

**WAH EYE NUH SEE HEART NUH LEAP: QUEER MARRONAGE  
IN THE JAMAICAN DANCEHALL**

by

Carla Kathleen Martina Moore

A thesis submitted to the Department of Gender Studies

In conformity with the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

(January, 2014)

Copyright © Carla Kathleen Martina Moore, 2014

## Abstract

This thesis explores the interweaving of colonial and post-colonial British and Jamaican Laws and the interpretive legalities of sexuality, compulsory heterosexuality, and queerness. The research project begins by exploring the ways in which the gendered colonial law produces black sexualities as excessive and in need of discipline while also noticing how Caribbean peoples negotiate and subvert these legalities. The work then turns to dancehall and its enmeshment with landscape (which reflects theatre-in-the round and African spiritual ceremonies), psychoscape (which retains African uses of marronage and pageantry as personhood), and musicscape (which deploys homophobia to demand heterosexuality), in order to tease out the complexities of Caribbean sexualities and queer practices. I couple these legal narratives and geographies with interviews and ethnographic data and draw attention to the ways in which queer men inhabit the dancehall. I argue that queer men participate in a dancehall culture—one that is perceived as heterosexual and homophobic—undetected because of the over-arching (cultural and aesthetic) queerness of the space coupled with the de facto heterosexuality afforded all who ‘brave’ dancehall’s homophobia. Queer dancehall participants report that inhabiting this space involves the tactical deployment of (often non-sexual) heterosexual signifiers as well as queering the dancehall aesthetic by moving from margin to centre. In so doing, I argue, queer dancehall *queers* transition from unvisible (never seen but always invoked) to invisible (blending into the queered space) while also moving across and through, as well as calling into question, North American gay culture, queer liberalism, and identity politics.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the presence of a Higher Power that I call God but that is called by many other names. I recognize that while my work and the work of all the people mentioned here was important, that Higher Power was instrumental in allowing our paths to cross so it could be completed.

To my mother, who started fighting for me before I was even in this world, thank you for never leaving me alone in a battle; always reminding me that I am limitless; buying so many plane tickets home; and for being the clearest example of beauty, brilliance, and strength I could ever need. You are my first and dearest love. 5%. To my father, who taught me to take everything with a laugh, thank you for helping me to take a rough life easy and for being so determined to meet your baby girl. To my brothers, who have plagued my life with their fighting, loving and unwanted advice from the day of my birth, never ever stop doing those things. I think growing up with all of you has shaped my interest in masculinities; you are integral to my work. To Lamby, who answered every call, read every proposal and responded to every snivelling “I can’t do it” with a “yes you can, go drink a rum and try again”, thank you for being a piece of home in big bad Canada. To Yasmine who has borne out my varying moods, shut-in like study habits, and overall Jamaican inspired oddity with remarkable grace and patience, thank you for being the type- A to my no type at all. Your kindness has made the cold, the distance and the passa passa much more tolerable, 6:30! To Rhys, Jodi, Marai, Auntie Shammie and Lloydie who always wanted to know when I was going to finish the people dem work, and always promptly sent me back to Canada, despite my certainty that the cold would kill me; thank you for being some of the meanest but greatest friends ever. #teamcarla. To Marion who feel she a fi har thesis dis, me love yu like cook food.

To my supervisor Prof. Katherine McKittrick, thank you for being the kind of intellectual I never knew existed, the kind I now want to be. Thank you for shade-ery, conferences, coffees and community. Thank you for always making sure that your student had the best, did the best, and had your time and attention. To Prof. Scott Morgensen who taught me to think and rest...but keep thinking; thank you for reminding me that academia is important, but a healthy life matters most. To Terrie Easter Sheen the GNDS warrior, and Kathy Baer who keeps it all together, I could not have navigated it all without you both; thank you for being the backbone of this programme. To Profs. Margaret Little, Kathleen Lahey, Beverley Mullings, Brian Heap, June Castello and Sonjah Stanley Niaah who were instrumental in teaching me how to think, I salute you.

To Auden who railed against Babylon with me, Alannah, Morgan and Danyel who chat di bad patois wid me, Aliya who buss me pon me first party, Dan the bunny, Maya the 'hood prodigy, Alex the Trojan horse, Natasha the kindred, Dorota the listening ear, and all the people I met here in Kingston; thank you for taking a (not so) little Jamaican girl into your hearts. You are all beautiful and brilliant and I can't wait to see the world you create. To Ian and the team at J-FLAG thank you for giving me the support I needed on the ground. To Frederick, Cedric, and Jah Truth, thank you for speaking your truths so bravely, thank you for being bad like yaws. To all the sadamites, sport, so, geighs, battyman, queens, queers, kids, chile dem, and people weh 'just a do dem ting' in Jamaica and the diaspora, defying 'reality' by remaining alive; to all the people who fight the good fights, to all the people who nuh tek back nuh chat and nah ask apology fi dem life, this work is yours. While it cannot begin to contain your lives, it is my hope that it can capture a kernel of the warrior spirit that moves through you.

To the #MooreMassive who put up with my inconsistent posting, sent prayers for me, and wished me well every time they saw me...I did it. Me get di ting dem, dem outta luck now. Riddim up!  
To Jamaica...with love.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Abbreviations.....	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	2
Situating Queerness.....	10
Common Sense Legalities and Black Sexualities and Neo-colonial Legalities and Black(er) Sexualities.....	11
Colonialisms, Black Geographies and the Impossibilities of Queer Dancehall.....	13
Brave “Battymen” and the (Im)possibilities of a Straight Dancehall.....	14
Methodology.....	15
Chapter 2 Common Sense Legalities and Black Sexualities.....	20
Reading the Law as Tradition.....	21
Story One: ‘Farrin’ Mind’—The British Common Law is Common Sense.....	22
Story Two: ‘White is Alright’—The Nation is Masculine, White and Straight.....	26
(Read: The Nation is Black Respectable).....	26
Story Three: “Man a (wo)Man” - The (Gendered) Fact of Blackness.....	28
Story Four: “(Wo)man a Man”—The Threat of the Black Feminine.....	30
Neoliberalism, Sex Work, and the Caribbean State: Jailin’ Jezebel.....	35
Chapter 3 Neo-Colonial Legalities and Black(er) Sexualities.....	41
Story Five: Yu Haffi Straight (Yu Cyan Lean) - Heterosexualization and State Sanctioned Homophobia.....	42
A Changing Tradition?.....	45
Historicizing Homo Hatred.....	46
Story Six: ‘Black Man Nuh Inna Dat’—The Nation is masculine, ‘Black’ and ‘Straight’.....	47
(Read: The Nation is Black Respectable).....	47
Homophobia, Neoliberalism and the Caribbean State.....	48
Story Seven: “Bad Man Dainty”—The Inherent ‘Queerness’ of Blackness.....	51
Story Eight: “Jamaican Nuh Inna Dat”—Anti-Queerness as Anti-Imperialist Resistance.....	55
Legal Challenges and Discourse.....	59
Chapter 4 Colonialisms, Black Geographies, and the Impossibilities of Queer Dancehall.....	67
Legal Geographies of Sexuality.....	67

Story Nine: Performance as Survival; From Plantation to Dancehall—The Dancehall Psychoscape .....	73
Story Ten: The Secular is Sacred; Visibility is Survival - The Dancehall Landscape.....	79
“Walk Up Inna Di Video Caw Yu Cute Gyal”: Hypervisibility As Agency .....	84
Story Eleven: There are No Gay Men Here—Dancehall Musicscape .....	88
The Theory of Dancehall’s Geo-Psychic Blind Spot.....	90
Chapter 5 Brave “Battymen” and the (Im)possibilities of a Straight Dancehall.....	99
Story Twelve: The Dancehall is Queer(ed).....	99
Queerness Defining Dancehall Defining Queerness.....	100
Story Thirteen: “Yu Haffi Be A Clown Fi A Reason”—Power and the Right to Queered Expression.....	104
Rumours Dem Spreadin’: In Defense of the Knowledge of the Oppressed .....	109
Story Fourteen: Undercover Chi-Chi—Dancehall Queerness as Modern Day Maroonage ....	110
Yu Haffi Out an’ Bad: Living in the Blind spot .....	112
Story Fifteen: Man a Gangsta—Symbolic Violence as Dancehall Masculinity .....	113
There are (Still) No (Visible) Queers Here: The Underside of Marronage .....	117
Chapter 6 Conclusion.....	123
Towards a Caribbean Queerness.....	123
Bibliography .....	129
Appendix A.....	145

## List of Figures

Figure 1. The album covers of Buju Banton's <i>Mr. Mention</i> and <i>Stamina Daddy</i> . .....	52
Figure 2. A Spatial Rendering of the Jamaican Dancehall .....	79

## **List of Abbreviations**

IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
J-FLAG	The Jamaica Forum of Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*To put it another way, social practices create landscapes and contribute to how we organize build, and imagine our surroundings. Black subjects are not indifferent to these practices and landscapes; rather they are connected to them due to crude racial-sexual hierarchies and due to their (often unacknowledged) status as geographic beings who have a stake in the production of space. – Katherine McKittrick*

*One day I learnt  
A secret art,  
Invisible-Ness, it was called.  
I think it worked  
As even now you look  
But never see me – Adil Juswalla in Bhabha*

*nobody cyan stop nobody from goh a dance, selector dem always aggo talk 'bout lick out pon it; if yu know yu straight and clean, buss a blank, yu can goh any dance, it's not classified for only straight person. – Cedric (MSM)*

On December 16 2012 Executive Director of J-Flag (Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays) Dane Lewis, in an interview with the *Jamaica Gleaner*, noted that some dancehall artists who had reformed their music—changing lyrical content so it is no longer the homophobic “hate music” of the prior era—were still being punished by international gay rights organizations and attendant anti-murder-music protests. Lewis explained that “the continued demonising of some of these artistes is unfair” (Henry, “J-FLAG Stands Behind Dancehall”). On behalf of J-FLAG Lewis stated that:

The truth is we aren't even involved in these anti-murder-music campaigns today and, in most cases, we are alerted of these protests through our local media. Every now and again, some protesters might email asking for clarifications

on songs and the general situation regarding LGBT  
Jamaicans. (Lewis qtd in Henry)

Lewis went on to say that J-FLAG has been required to intervene in protests planned by international organizations on the behalf of dancehall artists; he also characterises the international organizations as having “unreasonable initial requests.” He noted with some concern that the renewed (and unfounded actions) of international organizations would interfere with the “livelihood of artistes and the many people, and I am sure this includes LGBT people that depend on these artistes for their daily survival” (Henry, “J-FLAG Stands Behind Dancehall”).

On November 19, 2013 dancehall Artist Miguel “Sizzla” Collins was denied a US visa and entry to the United States. Sizzla’s visa—like that of many other dancehall artists—was revoked in 2008 as punishment for performing homophobic “Murder Music.”<sup>1</sup> Sizzla has been unable to obtain a US visa since 2008 despite repeated applications and signing the Reggae Compassionate Act in 2007 (which is a promise to never perform homophobic music again). In 2007 his concerts in Toronto and Montreal were cancelled and in 2008 he was denied entry to Spain for the same human rights violations: performing homophobic music (“US Bars Sizzla”). This kind of border policing of Jamaican artists who have been accused of homophobia must be coupled with the work of non-Jamaican and non-Caribbean activists who run global campaigns against

---

<sup>1</sup> “Murder Music” is a term coined by international gay rights activist Peter Thatchell to describe the homophobic music of Jamaican artists including Buju Banton and Sizzla. The revocations followed the launch of a “Stop Murder Music” campaign by OutRage!, the Black Gay Men’s Advisory group, and the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians All-Sexual and Gays (J-FLAG). (petertatchell.net)

“murder music.”<sup>2</sup> More specifically, the interplay between the international and the local here are significant and troubling. Despite the assertion by Jamaican LGBT advocacy groups that dancehall music has changed, the international community continues to view it with a myopic lens and punishes artists for songs penned over a decade ago.<sup>3</sup>

The opinions and experiences of LGBT/queer persons most intimately involved in the production of the music (it is upon them that the symbolic violence is visited) and the effects of the music (they will experience any *real* violence that is spawned by dancehall music) is ignored in favour of ahistorical international LGBT politics that positions Jamaicans as fixed and always already homophobic. What about Jamaican queers? The remarks from J-FLAG, above, uncover that Jamaica’s LGBT organization is often cast as a mere consultant—whose role is to provide clarification on song lyrics—rather than the centre point of LGBT interventions into Jamaican music and other queer matters. In short, the international community produces Jamaican LGBT subjects as persons without agency, incapable of addressing their own issues, and always in need of rescue. By ignoring the advice and preferences of the local LGBT people, as well as their own responses and interventions into dancehall, the international community (and with this

---

<sup>2</sup> International queer organizations have undertaken several tour/concert boycotts as well as lobbies directed at governments to bar dancehall artists. Equality California has been particularly vocal as well as the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. *Moreover*, the Stop Murder Music campaign has local groups in the UK, Canada, Bern and Zurich.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note here the queer liberal (often non-Caribbean) agenda that demonizes “bad” homophobic Jamaicans without attending to the complicated legislative frames that are troubled by Caribbean subjects. The preferential attention many queer liberals direct towards Caribbean homophobic performances reveals an agenda that creates what I call ‘rainbow modernity,’ wherein the ‘correct’ performance of ‘queerness’—usually premised as visible queer resistance—and the acceptance of that performance, become the markers of development and human-ness. I will consider this in greater detail in chapter 1 but it is important to draw attention to how the policing of Jamaican sexualities is tied to colonialism in complicated ways and that queer liberalism—specifically the rendering of Jamaica as always already homophobic and in need of correction—mimics a longer history of sexual discipline.

queer international organizations) begin to function along colonialist lines: the Global North telling the Global South how to think and be.<sup>4</sup>

On Friday November 15, 2013 *The Guardian* ran an article entitled “Reclaiming dancehall from the homophobes.” In it Ian McQuaid explores the upsurge of dancehall in London’s gay clubs noting that Shabba Ranks’ homophobic admonition 21 years ago “indelibly tarnished dancehall as a style poisoned by violent homophobia, and for the past two decades a de facto ban has been laid on the music being played in gay clubs” (McQuaid). The article continues that there are, however, a new crop of young gay Londoners—in particular those who fled to London to escape Jamaica’s anti-gay law—who see things differently:

People think dancehall is just one type of look, one type of sound, one type of identity...but in London there are loads of young gay blacks who've grown up with the music, and see it differently; they've heard it at family events and they know it's not all aggressive homophobia. You don't get violent tunes played at a christening! A lot of it is just great

---

<sup>4</sup> A note on my terms and terminology. The term Caribbean—as used here—refers to the English speaking countries of the Greater and Lesser Antilles. In this thesis the term Black, Caribbean, and Afro-Caribbean are employed interchangeably and both refer to a set of spaces and practices shaped by the British Common Law in relation to Black subjects. When the discussion becomes specific it will be with regards to the Jamaican context. Throughout this thesis I capitalize the term Black. Rather than marking blackness down as an identity, which in its oversimplified form it is, I conceptualize Black as a praxis. Blackness as a set of behaviours and assumptions that are deployed and inherited by persons living in certain kinds of bodies. In recognizing that these assumptions and behaviours are real and official and contour the lives of the persons in those bodies as well as those who launch those assumptions I capitalize Black to mark it as separate from a simple denotation of colour.

When discussing the period before World War II the terms European and British will be used since the United States had not yet become a global powerhouse. The term Northern or Global North is used to refer to over-developed countries in the Northern Hemisphere including but not limited to the United States, Canada and some European countries in the Post World War II period. This distinction is made because after the World War the distribution of power had changed somewhat the distinctions between the Global North and the Global South (countries in the Southern hemisphere including but not limited to Africa and the Caribbean) became more evident. I am aware of the geographic limitations of these terminologies and that with use they can become depoliticised and over-generalised; however, I deploy them in their politicised sense and in recognition of the fact that that despite shifts in terminology the persistent underdevelopment of the Caribbean remains consistent. The relationships may appear different between East/West, North/South, First World/Third World but are shockingly similar when read along whiteness/non-whiteness, and power.

party music that makes you go crazy, and now a lot of gay white kids are curious and want to hear more. (Dupé qtd in McQuaid).<sup>5</sup>

While I applaud the diasporic Jamaicans who reclaim dancehall music as their own, I am struck by three assumptions put forth in the article: the first is the singular and myopic reading of dancehall, which uncritically denounces an entire genre as homophobic; the second is the claim that dancehall was banned for two decades which, interestingly, does not provide a space to revisit the music and thus, again, inadvertently defines the entire genre as immutably homophobic; the third is the perspective which erases local Jamaican queers and their specific reading of dancehall artists and music. What about Jamaican queers? Where are they? Just as Jamaican queer cultures are framed by narratives that revolve around homophobia and “murder music,” contemporary discussions about Jamaican queerness are disproportionately located around diasporan Jamaicans living in the Global North. Jamaican queers are either victimized or erased by accusations of homophobia in dancehall and diasporic celebrations of dancehall. The end result, in *both* cases, is an epistemology that delegitimizes queer Jamaicans living at home and an over-representation of a single story—usually a refugee story that positions Jamaican queerness and Jamaican queers outside the nation. With this is also the tendency to cast Jamaican homophobia as an ahistorical narrative, one that is also underwritten by religious elements (as seen in some Christian denouncements of LGBTQ cultures) both of which obfuscate the impact of colonialisms on the legalities of Caribbean sexualities.

---

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that the picture accompanying the article is of white gay Londoners dancing to dancehall music. One wonders if the Jamaican queer was ever a consideration in the issues with dancehall or if they are merely being included in the London fold because they and their music add diversity, a new flavour, to an established white space.

As diasporan Jamaicans stake claim to dancehall Jamaican Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) claim space in and around the local dancehall. And, as my three participants tell it later in my thesis, they are not alone. As Cedric states in the epigraph above, the presence of homophobic performances—and I use the term performance deliberately to separate these acts from explicit homo-hatred—may symbolically expel gay men from the dancehall but do not absolutely exclude them in real life. Moreover, although homophobic elements still remain evident in dancehall culture, the vitriolic homophobia for which dancehall is still chastised is no longer present—that moment has passed. Even with this, a colonialist discourse continues to be deployed; one that shores up Northern modernity and in which Jamaica is permanently designated as brutish, homophobic, and incapable of change. In this formulation, MSM who remain in Jamaica are posted as perpetual victims or worse, invisible; their voices are largely absent from debates about their own lives.

This thesis identifies and analyzes same-sex desire and homophobia in the Jamaican dancehall. In order to get to this point, and along the way, I locate the dancehall within a genealogy of Black sexuality, which is historically vexed, actively policed, and Othered by colonial legislative undertakings which aim to propagate Black respectability. My research draws attention to the ways in which the policing individuals' experience—specifically policing vis-à-vis taboos and mores—is often linked to a *local interpretation* of the Law. For this reason I focus on the British Common Law—which was adopted by many Caribbean countries including Jamaica—as well as the *interpretive* enacting of this Law by Afro-Caribbean communities and individuals. The imbrication of legal discourse and the interpretation of this discourse is meaningful here: taboos are often

conceptualized in accordance with the Law; or, put another way, through signifying that which is not allowed, the Law creates a Master narrative which will be individually interpreted and deployed to ‘keep watch’ over certain people who, within the existing moral and social order, are acting inappropriate and/or taboo.<sup>6</sup> In recognizing that these acts constitute an individual enforcement of the Law, I read them as *interpretive legalities that shape Black sexual conduct*. That is to say *individual acts* of policing disclose taboos and mores and laws (law, notably here, is small case). These are individual interpretations of the state sanctioned legal undertakings that I refer to as the Law (large case). This project therefore does not parse Law and interpretive legality (law) but, instead, treats them as conjoined in order to work through how the historical attempts to control Afro-Caribbean sexuality moves between and across legal discourses and local acts of surveillance with the submission, resistance, and subversion by Afro-Caribbean subjects disrupting how Jamaican sexualities can be read and understood.

