

## Dub is the new black: modes of identification and tendencies of appropriation in late 1970s post-punk

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**‘Dub is the new black: modes of identification and tendencies of appropriation in late 1970s post-punk’**

**Abstract**

This article examines the complex racial and national politics that surrounded British post-punk musicians’ incorporation of and identification with dub-reggae in the late 1970s. I analyse this historical moment from sociological, intra-musical, and discursive perspectives, reading the musical incorporation of dub-reggae by The Police, Gang of Four and Joy Division against the backdrop of the era’s music press discourse. I also unpack discursive representations of Jamaican musicians and ask: what role does subaltern performativity play in contributing to ‘imaginary’ critical conceptions of dub, particularly concerning the Jamaican melodica player Augustus Pablo? I conclude by suggesting that post-punk musicians’ incorporation of dub-reggae represents neither an unencumbered post-colonial socio-musical alliance nor a purely colonial one, but rather exceeds and therefore problematises these two positions.

**‘I’d hate to be involved with the blues’**

- **Keith Levene** (Bohn 1980, p. 26)

For certain British post-punk musicians at the end of the 1970s, using blues-derived riffs was simply no longer cool. Running contrary to rock’s history of imitating and idolising musicians such as Robert Johnson, Howlin’ Wolf and Chuck Berry, post-punk groups such as Public Image Ltd (PiL) expressed disdain for music that exhibited blues influences. In an interview with the British music paper *ZigZag* in December 1978, PiL’s frontman and former lead singer of the Sex Pistols, John Lydon, said that he ‘got pissed off with’ hearing Steve Jones (the Sex Pistols’ guitarist) ‘run through Chuck Berry riffs and gradually changing to Peter Frampton riffs’ (Banks 1978, p. 8). However, as Lydon’s reference to white rocker Frampton suggests, post-punk musicians’ rejection of blues-associated music was not a rejection of African-American music per se, but a by-product of the punk movement’s rebellion against the kind of 1960s and early 1970s rock that had modelled itself on African-American music. As one member of the London-based (post-) punk group Subway Sect put it, ‘I like 50s rock ‘n’ roll—I just don’t like “ROCK” music’ (Walsh 1977, pp. 12-14). In other words, post-punk musicians desired to move away from the blues because it had become inextricably associated with their real enemy, rock.

PiL’s guitarist, Keith Levene, expressed this precise sentiment in a 1980 interview with journalist Chris Bohn for the *New Musical Express* (NME). When asked about his brief tenure with The Clash and his early musical influences, Levene remarked:

Funny thing was that I never realised at first that rock—The Rolling Stones—all came from black music, the blues. And I really came to hate all those ‘50s Chuck Berry riffs. I love it for what it was, but all the rock and rollers I know ... [make] me ill. They

are all so into that and think that it's so important—if only they'd fucking get away from it, into something that is important ... (Bohn 1980, p. 26)

Corroborating post-punk chronicler Simon Reynolds' suggestion that post-punk guitarists avoided playing bluesy-sounding riffs (Reynolds 2006, pp. 2-3), Bohn noted that Levene had to 'de-learn rock guitar' in order to avoid sounding like a 'rock and roll' musician (Bohn 1980, p. 27). In fact, a blurry image of Levene standing behind some decidedly un-guitar-like equipment—a keyboard fed through a tangle of wires, effects boxes and two up-turned Fender amplifiers—accompanies the interview, and Levene stated:

My personal thing has never come from black music, and I'd hate to be involved with the blues or anything. I never get the blues. I might get down, but the blues haven't got anything to do with me, right? When I left The Clash, I joined a band called The Quick Spurts and I told them that if I could amputate their little fingers I would stay with them, because I hate all that twelve-bar shit, you know? (Bohn 1980, pp. 26-7)

Thus it appears that Levene and Lydon desired to excise blues-based riffs ('all that twelve-bar shit') because of its association with the previous generation of white rock acts, particularly The Rolling Stones, who were amongst a cluster of rock musicians that punk enthusiasts derided at the time of punk's emergence (see for example Coon 1976, p. 24-5).

But, reading his words more closely, it could also be argued that Levene thought that 'the blues' was somehow remote or Other; as a white British musician, the African-American-associated practice of 'the blues' did not have 'anything to do with' him and, perhaps by extension, nor did it have 'anything to do with' the previous generation of white British rockers who had imbibed and re-enacted Chicago blues in London's Soho

clubs during the mid-1960s. Furthermore, Levene's elision of the category 'black music' with blues-based genres is striking for the way in which it highlights the complex signification of the term 'black music' in Britain at the end of the 1970s. Indeed, his rejection of 'black music' is surprising because all three of the regular members of PiL (including John Wardle, who went so far as to change his name to 'Jah') were fans of Jamaican popular music (Partridge 2010, pp. 230-1 and Reynolds 2009, pp. 16-26). Thus despite Levene's insistence that his 'personal thing' never came from 'black music,' one of PiL's main interests was 'black music,' just not African-American music.

There are undoubtedly many problems with the term 'black music.' As a category of popular music, the term presupposes an ethnic essence of blackness and homogenises the different musics and identities of the African diaspora. Philip Tagg's (1989) open letter is one of the most notable examples of a challenge to such assumptions and Keith Negus (1996) has also critiqued the essentialist presuppositions of the term. It should be clear from the way that I highlight the problems regarding Levene's use of the term 'black music' and its multiple significations that I do not endorse this essentialist view. Rather, drawing from Paul Gilroy, I retain the concept of 'black music' for its signification as an articulation of lived, meaningful experiences for black-identified groups and individuals (Gilroy 1993, p. 100), and I am seeking to highlight the problematic position of 'black music' as a resource for white rock musicians.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is also worth noting that during the 1970s there was a British music paper called *Black Music*, which included articles on different black-associated genres such as soul and reggae. George Lipsitz (1994) has also discussed how immigration to the UK from the Caribbean contributed to the partial dissolution of the differences between people from different island nations and the emergence of new categories such as

In this article, then, I propose that this splitting of ‘black music’ in Levene’s interview is illustrative of an ambivalence at the heart of post-punk musicians’ borrowing from and identification with Jamaican popular music and reggae culture more broadly. As Lydon and Levene’s comments indicate, borrowing from ‘black music’ qua African-American blues was passé, owing to its connections with 1960s and 1970s rock and rollers, and possibly demonstrated the appropriation of the experiences of a national and racial Other, implied by Levene’s suggestion that he didn’t ‘get the blues’ and that ‘the blues’ did not have ‘anything to do with’ him. But, borrowing from ‘black music’ qua Jamaican dub-reggae prevailed across the punk and post-punk scenes.<sup>2</sup> As I shall discuss, the black Atlantic character of dub-reggae, as a genre born of the migration of people and the circulation of artefacts between Africa, the Caribbean, the United States and Britain, meant that dub-reggae, when compared to African-American blues, was able to occupy different identificatory significances in the post-punk discourse, one of which was as a quasi-indigenous UK genre. The literal proximity of Jamaican artists to British ones brought about by the post-war labour migration and Britain’s colonial history afforded new musical and political alliances, as writers such as Dick Hebdige (1979), Negus (1996), and Christopher Partridge (2010) have identified. As Partridge has suggested, the

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‘Black Britons’ and ‘West Indians.’ For more on the intricate processes through which categories of music become sutured to categories of people, particularly concerning the issues of race, see the work of both David Brackett (2002; 2003; 2005; and 2012) and Karl Hagstrom Miller (2010).

