many ways, these fictional texts and their authors' are provocatively and innovatively imagining the future of Caribbean writing in the present, much in the same way that dub records and producers were, in the 1970s, imagining the current contemporary digital-global-reggae scene of today. With dub an original musical recording can be cut and remixed by multiple producers and sometimes by multiple singers and even have multiple deejays overlaying the track with talk-over.

In many cases, the traditional "lead singer's" role is usurped by either a melody making instrument or a proud deejay, the effect of which wholly reinvents the track. Postcolonial, yes, and postmodern, certainly, the dub subverts tradition and consciously and enigmatically reconstructs meaning through the rearrangement of time while also delaying or denying the listener's expectations. Critically, though, the multiple generators and narrators of the dub do not distort or diminish the clarity and the overall sound of the record; rather the sound experience is enriched by the multivocality. And, I argue, the Caribbean texts I name here share this same quality of more voices equals more understanding. The multiple manuscripts in *Oscar Wao*, the multiple layers of

mediation (including Lola, Beli, La Inca, Oscar, Oscar's writing, and Yunior) all inform the ultimate aesthetic experience of reading this wondrous text. The same can be said for the multiple narrators of various races in Michael Antoni's *Divina Trace*; the interwoven stories in Nalo Hopkinson's *The Salt Roads,* which connect divided women in Paris, Alexandria, and San Domingue; and the self-aware trickster narrator in Pauline Melville's *Ventriloquist's Tale*. All of these texts are aware of their textual creation—just as the producer, traditionally subordinated on a song, moves to the foreground on the dub.

The goal of this dissertation was to define and demonstrate the dub aesthetic as a new way of interrogating history in the Caribbean's contemporary literature; there is still so much to be said about the new developments in form and genre and the role of the narrative voice. Dub music and the dub aesthetic's open capacity for formal experimentation lend themselves well to an interrogation of the latest trends surfacing in Caribbean literature and the ways that multivocality seems to assert itself as the most accurate path to the fullest truth. Reading Nalo Hopkinson's *The Salt Roads* and the emerging genre that she refers to as "Caribbean fabulist fiction" through a dub aesthetic lens would be like entering a literary minefield. Reading a text like Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* for its dub aesthetic parallels of multivocality, intertextuality, and popular culture references would be a delightful dub aesthetic engagement. A dub aesthetic reading of Pauline Melville's *Ventriloquist's Tale* or Robert Antoni's *Divina Trace* (1993) complete with shifting time and trickster narrators that are analogous to dub's talk-over experience are where the dub aesthetic moves to next.

The dub aesthetic allows for an exploration of a text like *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* that moves beyond its overabundance of common Caribbean literary themes and gives critics new insight into a curious, multi-layered, multiple-perspective novel that casts doubt and raises questions about fact and fiction, truth and lie. Suspicion enters the text through the narrator himself and also vis-à-vis the employment of what appears to be magical realism or the *marvelous real*. By reading *Oscar Wao, Salt Roads, Divina Trace,* or *The Ventriloquist's Tale,* four critical texts criss-crossing the Caribbean region, the relationship between perspective and reality, and that between perception and truth is dub-ly distorted and intentionally blurred by the manipulative trickster narrator. These multiple layers offered by the witnesses' and narrators' perspectives of the truth parallels the way that a reggae song is enriched by each additional dub, and even has similarities with the culmination of dub music.

Jamaican music began with a transported, traumatized memory from a West African past. The earliest days of *tambu* percussion and *kumina* drumming pointed back to that prior home space. The music evolved over time and circumstances into the dub stretched soundscapes of the 1960s. Dub, because of its close connection to its reggae predecessor, divided its gaze between Africa and the new nation from which it sprang. But dub, however, was much more firmly invested in the present, becoming almost obsessive about recording and cutting newer and newer dubs to capture the "right now" of time. Recall, if you will, the example I analyzed in chapter three where Burning Spear's dub album *Garvey's Ghost* was cut, mixed, recorded, and released just four months after the reggae originals on the album *Marcus Garvey*. The faster the dub could be mixed the sooner the dancehalls could re-engage with the message; and the dancehall

patrons wanted more. From the dub producers they wanted more empty spaces for adding their own remembered words, more driving bass, more pulsing drums, more rearrangement, and more unpredictable talk-over.