This research project is therefore concerned with the ways in which narratives or stories create a tradition that is enacted as Law and the law.<sup>7</sup> It considers how stories about respectability and modernity, originating in the Global North and told and re-told in

---

<sup>6</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw puts forth a similar outlook and framing and describes it as “Intersectional Subordination,” which is “constituted by a variety of social forces that situate women of colour within contexts structured by various social hierarchies and that render them disproportionately available to certain punitive policies and discretionary judgments that dynamically reproduce these hierarchies” (“From Private Violence to Mass Incarceration,” 1427). While Crenshaw focuses on social forces I wish to focus more on the individual qua social force: the ways that Black people tell each other what is and is not legal and acceptable; how that is shaped by the Law; and how that in turn shapes the Law and access to legal recourse.

<sup>7</sup> As noted in text, the terms Law and law designate the interplay between legislation and individual action. For the purposes of this thesis the use of one of these terms (Law or law) will denote and include the other. That is to say both Law and law will imply the legislative as well as the interpretive. Conceptualizing these two narratives together allows me to unsettle the idea of the Law as emotionless institution and resituate it within the realm of the human— something that is dictated by and dictates to humans based on preference rather than ‘fact.’ When it is necessary to make a distinction between the two I will do so by utilizing each term in its more specific meaning.

the Global South, are received and read through and against Afro-Caribbean sexualities. This project works to understand these legal and sexual tensions through interrogating the musical and geographic narratives that are created within and exported from the Jamaican dancehall. I argue that these dancehall narratives offer a perception and performance of Afro-Caribbean sexualities that cannot be contained within normative sexual scripts (and more recent queer (liberal) scripts) that were and are fostered by colonialism. Jamaican dancehall narratives celebrate queerness (as black non-conformity) while symbolically refusing queerness (as sexual non-conformity). These dancehall narratives, I suggest, are local interpretations of colonial-legal narratives that were (and are) deployed to control Black sexuality; they are also narratives that, simultaneously, emerge from resistance activities engendered and practiced by plantation era slaves. The narratives of three MSM living in the Jamaican inner-city/dancehall space will complement these themes of the Law, the law, geography, sexuality, and dancehall. They re-tell the dancehall as a space that is, has been, and is becoming more queer—and, as noted throughout, queer is understood as both black non-conformity and as *sexual* non-conformity—if not visibly queer friendly.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> My denotation of queerness as sexual non conformity as well as black non-conformity makes a critical intervention into normatively white queer studies and normatively straight black diaspora studies. By exploring queerness—as non-conformity of various kinds—and deliberately tying queerness to blackness this work resuscitates the original use and intention of queer movements and challenges the heterosexism of some black sexuality studies which ignore how black sexualities—despite heterosexuality—still function queerly. That is my use of the word queer in various permutations and is meant to highlight the inherent queerness of blackness and the ways that Black people do not and never have been able to conform to hegemonic ideals of straightness premised on whiteness (read European-ness) and respectability. Thus it is my aim to add fluidity to the term queer and to produce a reading of queer that is more accessible and that dismantles a hierarchy of ‘difference’ in which LGBT sexual non-conformity is privileged and treated as exceptional and racial non-conformity is rendered silent, especially as it modified sexual/gender based difference.

## Situating Queerness

Contemporary framings of queerness-as-identity must be unsettled by the reintroduction of African-diasporic traditions that produce queerness-as-praxis. Put differently, this project is informed not by queer identity politics and identifications, but rather through queer praxes and activities. Present day queer politics, in an over-extrapolation of Foucauldian rhetoric that ties same sex practice to homosexual identity, often conflates queer sex with queer identity. As Gloria Wekker argues, however, “the notion of a sexual identity in itself carries deep strands of permanency, stability, fixity, and near impermeability to change. Furthermore the mere existence of a sexual identity is usually taken for granted” (Wekker 192). This is to say that contemporary queer politics has lost some of its initial queer impetus, settling instead on an assumed universalised LGBT identity politics that is actually resistant to variability (including racial differences) or change. Queerness in its present permutation is clearly aligned with middle class Euro-American masculine whiteness (*cf.* Eng; Morgensen).<sup>9</sup> This brand of queerness has been ideologically exported to the Caribbean and the rest of the Global South and is often posited as the ‘correct’ way to ‘be’ queer. The end result is the circulation of queer identities and identifications and identity politics that are engendered in over-developed nations. With this, a series of identity-politics tensions emerge: queer Jamaican men struggle to perform Jamaican-ness alongside scripts that are beholden to Euro-American queerness; queer North Americans struggle to understand Jamaica as a legitimate site for queerness because LGBTQ Jamaicans ‘are not allowed to come out’ in

---

<sup>9</sup> For more on queer modernities and liberalisms see Scott Morgensen “Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities”, and David Eng *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*.

terms they understand or advocate. Within and across and throughout these struggles with identity and identifications there are queer Caribbean nationals who refuse to (or never encounter the call to) ‘come out’; there are also many Caribbean nationals that are not swayed by, or never encounter, Euro-American scripts of queer correctness. Instead many Caribbean peoples come into being through their sexual practices as same-gender-desiring persons. Within this genealogy are Surinamese Mati women and Zami, Man Royals, Sodomites and other Invisible Caribbean Lesbians (who I suggest may be invisible because they are not *lesbians* but rather are women who have sex with women); there are also men in the dancehall who do not date women, do not profess to date women (hence avoiding the contentious “brother on the down low” label), yet who date men and refuse to identify as gay. Instead of reading these men as victims of (naturalized) internalized (black) homophobia this thesis treats them as evidence of the different ways to be queer and as evidence that queerness is about *practice* rather than a hardened identity that must be attained for legitimacy.

### **Common Sense Legalities and Black Sexualities and Neo-colonial Legalities and Black(er) Sexualities**

Chapters two and three of the thesis focus on legal histories and their colonial articulations in order to historicize how, and why, Black sexualities are implicit to Jamaican Law. More specifically, I argue that various aspects of Caribbean Law scripted Black sexualities as deviant and white sexualities as respectable. This portion of my thesis dwells on the colonial legacy of a system that legislated and policed Caribbean nationals through compulsory heterosexuality and the replication of the European nuclear

family model. Drawing on the work of M. Jacqui Alexander, who asserts that this model demands both sexual discipline and homophobia, I consider how these colonizing practices have impacted upon all gender and sexual minorities including gay men *and* heterosexual women. It follows that acts of homophobia in Jamaica, as well as subversive sexual expressions, are intimately tied to legalities that render a spectrum of Caribbean desires unintelligible especially, as Kimberlé Crenshaw notes, those concerned with black feminine autonomy.

In chapter two, I begin with a brief discussion of the British Common Law, a narrative (or story) that was cast as and came to be ‘common sense’ and was adopted by the Jamaican policy elite through its retention after Jamaican Independence. Drawing on the work of Tracy Robinson who considers the inter-locking of Law and individual acts of surveillance, I think about how this passing on of the Law can, conceptually, both uphold and trouble colonial legal systems. From there I turn to the legal narrative of the nation as white and straight to interpret and reinterpret the Law through the lens of respectability. The first narrative considers the ways in which whiteness and the nation produce the conditions through which respectability can be enacted and embodied. In chapter three, I continue the discussion of the Law as a commonsense tradition narrative and story and think about this alongside the ways in which the nation is produced as Black and straight. This ‘Black and straight’ narrative addresses the ways in which the nation attempts to imagine Black respectability in a neo-colonial moment when whiteness and queerness have aligned, and Black countries still carry colonial debris regarding sexuality. Inside of this narrative it is the heterosexualization of the state, rather than its

whitening, that defines Caribbean countries and (antagonistically) sets them apart from their former colonial masters.

### **Colonialisms, Black Geographies and the Impossibilities of Queer Dancehall**

The complex demand for—and impossibility of—Black compulsory heterosexuality (read non-queerness) come forth in Jamaican dancehall, which I interrogate in chapter four. This chapter explores the multiple geographic conditions of the dancehall—landscape, psychoscape, musicscape—in relation to colonial Laws and the evolution of those Laws and mores in post-colonial Jamaica. This exploration is based on field observation of two dancehall events: *Pull Over Mondays* and *Boasy Tuesdays* in the Jamaica's Kingston Metropolitan Area.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the legal geographies of sexuality and takes up the work of Homi Bhabha, Tim Cresswell, Katherine McKittrick (also quoted in epigraph) and Nick Blomley who think through the relationships between real and symbolic violence as enacted through the socio-legal control of space and sexuality. Herein I consider the central role of colonial and neo-colonial legislature in shaping the geographies that discipline dancehall's (queer and straight) sexual subjects. In considering dancehall's psychoscape I employ the work of Clinton Hutton who theorizes African and African diasporic performativity as survival mechanism as well as that of Donna Hope who researches dancehall masculinities (although from a decidedly heterosexual perspective). I couple this with a discussion of the ways in which the material geography and technologies of the dancehall are primarily delineated and defined by the human bodies *in it*, and what these bodies *do*, rather than physical

architecture. Using the work of Sonjah Stanley Niaah, who theorises the dancehall as “boundary-less,” I consider the implications of the high levels of sociality and relationality within the space on the psychoscape of its occupants vis-à-vis metaphorical boundary making and assumptions of sameness. This chapter also briefly discusses the prolific homophobic musical performances that define dancehall’s musicscape in the global imaginary. I engage the work of Nadia Ellis (who theorizes the dancehall as already queer), as well as Clinton Hutton and Barry Chevannes (who think through the productivity of homophobia to subaltern masculine performances), in order to think through how music contributes to the policing of the space and acts to ritualistically cleanse the space of homosexuality. The section concludes with the theory of the blind spot which, I argue, is the culmination of all three ‘scapes’ and allows MSM to move through the dancehall space unnoticed. Employing Katherine McKittrick’s theorizing of mapping in the underground as evidencing a differential geographic knowledge, I argue that the blind spot created by these three overlapping geographic dancehall ‘scapes’ and queer praxes creates the geographic conditions through which gay men move from positions of unvisibility to positions of invisibility.

### **Brave “Battymen” and the (Im)possibilities of a Straight Dancehall**

Chapter five is an intellectual ethnography of the dancehall as lived by three MSM: Cedric, Frederic, and Jah Truth. It seeks to uncover narratives of sexuality and resistance in the dancehall as discussed by persons who, according to interpretive legal frames, should exist on the boundaries of the space, but are instead at its centre. I specifically attend to questions such as: What is and are the place(s) of queerness in the

Jamaican dancehall? How do dancehall MSM envision themselves as part of the dancehall community, queer community—if at all? How do they navigate the dancehall space? Using Xavier Livermon’s notion of cultural labour (299) I engage how they effect change in their home communities. Marronage theory is employed to understand the movements of MSM within the dancehall space, as well as the contradictions of same-gender-desiring men who actively participate in what has been deemed a homophobic musical culture. This chapter also explores the tensions between explicit homo-hatred and performed homophobia by taking up issues of international intervention, local intervention, and organic shifts in the focus of dancehall—all of which affect expressions of homophobia. Through articulating dancehall queerness as possible and already in progress, this chapter considers alternate forms of queer resistance premised on ‘becoming’ and queer praxes, one that rests on learning the secret art of Invisible-ness (see epigraph)—through queering a whole space—rather than seeking visibility through coming out and attendant identity claims.

## **Methodology**

This work employs an interdisciplinary framework by putting queer theory into conversation with human geography, black studies, performance geography. This interdisciplinary combination is intended to combat the heterosexism of black studies while circumnavigating the normative whiteness of queer studies, all while reading Jamaican specificities into my methodology through the inclusion of performance geography. Performance geography is identified as a key framework because it welcomes

a variety of methodological approaches and it was created specifically for the dancehall.

Sonjah Stanley Niaah—its creator—describes performance geography as such:

a mapping of the material and spatial conditions of performance: entertainment and rituals in specific sites/venues, types and systems of use, *the politics of their location in relation to particular sites and other practices*, the character of events/rituals in particular locations, *and the manner in which different performances and performers relate to each other within and across different cultures* [emphasis added]. (33)

The deliberately multifaceted nature of the methodology is particularly attractive to me as a researcher working in an African diasporic context wherein subjects are historically and contemporarily required to perform multiple conflicting selves for survival. This means that the question of survival requires complicated epistemological strategies that move underneath systems of domination. A methodology that acknowledges these epistemologies works towards my goal of centering the self-determination of the queer dancehall subject in the development of my method and research. Under the banner of performance geography four methods are employed: discourse analysis, ethnographic observation, historical analysis and intellectual ethnography. The discourse analysis considers the narratives around sexuality that have shaped the Jamaican legal and social landscapes in colonial, post-independence and neo-colonial periods. In analysing discourse surrounding black sexuality I desire to retrieve the dancehall from its state of exceptional non-conformity and establish it within a wider history of Black non-conformity. Historicising my discussion in this way will position my final work within the realm of queer studies, but also within the realm of black

sexuality studies. Additionally it will challenge the tendency to position homosexuality as something that is inherently white or new to African and black diasporic communities.

These textual methods are complemented by observation of two dancehall events and interviews with three dancehall participants: two self-identified gay men/ MSM in the dancehall and one dancehall gatekeeper (who has the power to influence the dancehall agenda).<sup>10</sup> My primary purposes in conducting ethnographic field observations were to observe the use and transformation of space and to understand the articulation of dancehall's geographies as well as offer a more contemporary reading of the dancehall vis-à-vis its day to day dealings with queerness. By engaging three dancehall MSMs in intellectual ethnography I unsettle a disturbing tendency to talk *about* dancehall and MSM but never hear or engage the MSM who take up space there.

Rather than assuming that dancehall MSMs' position *outside* of academia *excludes* them as creators of knowledge, I re-centre these figures as *holders* of knowledge and through this, engage them to understand what "they have to tell us about the world we live in and how to change it" (xxiv Smith). In order to unsettle the hierarchies of knowledge that have separated Jamaican MSM from knowledge creation about their own lives, this thesis is also organized around stories. By engaging ethnographic interviews, theories, and Laws as narratives, I aim to draw attention to a common root that brings together many diverse and overlapping themes: storytelling and stories we tell to each other, about each other, about our countries, and the stories we ask of each other. By

---

<sup>10</sup> The General Review Ethics Board (GREB) at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, approved the ethnographic participant-observer data and the interview data. All procedures and policies were followed.

engaging stories in this thesis I am able to enmesh these narratives in a way that allows them to speak to and across each other without privileging one over the other.

This work does not aim to put forth any new truth or simplify any common sense understandings presently held. Indeed, it is the aim of this work is to make things more complicated by introducing voices that have long been ignored or marginalized. I do not cling too tightly to any utopian notions of a ‘time before,’ for those times are long gone and may never be reclaimed:

If my work is to be functional to the group (to the village, as it were) then it must bear witness and identify that which is useful from the past and that which ought to be discarded; it must make it possible to prepare for the present and live it out, and it must do that not by avoiding problems and contradictions but by examining them, it should not even attempt to solve social problems, but it should certainly try to clarify them. (T Morrison ‘Memory Creation’ 389)

My interests are in the *now* and draw attention to what kind of *now* can be created if new voices are heard. What voices are deliberately being silenced for colonialism now? What are MSM in the dancehall doing and how can those activities allow us to reimagine resistance now? And what does the dancehall say—twenty years after “Boom Bye Bye”—about queerness now? These and other questions haunt me and are not answered but are excavated in the stories I investigate in the pages below.



## Chapter 2

### Common Sense Legalities and Black Sexualities

On August 6 2012, as I prepared to undertake the field research that would drive this project, Jamaica celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> year of independence. A snap shot of the years leading up to Jamaica's independence is a map of the project of modernity: Jamaica's 'discovery' with the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1494; the intended genocide of the indigenous Taino population in less than 50 years; plantation slavery; indentured servitude and creolization; attempts to 'civilize' and 'modernise' the population through Christian conversion and the adoption of the British Common Law Constitution; and an Independence movement which culminated with the lowering of the Union Jack on August 6, 1962 and the birth of a new sovereign nation: Jamaica (despite the retention of the Monarch as the head of state).

Jamaica's situation parallels many Caribbean states that gained independence within the same time period. While flag independence altered these nations they retained the social and economic particularities that had developed in the pre-independence period and over years of colonial domination.<sup>11</sup> Noticeable among these social particularities were legislation and taboos pertaining to sexuality. Indeed coloniality and sexuality intermingle in ways that are unavoidable and complex. This thesis considers this fusion

---

<sup>11</sup> One such continuity was the centrality of the British Common Law to the development of the Caribbean Constitutions that provided the legal framework for post-Independence self-governance. The British Common Law was retained based on its superiority in maintaining civility and its familiarity to the new state leaders. Norman Manley, the Jamaican Premier, remarked that his country "had a system which we understand; we have been operating it for many years with sense. It is a system which is consistent with the sort of ideals we have in this country" (qtd. in Robinson 740). Thus continuity, not disjuncture, was key to the sustained development of Caribbean nation. Central to that development was the legal tradition that situated itself around the Common Law Constitution—a legal system, I argue below, that requires the ongoing legislative control of Caribbean sexualities.

by exploring the legalities of Jamaican sexuality (Law as institution and law as social policing) as produced by and functioning in colonial (which overlaps with plantation slavery and extends to the 1962 Independence moment), post -Independence (which begins in 1962 and extends into the present), and neo-Colonial (which overlaps with post-Independence and also extends into the present) contexts.

### **Reading the Law as Tradition**

For the purposes of this thesis the Law (upper case) refers to Caribbean Common Law Constitutions, as modelled on the British Common Law; here, Law will be also treated as a Tradition Narrative.<sup>12</sup> That is to say read the Law as a story that nations tell about themselves—to other nations and to their own populace—and thus as a narration of how things were, are, can be, and should be, and by extension, how things (through

---

<sup>12</sup> My interpretive framing of the Law is informed by Tracey Robinson’s “Gender, Nation and the Common Law Constitution” which “argues that the common law constitution can be thought of as the *working out of a tradition* within which notions of gender, national identity and citizenship are conveyed and secured” (735). She goes on to refer to common law constitutionalism as “*concerned with tradition*, in that its method is a form of traditionalism, and it also *operates within tradition*”(737). My interest here is the notion of the traditional or a tradition. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines tradition in a number of ways: A way of thinking, behaving, or doing something that has been used by the people in a particular group, family, society, etc., for a long time; the stories, beliefs, etc., that have been part of the culture of a group of people for a long time (“Tradition,” Merriam-Webster.com). Tradition is about continuity: the past and the present are linked together when traditions are shared. Tradition is also futuristic; tradition tells the way things were, are, should be, are not and are not allowed to be. Tradition, though, is also about stories and is a narrative that is integral to the definition of self. If tradition is a narrative about a customary way of thinking, a way of thinking whose *rightness* transcends time then tradition is a kind of *master narrative* concerning a people or a group. Like many traditions the Law can change. In the case of traditions it is those *parts* of tradition—not the wholly unchanging narrative—in which people are most invested that seem to transcend space and time to become ‘the norm.’ The reasons behind these investments are often more telling than the traditions themselves. There are also times when traditions—or parts of traditions—cease to be relevant. To discard the irrelevant might, in fact, reveal a different people, community, or self or that may be unfavourable or unpopular. In such instances the appearance of tradition becomes a cover: a performance deployed to conceal ruptures of dissent; a discourse that covers complexities and unfavourable narratives. Tradition, in those situations and in the form of Laws and taboos, give the impression that things are as they should be, as custom dictates.

resistance) might be. These legal traditions interact with individual acts of surveillance and self-surveillance—the laws (lower case)—that grow out of and reshape the Law. Individual acts of policing, as I term them, are interpretive legalities enacted in informal settings. Caribbean Legal narratives and interpretive legalities are myriad and riddled with issues of power. Treating the Law/law as narrative allows me to read the Caribbean Common Law Constitutions, as well as Caribbean sexual taboos, as stories that echo colonial legislation and begin to tell themselves anew in further post-Independence and neo-colonial moments when, paradoxically, they were deployed to liberate Black countries by maintaining colonialist structures. Through exploring moments of diversion and conformity to the Law, I will draw attention to the stories Caribbean nations and citizens tell about themselves, the various investments in and productive labour of particular stories, and how the legal narratives of socio-legal traditions may be deployed to conceal radically different lived realities. I read the narratives of Law, colonialism, and respectability in an effort to reveal what is necessarily concealed by such discourses and the alternate realities against which they define themselves—contested sites of alternative same-sex desire and geographic subversion that, I suggest in my later chapters, dancehall invites through subversion of these same narratives.