<sup>2</sup> Of course, not all post-punk musicians were explicitly anti-blues: Gang of Four still admired The Rolling Stones and many songs by The Fall use blues chord progressions. However, white post-punk of the late 1970s is significantly less marked by its incorporation of the blues idiom than the previous generation of rock music.

proximity between Britain's punk youth and Jamaican migrants, and their shared status as outlaws, engendered an ideological 'rapprochement' between punk and reggae (Partridge 2010, p. 171).

However, it is also worth observing the different tendencies of (primarily unidirectional) musical borrowing that this proximity gave rise to, and the way in which the post-punk discourse often fixed and reinforced a colonial subject-Other relation between white musicians and musicians of the African diaspora. That is to say, in both 1960s rock and 1970s (post-) punk, 'black music' (African-American blues and then reggae) functioned as a resource from which white rock musicians drew for inspiration. As Will Straw has suggested, post-punk's musical borrowing from dub-reggae, in what seemed at the time to have been a 'new unity of black and white youth,' might in retrospect be seen as a 'temporary [act] of rejuvenation undertaken by one of the communities involved' (Straw 1991, p. 382). Thus post-punk's identification with dub-reggae was neither an unencumbered post-colonial socio-musical unification, nor was it a purely colonial one; the nature of the relationship between the two genres, as I shall discuss, exceeds and problematises these two positions.

In order to analyse the complex politics involved in post-punk's identification with dub-reggae I undertake a prismatic reading of this historical moment, analysing it from the different social, intra-musical, and discursive perspectives. Throughout the article I refer to Georgina Born's model of the four modes of identification that can be deployed to explore how music can 'evoke, articulate, and represent' social and cultural identities through 'processes of composition, performance, or consumption.' The four principal modes of musical identificatory practice are: (1) the imaginary mode, a kind of

‘psychic tourism,’ the type of musical identification that is associated with exoticism, primitivism, and Orientalism; (2) the emergent mode, a musical identification or ‘alliance’ between two distinct social groups that ‘prefigures’ the emergence of a [real] form of sociocultural identity’; (3) the homological mode, musical identifications that reinforce existing sociocultural identities, e.g., the idea that black music is for and performed by black musicians; and (4) the macrohistorical mode, which describes how musics and their identificatory associations are reinterpreted at different moments in history (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000, pp. 31, 35-6). In this article I argue that the identification between post-punk and dub-reggae did not conform to just one of these identificatory modes, but slipped between and occupied both the ‘imaginary,’ which we might consider colonial, and the ‘emergent,’ which could be considered post-colonial. I am therefore stressing the importance of and possibility for fluidity when applying Born’s framework.

I begin with some historical detail about the punk-reggae alliance and then, in the next section, move on to musical analyses of songs by The Police, Gang of Four and Joy Division in order to illuminate the different ways in which white British musicians of this era incorporated dub, using these particular examples to demonstrate how musical appropriation can have different tendencies with differing significations. I also unpack discursive representations of Jamaican musicians and ask: what role does subaltern performativity play in contributing to ‘imaginary’ conceptions of dub, particularly concerning the Jamaican melodica player Augustus Pablo? In the final section of the article, I analyse British music journalist Vivien Goldman’s ‘exoticist’ reports on



Lyndon's 1978 trip to Jamaica with Richard Branson and Don Letts in order to extrapolate more examples of post-punk's colonial ambivalence.

### **The punk-reggae alliance and the emergence of PiL**

Jamaica's long history of subjection under British colonial rule provoked shifts in migration that would eventually contribute to the complex connection between white British musicians and black Jamaican migrants in the 1970s, and the subsequent musical borrowings characteristic of some post-punk-era music. The beginning of the Jamaican migration to the UK dates back to at least the Second World War when many West Indians were conscripted into the British army. According to the Times of London, on 22 June 1948, the SS Empire Windrush, in what could be understood as the beginning of the post-war wave of Jamaican immigration, ferried approximately 492 Jamaican migrant workers—including 'singers, students, boxers, pianists, and a complete dance band' as well as those willing to work in the coal mines—to Tilbury docks on the Thames estuary. West Indian migrants continued to travel to the UK throughout the 1950s and 1960s in an attempt to address Britain's post-war labour shortage.

One of the central features of Jamaican musical life that immigrants brought to Britain during the mass migration was the sound system: an outdoor party serviced by gargantuan speakers and DJs playing modified American R&B and ska records, although these parties moved indoors when adapted for the UK. DJs Duke Vin, Count Suckle and Metro were amongst some of the first artists to introduce the sound system to Britain. Sets by Duke Vin at London's Soho Flamingo were advertised in Melody Maker during the UK's 'blue beat' craze of 1964, the year that also saw Jamaican singer Millie Small

capture British audiences with ‘My Boy Lollipop.’<sup>3</sup> According to Metro, the UK sound system scene thrived to such an extent that, while in England, ‘nobody talked about Jamaica, because it was happening here now’ (Maycock 1998, n.p.).

This process of relocating the sound system and its associated genres and practices from Jamaica to the UK could be interpreted as an example of what Susan Stanford Friedman has called ‘indigenisation,’ the process of ‘making native or indigenous’ a cultural practice from elsewhere. This ‘transplantation’ from one country to the next, Friedman argues, relies on certain favourable conditions (Friedman 2006, p. 430). Jamaica’s long process of achieving independence from the UK therefore inadvertently fostered the ‘transplantation’ of sound system culture from Jamaica to Britain. Thinking through Friedman’s ‘indigenisation,’ in other words, offers another way to frame the idea that the punk-reggae alliance was more contiguous than it was imaginary, thus echoing Born’s ‘emergent’ model; this was in many ways a ‘socio-cultural’ alliance between two proximate music scenes, rather than pure ‘psychic tourism.’