Building on the enthusiasm surrounding dub talk-over dancehall music, dub's mut(e)ation – if I may once again demonstrate the term I put forth and engage with extensively in chapter two –took only what it needed from the dub genre, sporadically looking to the past for inspiration. When dancehall looks back listeners hear it in the digital sounds of studio produced riddim tracks that can mimic the goat-skinned drums of, for example, *kumina* or Rasta riddims of the *kette drum*. Overall, dancehall might be understood as reflecting the present while chasing the future.

During the course of Jamaica's musical evolution, one fact remained the same: the music produced on the island has consistently been dominated by male producers and performers. Jamaica's musical progression has opened up a wider space to allow diversity that could never have been imagined during those roughly two decades of dub's peak. Dub music studios were almost exclusively masculine spaces. There were no women producers, sound mixers, toasters, deejays, or selectors. Michael Veal's (2007) extensive work on dub does not give a single mention to women or even the absence of women because it is, for the most part, a given that Jamaican music was/is dominated by men. The dub music of the 1960s or 70s, arguably, never could have imagined that it would produce what or *who* we know today as dancehall or its deejays.

The deejay toasters or talk-over kings like U Roy, whose work I discussed in chapter three, would rhyme phrases over the dub soundscapes. This dub development gave way to the lyrical dancehall deejays that we know and take for granted today. The

lyrical storytellers that began making a name for themselves in the 1980s and 1990s were, overwhelmingly, men. So proud they were of their ability to tell stories over a pulsing riddim and in engaging ways inherited from their dub predecessors that some named themselves with colonial military titles: Lieutenant Stichie, Admiral Bailey, to name a few. But others chose names that rooted them to a local, Caribbean sense of power so they called themselves *bantons*, the Jamaican "slang for a great story-teller" (Thompson 30).

But for the women entering this masculine arena, they chose names that asserted status but set them apart from the men on the most obvious of levels. Take, for example, an artist like Lady G, who pushed her way into the dancehall scene in the mid-1980s, and in 1988 met much success with the lyrics she deejayed over the hottest riddim (rhythm) track of that year. Her song was "Nuff Respect" and the riddim, "Rumours/ Telephone Love," was produced by Augustus "Gussie" Clarke.[55] Riddims functioned then (and continue to function today) in the same kind of capacity as a dub producer like King Tubby did. But instead of various new, studio produced individual recordings pointing back to a single reggae original, any artist that can pay to do so, can "jump" onto a pre-made, one size fits all riddim track and the riddim producer takes production credit for each artist's use of his riddim.

Lady G's entrance into the field of dancehall was a remarkable accomplishment for Jamaican music and for Jamaican women. "Nuff Respect" is a song warning people not to gossip. Superficial, to some degree, but political as well, in her refrain Lady G calmly demands, "No carry me name no spread no rumor/ Show me nuff respect/ Now true me live inna di ghetto/ Show me nuff respect." The lyrics translate from the

Jamaican nation language as: "Don't talk about me when you spread your rumors/ I deserve respect / I might live in the ghetto/ But I still deserve respect." The lyrics I quote in the epigraph, "Because dis is a fact/ Me haffi confess/ To all a di ooman/
Man fi due respect," are, within the context of the song, telling men to stop disrespecting women because of how they dress and because of where they come from. But given the circumstances of gender exclusivity within the Jamaican musical tradition, Lady G's words can equally apply to the men of dancehall, of dub, or reggae, etc.,[56] "all a di ooman/ Man fi due respect." Translated, Lady G "confess[es] the "fact" that the women deejays deserve the respect of men.

Similarly, the Afro-Caribbean and often Rastafarian or Rasta-leaning reggae and dub artists of the 1960s and 1970s would never have imagined an uptowner, whose family's status aligns more with Babylon[57] than with the Rastafarian community, as one of the top grossing dancehall artists. In a November 2006 *Jamaica Gleaner* article titled "From Swimming Pools to the Grammys," a contributing writer described Sean Paul in the following national, religious, and color terms, all of which are Caribbean codes for class and privilege: "Born to a Jewish Portuguese-Jamaican father and a Chinese-Jamaican mother, Sean Paul grew up known to his friends as the 'copper-colour Chiney bwoy.'" Dancehall has advanced the dub into a space of increased, thought limited, inclusion.