### **Story One: ‘Farrin’ Mind’—The British Common Law is Common Sense**

While the British Common Law may have been familiar to Caribbean State leaders after Independence—who had been governed by it as well as governed with it at the local level—and it appeared to be an effective legislative framework, its history belies its neutrality. Peter Fitzpatrick, in researching the impact of Enlightenment discourse on

European legal systems, notes that the European law was not defined against itself but rather in opposition to the supposed ‘savages’ colonizers and imperialists encountered in the New World. The ‘savages’ delineated the contours of the Law by their categorical exclusion from it (Fitzpatrick, qtd. in Blomley 124; see also Alexander, “Not Just (Any)body” 12). Thus the British Common Law always already contained a set of assumptions about European superiority and the inferiority of the wild and infantile ‘Other’ in need of guidance and control. The colonial legal discourse was always already exclusionary and, at the same time, always already a tool of racialised and gendered control; it reflected empire and the valorisation of ‘traditional’ European masculinity just as it produced Caribbean-ness as inherently inferior.<sup>13</sup> With these racial designations in mind, which are tied to the aforementioned adoption of British Common Law, how did the legalities of Independence play out at the levels of the nation as well as the psyches of the male policy elite that legislatively ushered the countries into Independence?

On the cusp of the ‘post-colonial’ moment and Independence the Afro-Caribbean ‘Others’ chose to employ the British Common Law as the foundation of their post-Independence legislative framework. Eudine Barriteau proposes that newly independent Caribbean states seemed “unaware that the project of modernity began with the Enlightenment discourses that created colonialism and Western expansion and not with the active and pragmatic approach to development that they pursued in the post[Cold]war period” (Barriteau 26). In other words, she contends, the Caribbean nations embraced a particular modernizing tradition that was ‘natural’ or ‘commonsense’ to them. But the

---

<sup>13</sup> My designation of Caribbean-ness as ‘inferiority’ invokes Franklin E Frazier’s discussion of ‘cultural inferiority,’ and the supposed inevitable stamp of Black abjection that haunted the minds of the Black bourgeoisie and compelled them to replicate the white cultures that had oppressed them. This replication disclosed a quest for advancement and cultural uplift (112).

naturalization of this developmental path disguised its colonial leanings; the uncritical deployment of ‘modernization as development’ in colonial states embedded colonialism into the national fabric of the newly independent nations. Conversely, rather than a top-down development model offered by Barriteau, the region is often understood as pluralist (separate cultures living side by side) *or* creolized (enmeshed cultures)—thus suggesting that colonialism and its attendant legal systems were adopted and extended and subverted (*cf.* Brathwaite, 1971). David Murray complicates these discussions by suggesting that while we must acknowledge the continuing influences of a colonial past, Caribbean societies and their adoption of Eurocentric legal discourses can be read in a more nuanced way. He suggests instead that ‘dubbing,’ wherein certain aspects of different cultures are adapted and transformed as necessary and desired, more aptly describes these processes (66). I agree with Murray that we must be careful not to underestimate the agency of Caribbean state agents in deciding their various frameworks. We must also not fall into the trap of believing colonial subjects are simply drones, doomed to replay colonial scripts *ad infinitum*. The decision to maintain the existing Laws after Independence evidences the investment of the new male ruling elite (in maintaining their favoured positions), a sweeping away of their former ‘inferior’ positioning in relation to the departing British state, and the complicated ‘dubbed’ processes that underlies this.

As previously mentioned, much of the original British Common Law legislature was created, over time, against the specter of a racialised other. The ‘issue’ of Black *sexuality*—not simply blackness or race—was central to the European renderings of a savage (later re-rendered as the slave). Indeed the denigration and repression of Black sexuality, in particular Black female sexuality, was an important facet of the original

Common Law which was inadvertently carried over into post-independence Caribbean states by their allegiance to it.<sup>14</sup> I call attention to Black female sexuality in particular because, historically, the Black woman's body has been the site for struggles over Black respectability and the advancement of Black communities. Patricia Morton has identified four tropes of Black femininity that were created through slavery and colonial expansion and which have been used to denigrate Black communities: "the inept domestic servant (mammy), the domineering matriarch, the sex object (Jezebel), the tragic mulatto" (7). Supposedly the 'unrestrained' sexuality of the latter three consistently challenged the Black community's attempts at progress, while the former (mammy) stood in as desexualized Black femininity. Mammy's resilience, too, justified the continued oppression of Black communities because she was "strong enough to handle it" (White qtd in Mgadmi 3). I argue that the specter of domineering matriarch and the Jezebel implicitly underwrote Caribbean and colonial legal traditions and it was the desire for symbolic control of these two women that lead to the perpetuation of a discriminatory legal system. Breaching and subverting this system, also, created multiple opportunities for the replication, mutation, and resistance to colonialism which played out across the legalities of Caribbean sexualities. As a result in a post-Independence moment when the quest for personhood by gender non-conforming Caribbean nationals is actively bound up in the legal sphere and Human Rights discourse, legislation is increasingly engaged as a site of contestation, resistance, and domination in the Caribbean.

---

<sup>14</sup> For more analyses of the legislative control of Black sexuality please see M. Jacqui Alexander; Patricia Mohammed; Gloria Wekker; Maureen Warner- Lewis; Kamala Kempadoo; Violet Eudine Barriteau.

## **Story Two: ‘White is Alright’—The Nation is Masculine, White and Straight**

### **(Read: The Nation is Black Respectable)**

A central organizing narrative of the Common Law in relation to Caribbean nations is the story that nations are masculine, ‘white,’ and ‘straight.’ In this imaginary, ‘white’ is defined by the performance of masculinist European-ness premised on coloniality and ‘straight’ is a gendered and sexed concept located in white European middle class and elite identity and the privileging heterosexual relationships within monogamous matrimonial homes. These scripts will guide this discussion—which will not be chronologically ordered but instead will move between the colonial (which maps onto and extends out of plantation slavery), the post-Independence (which some may read as the ‘post-colonial’ but which I avoid describing as such because of the ways coloniality persists), and the neo-colonial (which refers to a particular relationship between Caribbean State leaders as holders of power and their citizens as exploitable objects in their pursuit of more power). As previously discussed, Caribbean governing elites retained much of the British Common Law in drafting their legal frameworks for self-governance. In understanding the stories that are told by this gesture it is necessary to address the historical, classed and raced locations from which Caribbean state agents spoke: what stories did the adoption of the Law talk back to and what stories did the elite hope to keep silent or (continue) telling through the Law?

I suggest that at the time of independence, Caribbean state leaders, among other things, came to a place of profound double consciousness.<sup>15</sup> The new state managers,

---

<sup>15</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois articulated the concept ‘double consciousness’ which he described as the “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (9).

products of the colonial project, harboured their own ideas about proper governance and the road toward ‘civilization.’<sup>16</sup> Additionally they were often members of the elite class/bourgeoisie and had their own stakes in maintaining their economic position as well as their own biases towards ‘whiteness’ as civility. Their disconnection from their ‘only known source’ of guidance and structure (British colonialism) prompted a hyper-awareness that they were being watched—perhaps with cynicism—for any signs that the stories of inferiority were true and that, indeed, Black people could *not* govern themselves.<sup>17</sup> This self-surveillance ‘revealed’ the need for a performance that would please the departing colonizers and be deemed appropriate by the citizens (who also carried colonial debris). Caribbean governments were called upon to *perform the State* which translated into a call for proof of *Black respectability*. The failure to completely decolonize themselves, as evidenced by the retention of the British Monarch as the Head of State, and the relationality of their identity—against the British—resulted in the replication of the British State/Empire as the only feasible performance; they maintained the Constitution because it legislatively confirmed their respectability (Girvan 2). The maintenance of the Constitution was a matter of pride for the policy elite as well as the British judiciary who, in return, elevated Caribbean legal practitioners (in word if not in

---

<sup>16</sup> The leaders of both political parties at the time of Jamaican Independence—the Right Honourable Norman Washington Manley and the Right Excellent Sir Alexander Bustamante—were mixed race Jamaicans with Black and White ancestry. This fact does not minimize the impact of black inferiority but rather is indicative of the complicated ways in which race functions in former colonies. That is to say their mixed ancestry allowed them access to the political arena that would not have been allowed an Afro-Caribbean person with no white ancestors at the time. However, despite their partial belonging to whiteness their undeniable blackness coupled with their inferior Caribbeanness marked them as unquestionably Black to the British colonizers.

<sup>17</sup> The anxiety of the Caribbean state leaders and cynicism of the British could be attributed to the recent failure of the Caribbean Federation experiment—a short lived political union among different British Caribbean islands. Stakes were high for Afro-Caribbean citizens who were compelled to prove to the colonizers that they were worthy of independence and —despite a history of failure— were capable of self-management

action) to “peers and brethren” in “common law kinship” (Robinson 741). This ‘ascendance’ in stature ‘proved’ that Black State leaders were now/still on par with the (legitimate) British Bureaucracy (despite being separated by Independence) and signaled to the British judiciary that their framework was recognizably superior—even to those fleeing their influence. The achievement of quasi-‘British’ status through elevation and ‘fraternity’ temporarily alleviated the double-consciousness and in turn produced Caribbean legal practitioners who would (as a matter of maintaining stature) enact the Law. The Common Law Constitution conveyance as an enabling narrative was successful. Caribbean states had proven that they knew how to govern and that proper governance was grounded in British tradition (and therefore legislatively white). They had proven that, despite their separation, they were capable of performing whiteness through state mechanisms.<sup>18</sup>

### **Story Three: “Man a (wo)Man” - The (Gendered) Fact of Blackness**

Despite the legislative white-washing of post-Independence Caribbean states by the new policy-making elite, their non-whiteness could not be denied. The government elite existed in the presence of colonial narratives of blackness that often functioned as ‘emasculating.’ Ashis Nandy writes:

---

<sup>18</sup> Post-Independence Caribbean legislature was about working within a white system but also highlighted the impossibility of achieving whiteness: it was and forever would be an aspirational undertaking. Caribbean Common Law practitioners were im/perfectly white: their blackness and Caribbean-ness always intervening. At its most basic level the imposition of (White) British Common Law on Afro-Caribbean communities constituted a violence against an ‘Other’: not British, not White, not First World. The imposition of this racist/sexist Law by Caribbean State managers constituted violence against self and the tensions around and implications of that enactment were necessarily very different. Thus Caribbean Laws could perform whiteness but were doomed to fail from the start.

Since about the seventeenth century, the hyper-masculine over-socialized aspects of European personality had been gradually supplanting the cultural traits which had become identified with femininity, childhood and later on, “primitivism”... Now they had to be rejected as alien to mainstream European civilization and projected on to the ‘low cultures’ of Europe and on to the new cultures European civilization encountered. It was a part of this process that the colonies came to be seen as the abode of people childlike and innocent on the one hand, and devious, effeminate and passive-aggressive on the other. (qtd. In Griffith 286)

Among these ‘childlike’ and innocent people were African and Afro-Caribbean men whose non-conformity to stereotypical binarised European gender norms placed them outside the realm of acceptable masculinity. That is to say Black men were not included in the master narrative of masculinity as told by colonialism; in fact, they were a necessary part of what the narrative of colonial masculinity was written against. These tensions regarding masculinity were projected onto the post-independence states. Belinda Edmonson writes:

Victorian debates on the readiness of the West Indies for independence often turned on questions of Black West Indian masculinity, that is, whether Black men could ‘prove themselves to the masculine equals of Englishmen.’ Edmondson suggests that this made ‘the nationalist project inseparable from the epistemological issue of defining West Indian manhood.’ It was, she evocatively adds, one of ‘making men.’ (qtd in Robinson 739)

Despite the legislative enactment of whiteness that was written into the Caribbean Common Law Constitutions, it still fell to Caribbean states to ‘talk-back’ to and resist existing narratives of Blackness and prove their masculinity. How might the Laws be used to tell the stories of Black male domination?

#### **Story Four: “(Wo)man a Man”—The Threat of the Black Feminine**

In order to understand how the Law can be read through and with Afro-Caribbean masculinity, it is necessary to look below the surface of this narrative for possible counter-narratives and locate what (or more precisely who) it silenced. Afro-Caribbean masculinity was under perceived ‘threat,’ externally, from European masculinity and internally from Black femininity. The seeming excessive autonomy of Afro-Caribbean women, whose sexual and economic labour was not securely tied to their male counterparts, was defined with and against Afro-Caribbean masculinity as naturally emasculating. Indeed the Moyne Report, produced by the West India Royal Commission, cited the ‘Lack of Family Life’ as ‘a social evil’ evidenced by the underrepresentation of matrimonial homes and the preponderance of women in the work force. In the report women’s roles (as workers and thus *not* homemakers) were also linked to “high rates of infant mortality,” “venereal disease,” “the misery and ill-health of old people as well as “juvenile delinquency” (Moyne and Stubbs 220-221).<sup>19</sup> While the report repeatedly recognised that women received lower wages than their male counterparts, which increased social and economic burden, they did not identify wage inequality as the problem or seek to economically empower individual women (ibid 216). The report also recognized prevailing counter narratives that marriage was not nor had ever been a popular option (as well as the understanding that attitudes towards marriage were denoted as “a legacy from the time when the institution of wedlock was discouraged among the slaves” (221). The Commission gave little weight to this assertion and instead prescribed

---

<sup>19</sup> The 1945 West India Royal Commission Report was produced from a 1939 visit to the Caribbean for the purpose of appraising social and economic conditions and the readiness of the country for Independence and self-governance.

legislative and social reforms designed to place and keep men as heads of families which should in turn stabilise the Caribbean family: women would be allowed financial freedom through access to their husband's superior wages; parenting could resume along the properly gendered lines; and Black men would self-actualize by assuming their rightful positions of dominance. The Commission visit and report highlighted that Caribbean nations failed to achieve compulsory heterosexuality, even if they functioned within heterosexist frameworks. The solutions offered by the British sent a clear message: if Caribbean men and by extension Caribbean nations wanted to prove their masculinity (read: whiteness and right to sovereignty) Black women must be returned to their rightful place (in the service to Black men). The Royal Commission invoked the specter of the 'Domineering Matriarch' in crafting a raced and gendered narrative of Caribbean femininity that put it at odds with and as 'threat' to the sanctity of the nation and the manhood of the men 'ordained' to rule it.<sup>20</sup>

The adoption of the British Law was accompanied by enactments of Caribbean patriarchy that were intended to exceed the expectations of white masculinity and situate Caribbean nations as superior to their former colonizers. The imbrication of patriarchy, superiority, national identity, and masculinity complicated the business of nation building. The end result, in the words of bell hooks, was that Black Nationalism reoriented itself and became a "dick thing" (qtd in Crichlow 123).<sup>21</sup> The apparent control

---

<sup>20</sup> The myth of the black feminine threat was resurrected a few decades later by Daniel P. Moynihan in his report on the Black family in the USA. Moynihan identifies the 'matriarchal structure' imposed upon the Black community which "retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well" (qtd in Crenshaw "Mapping the Intersection" 1254n42)

<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed articulation of black patriarchy and nationalism see M. Jacqui Alexander's "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization" in which she explores the heterosexualization of the Bahamian

of the feminine became central to narratives of Caribbean sovereignty and its attendant legislative purposes. Indeed this legislative narrative has functioned to disguise its own fallacy and silence contesting narratives for years: it has functioned to ‘normalise’ gender relations of Black countries by deliberately not acknowledging the ways in which Black women—since transatlantic slavery and colonialism—have never been allowed to, nor have never been seen to embody or adhere to, dominant colonial gender scripts. The narrative has also served as a heteronormative disciplining function, attempting to wed Black femininity and sexual autonomy to masculinity at all times.

Theorist M. Jacqui Alexander considers the more recent control of the feminine by Caribbean state leaders in her essay “Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas’ Tourist Economy.” In this essay she recognizes several sites of attempted control including: the paradoxical maintenance of differential wage structures for men and women despite the popularity of female headed households; the co-optation of gains made through the Women’s Movement’s labour struggles; the assertion of the primacy of the matrimonial home and the protection of only those women within it; and, most recently, the criminalization of erotic autonomy through legislation against lesbians and sex workers (22). Though these legislative undertakings may appear disparate, they are all localised around a desire to place the feminine in (submissive) relation to the masculine and to disguise the agency of women. These Laws also function to ‘straighten’ gender relations in particular countries by legislating compulsory heterosexuality and delegitimizing certain forms of

---

population as a two-fold nationalist and patriarchal undertaking premised on producing the correct citizen a heterosexual and male.

heterosexual expression. They continue the colonial work of controlling Black female sexuality. Alexander states:

And because loyalty to the nation as citizen is perennially colonized within reproduction and heterosexuality, erotic autonomy brings with it the potential of undoing the nation entirely, a possible charge of irresponsible citizenship, or no responsibility at all. Given the putative impulse of this eroticism to corrupt, it signals danger to respectability—not only to respectable Black middle-class families, but most significantly to Black middle-class womanhood. In this matrix, then, particular figures have come to embody this eroticism, functioning historically as the major symbols of threat. . . . the prostitute and the lesbian. Formerly conflated in the imaginary of the (white) imperial heteropatriarch, the categories “lesbian” and “prostitute” are now positioned together within Black heteropatriarchy as outlaw, operating outside the boundaries of law and, therefore, poised to be disciplined and punished within it. (23).

I quote Alexander at length here because of the multi-layered deconstruction of Black femininity contained within it: femininity as threat to respectability, nation, and Law. Since conceptions of respectability, nation and legality are entwined and built up *against* European masculinity what Alexander offers is a way to think about the multi-scalar threat of Black femininity to Black masculine respectability as it attempts to mimic European masculinity. In her discussion of Bahamas’ 1991 Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act, Alexander outlines a series of legislations that draw attention to the gendered workings of the state: legislations that made women culpable for the non-reporting of sexual violence against them; entrenched the criminalization of same sex intercourse between males and females; criminalized prostitution (for the first time); and, criminalized persons living with HIV who engage in sexual intercourse without

disclosure of their status (ibid 24). In continuing the work of masculinizing and straightening the state these Laws made clear the kind of femininity that was acceptable: femininity that was contained within the home and reproductive (read: heterosexual and performed sexual labour in service to masculinity); feminine sexuality that was tied to masculinity and not being used for its own autonomous economic profit (such as sex work and prostitution). The legislative control of Black female sexuality continues to be a key area of nation building which, as previously noted, is intrinsically tied to the masculinization of the state. The story told is that in the Caribbean there are ‘respectable’ women, that the nation’s women are under control, and that the legislation corroborates this narrative.