The avenues through which Britain’s white audiences came into contact with sound systems, dub-reggae, and musicians of Jamaican descent were myriad, and have been well documented (Hebdige 1979; Partridge 2010). The UK’s mainstream audiences had a taste of some of dub’s most celebrated names in February 1978 with the hit song ‘Uptown Top Ranking’ by Althea and Donna, which was produced by Joe Gibbs and Errol Thompson. But there were many other nodes of contact and spaces across the UK

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the British blue beat craze of 1964 see Lorre (2015), ‘Around the Beatles: (re)presenting the African diaspora in English pop hits of 1964.’

that brought the punk/post-punk and dub scenes directly into contact with each other. Clubs such as the Roxy and Acme Attractions in London, and the 'F' Club in Leeds, played hybrid sets of punk and reggae. Don Letts (a punk-reggae DJ of Jamaican descent who claims to have introduced Bob Marley to punk, giving life to the song 'Punky Reggae Party') and Caribbean producer Dennis Bovell (who worked with post-punk groups such as The Slits and The Pop Group) both facilitated contact between the two generic fields. From the mid-1970s onwards dub and reggae records were lauded in the UK music papers, with writers such as Vivien Goldman contributing regular columns on reggae in *Sounds*. In August 1977, *ZigZag* went so far as to dispense with its 'no black music policy' so as to offer more reggae-related articles, indicating a fundamental shift in white rock connoisseurs' attitude towards 'black music' (Needs 1977, p. 29).

The movement and event series Rock Against Racism (RAR), which formed partially in response to Eric Clapton's infamous endorsement of Enoch Powell's anti-immigration campaign and David Bowie's purported celebration of Hitler, is one of the strongest examples of a musical alliance between (post-) punk and dub-reggae, and illustrates the kind of ideological 'rapprochement' between punk and reggae that writers such as Partridge (2010) have described (see also Goodyer 2009, pp. 10-11). The fact that the establishment of RAR was partly a response to Clapton's endorsement of Powell also helps to contextualise Levene's dismissal of blues-rock and its white imitators cited earlier; like other 1960s rockers, Clapton's career was built upon imitating African-American blues musicians, and he'd also had a hit covering Marley's 'I Shot the Sheriff' in 1974. By demurring from associating with blues-based genres but developing a connection with Jamaican music, Levene and Lydon, and those affiliated with RAR,

could distance themselves from the inconsistent and problematic racial politics represented by the likes of Clapton and ‘all the rock and rollers.’ As Simon Jones has noted, reggae’s themes of ‘poverty, suffering and protest’ were apt to signify an opposition to the ‘dinosaurs’ of rock (Jones 1988/2011, p. 218).

However, as Roger Sabin has demonstrated, punk’s assumed status has an anti-racist movement has been exaggerated and perpetuated by a genealogy of mythologies, starting with the left wing critics of the 1960s up to accounts of punk written in the 1990s. According to Sabin, not only was punk’s interest in reggae a relatively superficial and romanticised one, but punk also neglected the oppression of British Asians, since their plight was deemed less ‘hip’ than that of the West Indian migrants (Sabin 1999, pp. 199-205). According to Born’s typology, then, punk and post-punk musicians’ endorsement of dub may have been an attempt to bring about, or ‘potentialise’ through music (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000, p. 35), sociocultural identification not just between two racially distinct genres of music, but also between black and white in the UK. At the same time, as Sabin has demonstrated, this identification was marked by ambivalence and, as I shall demonstrate, the residue of colonialism.

In order to explain why the punk scene specifically might have been interested in relaying a message of racial harmony, British music journalists such as Goldman and Jon Savage wrote of a shared sense of marginality between punks and Rastafarians. Following an RAR concert in September 1977, for example, Goldman described the connection between punks and Rastafarians as the ‘new wave sympathy for their black peer group.’ Goldman argued that it was their shared status as victims of an oppressive culture that brought punks and Rastafarians together. She also quoted Letts to support her

argument that the punk-reggae connection was one characterised by an anti-racist message: for Letts, punk was the ‘first white movement that he could relate to as a black man’ without being made to feel as though he was participating in a ‘minstrel show’ (Goldman 1977, n.p. see also Reynolds 2009, p. 6).

The punk-reggae connection was not only evident in the UK’s music venues, in the pages of the music papers and RAR-related events, but several punk-affiliated musicians voiced their interest in dub-reggae and performed alongside some reggae acts. Lydon’s personal enthusiasm for dub-reggae is perhaps the most well documented example. Lydon’s prominence at the time as an iconoclast, enfant terrible, and leader of alternative trends meant that his post-Pistols activity and his zeal for dub attracted intrigue and media attention. Three core events—Lydon’s appearance on Capital Radio on a programme titled ‘The Punk and his Music’; his famous list of reggae recommendations to a fan; and his trip to Jamaica with Virgin Records boss Richard Branson, DJ Letts, and journalist Goldman—have been used, most recently by Reynolds, to illustrate Lydon’s enthusiasm for and esoteric knowledge of dub and reggae (Reynolds 2006, p. 17).

Following the disbandment of the Sex Pistols in 1978, Lydon gave his first television interview since 1976 with journalist Janet Street Porter for London Weekend Television during which Porter asked Lydon whether his new band would be a reggae act (Porter 1978, n.p.). That same year, on Christmas Day and Boxing Day at the Rainbow Theatre in London, Lydon’s new project PiL had its debut performance. The review of the Rainbow concert for NME, written by Penny Reel, stressed how significant a figure Lydon was to the UK’s punk culture at that time; Lydon was ‘the face of the decade,’

someone who had almost single-handedly been the ‘catalyst for all that [had] happened in rock music since the Pistols arrived on the scene’ (emphasis original). Needless to say, the audience at the Rainbow Theatre was keen to hear Lydon’s brand new, post-Pistols music. Echoing the hybrid billing of RAR events and other black-white activist concerts, PiL appeared alongside dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, Letts and punk-reggae fusion band Basement 5, and in Reel’s account of the concert it was reggae, not punk, that ‘ruled the day.’ PiL took to the stage accompanied by a reggae soundtrack and, to quote Reel’s faux-Jamaican patois, this was PiL’s ‘first ever public appearance inna inglan, inna dis yah time, yaah!’ (Reel 1979, n.p.). Like Porter, Reel perhaps expected that PiL would be a reggae act.