To conclude then, let me don the headphones of the toasting deejay. Let me take to the microphone to talk-over my own original record in order to thank the Caribbean literary *massive* for allowing me *likkle space* to show off this dub aesthetic. Shifting, like a true Caribbean trickster, into the role of dub narrator, I employ meta-narrative

techniques to recall for you what this dissertation has accomplished. Having laid out the origins, inspirations, and definitions of the dub aesthetic, this project has demonstrated just how much the theoretical arenas of Caribbean hybridity discourse and Caribbean identity discourse needed to be revived or *dubbed*. Just as I did in the introduction, I once again turn to the grounding powers of nation language as a means of culturally and linguistically reinforcing the inseparables I hope to have made clear in the previous chapters. The music and the literature, the performative and the theoretical, the Jamaican part and the Caribbean/diasporic whole cannot be separated.

The literary space may be *calk* and it may be *ram*, but, full to capacity or not the literary dancehall must welcome this eager reveler. Surely there is room for this dub approach. The exuberant impatient texts, packed cover-to-cover on the Caribbean canon's ever-growing shelves – shelves that are bursting with stories that re-imagine colonial history, pulsing with stories that interrogate narrative truth, rocking with stories that re-negotiate identity and subjectivity over multiple migrations into diasporic spaces, swaying with the seldom heard stories of the marginalized middle/brown/upper class, and yelling with the stories of suppressed non-heteronormative sexualities – are calling out to be read and analyzed anew through the lens of a dub aesthetic.

The literary dancehall setting is the space where the past, present, and future collide and the dub aesthetic facilitates that. The hybridity and creolization discourse classics – the Walcotts, the Brathwaites, and the Glissants – remain untouchable kings of the Caribbean's theoretic dancehall. But just as Lee "Scratch" Perry enhanced and amplified the great Bob Marley's sound, so too does this dub aesthetic turn up the mixer's controls. In this venue the dub aesthetic is here to tease the memory by reviving

the old all while creating something new for us to appreciate. The dub aesthetic serves as a new lens which we can use to closely examine the evolving contemporary Caribbean literary world around us. This new and *re*newed beat booms and echoes calling us, the academic revelers, both backward to honor our past and forward to imagine our future.

Notes

[1] Here I reference the Caribbean ritual of burying a child's navel string (umbilical cord) in the ground in a special place of significance to the child's family. Some choose to plant a tree where the cord is buried. This practice is believed to promise the child fertility in the future and also links the child to the land.

[2] "Rude boys" is the name given to the young and unemployed men that roamed the streets of Kingston. With no jobs available, the presence of these men threatened public safety and increased crime rates.

[3] See Audre Lorde's 1983 essay of the same name.

[4] The Caribbean is mapped in the same way in Franklin Knight and Colin Palmer's *Modern Caribbean* (1989).

[5] Donnell offers an expanded reasoning for viewing the Caribbean's English speaking nations as "Anglocreole" in her critical study: *Twentieth Century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literary Cultural History* (2006: 9).

[6] See *PBS NewsHour* transcript for Jeffrey Brown's interview with author Junot Diaz.

[7] My use of the word "deconstruction" in this dissertation is not to call forth Jacques Derrida but, rather, it is meant in the same musical sense that ethnomusicologist Michael Veal uses the term in his text, *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae*.

[8] The poetics of the Caribbean lyrical novel is demonstrated quite beautifully in the following scene describing Mona's fears of the domestic. In staccato rhythm the narrator packs one sentence with the pain of living a single day as, what is to her, a typical Indo-Trinidadian woman: "Becoming a wife, with a husband, drunk maybe, after a night out with his friends in the rumshop, a boy out with the boys, now drunk, falling on you late at night, his mouth reeking of stale rum and the remnants of cutters lodged between his teeth, tugging and pulling at your underwear, intent on one objective—the release of his tension, aroused by the boys on his boys' night out" (Espinet137).

[9] As Espinet points out in *The Swinging Bridge*, the *kala pani* is the Hindi name given to "the black waters that lie between India and the Caribbean" (4).

[10] Espinet's character Da-Da, the father of protagonist Mona Singh, arguably represents the hyper-masculinity that many 1950s and 1960s Caribbean texts depict. Texts like those written by authors Naipaul, Selvon, and Lamming. For a brief analysis of Da-Da see Chelva Kanaganayakam's book review, "Closing the Circle." *Canadian Literature*. 190: 2006, 136-138.

[11] It is not my intention to suggest that Jenkins' novel is without complications of prejudice or stereotype against both Indians and African creoles. See David Dabydeen's Introduction in *Lutchmee and Dilloo* for details on Jenkins's political position and his literary shortcomings.

[12] *Rand* is the Hindi word used to identity both a widow and a harlot (Espinet 175).