Caribbean state leaders continue to legislate respectable versions of their countries today through colonial methods which treat their legal practices as transparent, as ‘just how things are done,’ and as tradition.<sup>22</sup> But the disconnection between legislative undertakings and the needs of Caribbean citizens reveals the Law as a cover for the ways Caribbean states do not function according to plan; very often the Law covers for the effects of neo-liberal/neo-colonial undertakings on Caribbean societies. For example, instead of enacting legislature targeted at the safety and health of the population—in their present situation—legislation is enacted to signify a ‘decency’ denied of the population by virtue of their poverty. In the Caribbean those conflicts are often played out across the body of the female sex worker.

---

<sup>22</sup> Through the deployment of colonial Law (institutional, systemic, social and individual) to control education, economics, gendered relations and governance, colonialism became transparent by legislating its own omnipresence. By placing all systems and institutions under its control, colonialism elevates itself to a state of commonsensical transparency. Thus the impact of colonialism in shaping tradition does not have to be considered; colonialism is tradition itself.

## **Neoliberalism, Sex Work, and the Caribbean State: Jailin' Jezebel**

The discussion of contemporary sex work in the Caribbean provides an opportunity to foreground the neo-liberal strategies as pursued by Afro-Caribbean nations (read: Afro-Caribbean men since national governments are still primarily masculine even when female headed) and the ways in which gender, sexuality and respectability underwrite these strategies. Sex work and sex work legislation call attention to the bifurcation of heterosexuality and heteronormativity and, as well, to how some heterosexuals experience privilege differentially—based on their race and class location as well as through their performance of heteronormativity (Cohen 455). Women sex workers or single mothers, for example, are often considered to be engaging in heterosexual activity outside of the borders of heteronormativity and are therefore excluded from many areas of heterosexual privilege and targeted for being in excess of the Law and the aforementioned neo-liberal strategies. As Afro-Caribbean state leaders have struggled to prove their masculinity in relation to white masculinity they have inherited and employed the heteronormative tools of empire and embraced a neo-colonial outlook. Jacqui Alexander writes:

The term neo-colonial is also meant to describe the class that has forfeited nationalist claims to sovereignty since it also manages the global neoliberal imperial project. On the ground, this project is interpreted as one of imperialism (instigated by the United States operating in close concert with corporate financial interests) and of recolonization simultaneously, suggesting that within the neo-colonial also resides the imperial (“Transnationalism, Sexuality and the State” 182).

In the neo-colonial moment it becomes clear that, despite flag-independence, the sovereignty of many Caribbean nations are still under threat from the United States—the newest empire—who transgresses national boundaries under the auspices of programmes such as the IMF and Global Fund. These programmes (I argue later) change the stakes for Afro-Caribbean states in asserting their own sovereignty/respectable masculinity (read: unwavering Blackness), but first they alter the conditions of gendered relations on the ground, changing the lives of gender minorities and exacerbating the need to write tradition into Law by the symbolic expulsion of autonomous female sexual expression and ‘submissive’ masculinity.

One of the primary Structural Adjustment Mechanisms of the IMF is the market liberalization of countries in its programmes, which is accompanied by a rabid pursuit of foreign investment and the privatization of previously government owned entities. The end result of these programmes in Caribbean countries—with few industries outside of agriculture to start—is a transition to a service based industry and an increased reliance on tourism for national income.<sup>23</sup> Very often the sand, sun and international perception of the laid-back, languorous sensuality of ‘the islands,’ make Caribbean countries ideal vacation destinations for Europeans and Americans. Caribbean states are therefore encouraged, by IMF programmes, to open their borders through tourism. Concurrently, colonial tropes, which hinge on uncontrolled Black sexuality, still exist in the minds of many Northern citizens and are deployed on multiple scales in advertisements for

---

<sup>23</sup> For more on the IMF and Gender see Helen I. Safa, *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner: Women and Industrialization in the Caribbean* and Jane Bennett, “A Gender Analysis of National Poverty Reduction Strategies”.

Caribbean destinations undertaken by their government agencies effectively creating a demand for sex workers.<sup>24</sup>

Female sexual labour, therefore, is necessary to sustain national development as dictated by the IMF (in collusion with the United States).<sup>25</sup> But the economic freedom allowed women through autonomous application of their sexual labour is problematic. While the contemporary sex worker's labour upholds the economic promises of tourism, her presence contravenes ideas about 'respectable' female sexuality.<sup>26</sup> It follows that the legislation of her existence—the decriminalization of sex work—disrupts the story Caribbean nations want to tell about their ability to control women, their respectability and the marginality of female sexuality to national development. Changing the story and writing sexually autonomous Caribbean women into legislation in fact writes them into the nation, and unsettles the supposed neutrality of neoliberal undertakings which created the need for the sex worker in the first place. The sex worker exists and she is integral to neoliberal nation building yet her autonomous female sexual presence is a threat—especially in a neo-colonial moment when Afro-Caribbean states are in need of 'rescue' from international (read: White) agencies and needed to put forth respectability and quell fears that they could not lead themselves. What can be done?

One 'solution' is to redouble the *appearance* of control of the feminine. In the Bahamian instance it was the transmutation of the sex worker into the Jezebel—a

---

<sup>24</sup> For more on Caribbean sexuality in the global marketplace see Denise Brennan, *What's Love Got to Do With It? Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic*.

<sup>25</sup> It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the differences between male and female sex workers. See: Denise Brennan. *What's Love Got to Do With It? Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic*.

<sup>26</sup> The parallels with plantation slavery are clear: in the late 1700s to early 1800s prostitution of female slaves by white owners was common but only slave women with owners were 'authorized' to work; slave women were not allowed to *independently* prostitute *themselves* (LaFont 26). Their labour, moreover, was only acceptable in service to men.

longstanding colonial trope—and disregarding her right to sexual autonomy while repositioning her sexual engagements as individual wantonness rather than survival mechanism. This was accompanied by the elision of state activities that called the sex worker into being by limiting her access to other kinds of work and (silently) offering her body as a part of the tourism product while simultaneously punishing her for sex work through the de novo criminalization of prostitution (“Erotic Autonomy”, Alexander 23). These activities constituted a change in tradition or, I would suggest, the retrenchment of commitment to a certain kind of Black respectable tradition. In other countries, tradition was maintained by preserving existing anti-prostitution laws. The disjuncture between the legal narratives and the realities of Caribbean nationals leads me to question the transparency of the Law or its role as a ‘holder of tradition.’ It also leads me to read the Law as a marker of an idealised version of tradition and a master narrative used to muzzle various truths about Caribbean sexual identities. By placing sex workers outside of the protection of the Law, they were placed outside of the nation and informally denied citizenship. The criminalization of sex workers made their labour ephemeral to national development, even as it continued to drive the tourism industry.

By producing the sex-worker as criminal, she was rendered silent—unable to speak for fear of reprisal, able to be ignored because of her ‘deviance.’ Her actions were positioned alongside rape, murder and incest in Law codes, which automatically marked her survival strategies (sex work) as a pathological indulgence. In marking the sex worker as counter to the nation, the government sends a message to other women within its borders by suggesting that women’s sexual labour is not allowed to serve or financially

support women and that sexual labour that benefits ‘only’ the woman is wrong.<sup>27</sup> The criminalization of sex work also renders female sexual autonomy illegal and, in this, reaffirms the nation as masculine and ‘straight’ by divorcing itself from the specter of the uncontrolled feminine and inappropriate or unrespectable acts of heterosexuality. Writing these values into Law continues the appearance of a tradition that signals the ‘respectability’ and civility of Black nations who, in response to previous narratives, have even greater stakes in restraining unruly Black female, and male sexuality.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Of course these framings of sex work as only for the woman negate the fact that many women undertake sex work to support families and also the increasing acceptance of ‘survival sex’ among marginalized communities (LaFont 62). These factors do not enter the discussion because the Law, like all master narratives, is not written from the bottom up, but rather the top down. Those factors are specific to the ‘lower class’ Caribbean nationals, not the upper class policy elite who decide tradition. See also my discussion at n26.

<sup>28</sup> I recognize that this discussion only addresses female sex work. Unfortunately it is outside the scope of this paper to take up illicit male sexuality but the control of male heterosexual sex workers continues to function differently in the Caribbean and is under less sanction from the government and law enforcers.



## Chapter 3

### Neo-Colonial Legalities and Black(er) Sexualities

The Caribbean Common Law Constitution, as a product of the British Common Law Constitution, was deeply invested in restraining black sexualities. Under these legislative frameworks a number of ‘non-conforming’ sexualities were deemed unacceptable and counter to the nation: ‘unrestrained’ female sexuality (female sexuality not firmly tied to a reproductive imperative) as well as queer practicing sexualities. This is to say before the Law sought to control LGBT persons it simply sought to foreclose same-gender-desire as non-reproductivity. In the section below I expand the previous discussion of the masculinizing function of the Law, which was premised on the control of the female body, to include the heterosexualizing function of the Law, which sought to control the queer body. These two processes are interlinked and coalesce around the need to control femininity and discipline masculinity through scripts that revolve around conformity and Black respectable (formerly white) heterosexuality. The heterosexualization of Caribbean states, followed by the recent inclusion of particular queer subjects in Northern states, has provided one of the most important breaking points in the long history of colonial rule: this is the moment in which Caribbean states begin to *oppose* the British Common Law constitution as an act of sovereignty. At the end of this Chapter I consider two legal challenges to the Jamaican constitution—brought by Jamaicans but supported by foreign organizations—and explore the dynamics/discourse of Jamaica vs. North America and local vs. foreigner that have shaped and been produced by them both inside and outside the court.

## **Story Five: Yu Haffi Straight (Yu Cyan Lean) - Heterosexualization and State Sanctioned Homophobia**

The masculinization of Caribbean states was accompanied by a heterosexualization that firmly tied citizenship to reproduction. This was a carry-over of European legislature that, among other things, was invested in the Black reproduction of the slave population. As noted above, Black sex was essential to making more slaves, and the Law at that time—whether banning or legalizing marriage—delineated how heterosexuality underpinned the Caribbean economy (LaFont 22). In the post-colonial/pre-Independence period this hidden agenda intermingled with whiteness and emerged as compulsory matrimonial heterosexuality—a category that positioned the Black nuclear family as the building block of the nation (*cf.* Moyne and Stubbs).<sup>29</sup> The protection of the heterosexual family can thus be read as the protection of the national foundation and the protection of the nation itself.

The whitening and straightening of the state did not only impact women, it also had restrictive and expulsive effects on gender-non conforming men, specifically same-gender loving Caribbean men. The gay man was also a marker of the feminine and his control was also integral to the establishment of proper Black masculinity. Moreover the gay man was a dangerous anomaly—femininity masked by a masculine body—and was not easily recognizable; the potential for subterfuge and invisibility made the expulsion of the gay man from citizenship essential. Same-gender desire for Black men was also

---

<sup>29</sup> The ‘transparency’ of the heterosexual nuclear family was premised on its knowability, even as this disguised numerous atrocities committed against women within the family structure. Domestic abuse and marital rape were actively disguised by many Black women so as to maintain the family structure and the appearances of Black respectability (Crenshaw, “Race, Gender and Sexual Harassment” 1472).

complicated by years of cultural disruption caused by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, as well as the violent intervention against non-reproductive sexual activity between slaves, which had created the idea that same-sex-desire was Un-African. In its legislation against sodomy and sexual activity between men, the British Law complemented Black Nationalist imaginaries of homosexuality as foreign and aligned with Europe (Alexander “Erotic Autonomy” 53). The Law, they believed, was created to control an un-natural occurrence found initially in European populations but which had contaminated the local population through years of European contact. This was an interpretive ‘fact’ that confirmed the natural licentiousness and deviance of the white population in the minds of Black communities.<sup>30</sup>

Homophobia, or as Rinaldo Walcott terms it “Anglo-Caribbean homo hatred” (Walcott, “Queer Returns” 3), thus became a defining aspect of post-colonial Caribbean nation states and was/is a carry-over from heterosexist colonial Laws. The retention of anti-sodomy Laws signaled to same-sex-loving persons and Caribbean nationals the moral purity of the new Caribbean states. Since (as slavery taught us) bodies are the basis of development, more Black workers were needed to build better Black countries non-reproductive queer sex was deemed facile and selfish. The entrenchment of heterosexual reproductivity as integral to straightness was achieved through a legal narrative that positioned homosexual activity alongside heterosexual aberrations such as rape and incest and along a continuum that climaxed in murder (“Erotic Autonomy”, Alexander 41). For

---

<sup>30</sup> This reading of the Law is a misunderstanding of the fact that colonial anti-sodomy Laws were originally created against the specter of the indigenous Indian as sodomite and worked to position white masculinity as supremely powerful in its heterosexual normalcy (Alexander “Erotic Autonomy” 48). Despite the misunderstanding, the idea of homosexuality as Un-African flourished in both Black and White communities and continues to contour relationships between the countries in the Global North and Global South today.

example in Jamaica, the act of sodomy is criminalized within the Offences Against the Person Act of 1864, which also criminalizes murder and incest. By housing homosexuality within broader narratives of criminality and deviance, this Law conveys the perversion of homosexuality and creates the homosexual as naturally criminal and a non-citizen who seeks to hurt rather than help the community and nation. The intertwining of non-reproductivity, criminality and homosexual unacceptability is evidenced by the kinds of mental labour Caribbean citizens undertake to separate these narratives and accept same-gender-desiring community members.

Scholars including Cecil Gutzmore (2004), David Murray (2012), and Siobhan B. Somerville (2000) report instances of same-gender-desiring Black community members receiving acceptance based on their productivity and respectability. Specifically, heterosexual Caribbean nationals often justify the acceptance of same-gender-desiring persons by comparing them to other ‘non-productive’ elements such as gunmen and murderers. By a process of symbolic distancing (i.e., stating that the gay person is *not* a gunman, *not* a murderer) they identify same-gender-desire as a ‘lesser evil’ and argue for the acceptability of the person. From there they assert the same-gender-desiring person’s productivity vis-à-vis their work ethic, how they provide for family, and so on, as proof that they do contribute to the nation and are different from ‘other homosexuals.’ But neo/colonial and legal narratives pertaining to sexuality provide the conceptual fodder for the ‘other homosexuals.’ So what are being unraveled here are multiple legislative narratives that codify and define Caribbean queer sexualities as criminal and destructive. The reproductive and the productive become inter-coded in interesting ways: murderers and gun-men are perceived as ‘takers’ who, despite their reproductive contributions,

work against the nation because they take from those who are productive. Same-gender-desiring persons on the other hand, do not take from the country, rather they fail to give babies, the raw material of the work force that is the building block of the Black nation. The separation of the productive and reproductive in cases of queer acceptance proves the initial interweaving of legal narratives of heterosexuality, reproductivity, productivity, and Black respectability as fundamental to nation.

### **A Changing Tradition?**

More recently, certain homosexual citizens have been selectively included into American and European folds. This activity was accompanied by numerous acts of sexual imperialism which positioned the Global North as a site of sexual modernity and the Global South as sexually pre-modern. Jasbir Puar identifies one such imperialism as homonationalism which included, among other things, “the split between proper, national (white) homosexuality (...queerness?) and improper (colored) non-national queerness” (*Terrorist Assemblages*, 78). While Puar’s homonational imperialism revolves around biopolitics and the Israel/Palestine conflict, Jacqui Alexander considers sexual imperialism in the gay travel industry. She notes that in the current imperialist “universe, whiteness and masculinity operate together through a process of normalization that simultaneously overshadows lesbians, working-class gay men, and lesbians and gay men of color of any class” (“Imperial Desires/Sexual Utopias,” 71). Though conceptually diverse, both imperialisms converge when overdeveloped nations (including but not limited to states in Europe and North America) utilize a rhetoric of queer-friendliness that, in fact, demonizes regions in the Global South (including, but not limited to the

Caribbean and Africa) and deem them pre-modern and homophobic. This hegemonic brand of queerness, premised on ‘coming out of the closet’ as ‘resistance’ and an act of queer visibility, is now the benchmark of modernity or advancement. Yet these acts of visibility work to oppress queer minority groups including queers of colour, poor queers, and differently abled queers within overdeveloped nations and globally. There is now, apparently, a ‘correct way’ to be (and become and be seen as) a queer human and it evidences the same over-representation of white middle class Euro-American masculinity Sylvia Wynter critiqued years ago (324).

### **Historicizing Homo Hatred**

Thus the former colonies who fail to readily embrace these new western and northern queer traditions are designated as backward, and pre-modern. This march towards rainbow modernity is, in fact, complicated by the colonial legacy that positions same-sex desire, and the history of sexuality, among Black populations in a different way. As noted above, the knotted discourses of the plantation, the colony, and the post-colony were legislatively upheld by different articulations of respectability that disciplined Black sexual desires and upheld compulsory heterosexuality and heterosexual reproduction. All of this was complicated by an often overlooked history, wherein buggery was used to emasculate and punish slave men on Caribbean plantations. Thomas Foster writes that “regardless of location and time period, no enslaved man would have been safe from the threat of sexual abuse” (448). Thus same-gender-desire was legislatively denied of Afro-Caribbean subjects while same-gender-sex was simultaneously positioned alongside the submission and domination of Black men the

threat and reality of male rape. This shifted the relationship Afro-Caribbean men had and have with same-gender-desire drastically, regardless of the presence or absence of such sex and desire in their African cultures. The desire for same-gender-sex was re-envisioned as a *lack* of masculine control and a failed commitment to masculinity as well as a perverse appreciation of continued (European style) domination. This kind of desire, then, could not be legislatively condoned in newly emancipated states. This fundamental division between white European middle class men and Black colonial male subjects provided a break in tradition, when Caribbean legislature was deployed to signal non-conformity rather than conformity to colonial legal traditions.

**Story Six: ‘Black Man Nuh Inna Dat’—The Nation is masculine, ‘Black’ and ‘Straight’**

**(Read: The Nation is Black Respectable)**

The compulsion for Black respectability, as previously mentioned, contoured the experiences of gender minorities in Caribbean states where legislature was used to dominate and erase them through criminalization. Up until the 1990s and the early 2000s Black states matched their former overlords in their commitment to the British Common Law. But, as previously mentioned, the white elite were categorised as licentious due to their engagement with same-gender-sex, despite its criminalization. Paradoxically, the Law was used to tell a story of Black conformity just as it evidenced a deliberate performance of the state as white, masculine and straight. This conformity functioned, in large part, through the symbolic heterosexualization and ‘straightening’ of the state and the resulting signification of respectable blackness. I argue that the retention of anti-

sodomy Laws by Afro-Caribbean former colonies, relatedly, continues the work of signifying Black respectability. This respectability, I also suggest, presently allows the Caribbean state to invoke a Black superiority to Northern countries: the Black commitment to tradition (colonially inspired heterosexual) is positioned as more reputable than the (queer) Northern ‘fall from grace.’ This also bolsters Afro-Caribbean sovereignty through the resistance to Northern (queer) intrusion. I further suggest that the classed and raced particularities of Black countries create an additional investment in the *performance* of heteronormativity as a counter to the inherent queerness of blackness.

Instead of demonizing Caribbean countries who retain ‘homophobic’ legislation I suggest that the retention of these Laws must be situated alongside Caribbean colonial history and various investments in a particular kind of tradition that positioned a range of Black sexualities as unintelligible and in need of control. While this re-situation does not alter the legislative oppression of same-gender-desiring persons living in the Caribbean, it does work against imperialist tendencies to classify the entire region as ‘backward’ while also offering a conceptual map that identifies the complex workings of Black sexual narratives. It also undermines queer liberal agendas, which resuscitate imperialist and colonialist rhetoric and which are exploited to valorize the supposedly queer friendly states in the North.