PiL began their set with ‘Theme,’ the opening song to their first album *Public Image: First Issue*. The song comprises a hypnotic looping bass line, sound effects, improvised-sounding vocals, and a groove that evokes slow-tempo hard rock. Wobble’s bass line in particular is conspicuous for its use of a—presumably forbidden—bluesy flat 7<sup>th</sup> and its adherence to an alternation between areas I and IV (though lacking the move to V that would complete a blues progression). But, by virtue of the song’s prominent bass-and-drums texture, overall emphasis on timbre, Lydon’s meandering vocal performance, and the evasion of verse-chorus form, ‘Theme’ could indicate a dub influence and a significant departure from previous rock or punk styles. PiL’s debut concert, Lydon’s enthusiasm for dub and reggae, and events organised in connection with RAR, in addition to the roles played by intermediaries such as Goldman, Reel, and Letts, thus illustrate the literal proximity that existed between the two generic camps of punk and reggae in the UK and the forging of the ‘emergent’ identification between punk and reggae.

### **Tendencies of appropriation: echo and the melodica**

In his post-punk chronicle, *Rip it up and Start Again*, Reynolds has argued that punk groups such as The Clash and The Ruts took the ‘protest aspects of roots reggae,’ whereas post-punk groups such as PiL turned to reggae and dub as a ‘purely sonic revolution,’ fascinated by its ‘spatialised production and sophisticated yet elemental rhythms’ (Reynolds 2006, p. 18; Partridge 2010, pp. 25-7). As commentators such as Negus have noted, however, bands like The Clash did in fact borrow reggae’s rhythms, particularly the ‘distinctive syncopated reggae off-beat guitar,’ as exemplified in songs such as ‘(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais’ (Negus 1996, p. 108) and of course their performances of reggae songs such as Junior Murvin’s ‘Police and Thieves.’

Significantly, songs that used reggae-derived rhythms were not unique to either punk or post-punk. The Rolling Stones—Levene’s loathed ‘rock and rollers’—covered Eric Donaldson’s ‘Cherry Oh Baby’ on their 1976 record *Black and Blue* and their song ‘Luxury’ from *It’s Only Rock and Roll* (1974) is also ska-influenced. Led Zeppelin’s 1973 ‘D’Yer Ma’ker’ is also a reggae song, within a deliberate pun in the title. Other punk and post-punk groups of the late 1970s also incorporated the rhythmic aspects of reggae. Several songs by The Police, such as ‘Can’t Stand Losing You,’ ‘Don’t Stand So Close To Me’ and ‘Roxanne,’ alternate between sections characterised by a reggae-derived rhythmic feel and those with more of a classic rock or pop feel. In the case of ‘Can’t Stand Losing You,’ for example, the song opens with a timbales-style snare roll. A rocksteady-style bass line and the offbeat ‘skank’ in the rhythm guitar establish the reggae groove. But within four measures, when Sting’s voice enters in his faux-patois with the words ‘Called you so many times today,’ the rhythmic profile of the song

becomes decidedly squarer, especially in the rhythm guitar, which switches from playing on the offbeat to playing four quarter notes per measure. The song's shift away from its reggae beginning is even more pronounced during the pre-chorus and chorus when the song unveils its 'true' identity with more of a rock feel, using punkish repeated eighth-notes in the bass and rhythm guitars, and pop-style harmony vocals. The reggae groove returns again before the second verse and fragments thereof also recur during the instrumental break at the song's halfway point. Nevertheless, proportionally speaking, pop/rock is the song's dominant style, especially because the song's main hook is in that idiom. The use of reggae is, in this case, conspicuous but not pervasive.

But other musicians of the post-punk era had more inconspicuous ways of borrowing from reggae and dub. Both Gang of Four and Joy Division borrowed from Jamaican music without incorporating the distinctive offbeat 'skank' that The Clash, The Police, The Rolling Stones, and others had all experimented with. First of all, journalists from both the 1970s and the present have commented on the way in which Joy Division's particular approach to spatialised production in their recordings may have been informed by the kinds of techniques employed on dub records. Secondly, both Joy Division and Gang of Four incorporated the melodica, an instrument that had featured in reggae music since the 1960s in ska and 'soul reggae' and was in the 1970s connected with Jamaican music and melodica player Augustus Pablo.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See for example the 1981 compilation released by Trojan Records, which includes many tracks by Pablo as well as other melodica players such as Joe White. What is striking about this album is its sleeve: a pair of brown hands play a melodica, one of which is holding a joint and Pablo's name is the most prominent on the cover.



In an interview given with Bert van de Kamp first published in the Dutch magazine *Muziekkrant Oor* in September 1981 Joy Division's producer, Martin Hannett, expressed his fondness for dub. Van de Kamp remarked, too, that Hannett's distinctive production style was identifiable because of the '[dub] techniques, delayed reverb, elastic drums and other special effects' used on the records he had worked on (van der Kamp 1981, n.p.). In the same interview, Hannett mentioned being impressed by Jamaican producer Joe Gibbs' music, even if it was not always possible to discern exactly how Gibbs had achieved a particular effect (van der Kamp 1981, n.p.). In an earlier interview with Max Bell in *NME* in 1980, Hannett remarked that he was especially fond of the sound of echo and synthesized drums he had heard on reggae recordings, to which his friend, DJ Roger Eagle, had introduced him:

I'd go around to [Eagle's] gaff around midnight and stay 'til dawn listening to his million reggae albums and they were all great dance records. Plus he tended to have blow (Hannett quoted in Bell 1980, p. 6).

In a filmed interview with Tony Wilson (manager of the Manchester-based label Factory Records, the label for whom Hannett produced) at Strawberry Studios in Stockport, Hannett demonstrated his methods at the mixing desk in such a way that alluded to these dub and reggae influences. Redolent of dub historian Michael Veal's description of the 'spatial' dimension afforded by echo (Veal 2007, p. 71), Wilson asks Hannett whether he uses 'exotic electronics to create an imaginary room' (emphasis mine, Hannett and Wilson 1980, n.p.). Wilson's comments in the video perhaps indicate that dub-reggae was situated between two discursive positions: the quasi-indigenisation (that I discussed above) and exoticism. But what is it about the idea of an 'imaginary room' specifically or creating a sense of space in a record that, to Wilson, sounded

‘exotic’? Was this kind of effect more associated with dub, a genre with ‘exotic’ connotations, than some of Hannett’s other influences, such as psychedelic music, mid-1960s CBS recordings (Bell 1980, pp. 6-7), and records by pop/country artist Lee Hazelwood (Savage 1989 printed 1992, n.p.)?