[13] Puri explains the use of hybridity rhetoric in postcolonial nation building: "Although hybridity offers Williams a vocabulary for unifying Trinidad by producing a hybrid identity that is different from the identities in the ancestral lands of its inhabitants, it is important to note that it it's a cultural hybridity, not a racial one. The tendency to play up cultural hybridity as a way of playing down racial hybridity is a recurrent move of many foundational Caribbean nationalist invocations of cultural hybridity." Puri, Shalini. *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Post-Nationalism, and Cultural Hybridity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, 48-49.

[14] In Part One of Puri's text she explains that true hybridity is impossible without equality. She pieces apart the various representations of hybridity—from callaloo to *mestizaje*—to evidence the ways in which cultural hybridity has been integral to Caribbean nation building (45-60).

[15] See my analysis of the Kenny and Mona encounter on page 34, within.

[16] Veal uses the first chapter of his dub study to reflect upon the interwoven influences on Jamaican music from past to present.

[17] Michael Veal suggests that dub music comes to be because of the unique circumstances of Jamaica in the 1960s. Beyond national independence in 1962, the 1960s saw "studio engineers who had variously tuned into the potentials of Africa, outer space, nature, psychedelia, and the late modernist machine" (34).

[18] The "Sea Is History" essay by Derek Walcott appears in the following collection of essays: Birbalsingh, Frank. *Frontiers in Caribbean Literatures in English*: NewYork, St. Martin's Press, 1996. "Sea Is History" poem by Derek Walcott appears in the following collection of poems: Walcott, Derek. *Collected Poems 1948- 1984*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987 and the internet at Poets.org.

[19] Garveyites are followers of Garveyism, the system of beliefs and ways of life put forth by Jamaican thinker Marcus Garvey's (1887-1940) and his pan-Africanist movement, the UNIA-ACL (Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League) which dates back to the late 1920s.

[20] By adapting dub music into a literary aesthetic, it is critical too to widen the parameters of what constitutes a Caribbean text.

[21] The history of the Ariwa Record Label, its founder and the label's foundation are detailed in the "Ariwa Story" section of the record label's website: www.ariwa.com.

[22] In *Trinidad and Tobago: Democracy and Development in the Caribbean* (1986) Scott B. MacDonald discusses the ways that Black Power discourse from the U.S.A. radicalized the Afro-Creole populations in Trinidad. Tensions between Indians and blacks escalated post-Independence economically - as job scarcity increased competitions for the limited options, and politically – as Indo-Trinidadians pushed for their own representation (8).

[23] Terry Lacey's 1977 study, *Violence and Politics in Jamaica*, explores why Jamaica seemed to explode with violence during the decade of national independence, the 1960s. Lacey cites political instability, increase in youth population, and urbanization as the major contributors to the rapid rise in crime and violence in the capital city of Kingston.

[24] See the seminal Caribbean history and society works by both George L. Beckford (1972) and Aggrey Brown (1979).

[25] The opening pages of Marcus Rediker's introduction to *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (2007) are presented from the perspective of a captured African woman who is brought aboard a slave ship. He calls upon various primary sources for details, but the story itself is one of his own creation.

[26] In "Crossing the Ring of Fire: Slave Resistance during the Middle Passage, 1720-1842" Antonio T. Bly, like Rediker, uses 18th century texts to support his own fictional reproduction of a slave mutiny meant to enhance the readers' understanding of slavery.

[27] Peter Tosh and Bob Marley co-wrote the song "Get Up Stand Up," but the song was recorded by Tosh, Bunny Wailer, and also by Bob Marley and the Wailers. The song is featured on the Bob Marley and the Wailers' album, *Burnin'* (1973).

[28] This lyric is quoted from Buju Banton's song "Untold Stories," which appears on his album *Til Shiloh* (1995).

[29] See Sarah Dillon's work *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* (2007).

[30] The word *abeng* is Twi, a Ghanaian word meaning horn. The tradition of blowing the horn comes to Jamaica through captured Africans and is a tradition that was kept alive by the Jamaican Maroons. *Abeng* (1984) is also the title of Jamaican author, Michelle Cliff's first novel which itself is a revision of history.

[31] This figure covers a twenty year period, 1982- 2004. The average number of interdicted Haitians during this time was fewer than 5,000 per year, but there were significant spikes following the 1991 coup which ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Numbers of interdicted Haitians rose to nearly 40,000 in year following the

coup. See Figure 1 of Ruth Ellen Wasem's "U.S. Immigration Policy on Haitian Migrants," 2.

[32] "Intertemporal" is a word used in economic theory to make sense of a government's or a person's savings habits over time usually the present and the future (see intertemporal choice or intertemporal consumption).