### **Homophobia, Neoliberalism and the Caribbean State**

Before turning to queer identities, it is necessary to briefly contextualize how national sovereignty, masculinity and the economy became intertwined in Caribbean states—as this, in part, clarifies how the political landscape underwrites sexual

formations. Following the Independence movements in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s many Caribbean states struggled economically. This was especially the case for countries such as Jamaica, who had no natural resources such as oil or gold and who depended primarily on agriculture, bauxite, and some manufacturing. All three industries failed between the 1970s and 1990s and in response to the country's economic decline Jamaica signed 8 IMF and 6 World Bank Agreements between 1977 and 1990.<sup>31</sup> Most recently the government signed another loan agreement in 2012. The intervention of the IMF effectively wedded Jamaica to its former colonial masters as well as to the United States. National borders were made permeable to American penetration through a liberalized market and North American investment in the IMF. Jamaica's right to sovereignty (read: Black masculine autonomy) was once again under external threat from the white Global North and the country was under imperialist control only 15 years after Independence. On another level, IMF poverty reduction/structural adjustment processes changed the material conditions for low-skilled low income Jamaican men. As a result of diminishing earning potential they were further divorced from the promise of masculinity—a phenomenon that was compounded by the seemingly improved earning ability of their female counterparts and the consequentially exacerbated gender antagonism on the

---

<sup>31</sup> The manufacturing industry floundered having a brief resurgence in the 1990s with the introduction of the Freezone Manufacturing Area which primarily hired low-skilled women and has since failed as cheaper labour could be found elsewhere. The bauxite industry failed in the 1970s and conflict between industry managers and the then Prime Minister triggered disinvestment (as supported by the United States Government) and capital flight by other foreign companies. The failure of bauxite was followed by the gradual destruction of the agriculture industry starting with the removal of the preferential Trade Agreement with the African Caribbean and Pacific Regions in the 1990s. The industry suffered further when the government withdrew their support from agriculture as a part of its agreement with the IDB and became untenable when foreign food flooded the market as a part of market liberalization programmes pursued under the IMF. For more on the IMF and Jamaica see Michael Witter "Trade Liberalization: The Jamaican Experience."

ground.<sup>32</sup> In this moment the supposed ‘cultural inferiority’ of blackness threatened to become fact and Black nations were seen as ‘failing’ at self-governance (an assertion that, of course, ignores the continuing exploitative colonial relations between countries in the global North and those in the global South). It was under these conditions that Afro-Caribbean countries, such as Jamaica, received the call (read: demand) to embrace queer masculinity. I suggest that the diminished economic position of Caribbean countries impacted the complexly intertwined masculinity of Caribbean men. This inferior position produced a resistance to embrace submissive masculinity that, again, had the potential to damage the nation in its softness or ‘femininity.’

What are the stakes in maintaining a heterosexist regime for a ‘failing’ Black country with no race, class, economic or geographic privilege? I suggest that they are great, since heterosexual privilege is the only “type” of sexual respectability that could be accessed by these countries and transformed into an acceptable national script. Jacqui Alexander notes that “[a]s neither a stable ontological identity nor a fixed process, heterosexuality resorts to makeshift signs through which it is registered and through which it creates and legitimizes idiosyncratic boundaries” (Transnationalism 208). She further states that in instances of “major international political economic incursions that have in turn provoked an internal crisis of authority ... criminalization functions as a technology of control, and ... becomes an important site for the production and

---

<sup>32</sup> For more on gender antagonism see Suzanne LaFont “Gender Wars In Jamaica.” The destruction of traditional ‘male’ industries such as agriculture and manufacturing increased unemployment among Jamaican low income men and I would suggest their unemployability as well. Specifically, as Barry Chevannes notes, masculinist socialization propagated the “ ideas that tough work is male work....the socialization of the boy child is often aimed at making him tough” (Chevannes 25). Service oriented labour which privileges communication skills and ‘understanding’ are not regarded as male work and contravene commonsense understanding of black masculinity. Low-income black men in particular, because they must flee the spectre of infantile emasculated identity, perform a type of hypermasculinity which does not complement such vocations.

reproduction of state power” (Not Just (Any)body, Alexander 6). Thus the continued criminalization of homosexuality imbues the state with new symbolic power through their right to formally and informally designate who are citizens and non-citizens. Similarly by refusing the call to ‘rainbow modernity’ Caribbean states can claim independence from economically powerful imperial nations. The persistence of colonial relations between the Global North and the Global South, now traversing the lines of the neo-colonial neo-liberal, places Caribbean masculinity under further threat and influences Afro-Caribbean states to assert their independence in any way they can, and one such way is a refusal to change their tradition. But why has homosexuality become the site for this struggle? I suggest that the need for a performance of heterosexuality was redoubled by the inherent queerness of blackness and the association of queerness with whiteness.

### **Story Seven: “Bad Man Dainty”—The Inherent ‘Queerness’ of Blackness**

When I speak of the queerness of blackness I speak of queerness as non-conformity. It is the same queerness that necessitated independence era legislative policing of Black sexuality. Queerness as an inability/unwillingness to replicate whiteness, despite the best efforts of the state to demand that Black subjects ‘become’ respectable through mimicking colonial narratives (*cf.* Bhabha). In the case of Caribbean nations, I suggest that their non-heteronormative gendered relations (the refusal of the marriage script, most obviously), poverty, and blackness mark them as queer. I pause here to offer a further note on queerness. Earlier I pointed to the enactment of a queer liberal hegemony—what I term ‘homohegemony’—in Northern countries, a narrative put forth by those who purport to be the holders of queer legitimacy and who justify their

intervention into 'homophobic' Southern states through deployment of a colonialist development rhetoric.<sup>33</sup> CJ Cohen suggests that this kind of queer politics, that bifurcates along homo/hetero boundaries, limits the radical transformative power of queerness by eliding those heterosexual identities that fall outside the bounds of heteronormativity and also conceal raced and classed differences in queer and heterosexual experiences (440). I wish to complicate Cohen's insights by drawing specific attention to Black working class masculinity which was even less adept at replicating white hegemonic masculinity and, in its excess, was quite queer.

As evidence of Black male excess I offer an unlikely figure: Buju Banton (Please see Figure 1.)



**Figure 1. The album covers of Buju Banton's *Mr. Mention* and *Stamina Daddy*.<sup>34</sup>**

---

<sup>33</sup> Homohegemony is a term I coined while writing this thesis and it refers to a particular brand of white-middle class-male-Northern-out of the closet queerness that holds great cultural currency and is presently being deployed as the 'right way' to be queer. Kyle Jackson, who also researches queerness and Jamaica also came to the same term in his own work. Our theories differ, however, in that his concept is more closely tied to homonationalism while mine takes up homohegemony as a function of (neo)colonialism.

<sup>34</sup> The *Mr. Mention* cover art copyright is property of Techniques Records and the *Stamina Daddy* cover art copyright is property of Penthouse Records. Both are used in accordance with the academic use and limited dissemination allowance of copyright law.

Banton is often called up in discussions of queerness because of the international backlash and censor he experienced from international gay rights advocates in response to his ‘homophobic anthem’ “Boom Bye Bye.” What is never discussed, however, is Buju’s own queerness. As substantiation of Buju Banton’s queerness, and to further destabilize queer, I offer the covers of his 1992 debut album *Stamina Daddy* and the follow up album *Mr Mention*. *Stamina Daddy*—the term—is an allusion to Banton’s hetero/sexual prowess, the same hyper-sexed masculinity that was derided by European colonialists. But his body also transgresses even ‘traditional’ Jamaican masculine expression (as embodied by the middle and upper classes): his flowing multi-colored garb, eye-catching animal print combinations, and ostentatious gold jewelry create a hyper-adornment which marks him as neither white, middle class, restrained, nor respectable; they mark him as queer. But within the context of the Jamaican Dancehall—an urban, Black, Caribbean space—such adornment of males is normal (although the styles vary over time). David Murray notes similar varied performances of self, undertaken by Martinican men, including the public revelry and costuming at carnival (*Opacity*, Murray). While Jamaican hyper-adornment may be localized, ironically, around the lower class men that create its homo-hating Dancehall music, the carnival revelry crosses class confines. Thus despite differences between when and where hyper-adornment occurs (i.e. in the carnival moment or on an everyday basis), these differently gendered expressions are common to most Afro-Caribbean men across social boundaries. The homophobia of the dancehall, however, offers different access to gender non-

conforming behaviours that are normally denied to middle-class men outside of Carnival season.

The level of sartorial display and fluid sexual expression of even homophobic Caribbean men—leads me to believe their own Black queerness informs their unwillingness to accept sexual queerness. Put another way, the inability of Caribbean men to perform ‘straightness’ (white heteronormative masculinity), as a result of their Blackness (read: African cultural retentions as well as slave and post-slave non-conforming Caribbean sexual scripts), makes them acutely aware of the ways they do not fit a model of heteronormative masculinity and respectability. It is therefore imperative that the borders of Black working class masculinity are actively policed and that the threat of sexual queerness is expelled from the inherent queerness of Black masculine expression. Homophobia is often deployed to delineate the contours of heterosexual identity through acts of surveillance and discipline. The domination of subaltern masculinities is also integral to the “myth of male power” (Nurse 8). I suggest that the retention of homophobic legislation as well as individual homophobic performances work to police the borders of heterosexuality by expelling the homosexual from the Black nation, leaving them without protection or any rights to claim space or geography. It also refigures the Black state as correctly masculine, (that is masculine and straight), rendering it more straight than its Northern dominators.

## Story Eight: “Jamaican Nuh Inna Dat”—Anti-Queerness as Anti-Imperialist Resistance

The rejection of homosexuality by Afro-Caribbean states is also a rejection of whiteness i.e. white Western imperialism and its attendant queer articulations (read: ‘pathological’ whiteness (*cf.* Eng). Many Afro-Caribbean nationals, through years of cultural disruption engineered by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, think of homosexuality as Un-African (see Crichlow 121 and Silvera 346).<sup>35</sup> This assertion contradicts Afro-Caribbean histories wherein many citizens can identify a same-gender-loving person in their family or community. Indeed Barry Chevannes’ study of Jamaican bisexuality in the 1970s revealed that for some men “homosexual practices were considered “a pleasurable diversion”...but that a disapproval existed of feminine-like behaviours in male-male sexual relationships” (qtd. in Kempadoo 46). Despite the criminalization of homosexuality there is also a documented history of same-sex-attracted and gender-non conforming persons working in the Caribbean entertainment industry such as Shebada (a male cross-dresser in Jamaica) and DiDi (a *bajan* ‘queen’).<sup>36</sup> Thus, the assertion that same gender desire and even ‘queerness’ is foreign to Caribbean nations is a gross oversimplification of Caribbean realities. Their position in the national imaginary may

---

<sup>35</sup> This is a perspective that is mirrored by many African state leaders today. One of the most notable being Robert Mugabe who opined “If you take men and lock them in a house for five years and tell them to come up with two children and they fail to do that, then we will chop off their heads” (qtd in Harare [www.rnw.nl](http://www.rnw.nl)). He objects to homosexuals on the grounds that they “destroy the African moral fabric” (*ibid*). Again here the issue of sovereignty looms large, Gays And Lesbians of Zimbabwe note the complex narratives Mugabe and others like him intertwine in legitimizing their claims: “ President Mugabe and his protagonists present [narratives through which] they are the only authentic defenders against Western intrusions. Zanu PF has successfully deployed populist homophobia within this narrative and weaves notions of the ‘un-African’ nature and ‘abhorrence’ of homosexuality into the discourse of sovereignty” (*ibid*).

<sup>36</sup> ‘Queen’ is a Barbadian term used interchangeably to refer to same-sex-attracted men as well as cross dressers and what would be known in North American terms as ‘transgendered’ or ‘trans’ people. I hesitate to attach the word Trans to queens because in his research David Murray discovered that the term Queen predated Trans and is still more widely used in Bajan society.

have been a source of tension, but same-gender-loving people have existed as integral parts of Caribbean communities for years. I suggest, therefore, that queerness as sexual non-conformity is not *new* to Caribbean communities; what is *new* is queer visibility and queer visibility is read as whiteness. Put another way, Caribbean queerness as practice pre-dates queer identity politics, so the rejection of Northern queerness is not based, as some have implied, on the absolute unfamiliarity of same-gender-desire but rather an unwillingness to embrace the parts of it that are anomalous to pre-existing Caribbean queerness. The presence of a Caribbean queer reference point, which is perceived as under threat or belittled by newer imperialist Northern queer identity politics contributes to the tensions between Caribbean citizens and queer citizens from the North who struggle to comprehend other ways of being queer.

Caribbean countries retained the British Common Law in their post-Independence legislative frameworks as a marker of progressiveness and to tell a story of Black respectability, often through the symbolic control of Black sexuality and gender relations—despite the very different lived realities of Caribbean citizens. Homosexuality had been placed in the realm of the pathological and criminal by British Common Law. Simultaneously, as a product of coloniality, homosexuality was placed firmly within the realm of whiteness, where it was taken as proof of white licentiousness and tied to Black subjugation and emasculation particularly in the context of male rape and bondage. After decades under these conditions, same-sex-loving was repositioned from a *sexual practice* to an *identity* category, the latter of which was promulgated by the Northern gay rights movement and practices of sexual imperialism within the context of ‘rainbow modernity.’ This identity and the movement promoted a politics of ‘coming out of the closet’ wherein

queer visibility was considered a resistance activity that is premised on claiming geography: coming out and claiming space as proudly queer. The act of coming out is foreign to most Caribbean communities whose identifications privilege sexual practices rather than a particular lifestyle. Same-gender-desire also functions within the Black respectability framework which has necessitated its (oppressive) silence—so the visibility of Pride, so often attached to Northern queer liberal narratives, is not an available script in many Caribbean communities precisely because the history of Black sexuality is premised on a very different set of sexual desires and practices.

For most Caribbean persons the first interaction they have with ‘out and proud’ queers is from North American cable television. The proliferation of North American queer images collides with a Caribbean history that acknowledges queerness on an individual/private level, but denies queer rights and queer acceptance at the public and state level. Simultaneously Caribbean States came under increased US interference through their reliance on IMF, IDB, USAID and other monies to subsidize their failing economies; the failure of these economies is threatening to resurrect the myth of ‘Black inferiority.’ Many of these political and economic processes have been underpinned by the gay rights movements expanding beyond the North to ‘intervene’ on the behalf of gay communities in African and Afro-Caribbean states. Their intervention is supported by international human rights organizations and like-minded state agencies. Queerness, in its contemporary permutation, flowed into the Caribbean on white North American bodies. It also bore uncanny resemblances to white imperial/colonial practices, specifically the need to ‘rescue’ and the right to ‘guide.’ In offering this guidance the economy and human rights are collapsing into each other in disturbing ways. Specifically, there is a

rising sentiment that developmental aid must only be available to countries who comply with the human rights frameworks of donor countries. Case in point is UK Prime Minister' David Cameron's 2011 threat to withhold aid from 'anti-gay nations' which he tabled at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Australia ("Cameron Threat", [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)). These tactics complicate matters on the ground by re-positioning queerness as *the cause* for halted national development and the local queer person as an accessible (and punishable) barrier to progress. Through economic struggles, which queer imperial/colonial benevolence folds into, queerness is a signifier of not just whiteness, but white intrusiveness.

In the minds of Caribbean citizens, too, queer rights groups attempted to cripple the musical careers of beloved Caribbean artists who created 'murder music,' with little effort to contextualize the music within Caribbean cultures.<sup>37</sup> Queer rights groups threatened to boycott and destroy the tourist industries of countries that refused to accept gay cruises (even when those gay Citizens were not allowed the same privileges they demanded in their home countries) (Puar, "Global Circuits" 1045). The conflation of queerness, the Global North, and economic superiority/control, and heavy handed queer liberal intervention tactics, created queer identities as threatening to national sovereignty and ergo Black masculinity. Moreover it mirrored earlier experiences of white queerness as invested in Black subjugation and undermining Black masculinity. As a result nationalism, combined with years of British inspired (and legislated) heterosexualization

---

<sup>37</sup> "Murder Music" is a term coined by international gay Rights activist Peter Thatchell to describe the homophobic music of Jamaican artists including Buju Banton and Sizzla. The revocations followed the launch of a "Stop Murder Music" campaign by OutRage!, the Black Gay Men's Advisory group, and the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians All-Sexual and Gays (J-FLAG). ([petertatchell.net](http://petertatchell.net))

and a centuries old fatigue of imperial domination, created the Anglo-Caribbean homo hatred which has been uncritically read as ‘natural’ Black homophobia. This phenomenon is, in no small part, an anti-imperialist undertaking wherein the Caribbean queer person is reimagined as a white-minded interloper in a Black body and is rejected from the nation in order to uphold sovereignty.

The retention of Anti-Sodomy Law is, I argue, a new master narrative of Caribbean-ness as anti-imperialist resistance to the global North, and as a beacon of Black respectability. With this, the master narrative posits Caribbean-ness as not queer—as it is understood outside the region—yet a site of invisible queer histories, practices and desires. I suggest that Caribbean states deploy this narrative as an act of resistance and distraction. In their efforts to resist (sexual) imperialism excessive control of queer bodies is a panacea for a lack of state control in many other areas due to economic challenges and a dependency on international aid. That is to say that in the absence of other sites of privilege, heterosexuality is over-emphasised by the state and Caribbean citizens as a site of power. Heterosexual identity is conflated with Black-power, especially as it stands in opposition to the new white-power of queerness. The struggles between queerness and Afro-Caribbean-ness become more evident when legal challenges are brought to Caribbean organizations on behalf of gay rights groups or queer persons. Between 2012 and 2013 two such cases were before the Jamaican court.

### **Legal Challenges and Discourse**

On February 7, 2013 AIDS Free World filed a complaint with the Supreme Court of Jamaica on behalf of Javed Jaghai. Jaghai is a young gay rights activist who had been

evicted from his home on the basis that his status as a homosexual meant he was engaging in sodomy and therefore breaking the Law on the premises. Jaghai countered that the 2011 inclusion of the Right to Privacy in the newly enacted Jamaican Charter of Rights made it impossible to enforce anti-sodomy Laws as the government no longer had any place in the bedrooms of Jamaican citizens. His eviction was then a breach of his right to privacy. A few things are important to note here: in the months leading up to his eviction Jaghai was employed to J-FLAG in the capacity of Education and Outreach Officer. During his tenure he conducted several print, radio, and television interviews where he ‘came out of the closet.’ The ‘coming out’ of J-FLAG officials was not new but it had never before been undertaken on such a grand scale. Jaghai is also a graduate of a North American university who was in Jamaica on a fellowship when he undertook this work. A year and a half later, having filed the complaint, he left to pursue higher education in the United States again. The image of North America appears and reappears in this case: in the form of AIDS Free World, as the site of Jaghai’s formal education, and as a place of escape after having ‘stirred the pot’ at home. Many Jamaicans argue that his compulsion to come out in at least 4 television interviews is also evidence of a North American mindset. These local views can be found in the comments sections of newspapers articles and Youtube videos pertaining to the case. Chris Porter commenting on the *Jamaica Gleaner* website writes:

Wow! Americans want to change Jamaican culturalism!  
This is madness, you keep your thing in America and Europe, do not try and impose your lifestyle on others. These are the reason why the USA is hated by the people of the Middle East and Africa. Do not interfere in people's culture. (“Advocacy Group Mounts Challenge,” [www.jamaicagleaner.com](http://www.jamaicagleaner.com))

A similar comment is made by mwilson30058, which separates, however, along race/nationalist lines:

Well an Indian Jamaican Javed Jaghai come from foreign to Jamaica, obtain a Jamaican passport and then turned around and now challenges the constitutionality of our Jamaican Laws. What black people dont have the right of sovereignty to determine what is best for them. I repeat again my famous idea when Jamaica gained independence we should have asked all foreigners and their embassies to leave the country and then we should have turned around and selected those we wished to associate with. (ibid)

While mwilson30058 is incorrect in suggesting Jaghai is a foreigner, these postings, as well as conversations I overheard while in Jamaica, suggest that at the very least some Jamaicans assume that Jaghai—a queer Caribbean citizen—has betrayed Jamaica by knowingly transgressing Caribbean tradition, placing himself at risk, and then inviting North America in to punish the country by responding to Jamaican homophobia and legislation. His multiple ties to North America through formal education and informal media and cultural education (read: assumed brain washing) as well as his economic backing (as provided by AIDS Free World) in this case make his allegiance to Jamaica questionable. Jaghai was imagined as a Caribbean person who has bought into the idea of America as progress and who has come back to the Caribbean to punish them for their backwardness with North American queer money as the whip.