Indeed, the use of echo and delay is one of dub-reggae’s most central sonic characteristics. Although he doesn’t trace the specifics of such a connection, John Corbett has suggested that music with an ‘echoey-mix’ suggests the ‘long-standing trope of Orientalism, usually linked to a “mysteries of the East” mentality’ (Corbett 2000, 176). Partridge (2010, p. 202) has also highlighted the importance of echo—as a concept and sonic phenomenon—in dub-reggae and Rastafarian culture more broadly. In this regard, I suggest that the sonic use of echo in dub-reggae may be connected to both the evocation of the utopian elsewhere and symbolic repatriation germane to Rastafarianism, as well as particular stereotypes about ‘Other’ musical cultures. Since echo is produced when sound bounces off a surface, hearing echo in dub implies a communion or mirroring with a distant location, the noise carried across the large space between two surfaces. To put it another way, sound is sent from Jamaica to a symbolic Africa and returns intact thereby invoking a sense of kinship, connection and resonance, but also the assuring implication that the ‘soon-come’ elsewhere is, in fact, out there. The disembodied sound of one’s own voice emanating from a not-easily-identifiable source also has a magical quality that suggests the supernatural and the uncanny, and therefore arguably plays into stereotypical images of the Other, hence perhaps Wilson’s reference to ‘exotic electronics.’

Hannett was not the only ‘member’ of Joy Division who expressed an interest in dub. According to his widow, singer Ian Curtis often went to the Moss Side district of

Manchester in search of the latest reggae releases (Curtis 2007, p. 31) and drummer Stephen Morris has also commented that the band listened to ‘a lot of dub.’ In response to Reynolds’ suggestion that the sound of ‘cavernous space’ on Joy Division’s records produces the feeling that dub originated in ‘the Lake District or the steppes of Siberia,’ Morris commented:

There was a whole series of records by Scientist—Scientist Meets the Space Invaders, and all that. That was kind of the feel but obviously we’re not from Jamaica! So it got a little bit warped (Morris quoted in Reynolds 2009, p. 239).

Thus numerous music critics, in interviews with the band members themselves, have suggested both implicitly and explicitly that Hannett and Joy Division’s echoing mixes were inspired, at least in part, by listening to dub records. Moreover, a more concrete allusion to dub-reggae can be heard in Joy Division’s use of the melodica, an instrument that was associated with Jamaican music, specifically Augustus Pablo. The band use the instrument in their song ‘Decades’ from their 1980 album *Closer*. It can be heard playing the repeated motif (see Example 1) at approximately 4:35, although it is almost indistinguishable from the sound of the ARP Omni synthesizer, an important point to which I shall return. Commentators both past and present have connected the melodica with Pablo (particularly regarding Gang of Four’s use of the instrument) and it had also been used in earlier ska records such as those by Delroy Wilson and in songs such as ‘King Street’ by the Soulettes. But, even though the melodica was strongly associated with Jamaican popular music, its sound is arguably not as obvious a Jamaican signifier as a ‘skank’ rhythm employed by The Clash, The Police and The Rolling Stones. In the case of Joy Division, the melodica blends seamlessly into the kinds of synthesiser sounds with which they were experimenting. In their song, ‘In a Lonely Place’ (released by New

Order), the melodica is clearer than it is in 'Decades' and it plays part of the song's main instrumental hook. Nevertheless, in this recording too, the melodica responds to and blends in with the synthesizer in such a way that its timbre is almost indiscernible (see Example 2).

In light of the broader discussions of post-punk appropriation, then, I would argue that the semantic slipperiness of the melodica, as a synthesizer masquerade, makes for a more subtle kind of musical appropriation than those exemplified by The Clash, The Police, The Rolling Stones and Clapton. Given the culturally inscribed stereotypical association between blackness and rhythm (as highlighted by writers such as Ronald Radano 2003, p. 234) in choosing to blend a dub timbre into their songs rather than dub rhythm, have Joy Division circumvented crude appropriation or crude primitivist stereotyping? Furthermore, given the extent to which rock and modernist cultural discourses prioritise 'newness,' 'transformation,' esotericism and secret codes, Joy Division's timbral experiment with the melodica could also be said to afford more cultural capital than The Police's rhythmic borrowings or the covers performed by the likes of Clapton and The Rolling Stones.

Joy Division was not the only post-punk band to use a melodica in some of their songs. Gang of Four also used the instrument on their 1979 record, *Entertainment!* Unlike in Joy Division's recordings where the melodic blends with the other instrumental timbres, Gang of Four's melodica captures the child-like, no-frills, amateur aesthetic of punk that music journalist Caroline Coon celebrated in her 1976 *Melody Maker* article, 'Rebels Against the System' (Coon 1976, pp. 24-5). Journalist Mary Harron, also writing for *Melody Maker*, suggested that Gang of Four's singer, Jon King, played the melodica

in the ‘way he used to in primary school’ (Harron 1979, p.18). The melodica’s childlike simplicity in Gang of Four’s music, then, was a symbol of punk naïveté and authenticity. It can also be interpreted as a rejection of the overblown synthesizer virtuosity that characterised 1970s supergroups such as Emerson, Lake and Palmer, much like the one-finger-style synthesizer playing of electro-pop musician Gary Numan, a connection made by Theo Cateforis (2011, p. 176).

In fact, the particular way in which Gang of Four incorporated the melodica into their songs can be heard as being part of punk’s anti-virtuosic ethos. In ‘Ether,’ the opening song on their album *Entertainment!* (1979), the band introduces the melodica during the instrumental break where it participates in an antiphonal dialogue with the electric guitar, playing in minimal single-note and single-chord bursts. Towards the end of the instrumental break, the two instruments (guitar and melodica) alternate playing dissonant chords on the downbeat, eventually collapsing together, no longer playing antiphonally, as their rhythmic diminutions propel the song forward towards its main riff. In effect, the melodica-guitar duet in this song is an anti-solo; both instruments play minimal, non-melodic parts. In other words, Gang of Four used this ‘primary school’ instrument in such a way that accorded with punk’s overall ethos of anti-virtuosity.

However, following a concert on 25 March 1979 at the Lyceum Theatre in London journalist Charles Shaar Murray noted Gang of Four’s debt to Pablo, describing the band’s incorporation of the melodica as ‘an earnest approximation of’ Pablo’s melodica playing (Murray 1979, n.p.). In a more recent interview from 2009, furthermore, Gang of Four’s guitarist Andy Gill said he’d put his ‘hands up and admit’ having got the idea of using the melodica from Pablo (Reynolds 2009, p. 110). What is

significant, then, is the way in which Gang of Four, like Joy Division, absorbed this reggae signifier into their overall sound—as part of the no-frills instrumentation of punk in the case of Gang of Four or merged with other keyboard sounds in the case of Joy Division—rather than choosing to juxtapose more obviously reggae-style material with rock/pop ideas or recording covers as their contemporaries and predecessors had done.<sup>5</sup> This use of the melodica was thus more of an oblique or less glaring tendency of appropriation from dub-reggae.