[33] There is also a connection to be drawn between the imagery of Célianne's and her daughter's drownings and the drowning depicted in David Dabydeen's poem, "Turner" (1995). Dabydeen's poem gives attention to the discarded African whose head is submerged in the foreground of J. M. W. Turner's 1840 painting titled "Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying." Dabydeen explains his choice of subject matter in his introduction: the African's head "has been drowned in Turner's (and other artists') sea for centuries. When it awakens it can only partially recall the sources of its life, so it invents a body, a biography, and peoples an imagined landscape. […] The agent of self-recognition is a stillborn child tossed overboard from a future ship" (7-8). Dabydeen's poem and Danticat's "Children of the Sea" all share the same haunting dub rhythm of memory revived.

[34] See April Shemak's *Asylum Speakers* (2011) for more on the politics of the Haitian refugee body.

[35] See Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993) and his discussion of the griot or griotism in music of the African diaspora, from West African to American rap music.

[36] I discuss mut(e)ations at length in the previous chapter.

[37] Dread-talk is a way of communicating between Rastafarians that connects them linguistically to Ethiopia, Jah/God, and each other. Dread-talk replaces, for example, all "me" or "my" and "you" or "u" sounds with "I." An example would be the word meditate in Dread-talk is "I-ditate."

[38] See Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*.

[39] I clarify these "colored" terms in detail as the literary analysis unfolds.

[40] I clarify this black identification of the white Winkler as the literary analysis unfolds. See also Kim Robinson-Walcott's study of Anthony Winkler, *Out of Order* (2006), for further investigation of Winkler as anomalous in this regard.

[41] The Ministry of Public Administration and Information makes this coat of arms and flag information available on the National Library and Information System Authority of Trinidad and Tobago's website.

[42] In fact, Louis Jenkins was enrolled in "expensive music lessons" and trained on the violin (2).

[43] "Uptown" is a word used throughout Jamaica to describe the middle class and better populations who, traditionally, live uptown. Downtown is the site of the poor. Uptown is reserved for the educated and economically successful.

[44] "Brownin'" is the Jamaican term to describe a light complexioned woman. A lighter complexioned man would be referred to as "brown." Often, but not always, a layered descriptor of race and class, the word "brownin'" can be interchangeable with "uptown" in as much as light complexion is often also synonymous with higher class positioning in Jamaica. A "brownin'" from the working or lower class is exceptional, for the same reasons noted in the previous sentence.

[45] This is not the first time I am using this term in this section break of Chapter Four. I invoke "post-Dexter" in much the same way that Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2007) define the post-colonial moment.

[46] In his biography on his record label's website (www.Ariwa.com), dub producer the Mad Professor, details his introduction to reggae and dub music via the "Groove Govenor's" radio broadcast. See more on the Ariwa Records website.

[47] These were the same concerns raised by Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley during the 1970s. He built his platform on leveling the gap between the haves and the have-nots. See documentarian Stephanie Black's film *Life and Debt* (2000) for a critical take on Jamaica's financial woes.

[48] Many of Michael Manley's most stirring and controversial quotes are catalogued on his website (www. Michael manley.org). The speech to which I refer here, was Manley's address at the International Conference in support of the peoples of Zimbabwe and Namibia, in Maputo, Mozambique, May 17, 1977.

[49] See Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) for its exploration of how postcolonial texts serve as critiques of the established and privileged European literary models.

[50] The Institute of Jamaica produced this article for print in the Jamaican newspapers, *The Jamaica Gleaner*, *The Observer*, *The Star*: "Honouring Lee 'Scratch' Perry" also appears on the less stable website for the Institute.

[51] Carivision Community Theatre, Inc. presented "A Feast of Words and Movement at University of Maryland, Ulrich Recital Hall, March 25, 2012.

[52] "Crick Crack" is published in Merle Collins' *Rotten Pomerack* (1992), 60-63.

[53] See Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981).

[54] Traditional may not be the best word choice, as I do not clarify whose tradition: Western (Europe/colonial), African, Asian, or indigenous.

[55] See the Discogs web entry for Lady G and Gregory Isaacs.

[56] Let me clarify that Lady G was not the first Jamaican woman to perform or record a song. Before Lady G, there were women like Sister Carol, Marcia Griffiths, and a few more, not many more, but more. Lady G, I am arguing, is one of the first to have success in the definably dancehall genre.

[57] This description of Sean Paul as a Babylon descendant is meant to underscore his non-black, non-Rasta background.

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