Legal discourse mirrored that of ‘ordinary’ Jamaican citizens in May, 2013, when Maurice Tomlinson sought a declaration that the refusal to air his gay tolerance advertisement constituted a breach of his Constitutional rights to freedom of expression

and to disseminate information.<sup>38</sup> He also sought an order for local television stations to air the ad in exchange for regular fees. Tomlinson is a gay rights activist who also works with AIDS Free World. He fled Jamaica in 2012 after receiving death threats in response to the news that he had married his male partner in Canada the previous August. Again North America features heavily in this case: in the form of AIDS Free World, as a potential site of escape for Tomlinson, and as an *expected* site of escape once he acquired citizenship through marriage. Tomlinson, like Jaghai, was received as un-Jamaican and more importantly anti-Jamaican because of his strong ties to North America—ties that were confirmed by his queerness. This positioning became clearer in the legal discourse employed in the case:

TVJ is arguing that Mr. Tomlinson lacks standing, and that the case is not properly before the court and should not proceed. TVJ cites his own statement that:

Mrs. Gibson-Henlin submitted that the Claimant is what is known as a “poser” and a “tool.”

Mr. Tomlinson conceded that the ad was created as part of this campaign to change law and policy, and there was no harm to him resulting from the refusal to air the ad, she argued.

“He created the situation which gave rise to the claim. There was no threatened harm. *The Claimant suffered no harm, and is being used as a tool by AIDS Free World, which has no standing and has suffered no harm in Jamaica* [emphasis added].”

---

<sup>38</sup> The ad features Tomlinson and a prominent Jamaican activist, author, and scholar Yvonna McCalla Sobers. In the video Tomlinson explains to Sobers (his aunt) that he is gay to which she responds that she does not understand it but she loves him still. The emphasis on using popular and accepted Jamaican allies as well as identifiably Jamaican scenarios and settings is part of efforts to locate queerness in Jamaican identity. The effort is mirrored in the J-FLAG “We Are Jamaicans” campaign where gay and trans Jamaicans as well as their allies speak out in support of tolerance. The movement is rooted in articulating queerness and Jamaican-ness as a resistance strategy to nationalistic homophobia.

*“He has not been threatened by any organ of the State and in fact the State has been helpful to him (when he was threatened by members of the public), it is difficult to see how he can allege that his rights have been infringed [emphasis added],”* she told the court.

Justice Sykes: You are saying that this claim is not properly before the court?

Mrs. Gibson-Henlin: Yes, it should not proceed [emphasis added] ( qtd. in Jackson-Miller)

Again the presence of North America cannot be denied, nor should it remain unexamined. An essentialist reading of this moment would identify only the inconsistency of blaming a person for the violences done to them (i.e. blaming Jaghai and Tomlinson for ‘inviting’ homophobic backlash or censor). While both situations speak to the continued oppression of gender-non conforming Jamaicans by the state and other organizations and confirm that there is indeed much work to be done vis-à-vis social justice and equality, I suggest that deliberately reading against the tendency to demonize Caribbean states may reveal another story. Designating the Jamaican responses to the situations as a site of homophobic victim blaming does not account for the many colonial violences that have shaped the Jamaican relationship with queerness. It elides the ways in which both gay and straight Jamaicans have been victims of sexual and sexualizing violence as a result of the colonial project and its attendant legal architectures. It denies the colonial baggage that shapes *all* gender relations in the Caribbean today. It also does not acknowledge the fact that the case is being filed by an American based organization in a country that is not America.

The intrusion of Northern organizations into Caribbean states is not neutral territory; it is rife with issues of power and struggles for sovereignty and personhood.

Refusing to see Jamaican homophobia as *not* exceptional removes anti-gay sentiment from a genealogy of Black sexual policing that started during slavery and extended into the colonial era. It leaves white Northern interventionist undertakings critically unexamined and reifies beliefs that the North can and must save the South from itself. I am not arguing for a de facto assumption of imperialist intention in the activities of Northern organizations such as AIDS Free World or even international donor agencies; nor am I suggesting that local activists like Jaghai and Tomlinson, who challenge anti-sodomy laws and press, are “posers” or “foils,” on the contrary both have been instrumental to effecting change for Jamaican LGBT/queer persons. I am arguing *against* North American queer racism, which assumes local/Jamaican queer persons are incapable of advocating for themselves. I am also arguing for a conceptual and activist lens that notices how queer anti-Black racism equates heterosexual blackness with backwardness and thus privileges queer *identity*—rather than complex sexual practices and desires—as a sign of intelligence and progressiveness. This is a racism that, for the most part, actually privileges the fight for queer rights through positing, implicitly or explicitly, that whiteness is the correct home of queerness. I also argue, therefore, against the imperializing tendency to assume Black Caribbean states are always the problem in any given situation and I advocate for the right of Black States to govern themselves. The over-representation of North America, in the cases of Jaghai and Tomlinson but also broader imperialist patterns, work to further align queerness with punitive whiteness, play upon a painful history, and exacerbate anti-homophobic sentiment in Jamaica which has real life implications for queer persons on the ground. I therefore draw attention to the ways these relationships are perceived by those Jamaicans who are not versed in Human

Rights Law or feminist theory yet still experience coloniality as sexist racism—those Jamaicans with whom queer Jamaicans must share space. It is the opinions of those Jamaicans that shape the lives of queer Jamaicans and as such they must be treated with respect rather than denigrating dismissal.



## Chapter 4

### Colonialisms, Black Geographies, and the Impossibilities of Queer

#### Dancehall

##### Legal Geographies of Sexuality

Caribbean states may signify a new master narrative of Caribbean-ness as anti-queerness (read: anti-white imperialism) through the continued criminalization of homosexuality. The deployment of this narrative, however, erases contesting stories and relegates opposing sexual practices to the realm of impossibility. But, as I have demonstrated, same-gender-desire is and has always been a part of Caribbean lives. I suggest that the legislative extirpation of Black same-gender-desire through criminalization places MSM outside the nation, making them informal non-citizens, regardless of their decision to come out or not. This is to say that while Jamaican MSM certainly reside within the nation, they are not explicitly *of* the nation because they are not guaranteed full citizenship rights that correspond with heterosexuality. In many ways, criminalization can make entire countries into prison-like geographies, if not through the punishment of excessive/taboo identities—as seen in my discussion of a range of Caribbean sexualities above—then certainly through the near carceral restriction of spaces that non-citizens or the sexually deviant are allowed to access. MSM, as non-citizens, are literally and symbolically denied the right to geographic space. In fact *it is their exclusion from the national space that defines the space and the people within it.* What is the impact of being legislatively designated as always out of place?

The discussion of queer Caribbean-ness, as always out of place, is further complicated by its existence as praxis rather than an identity. The resulting fluidity allows queer Caribbean-ness to simultaneously be read and rendered out of place while actively subverting the national script and queering Caribbean traditions. I understand this subversive out-of-place-ness as invisible-unvisibility.<sup>39</sup> The invisibility-unvisibility of Caribbean queerness—through its refusal to identify itself/come out—allows a movement between the margin (its assumed home of displacement) and the centre (the site of a nation that has refused but not fully expelled queerness). In this case, Afro-Caribbean queer/MSM bodies are vehicles that, in their un/invisibility and movement, refuse essentializing colonial and legislative discourses that homogenize and discipline queer identities and Black sexualities. Instead, these Afro-Caribbean queer bodies create the conditions through which praxis and practice are the lenses through which queerness is engaged.

I turn to geography in order to work through these themes of invisibility-unvisibility, displacement, and queer practices in relation to dancehall. I begin this chapter with a brief discussion of the legal geographies of sexuality and colonial geographies. I also revisit what I described above as the new master narrative of Caribbean-ness as anti-queerness and think through how it is used—in a Foucauldian sense—to discipline sexualities. More specifically, in Jamaican dancehall, music and

---

<sup>39</sup>My use of the term invisible echoes Katherine McKittrick's discussion of Black women's geographies. Specifically her discussion of Linda Brent, a slave woman who hid herself in a tiny garret for several years to escape her abusive slave master. From that tiny space she observed her children's lives as well as her master's search for her which she thwarted by having misdirecting letters sent from other states. In that space "Brent is everywhere and nowhere, north and south, invisibly present across the landscape, in the last place they thought of" (*Demonic Grounds* 42). Just as Brent is both un-seen and a felt presence, I argue for the invisibility of Jamaican MSM. Even when they are not physically present in the dancehall their presence is invoked and it is their presence that stretches across and defines the dancehall space. They are not seen but still there and materially shaping the space: invisible.

anti-queer performances discipline the population by signifying that which is not allowed. The symbolic legalities and illegalities of sexuality, then, are rehashed and distributed throughout dancehall cultures. The population then internalizes these symbols and replicates them through acts of surveillance and through the everyday policing of their own performance as well as the performances of people around them (Foucault 202).

It is important to note here that the contemporary geographies of the Caribbean, including the dancehall are tied to plantation technologies—those mechanisms, such as murder and slave entrapment—that leak into contemporary state technologies, such as the prison industrial complex and racist zoning practices (ghettoization as entrapment). These historically present technologies also inform fashion industries (that lighten the skin of dark skinned Black models or impose impossible beauty ideals on Black bodies) and circulate ideas about Black respectability that privilege European beauty standards and denigrate African aesthetics or practices. These technologies collude to keep Blackness, especially lower class/‘ghetto’/inner-city Blackness, out of sight through direct erasure, or the destruction of subjecthood that hinges on a rhetoric of Black inferiority. In response, Black subjects—through a process of self-surveillance—may discipline themselves according to Eurocentric scripts or remove themselves from the landscape completely. But as Durrhein (et al) argue displacement of the oppressed as an undertaking of “privilege does not operate [only] via practices of exclusion, but through the engineering of affect” which creates some subjects differently, even as those subject are simultaneously allowed to claim space (qtd. In Hubbard 46). As such, even as some Black bodies are allowed access to geography, they are created as objects in place by a process of affective othering that marks them as always already excessive, pathological,

and/or abject. Through disproportionate surveillance both on plantations and in Black and non-Black communities—some Black bodies have been created as exceptional, hypervisible, and problematic through a disempowering gaze that selectively registers Blackness but negates it through the denial of agency and human-ness.

In the case of the legislative control of homosexuality, this kind surveillance and disciplining is enacted through policing the borders of masculinity and the symbolic expulsion of the gay citizen, through threat, mockery, real violence, and/or symbolic violence. The Law, Lisa Sanchez suggests, sanctions these kinds of violences: “law creates a safe space for violence—a space where violence has no witness” and, moreover, it “constructs boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate violence and produces sociospatial zones where violence is tolerated” (qtd in Blomley 132). Thus, the Law implies violence, requires violence for its institutional enforcement, and creates violence in its unofficial (day to day individual) enactment. In Jamaica, the existence and retention of the anti-sodomy law is often quoted, along with the Bible, by queer-hating Jamaicans as evidence of homosexuality’s transgressive nature and as a justification for anti-queer disciplinary actions (that are subsequently spatialized). The individual commitment to enforcing the Law curtails the geographic rights of Jamaican MSM by asserting that homosexuality is not to occur and, if it does occur, it should be done in private; this situates queer activities away from the public spaces thus ensuring that common and community spaces are marked as the property of the Law and sexually legitimate citizens.

The Law’s colonialist (as racist and sexist) framework refuses ‘difference’ and creates multiple sites of public exclusion and very few, if any, public sites of queer acceptance. But as Tim Cresswell argues “the unintended consequence of making space a

means of control is to make it a site of resistance”(163). Thus, just as a legal master narrative of anti-queerness cannot completely erase queer citizens, a local culture of homophobia cannot prevent all MSM from claiming space. These colonial and legal geographies of sexualities will, however, delineate: how they navigate the various geographies of sexuality and coloniality; how they perform in response to the active policing of their identities; and, how they negotiate (non)citizenship. With this in mind, I work through and suggest below that the local culture of homophobia changes the reception of queerness in the space in ways that may become complicit with resistant acts of queering.

As I turn to a discussion of the various geographies of the dancehall—landscape, psychoscape, musicscape—I keep in mind that dancehall bodies have been referred to as, among other things, unruly and outside of the Law. Interestingly, dancehall functions in a strange margin-centre relationship with Jamaica wherein locally it is contested, because of its ‘lewdness’ and violence and the class location of its major players, yet internationally it is central to defining Jamaican-ness. David Scott marks these tensions over the “the popular” as a post-colonial anxiety tied to its potentially damaging impact on respectability (cited in Niaah 13). I argue that the marginal but central relationship between Jamaica and dancehall is replicated in dancehall’s relationship to queerness. Specifically, the disdain for queerness that emerges in dancehall is contradicted by supposedly straight men *within* the dancehall that evidence a decidedly queer aesthetic and who continue to invoke queerness as a part of “ritualized” homophobic performances (Ellis 17). Thus despite its derision of homosexuality, queerness remains symbolically central to the dancehall identity. In what follows will consider the multiple geographies

of the dancehall, as they are created by colonial Laws and the interpretation of those Laws as laws and mores in post-colonial and post-slave Jamaica, as well as MSM's relationship to the production of dancehall space. This chapter explores the dancehall psychoscape, landscape and musicscape and is informed by field observations of two dancehall events: *Pull Over* (in Waltham Park) and *Boasy Tuesdays* (on Balmoral Road).

It is important to highlight here the ways the dancehall does not conform to standard spatial organizations. That is to say, the physical geographies of the dancehall are often transient: bar piazzas, street corners, back yards and indeed entire streets are converted into dancehall venues for the purposes of nightly 'bashes,' parties, or 'sessions.' These sites return to their original purpose by the morning. The spaces that are available for dancehall are targeted by police officers as well as policy makers and undergo excessive surveillance through patrolling and legislature such as the Noise Abatement Act which places temporal limits on the use of loud speakers (speakers which are integral to the dancehall session). In this way dancehall exhibits traits of the 'ungeographic'—a concept taken up by Katherine McKittrick in her text *Demonic Grounds*. Here the ungeographic discloses those sites where poor, Black, people from the Global South are often not (but not never) assigned a standard space and instead must convert/subvert space as needed, usually within limited boundaries (xii). Sonjah Stanley Niaah finds the genesis of spatially limited celebratory sites such as the dancehall, on the decks of slave ships where slaves danced for exercise and to cope with the terrors of the middle passage (17). Thus the dancehall evidences and extends a particular manifestation of Black space, especially the kind evolving in and across modernity (middle passage, slave ship, plantation, colonies, and so on). This creative subversion in the use of space is

evident in the two dancehall sessions I attended: *Pull Over* is held in the parking lot of a plaza in the ghetto adjacent area of Waltham Park and *Boasy Tuesdays* is held in the work area of a car wash on Balmoral Road which adjoins the Maxfield Park area (another low-income and crime-prone community).

### **Story Nine: Performance as Survival; From Plantation to Dancehall—The Dancehall Psychoscape**

I enter the geographies of the dancehall through the psychoscape of its participants in recognition of the fact that it is implicitly constitutive of and resulting from the landscape and musicscape of the space.<sup>40</sup> I employ the term as a way to spatialize the thought processes of the inner-city post-Independence subjects that define and create the dancehall space. Specifically I want to render map-able the present day and multi-scalar affective manifestations of colonialism that produce boundaries of appropriateness and respectability. These psychic and psychological colonial spaces engender what I call blind spots—sites in the dancehall where Caribbean queerness makes an appearance but, because it appears in a seemingly heterosexual location, is not rendered a threat. Blind spots are necessarily created in and through the shifting of these affective structures.

My rendering of the psychoscape also recognizes the close relationship between belief, practice and space and draws on the work of Tim Cresswell who notes that “[s]pace is not simply formed and molded but plays an active role in the formation of

---

<sup>40</sup> I first encountered the term psychoscape through Sonjah Stanley Niaah who employs it in recognition of the “varied recreative responses” created by “inner-city urban settings” (49). I employ the term differently but it is important that I note its origins, especially since in both cases it is concerned with inner-city persons and their relationships to space.

society. Society produces space and space reproduces society”(12). In this sense I read the dancehall space as the material manifestation of the mental and emotional geographies of its participants (as shaped by the colonial project) vis-à-vis it’s spatial arrangement as well as its renderings of a Black *place* (as read through a lens of inclusion vs. exclusion, and performances undertaken in the space).

This section, too, is primarily concerned with dancehall’s reproduction of the geographic and social elements of Afro-Caribbean spiritual ceremonies. The role of spirituality is significant to the production of dancehall space because it recasts the liberatory potential of plantation era ceremonies which, I argue, reappears in dancehall sessions today.<sup>41</sup> Both the dancehall and the spiritual ceremonies work against technologies of Black erasure and allow for agency through the repossession of self. In framing my discussion of Black erasure I turn to Katherine McKittrick who makes a critical intervention into G/geography in her book *Demonic Grounds*. She argues:

If *who* we see is tied up with *where* we see through truthful, commonsensical narratives, then the placement of subaltern bodies deceptively hardens spatial binaries, in turn suggesting that some bodies belong, some bodies do not belong, and some bodies are out of place [emphasis in original]. (xv)

Her discussion focuses on Black women but I extrapolate it here to include all the poor Black persons whose bodies have been rendered as permanently *in place as out of place* through slave era and present day technologies that attempt(ed) to fix Black bodies within certain spaces and/or remove them from space all together.

---

<sup>41</sup> These are not the only similarities between the dancehall and spirit ceremonies. Many other parallels exist including the dance styles, use and style of music, temporal parallels vis-à-vis time of staging of events etc. Unfortunately it is not within the scope of this work to consider all synchronizing elements.

So how do Caribbean subjects survive society's different forms of anti-Black racial violence that can, as well, result in genocidal racism—all of which is underwritten by the complex and conflicting illegalities of Black sexualities and queer cultures that emerged out of, as noted above, plantation technologies and British Common Law? How do poor Black participants of the dancehall cope with the violence of Black erasure? According to Hutton “ [t]o a great extent, the enslaved coped with and resisted slavery and fashioned their being, their agency by embracing/becoming one personality and agency above any other, the artist” (“Creative Ethos” 128). In so doing they undertook “to perform the ontological script designed and written for Blackness by Whiteness as a cover or a mask for the other personality, its own sovereign script, its own freedom-making enterprise” (ibid 129). Effectively Afro-Caribbean slaves became masters of misdirection, acting to avoid punishment and possible murder (Black erasure) by performing the ‘slave’; publicly performing as objects of the white master, while keeping their ‘free selves’ in hiding. As opposed to theories of performativity that privilege the repetition of activities as creating realities (*cf.* Butler), Afro-Caribbean slaves moved into the realm of performance in order to exhibit agency through undertaking intentional or unintentional performances which found “destiny and density of purpose in place and space” (Alexander xvi). Site specific performances were premised on a mode of survival which underscored both sides of the subject/object dichotomy that typified plantation life.