### **Augustus Pablo, exoticism and subaltern performativity**

Some of Pablo's own music suggests a self-conscious performance of exotic-ness, which may be interpreted as a form of resistance and as part of Rastafarian uplift. What is significant, is the way in which Pablo's ironic or kitsch exoticist musical language, figures into a perception of dub-reggae as straddling different locales and, as such, slipping between the 'imaginary' and 'emergent' modes of identification. As I have already indicated, one of the central characteristics of Jamaican popular music is its use of utopian ideas and imagery, as part of the Rastafarian commitment to repatriation. Images of an idealised Africa (as Zion, Ethiopia, the motherland, etc.), at a time either before or after forced exile and subjugation, pervade dub-reggae music. Sociologist Sarah Daynes has discussed how dub-reggae musicians favoured a generalised image of the continent, a 'single and homogenous' Africa, rather than references to specific tribes or countries. Drawing on the etymology of the word 'utopia,' meaning 'no place,' Daynes

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<sup>5</sup> New Order recorded a version of reggae musician Keith Hudson's 'Turn the Heater On' for a John Peel Session in 1982. The melodica can be heard prominently in this performance too.

has suggested that Africa, as it is represented and conceptualised in reggae's 'collective memory,' is both 'not-here' and 'not-yet' (Daynes 2010, pp. 90-105). As I have suggested, the use of echo in dub may be heard as a utopian musical semiotic; or, at least, the fact that it has been interpreted by certain commentators (i.e. Wilson) as an 'exotic' sound encourages one to wonder why. Relatedly, postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha have highlighted the role of performativity in subaltern cultures. Spivak (1988) suggests that in order to be able to 'speak,' the subaltern must adopt hegemonic performances. Bhabha (1994) proffers the idea of 'mimicry,' the moment when the subaltern or subjugated turns hegemonic culture on itself, as a form of resistance. The so-called 'mystical' or 'exotic' sound of echo in dub records, while not strictly an example of mimicry, may be heard as a self-conscious performance of Otherness in line with these theories and as an articulation of utopianism.

According to New York Times music critic Jon Pareles, Pablo coined what he referred to as the 'Far East sound,' which Pareles has described as 'minor-key tunes with sparse lines for melodic floating above deep bass lines and echoing keyboards,' exemplified by the songs 'Java' (1972) and the album *East of the River Nile* (1977) (Pareles 1999, n.p.). Veal has also suggested that Pablo modelled his 'Far East sound' on 1960s recordings made by the likes of Don Drummond, Dizzy Moore, Jackie Mittoo and Tommy McCook, all of whom made music designed to represent either Africa or Asia (Veal 2007, p. 166). While certain dub and reggae musicians explicitly referred to Africa in their lyrics and album titles, Veal has noted how Pablo's own articulation of the 'political and spiritual dimensions of his Rastafarian faith' was through his creation of a 'devotional genre of reggae exotica.' Pablo therefore communicated reggae's collective

vision of Africa-as-utopian-elsewhere using ‘exotic’ musical gestures in addition to textual ones (Veal 2007, p. 166).

Pablo’s song ‘Java’ was a collaborative work between Pablo, producer Clive Chin and engineer Errol Thompson, and was recorded at Randy’s Studio in Jamaica. The song comprises a characteristically reggae-style ‘skank’ rhythm guitar part, plus lead-guitar melodies, bass, the distinctive reggae rim-shot snare at the beginning, and a delay effect on the minimal vocals that repeat the word ‘Java.’ The song’s main melody is dominated by Pablo’s melodic improvisations (Veal 2007, p. 165). With regards to Veal’s suggestion that Pablo developed a ‘devotional genre of reggae exotica,’ and recalling earlier discussions of Otherness, one of the most striking aspects of the song is the fact that it opens with the archetypal musical referent for the exotic or the ‘East:’ the melody from ‘The Streets of Cairo’ or ‘The Poor Little Country Maid’ (see Example 3). Originally a vaudeville song, ‘The Streets of Cairo’ was written in 1895 by American composer James Thornton to ridicule the authenticity of the ‘Egyptian’ dancing girls who performed at the World’s Fair in Chicago two years earlier, who were most likely from France (Kennedy 1998, pp. 271-77). On ‘Java’ the unmistakable melody is picked out on the electric guitar, over which Pablo intones the largely indiscernible words ‘From the West... From the East... Hail... Java.’ Pablo’s lyrics, minimal though they are, recall the Rastafarian imagery of, and reverence for, a ‘soon-come’ elsewhere. What is striking, however, is that Pablo has replaced Africa with Java, perhaps demonstrating the non-specificity of Rastafarian utopianism. Even though the melody from ‘The Streets of Cairo’ appears only at the very beginning of the song, it forms part of Pablo’s creation of



the ‘Far East sound,’ acting as a framing device for the entire song; Pablo’s quotation of ‘The Streets of Cairo’ might even be interpreted as an instrumental toast.

Significantly, then, Pablo appears to have taken this image of Java/elsewhere from colonial power: a fin-de-siècle American voice satirising the sound of the Middle East. This image or symbol for the ‘East’ as represented by this eight-bar melody had thus acquired such circulation and semiotic power that Pablo, who stands as ‘Othered’ by white-dominated society, borrowed it for its capacity to represent utopian uplift. To put it simply, Pablo-as-dominated has re-appropriated dominant culture for his own ‘devotional exoticist’ project. In the words of Edward Said, ‘There are lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter between East and West’ (Said 1978, pp. 58-9; see also Bhabha 1994, p. 25); here a stereotypical image of the Orient—a fragment of colonial culture come loose and turned kitsch—has shaped Pablo’s representation of a utopian elsewhere in ‘Java.’ The colonial fantasy of Otherness has been transformed into a creative expression of subaltern identity.

And so, even though dub-reggae may be perceived as a genre or style that was quasi-indigenous to the UK, and musicians such as Letts felt a part of the punk scene, in parallel, Pablo’s music evoked the ‘exotic’ as part of his commitment to Rastafarian uplift. It could therefore be argued that dub-reggae’s identity straddled the local and the exotic in the 1970s rock media discourse. For this reason, perhaps, actors such as Wilson and writers such as Reynolds have continued to ascribe an ‘exoticist’ dimension to post-punk musicians’ incorporation of dub.

### **Between the imaginary and the emergent**

In the same section of Reynolds' book in which he discusses some other of the post-punk albums that display strong dub influences (*Y* by The Pop Group and *Cut* by The Slits, both 1979), he forges a link between the kind of 'exotic connotations' that dub-reggae offered post-punk musicians in search of inspiration and 'newness,' and the artwork in which these groups clothed their albums. Reynolds points out the similarity between the cover for *Cut* (1979) and the image of the Mud People of Papua New Guinea on the cover of *Y*, suggesting that both groups (The Slits and The Pop Group) longed 'for a lost wholeness that they imagined existed before civilization's debilitating effects' (Reynolds 2006, p. 48). On the one hand, The Pop Group's 'exoticist' interest in dub—their simultaneous idealisation, representation and containment of non-Western cultures deployed to criticise life in the UK, which extended beyond using dub-reggae sounds into a more generalised image of 'Other' cultures—participated in the familiar asymmetrical dialogue that has taken place between much Western music and its Others. On the other hand, what is so striking about The Pop Group's utopian vision of 'pre-civilized society' is that it to some extent recalls the utopianism at the centre of the Rastafarian movement. But the two strains of utopianism arise from different circumstances: from slavery, forced migration and colonialism in the case of the Rastafarians, and as part of a broadly creative process for the post-punk musicians.

Rastafarian utopianism seems to have been one of the central aspects of reggae culture that found resonance with Britain's white youth, exemplified by the union between the two socio-musical scenes on the stages at certain activist events such as RAR. As a quasi-indigenised UK genre, dub-reggae's proximity to the punk scene, both

in terms of its politics and in terms of literal physical space, afforded a different kind of identification than the one that characterised 1960s blues-rock, where white performers mediated African-American music and experiences; ‘the blues’ may not have had ‘anything to do with’ Levene, but many post-punk musicians felt a kinship with reggae and dub.<sup>6</sup> However, as Reynolds’ reference to The Pop Group’s exoticist utopianism implies, in spite of the shared disenchantment with the socio-political status quo in Britain at the time and the literal proximity between post-punk and dub-reggae musicians, the discourse of Britain’s post-punk subculture captured this ambivalence, framing dub and its musicians as both local and ‘exotic,’ proximate and remote.

Journalist Vivien Goldman’s reports on the aforementioned trip that Lydon made to Jamaica in 1978 with Branson, Letts, and Goldman herself published in *Sounds* magazine in March 1978 also demonstrate this slippage between the ‘emergent identification’ and the ‘imaginary.’ Her articles exemplify the new sociocultural alliance on the one hand, but echo Britain’s colonial past on the other. According to Goldman, Lydon was flown to Jamaica to work as an A&R scout for Virgin, having proven his ‘impeccable’ qualifications with his playlist for the Capital Radio programme (Goldman 1978a, n.p.). Lydon confessed at the time that his motivation for joining Branson et al in Jamaica, and agreeing to act as a talent scout, was as much to save himself money on Jamaican records as it was to raise the profile of Jamaican music in the UK (Courtney 1978, n.p.). Opening her report on the Jamaican trip Goldman set both the soundtrack and scene. She listened to Jamaican singer Mikey Dread when she arrived and her article

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<sup>6</sup> Partridge (2010), for example, has noted how many punk and post-punk musicians would attend reggae sound system or ‘blues parties,’ pp. 168-9.

begins with references to famous Kingston landmarks such as the Sheraton Hotel (featured in Perry Henzell's 1972 film *The Harder They Come*) and Randy's Record store and studio, where renowned musicians such as Lee 'Scratch' Perry and Bob Marley made records. While staying at the Sheraton, Goldman remarked that the roster of live musicians playing at the hotel made it feel as though 'you were wading through your singles collection every time you went to get a glass of water,' name-dropping Peter Tosh, Tapper Zukie, Culture, Robbie Shakespeare, Sly Dunbar, and Perry as the hotel's principal entertainers (Goldman 1978a, n.p.).

When describing the socioeconomic conditions in Jamaica, Goldman employed a similar narrative strategy to the one used by Hebdige in his 1979 book on post-war British youth culture, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, extrapolating perceived parallels between the poverty she witnessed in Jamaica and the kind faced by Britain's working class youth (specifically Lydon as the son of Irish immigrants). She also suggested that music offered a way for the oppressed in both cultures to escape poverty and that Rastafarian utopianism was integral to both cultures (Goldman 1978a, n.p.). Unemployment, existential emptiness, music, narcotics and millenarianism were the things that, for Goldman, fostered a kindred connection between Jamaicans and England's suffering lower classes. Lydon and Goldman's trip to Jamaica, and Goldman's report, then, can be understood as an attempted actualisation of the cross-cultural identification already 'emergent' among certain members of Britain's punk scene and other white reggae fans. In making the pilgrimage, as it were, from London to Kingston, Lydon, Goldman, et al were modulating the punk's scene's identification with dub-

reggae through the 'emergent' into something more 'real,' retracing the transatlantic route at the heart of reggae culture.

Nevertheless, there are some significant aspects of Goldman's report of Lydon's trip to Jamaica that challenge the idea of an 'emergent' and/or 'real' identification by reinscribing Jamaican 'Otherness' and rebounding the punk-reggae identification from the 'emergent,' back into the 'purely imaginary' realm. While raging against his former manager Malcolm McLaren and McLaren's associate Vivien Westwood, Lydon revealed Westwood and McLaren's casual racism and tourist idealisation of Jamaica. Regarding Lydon's trip to Jamaica, the pair was reported to have said that Lydon had 'gone away to the sun in Jamaica to grow his cock' (Goldman 1978b, n.p.). Westwood's alleged reference to the size of Lydon's proverbial 'gear' and its hoped-for improvement upon travelling to Jamaica reveals how white-dominated culture's fixation with black male genitalia has been one way of sustaining the colonial project, by objectifying, homogenising, and fixing black bodies as simultaneously abject and alluring (Bhabha 1994, p. 59). Thus the fact that Westwood chose to depict Lydon's interest in dub-reggae and his trip to Jamaica using such a stereotype contributed to reinforcing the idea that black musicians, even those in Britain, still represented an objectified Otherness.

Westwood's language and ideas (paraphrased by Lydon in the interview with Goldman) thus bore the sinister traces of power asymmetries, and for all their striving to surpass the realm of 'purely imaginary' musical identification, similar kinds of colonial structures surfaced in other articles by Goldman herself. Just one week after the second instalment of her piece recounting Lydon's Jamaican experience, Goldman published another article in *Sounds* on the reggae band Culture, which was suffused with exotic

imagery. Goldman focused on facets of Jamaican life that are especially ‘natural,’ ‘animal,’ ‘erotic,’ and ‘spiritual.’ She chose to open the article with an image of Culture’s singer Joseph Hill washing his hair with cactus. She then observed the different kinds of exotic fruit growing in abundance—the wild cherry and the ugli—as well as the goats, the children playing makeshift instruments and the marijuana. ‘The entire country encounter,’ she wrote, ‘seemed like a dream.’ In her descriptions of Hill, Goldman also invoked a stereotype common to descriptions of black men of the spiritual leader or the shaman type:

Joseph . . . is striding beside me, firmly clasping a knotty stick. Was I under the influence? Perhaps: Joseph resembled a prophet of old, an endlessly praise-worthy patriarch of yore, accepting the shouts of ‘Hail Culture!’ that spring from all directions with a graciously sage nod. As befits the one and only leader of Culture. (Goldman 1978c, n.p.)