Thus slave era Afro-Caribbeans transgressed the subject/object dichotomy using performative acts of display as tools to create ruptures. This not only troubled normative Black invisibility and silence, by insisting on visibility, it also ties visibility to agency by drawing attention to how the enslaved claimed or directed the gaze, and participated in

resistance activities that attempted to fix them in place. These performative acts occurred—among other places—in night-time spiritual ceremonies of repossession.

Naipaul writes:

In the slave plantation of the Caribbean Africans existed in two worlds. There was the world of the day; that was the white world. There was the world of the night; that was the African world, of spirits and magic and true gods. And in that world ragged men, humiliated by day, were transformed—in *their own eyes, and the eyes of their fellows*—into kings, sorcerers, herbalists, men in touch with the true forces of the earth and possessed of complete power. As king of the night, a slave by day, might be required at night never to exert himself; he would be taken about by his fellows on a litter... To the outsider, to the slave-owner, the African night world might appear a mimic world, a child's world, a carnival. But to the African – however much in daylight, he appeared himself to mock it – it was the *true world*: it turned white men to phantoms and plantation life to an illusion [emphasis added]. (“Creative Ethos” 132)

Thus through the performance of the self *as* King one could become the King one *might* be if one were not in the absolute social, economic and geographic ‘limit situation’ (Bakare-Yusuf, 467) of slavery. Key to this transformation was the display of oneself in one’s present *unmasked* state to the persons in the ceremony. Through this performance Afro-Caribbean slaves were able to inhabit alter/native universes in which slavery was the illusion; they practiced repossessing themselves *for* themselves by deliberately opening themselves to possession by their ancestors.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup>Homi Bhabha cites Frantz Fanon as stating that the “[t]he colonial subject is always ‘overdetermined from without’... It is through image and fantasy—those orders that figure transgressively on the borders of history and the unconscious—that Fanon most profoundly evokes the colonial condition”(43). The role of alter/native universes and sites of ‘fantasy’ have a long history among the oppressed and manifest themselves in the work of many Black artists/academics. Audre Lorde, in her book *Zami*, creates

Very often slave era ceremonial transitions involved the ritualizing adornment of the body and the space to become/welcome ancestral spirits using “techniques of assemblage: the arrangement of multiple elements to realize or to denote a visual artistic/aesthetic vision or creative imagination” that focused on decorating the head of the participant and the seal/head of the ritual space as the site of the spirit’s entry (Hutton, “Creative Ethos”139). By re/creating the body and space in a manner befitting the spirits of their ancestors Afro-Caribbean marked these bodily and physical geographies as set apart from the ‘white world,’ locating them differently within the plantation geography as redemptive site of Black possibility/place. Hutton observes, however, that despite the ‘serious’ work it did, these ceremonies were also sites of celebration, noting that “the secular and the religious, the profane and the sacred, were then and now, not characterized by immutable borders, walls or fences or categories (134). Indeed, they were also sites of relaxation, celebration, and anti-slavery organizing.<sup>43</sup>

Though markedly different, I suggest that this kind of complex reworking of self, ritual, adornment, spirituality, objecthood, resistance, and freedom can be gleaned in the inner-city lives of Caribbean peoples. The precarious inclusion, most obviously, of lower class Black people into the social fold is premised on their appearing in those places where they are tolerated and/or appearing as versions of themselves that are deemed more

---

“Biomythography” which blurs the lines between biographical history and myth in deliberate attempt to fill in the holes of what *is* with what *might have been*. Toni Morrison takes up similar themes in her work on memory which she privileges “because it ignites some deep process of invention and ...because I cannot trust the literature and sociology of other people to help me know the truth of my own cultural sources” (386). That is to say she cannot trust the part of herself that is *overdetermined from without* to do the redemptive work of writing Blackness responsibly; that can only be done by a retreat from what is to what was, or what *may* have been.

<sup>43</sup> In this way the Jamaican dancehall finds space in a genealogy of Afro-Caribbean celebratory sites including but not limited to blues clubs, nine-nights (the Jamaican term for funeral wakes) hip-hop clubs and Black churches. See also Hilary Beckles “War Dances”: Slave Leisure and Anti-slavery in the British-colonised Caribbean.” and Sonjah Stanley Niaah “Kingston’s Dancehall: a Story of Space and Celebration”

‘palatable’ by ‘polite society.’ While the plantation and the dancehall are certainly different, the ways in which the marginalized colonial and post-colonial spaces of exclusion demand survival tactics that require constant geographic negotiation, site specific performances, and alternative ceremonies, are meaningful. Indeed Bibi Bakare-Yusuf describes life for dancehall participants as a “‘limit situation’ in which the issues that face them on a daily basis are issues of survival and keeping the terror of daily life at bay” (467). They are further limited by stigmatization that creates ghetto citizens as unemployable (due to their street addresses and uncritical assumptions of sub-par intelligence and/or an assumed proclivity for violence or theft). The poor and marginalized are, then, bound to their particular destitute communities in ways that reflect back on (but do not replicate) plantation entrapments. I proffer, then, that some slave-era survival mechanisms reappear and are recast in the dancehall—even though the conditions through which the marginalized and entrapped must survive are very different.

It can be seen that for slaves the social and the political are imbricated in the limited ‘autonomous’ spaces they were allowed. The body as a geographic site also became an important location from which to talk back to technologies of Black erasure through the performance of the self in a kind of street theatre. In recognizing the high levels of performativity as well as the centrality of display to Afro-Caribbean resistance activities, I mark the *sociality* of the ceremonial site/s as integral to the struggle for liberation. That is to say the liberation activities demanded an audience and in this engendered participatory politics and relational practices of survival. Similar elements can be seen in the dancehall and, I argue, the geographic shape of the dancehall—as theatre in the round which allows no separation between audience and performer that is

also a Black ritual site which requires spectators—is the physical manifestation of a psychoscape that still needs and recognizes the usefulness of these (ongoing) rituals of repossession and everyday survival.

### Story Ten: The Secular is Sacred; Visibility is Survival - The Dancehall Landscape

As an example of dancehall’s ritual leanings I offer its physical geography, represented in Figure 2.<sup>44</sup>

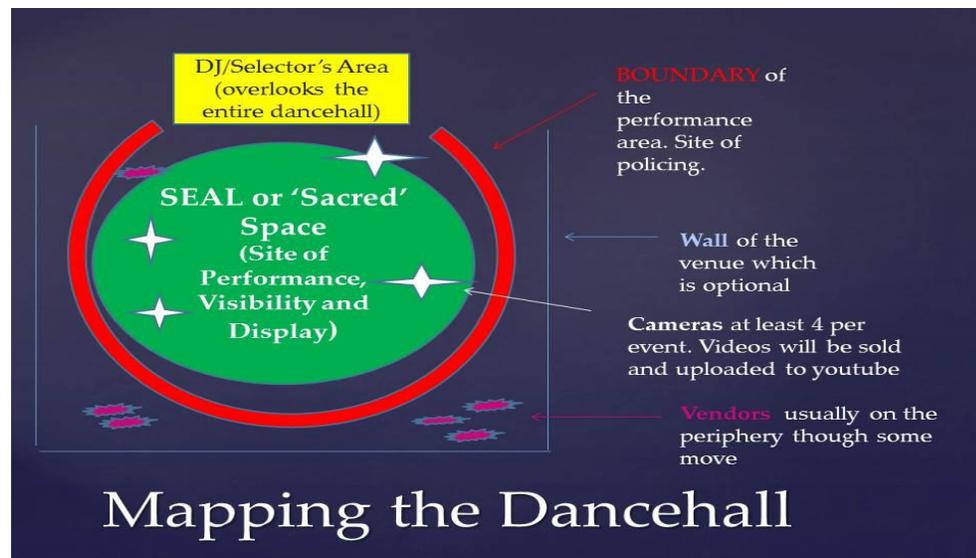


Figure 2. A Spatial Rendering of the Jamaican Dancehall

Of greatest importance to this discussion is the presence of the seal/sacred space/stage (to be discussed in detail later) at the centre of the dancehall. This seal/sacred space is demarcated not by material walls or barriers or lines, but through the social nature of its boundary making. Specifically, the boundaries are created by dancehall’s

---

<sup>44</sup> The use of the term ritual here echoes Kertzer’s reading as introduced to me by Sonjah Stanley Niaah as “action wrapped in webs of significance” (*Dancehall 90*). But it differs in that my reading does retain elements of the *spi/ritual* in that the dancehall does not separate the secular from the sacred.

participants through a shared understanding of space rather than physical barriers.<sup>45</sup> The spatial arrangements of both *Boasy Tuesdays* and *Pull Over* are commensurate with Figure 2. with minor changes (to accommodate the original infrastructure the plaza and car wash's buildings) made to the property.

The Disc Jockey's (Selector) area overlooks the space in its entirety and is often elevated on an official or makeshift stage; otherwise it occupies the highest naturally occurring space in the party, or 'session,' as dancehall parties are called. The party-goers arrange themselves in two concentric circles or half-circles with the selectors at the top. The inner circle is the space of highest activity marked by dancing (in groups or alone), singing, or 'performances' of the self in ways that garner high levels of attention. The outer circle comprises persons who participate less actively and also observe the goings-on of the inner circle. Movement between these areas is free and occurs regularly. Both areas (with a greater emphasis on the inner circle) are crossed by video and still photography cameras.

Clinton Hutton parallels the dancehall session and the Revivalist ceremony by comparing the role of the DJ (Selector) to that of the Revival Shepherd and the ways in which both have a responsibility to control the mood and actions of the crowd (Hutton,

---

<sup>45</sup> An interesting area for further research that I am unable to take up here is the impact of the street—which is a popular site for dancehall events—and how this location impacts upon the psychoscape of dancehall participants. Susan Stewart (cited in Cresswell 47) conceptualizes the street as a "room by agreement" which opens up to an additional level of communality among dancehall participants. What kind of unspoken agreements are made about the uses of the room? How do those agreements influence ideas of sameness or demand conformity within the space? I suggest that slave era Afro-Caribbean spiritual ceremonies are central to the material geographies manifested—in streets converted to event spaces—by this agreement, but there is a need for a deeper consideration of the impact of this agreement on mental and emotional geographies of this room/street/dancehall space.

“Forging Identity” 20).<sup>46</sup> Just as the Shepherd leads the ‘flock’ (congregation) through the spiritual ceremony, transporting them to liminal spiritual states through drumming, chanting, dancing and the invocation of spirits, the dancehall selector moves party participants to states of frenzy through the use of music as well as the selector’s own utterances via the microphone (ibid 20). Dancehall researcher Kingsley Stewart makes a similar observation in his work, noting the similarities between the centre of the dancehall session and the seal, which is the sacred space in Afro-Caribbean spiritual ceremonies.<sup>47</sup> Stewart also notes that dancehall participants do not enter the centre of the session until the party is at its peak—which is similar to the reverence held for the seal. He also draws attention to the way the selector invites participants into the centre, much like the Shepherd does to the flock. In dancehall, the seal/centre changes meaning according to the collective energy of the participants: it is not a space to ‘hang out’ or pass the time until the seal is opened by the DJ and the session reaches its peak.

The material manifestation of the dancehall recalls the spirit ceremony as well as theatre-in-the round and a reverse panopticon. I suggest that the theatricality of the space makes it even more conducive to performances: it contains a ready-made audience. I suggest, however that this relationship also works in reverse where the needs of the dancehall participants encourage them to replicate the theatre in the round formation: audience on all sides, performers working across the middle. The dancehall differs from a theatre, however, in that the theatricality of the space is rarely if ever directly addressed.

---

<sup>46</sup> Revivalism is an Afro-Christian religious form existing in Jamaica. It evidences a strong focus on spirit possession and singing and dancing as a part of worship. For more on Revivalism see Edward Seaga ‘Revival Cults in Jamaica: Notes Towards a Sociology of Religion’ in *Jamaica Journal* Vol 3. No. 2.

<sup>47</sup> I received this information as a student at the University of the West Indies where Kingsley Stewart facilitated a course on the Jamaican Dancehall. It was since then expanded upon in informal conversations during the 2003-2004 academic year. Prof. Stewart is yet to publish or present these readings of the Dancehall in any other academic form.

While dancehall participants acknowledge the ways they present themselves differently inside the space versus in their day-to-day lives, they do not cite it as a site of acting per se, rather a site of being differently. The arrangement of the dancehall also produces the effects of a reverse panopticon, that is rather than a site where one person can theoretically see the whole it is a site where all other members can see each person. The participants in the centre are aware that they are surrounded on all sides by observers. While this audience offers liberatory possibilities it also enacts a symbolic policing of the centre by virtue of high levels of surveillance.

When I arrived at *Pull-Over* at 1:30AM on a Tuesday morning, the seal/centre of the dance was still empty. Dancehall DJs Beenie Man (dressed from head to toe in shiny purple) and Macka Diamond entered the party between 1AM and 2AM and in both instances the music was paused so they could be welcomed and get their big-ups (respect).<sup>48</sup> At about 2AM the selector called in several female dancers to open the seal. The video men (camera operators)—who had until then perused the boundaries of the session—reoriented their cameras to the centre. The energy of the party heightened significantly: more people began dancing and those who were dancing before began to do so in earnest. The bordering audience moved in to better see the activities in the middle of the session; one girl held centre stage as the selector stopped the music and directed everybody to observe her. During her ‘performance’ even Beenie Man stopped his activities to pay homage to her—she was the ‘queen’ of the moment called into action by

---

<sup>48</sup> The term ‘straight’ is employed in a socio-linguistic sense as a symbol of heterosexuality and appropriateness. For example in a conversation a person may say ‘yu cyan lean yu haffi straight’ which could mean you cannot be gay (lean) you have to be straight (heterosexual) or you cannot act in an incorrect way (such as being disrespectful) you have to do the appropriate (respectful) thing. The use of pun, double entendre and a layered signifying system is popular in Jamaican speech (especially that of the patois oriented lower classes).

the selector/Shepherd.<sup>49</sup> Through this performative act of display one female party-goer transitioned from the conditions of her everyday life (of which I admittedly knew very little) to the focal point of an entire event. This transformation was made possible by the geography of the dancehall: the space that replicates theatre in the round organically unfolded into a stage; the social relationships in the dancehall, that privilege such display, enabled this transition while also signaling how the selector has the control/responsibility to guide the participants.

These kind of geographic processes draw attention to the work of theorists such as geographer Sonjah Stanley Niaah, who positions the dancehall as “ritual space, celebratory space” (87) and observes phenomena akin to Victor Turner’s concept of “*communitas*...the experience of heightened sociality, such as that found in the liminal phase of rites of passage” (ibid 90).<sup>50</sup> Extending Niaah’s observations, I argue that the dancehall is a site wherein repossession of self, through rituals of community participation and display, can occur. The dancehall subject is renewed by the heightened experience of community and inclusion into the social fold—an entitlement denied by the wider society. In the dancehall the ‘spirit’ of the religious ceremony is replaced by the ‘vibe’ which has been theorised as having the “power...to produce and induce particular affective states and forms of subjectivity” (Durrheim et al qtd in Hubbard53).<sup>51</sup> I also

---

<sup>49</sup> My invocation of royalty and the queen here are not to be undertaken lightly. In the Masquerade and Brukkins (Afro-Caribbean religio-cultural forms) ‘bands’ were often lead by a King and Queen who stood as the embodiment of ritualized power. Contemporarily, the yearly Dancehall Queen competitions offer cash rewards, travel opportunities and popularity to the female contestant voted the best dancer. For more on Masquerade and Brukkins see Clinton Hutton “The Creative Ethos of the African Diaspora: Performance Aesthetics and the Fight for Freedom and Identity.”

<sup>50</sup> Niaah also observes the complex interlinkage of dancehall events and ceremonies of life, death, anniversary, departure and arrival which she suggests strengthens its relationship to ritual (88).

<sup>51</sup> While Durrheim, et al, go on to trouble the producer/produced relationship between individual subjects and the vibe, I retain the concept as a stand in for the spirit of religious ceremonies, specifically because in both cases the individual must, in some way, surrender agency—to the spirit/*communitas* /vibe—and be

suggest that the *public* performance of a particular *unlimited* version of the self, as opposed to the deliberate possession by ancestral spirits, is essential to dancehall's liberatory ontology. I further suggest that the ideal self in the dancehall is crafted through an assemblage of social and spiritual cues—similar to but not twinning those used to adorn the slave body and seal—designed to elevate the dancehall body to hypervisibility. Dancehall subjects continue, therefore, the African tradition of repossession through adornment and display and the participants project their 'true' selves *onto* the seal/stage at the centre, *into* the minds of the audience, and *out of* the invisibility of their everyday lives. This behaviour is supported by the use of video recording devices in the dancehall which allow Black subjects space in a digital memory that works in direct contravention to technologies of Black erasure.

### **“Walk Up Inna Di Video Caw Yu Cute Gyal”: Hypervisibility As Agency**

As I have previously propounded, the material geography of the dancehall session creates it as a site of visibility. I proffer that the presence of video cameras in the space elevate it to a state of *hypervisibility* in that performances undertaken in the space extend pass its geographic borders. Indeed a cursory internet search for *Boasy Tuesdays* reveals three YouTube videos and several photographs as well as website references, a feat made possible by the video digital memories and archives created by the cameras at the event. In most dancehall sessions there are between one and four video cameras present: there were two at *Pull Over* and one at *Boasy Tuesdays*, along with a still photographer. The dancehall video camera is known as the 'video light,' which is a reference to the make-

---

consumed. I also retain it because in dancehall the vibe is recognised as the spirit of a location as well as one's mood or emotion as affected by that location and/or one's personal experiences.

shift *super* camera lights that camera operators craft from street lights or converted car headlights and power by batteries strapped to their bodies.<sup>52</sup> The video light allows dancehall participants to claim geography in two ways: by projecting their images out of the dance via DVD and Youtube, etc., and by directing the gaze of other participants to the person performing for the camera at any given time. That is to say the lights are so bright (and the antics so bold) that it is impossible to ignore a person who is engaging with the camera and they momentarily claim more space inside the dance. Thus the ‘video light’, as a phenomenon, is an important part of the dancehall geography and intimately tied to how dancehall subjects court attention and engage in acts of display and, to add to this, become part of a wider digital archive.

I suggest that the performances elicited by the video light open up a redemptive unmasking of the dancehall subject, wherein they can reveal the selves they would like to/could be. Bibi Bakare Yusuf cites Paulette—a dancehall participant—as saying “I may be poor and come from the ghetto, it don’t mean I have to look shabby. A woman always has to look good even if it means spending her last dollar. Going to a dance is the time to dress up and let the world really see you *as you are* [emphasis added]” (468). The identification of the ‘glamorous’ dancehall self as *who you are*, despite an acknowledgement of poverty, indicates to me that what happens at dancehall sessions

---

<sup>52</sup> Interaction between camera operators – usually male – and party goers range from simple recording of dancing to asking participants to review the party, offer details about their clothes and hair etc. If the party goer is known by the camera person they may ask more personal questions in an attempt to elicit tales of success. Camera operators may also interview the Dancehall artists and popular personalities in the session as well as offer opportunities to promote upcoming parties and businesses. Party goers often vie for camera time, jostling each other out of the way in an attempt to tell their stories, air grievances, and ‘moggle’ (show off) on the persons in the party and watching on screen. Recordings from these events are sold locally and internationally in DVD format as well as uploaded to Youtube and other entertainment websites dedicated to covering Dancehall events.

constitutes an unmasking, a deliberate projection of an ideal self—marked as impossible—into the realm of the possible. This unmasking takes place at the sacred/spiritual seal of the ceremony’s centre, where the participant can become their ‘true’/ideal self, which recalls slave ceremonies, that were utilized by Black subjects as locations of agency and repossession.<sup>53</sup>

Bibi Bakare Yusuf describes female dancehall fashion as “orchidaceous,” “strangely dislocated from the rest of society,” and “the very antithesis of conservative restraint and concealed style” (477-478). I suggest that for the women of the dancehall—especially in the 1990s—the fashioning of the body through the use of clashing and conflicting styles, and whatever was handy, replicated the ritualizing of the Afro-Caribbean slave body. It also recalls the ways in which ceremonial sites were produced through assemblage and bricolage. By creating the excessive dancehall body for display, women resist twofold structures of oppression that would see them rendered invisible by their Blackness and their femaleness. By performing what would today be known as ‘ratchetness,’ and what is referred to in the dancehall as slackness, dancehall women self-select a type of hypervisibility that is impossible to ignore, thus refusing to be cast as abject while simultaneously embracing that which is bold, excessive, and impossible to contain.