What is more, Goldman detailed how Hill lived with his mother in a two-room house, with a ‘lushly flourishing garden,’ like a ‘Tropical Greenhouse at Kew with the lid off’ in a ‘land that’s so blatantly fertile.’ Goldman also justified Rastafarianism’s negative attitudes towards women by suggesting that such beliefs ‘tie in with fears of a culture that’s rooted in the seasons. The cycles of the moon exert a fully acknowledged power in the absence of streetlights’ (Goldman 1978c, n.p.).

Under Goldman’s pen, then, Jamaica was an exotic, erotic, primitive paradise, and her reporting on Jamaica falls into the long-standing historical trend of simultaneously idealising yet containing the Other through particular kinds of representation. Here the Other is revered for its mysticism, virility, and earthiness—images that bands such as The

Pop Group and The Slits also attributed to reggae culture.<sup>7</sup> Even though the kind of identification that Goldman and Lydon were cultivating (with press articles, interviews, trips and musical borrowings) was one that highlighted similarity along the axis of socioeconomic disenfranchisement, a sense of difference was nonetheless articulated through Goldman's exoticisation. Furthermore, the kind of poverty experienced by West Indian migrants living back in the UK was arguably more severe, or less of a performance, than the kind encountered by dub-reggae's white punk counterparts. In an interview with UK reggae group Aswad, for example, Goldman quoted their bass player George Oban who pointed out the difference between the posturing of punk and the real hardship of Jamaican immigrants:

See my trousers now? They're done up with a safety-pin and man call me a punk. But it's the same with the holes in my t-shirt—I wear it like that because I haven't got another. The punks do that to be outrageous... (Oban quoted in Goldman 1977, n.p.)

Goldman's response was to point out that not all punks are necessarily dilettantes, but conceded, 'those mohair jumpers with prefab holes do cost £26.00' (Goldman 1977, n.p.). Despite the fact that many parts of Britain had existing West Indian communities, and that the dub-reggae music scene was somewhat 'indigenous' to the UK (in Friedman's sense of the term), Goldman's publications in *Sounds*, especially her trip to Kingston with Lydon, would have provided British readers with exposure to Jamaican cultural life that to some extent fitted the pre-established models for understanding difference, with echoes of the colonial-era travelogue.

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<sup>7</sup> For more examples of post-punk musicians' exoticist depictions of dub and reggae, see Reynolds' (2009) interview with Ari Up of the Slits, in which she emphasises what she sees as the 'tribal' aspects of reggae, esp. pp. 4-8.

## Conclusion

I have read the dub-reggae/post-punk alliance as though it were light refracted through a prism; rather than focusing solely on musicians' accounts, I have examined this historical moment from different interconnected perspectives: from the 'new alliance between white and black' captured by events such as RAR, to the different ways and potential semiotic valences of post-punk's musical incorporation of reggae, to the importance of subaltern performativity in the imaginary mode of identification, and to discursive representations. What emerges in the final analysis is a moment of musical alliance that conforms to neither a colonial relation nor a post-colonial one, an identification that is neither strictly 'imaginary' nor 'emergent,' but slips between these positions.

For those in the punk and post-punk scenes in the UK at the end of the 1970s the kind of music that was both made and revered by the previous generation of rock musicians had not only fallen out of favour, but provoked feelings of disgust and embarrassment. Charges of inauthenticity, irrelevance, and appropriation lurked underneath musicians' and critics' responses to groups such as The Rolling Stones, whose career was founded upon the imitation of earlier African-American musical styles. Perhaps in light of the UK's racial violence, its growing support for far right politics, and the Clapton's clumsy support of Powell ('send them all back') (Street 1986, pp. 75-6), British musicians perceived a 'purely imaginary' identification between white British rock musicians and African-American styles in the 1960s. Jamaican popular music, on the other hand, offered a different kind of cross-racial identification. A shared sense of alienation and disillusionment, articulated most explicitly in anti-racism causes such as RAR, was one principal rationale for the identification between punk/post-punk



musicians and dub-reggae artists. Indeed, several post-punk musicians frequented UK sound system parties established by Jamaican émigrés, and the UK's subcultural venues boasted back-to-back punk-reggae playlists. In many ways the identification between British punk/post-punk musicians and the Jamaican diaspora strived beyond the 'purely imaginary' into the 'emergent.'

The identification between Jamaican and white British musicians was, however, not without its power asymmetries. Despite the literal proximity between these socio-musical groups, Jamaican music still represented something exotic. For some (but not all) punks and post-punks, the anti-Babylon creed and empathy with 'sufferation' was a fantasy rather than a socioeconomic reality. What is more, dub-reggae's own language also projected a kind of exoticism; with its strong connection to Rastafarianism, dub-reggae depicted a romanticised 'Africa' or elsewhere. Thus although dub-reggae can be seen as local or even 'indigenous' to the UK, its attendant dreams of repatriation also made it appear 'Other.' The aura of Otherness in Jamaican popular music derives not only from its lyrics, but also from musicians' use of sound effects. The uncanny, magical-seeming character of echo and the far-off sound of a disembodied voice are not only spiritual and associated with the intoxication of marijuana, but also connote the 'mystic East.'

These sound effects, furthermore, were the kinds of musical elements that post-punk musicians took from dub. But the connotations of the exotic that these effects brought to dub did not necessarily translate as such when incorporated into post-punk's musical language. While Jamaican musicians imagined the distant echoes of 'Africa,' British post-punk musicians buried the sounds of Jamaica echoing 'Africa' inside their

mixes to achieve a variety of aesthetics and connotations. From PiL's bass-heavy texture and exploration of abrasive timbres, to Joy Division's 'imaginary' rooms and slippage between melodica and synthesizer, to Gang of Four's child-like anti-solo, these appropriative tendencies and identificatory modes emblemise a complex tale of power, diaspora, representation and identity. These shifting tendencies of appropriation and modes of differing modes of identification, furthermore, confuse the familiar paradigm of simple musical borrowing that, as popular music scholars, we often use to describe the migration of musical styles from one musical genre to another, and from one social group to another.





Example 3. The opening melody to 'Java' by Augustus Pablo, derived from 'The Streets of Cairo' by James Thornton



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