Donna Hope observes the ‘conspicuous consumption’ of name brand clothing and products in the dancehall which I suggest may be read, not just as an attempt to negotiate

---

<sup>53</sup> This reading contradicts Sonjah Stanley Niaah’s suggestion that dancehall subjects move from “the ordinary to the fantastic through the adoption of camera-ready masks” (172). This departure is informed by the way dancehall space is used but also with respect for the way dancehall subjects speak, specifically their use of the phrase ‘nuh tek it seh mi simple’ (don’t think I am simple). Very often when referring to their everyday fashion, jobs, and demeanor dancehall participants advise their observers that despite being simply/shabbily dressed, they are not simple people. The person they are appearing as—much like the slave—is who is required to tackle the vagaries of everyday life.

“class and status...on wealth and social visibility” (*Man Vibes* 93), but rather as a repossession of self within Jamaican neoliberalizing landscape. Specifically, the ritualized performance of wealth, in a free market context where purchasing power is tied to individual worth, signifies personhood to those observing these performances. In this way dancehall subjects can ‘moogle’ (show off), but also symbolically repossess themselves from those technologies of Black erasure (ghettoization, criminalization) that seek to dispossess them of human-ness based on their economic inferiority. In this reading, the men drinking directly from Hennessey bottles at *Boasy Tuesdays*, and their counterparts showering cash onto the turntables at *Pull Over* to make the selector pull up the tune (play the song again), are not simply seeking to “pose or posture on the basis of little substance” (ibid 93). Indeed while there are certainly elements of aggrandization in these activities, the actions themselves evidence the occupation of an alter/native universe created within the dancehall space—one in which the performance of the ‘big spender,’ at least momentarily, materially creates a man of wealth and ergo power. It is not a moment of make-believe or even—as essentialised readings may argue—proof of Black irresponsibility; it is, rather, an assertion of selfhood within the framework that is most relevant to the contemporary neoliberal Jamaican context: a self that could be if opportunities could be had. Thus ‘flossing’ (displaying wealth) at the centre of the dancehall, to be recorded by those present and the consumers of videos and pictures, is a resistance activity based on the navigation of multiple identities and the deliberate performance and projection of the ‘ideal’ entity within the sacred space/centre stage. This quest for selfhood, through performance of a Black liberated self, demonstrates that dancehall provides a geographic moment to recast the politics of visibility: here,

Blackness is beautifully adorned and free and public—and these acts and displays are *produced by all the participants at once*—and also claiming personhood and humanness (in a world that erases and marginalizes and cannot bear Afro-Caribbean worth on these terms).

### **Story Eleven: There are No Gay Men Here—Dancehall Musicscape**

The final dancehall geography I wish to engage also flows from dancehall's psychoscape: the musicscape. Despite the geographic nature of its name, the primary interest in dancehall has coalesced around its music: as homophobic, as misogynist, as contributing to crime and moral decay. Given the proliferation of negativity that is attached to dancehall across a range of venues—radio, television, and both in and outside the country—dancehall's music is often marked as a synecdoche for all aspects of the culture and its themes taken up as a marker of the culture's baseness. Assertions of dancehall's carnal lewdness often centre around its engagement with (hetero)sexual violence and homophobia. As a cultural geographic artefact, shaped by colonialism, dancehall music continues to distil and narrate the tensions around the control of the feminine embedded in colonial Law. This is diarised in song through, as Hope argues, themes such as the “conquest, courtship and praise” of the vagina, the maintenance of a “harem of babymothers, girlfriends,”... and an “overt paranoia of male homosexuality and all it symbolizes in Jamaica [through real or symbolic violence]” (Hope, “Of Chi-Chi Men” 5, 11; Hope, “*Man Vibes*” 21).

As previously mentioned, homophobia in dancehall has resulted in many artists receiving extreme censure from international organizations who refuse a nuanced

exploration of how colonialisms functioned and continue to function to position queerness and Blackness as unrelated and unrelatable. Within the dancehall space, homophobia functions as a form of cultural currency, with some artists gaining popularity for performing homophobic music (Cowell 53); this is an assertion that is confirmed by my interviewees. Barry Chevannes notes, in his research on inner-city men, that the violence underwriting homophobia is an important part of identity formation and as peer-group bonding (“The Role of the Street” 143); thus homophobia is not specific to dancehall but is reflective of the social specificities of the culture that informs it. In these negotiations dancehall men navigate different kinds of violence that are constitutive of masculinity, with homophobia being but one of many scripts emerging alongside gender formation ( Hope, “Of Chi-Chi Men” 10). A slightly different reading of homophobia casts it as the *ritual* disavowal of queerness—which is informed by dancehall’s awareness of its own queerness: “the [homophobic] songs are played; no one is “gay”; everyone can turn a blind eye” (Ellis 17). This particular interpretation of the dancehall space dovetails with Clinton Hutton’s claim that Caribbean citizens express not intolerance but rather ‘repressive tolerance’ of homosexuality. Hutton suggests that this is coupled with a “social policing” that is aligned with “a certain permissiveness” (“Casting the First Stone,” Hutton 122). These different readings of the ways in which homophobia is understood through and with dancehall and the wider Jamaican culture are useful for interpreting certain contradictory behaviours, such as the popularity of male to female cross dressing in Jamaican entertainment, and the popularity of seemingly queer dance and sartorial expressions within a ‘homophobic space.’ When taken in conjunction with Cowell’s assertion that homosexual activity may be overlooked by society if engaging in

the behaviour provides a means of economic survival the dancehall absolutely becomes a space of queer possibility (41). Given the non-conformity of certain aspects of Jamaican culture, it falls to its citizens to encode and elevate the policing of sexuality into (homophobic) rituals: musical rituals, performance rituals (such as mimicking gun shots in support of homophobic music), social rituals (such as men refusing to sit beside other men). These rituals define dancehall music which in turn shapes and reshapes the psychoscape of dancehall's participants.

My understandings of Jamaican homophobia and these theoretical readings of the phenomenon are not meant to excuse homophobic violence of any sort but rather elucidate how homophobia/homo hatred fits into a longer Black sexual history that refuses certain types of difference. These histories including colonialism, nationalism as compulsory heterosexuality, concealment of desires as survival, gendered responses to economic disenfranchisement, and various anti-Black violences interweave to shape the gendered responses to MSM and other non-conforming sexual practices. I consider this in further/different detail in the conclusion.

### **The Theory of Dancehall's Geo-Psychic Blind Spot**

The theory of the blind spot is informed by my years of involvement in the dancehall—as a participant—prior to undertaking this research. In the period 2000-2004 there was a sudden increase in the popularity of male dancers led by the late Gerald “Bogle” Levy. Men had always danced in the dancehall, but never before were such high levels of homosociality recorded; nor had the dancing so decisively excluded women. The geography of the dancehall—which had always seen women at the centre—

reoriented with the men claiming centre stage and the women relegated to the periphery. The dancers also evinced a very queer aesthetic: tight pants (to emphasise the dance moves), brightly coloured and ornate shirts with deep cut V-necks, tweezed eyebrows and bleached skin (to better display tattoos), and an almost ‘feminine’ attention to grooming (*cf.* Hope, Ellis). Men in the dancehall have always expressed queerly, but this was a queerness that transgressed into what was previously considered dangerous territory: it looked ‘gay.’ There were moments of unrest, but more generally this dancer look was accepted and redistributed across the dancehall: tight pants were and have remained very popular (despite a cadre of songs that denounced them less than a decade before), and the excessively pretty male body became the benchmark of dancehall masculinity. Middle class men took umbrage to the look, offended that the dancehall had turned its back on its masculinist roots and transgressed into the ‘foreign,’ the ‘girlish’ but eventually resigned themselves to the blatant double standard: ghetto men can look gay because they are all thugs; middle-class men must dress like thugs to not be assumed gay. I wondered what these sartorial contestations meant for gay men/MSM who were previously hesitant to enter the dancehall space for fear of detection?

In the section that follows I consider what happens when the various dancehall geographies collide and how those collisions may contribute to queer possibilities and practices. In its most basic form this theory brings forth both homophobia and queer possibilities. I suggest that the master narrative of homophobia—as defining the dancehall but also a remnant of legal colonial-nation-making—creates the dancehall space as hyper-heterosexual. This overt compulsory heterosexuality, when coupled with the machismo of dancehall’s heterosexual participants and a culture that legitimizes the

use of violence to police gender norms (Crooms 244), results in the *assumed* heterosexuality of all those who enter. This is especially relevant since MSM enter the dancehall and other public spaces under threat of physical violence/death. These factors collude to create a geo-psychic blind spot in which all men ‘brave enough’ to enter are assumed—at least for the time—to be heterosexual. With this, any signs of queerness are *recoded* as something else by the straight participants who do not want to address their own un-absolute power in policing the space. This blind spot offers a site of possibility for queer men who, through strategic performances of the self, may access the space under the cover of heterosexual assumption.

In the case of the dancehall, I suggest that colonial practices have conspired to wrongly create queerness and Blackness as distinct and mutually exclusive categories which cannot be unified without obvious disruption. Specifically, through the colonial, national, and legal scripts that cast same-sex-desire as ‘naturally’ in opposition to Blackness, and queerness as located in and through whiteness, queerness has been fixed ‘in place’ as not-Black and therefore, in the Jamaican context, non-visible and non-knowable.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Blackness has been imagined as always already visibly straight and (usually) anti-queer. In this way queerness—in that it is always white-visible—becomes a disruption *to* Blackness, automatically noticeable once it is present, which produces the Black-queer person as aligned with/touching/touched by whiteness (the home of queerness) and therefore dispossessed of authentic (heterosexual) Blackness in a (seemingly) noticeable way. Thus Black-queer is always noticeably *not Black*.

---

<sup>54</sup> As ‘queerness’—as a North American sexual identity—has calcified into a distinctive category which privileges visibility, it has become even more difficult to conceive of a queerness that remains beneath the surface: queerness in disguise. Indeed white ‘out’ queerness—which even in Jamaica is usurping practice based sexualities—‘should’ not be able to pass undetected in/on a Black body: queerness is always visible.

I want to suggest that the flattening out of identity categories in this way opens them up to subversion, specifically subversion premised on alternative occupation of geography and especially the geographies of self. The supposed ‘transparency’ of identity assumes that what is visible, what is above surface, is all there is—in this sense, identity is a racial-sexual ‘ontological script’ that is always seeable and therefore truth-telling. This narrative does not, however, account for the underground. In referring to the underground I recall the Underground Railroad—a tool of freedom that functioned within existing *known* geographies yet remained *unknowable* because of its alter/native uses of space. Katherine McKittrick suggests that “[b]ecause mapping occurred *in* the underground, it is a point of seeming frustration and confusion. The ostensible frustration and confusion do not necessarily identify slave ignorance but are, rather, evidence of a radically different sense of place” (“Freedom Is A Secret” 102). I propose that ‘the underground’—as a space that remained concealed though above ground—provides some insight as to how ‘transparent’ identities may be made to conceal contradictory elements. Specifically I refer to the ways MSM in the dancehall may navigate geographies of (homophobic) Blackness and (visible) queerness to deflect attention away from their annexation. MSM may modify queerness, through eschewing visibility, or modify Blackness, by silently resisting compulsory heterosexuality in a way that unsettles the ‘impossibility’ of their association, by making their merger real. That is to say that dancehall MSM by refusing to ‘come out’ and be ‘correctly queer’ can unsettle the compulsory heterosexuality of colonial blackness by being queerly in heterosexual/homophobic spaces; forfeiting neither of their social locations and disproving the mutual incompatibility or assumed disruption that should come from their

meeting. This annexation is made possible by the existence of a Caribbean queerness that is based in praxis, not identity. Praxis does not require visibility. Praxis defies identification that seeks identity. Through queerness as praxis *invisible* and *unvisible* Black-queerness may enter the dancehall in ways that white queerness as visibility cannot.

Opportunities to trouble the Black/queer divide are supported by how Black masculinity is imagined in the dancehall. The centrality of violence to inner-city Black masculine identity creates legitimate Black masculinity and violence as intrinsically linked (Crooms 224). This linkage does double work: it produces the dancehall as a space governed by masculinist music and worldviews, as a site of violence, *as well as*, inadvertently, ‘gifting’ dancehall men with a de facto violent (read: heterosexual) reputation (or at least the assumption that they have the potential for violence) based on their Black inner city male identity. Put slightly differently, if we can imagine that violence is central to this particular brand of Black masculinity, and that Black masculinity is always already heterosexual, then violence and heterosexuality become linked in this geographic location. Just as all the men in the dancehall are assumed violent, they are assumed heterosexual as well.

I offer that the fluidity between violence and heterosexuality creates opportunities for substitution. The fluidity creates the underground or the blind spot wherein the performance of violence is a *projection* of a heterosexual self. The assumption of unwavering violence cum heterosexuality in the dancehall, I argue, is what allows Black dancehall men to express themselves queerly without fear of reprisal. This queer expression spurs them to aggressively police the borders of their sexuality through

symbolic violence: the individual performance of homophobia and the deployment of homophobic music declares the rules of engagement and ritualistically cleanses them and the surrounding space of homosexual threat. In an ‘ideal’ world the music declares what cannot happen in some spaces; but, as noted previously, attempts to control and discipline do not completely eradicate the possibility of resistance: in this case queer sexual expressions emerge unvisibly in plain sight. Dancehall music declares, then, what *should not* happen rather than what *cannot* happen. And in the spaces between should not and cannot is the blind spot: a phenomenon created by the disparity between the symbolic violence used to police the dancehall space and how dancehall MSM (do not) respond to that violence.

The strident declaration of what cannot (read: should not) happen in the dancehall interacts with high levels of visibility to produce it as an especially unsafe space for queer men. Because queerness is theorised as always disruptive and because the dancehall is premised on hypervisibility, a queer man in the space should, most certainly, disrupt the space, be noticed, and (since the space has been clearly marked homophobic) be punished. I suggest that the levels of visibility in the dancehall elevate the sense of masculine power held by straight men: given the theatre in the round/reverse panopticon arrangement, the space is theoretically actively policed by the many onlookers who share the space. Thus queerness in the space should be controlled by the high levels of surveillance. But the dancehall is not just a site of social control, it is also a Black communal site. Moreover it is a site built around a high degree of community involvement or, as noted above, *communitas*. As a part of *communitas* the dancehall participant “submits to nothing less than the authority of the community” (Niaah,

*Dancehall 90*), forsaking some aspects of their individuality for inclusion in the group. I propose that the community assumes homogeneity amongst its members as a result of the high levels of sociality and *communitas*, which asserts: ‘we are all here for the same reasons, we all know the rules.’ Thus high levels of visibility (assumed to result in high levels of surveillance) are met with an assumption of sameness (based on the cultural and historical specificities of the space) which combine with an assumed mandatory heterosexuality (based on the assumed visibility-knowability of queerness and the threat of violence to queer bodies). Within the imbrications of these moments and scripts is dancehall’s geo-psychic blind spot: a socio-spatial phenomenon wherein queerness may exist, undetected, via the tactical deployment of heterosexual signifying practices, which remain unchallenged because of the assumed hegemony of compulsory heterosexuality that is engendered by the threat of homophobic violence and a state of masculinist hypervisibility.

It is important to note that my proposition of the blind spot in no way negates the homophobic violence queer Jamaicans experience every day. Nor does it position the dancehall as a safe space for MSM. It does, however, work against the assumption—which is put forth by dancehall participants *as well as* the international queer community—that dancehall (as Blackness) and queerness *cannot* co-exist. As I will discuss in the chapter that follows, it also calls attention to the ways resistance can be imagined outside of a queer visibility framework. The blind spot works because MSM make it work. In explicating the blind spot I set the stage for a discussion of queerness in the dancehall and the ways it defies commonsense understandings of queer Jamaica and queerness in general. It also unsettles the identity politics that have come to define North

American queerness by locating queerness within the (heterosexual) home of the dancehall community. Gayatri Gopinath opines that “home” is not simply or necessarily the place from which the queer subject is evicted or exiled. Rather “home” is a space that is ruptured and imaginatively transformed by queer diasporic subjects even as they remain within its confines (70). In choosing to remain “home” in the dancehall space and culture queer subjects expand the limits of what is im/possible within the space. While the blind spot is liberatory, it is not without its complications. As I will argue, the work of the blind spot constitutes a type of queer marronage—but marronage as it is understood in the historical context of traversed lines of liberation and (complicity with) oppression and the legalities and illegalities that shape Afro-Caribbean sexual practices. Similarly, some of the survival performances undertaken by dancehall MSM make them complicit in producing the space as homophobic. In the section that follows I consider the queer Black geographies of the dancehall as experienced by Jah Truth, Cedric and Frederick, three MSM existing in the dancehall space.



## Chapter 5

### Brave “Battymen” and the (Im)possibilities of a Straight Dancehall

#### Story Twelve: The Dancehall is Queer(ed)

How does the blind spot work? More broadly: how do queerness and the dancehall (not so) secretly meet and shape each other? How do gay men in the dancehall exist across the various dancehall geographies and the colonial legislations that produce and police, all at once, masculinity, space, and Afro-Caribbean sexualities? And how might we re-imagine queer possibility if we deliberately *centre* the queer/MSM dancehall participant as the holder, creator, and conveyer of knowledge and thus as human? The following section puts forth an intellectual ethnography of the dancehall as lived by three MSM: Cedrick, age 23, gay, participant in the dancehall for 15 years; Jah Truth, age 30-ish, gay, gatekeeper and in the dancehall for 8 years; and Frederick, age 18, bi-sexual, participant and the dancehall for 3 years.<sup>55</sup> Frederick and Cedric as dancehall participants, consume dancehall culture and reproduce it outside of the events, but do not have the power to set the dancehall agenda (*vis-à-vis* introducing new dance moves, fashion, slang, and other trends). Jah Truth’s level of recognition, because of his job and high profile lifestyle, places him in the role of gatekeeper which means he has the power to set the dancehall agenda, especially with regards to fashion. All three men are from low-income backgrounds, although Jah Truth now socializes and works in middle-class and upper-class circles and is financially very well-off.

---

<sup>55</sup> All names have been changed.

## Queerness Defining Dancehall Defining Queerness

Question: How do you define the dancehall space?

The space is almost like a profiling fashion show of the best of the best, it's like a little pageant. (Jah Truth)

Well the dancehall is straight. There is no point in time when I can see the dancehall as not straight. Even in the songs. I haven't seen the artiste to date who has sung about acceptance about homosexuality in the dancehall. I've seen where they [sic] have been acceptance of oral sex. Once upon a time oral sex was a no-no in the dancehall. Both artistes, female and male used to sing against it; bun (burn) it out. Now the males are supporting it. The female... not so much supporting it but it's like a tug-o-war. (Frederick)

When it comes to dancehall, it's all about being straight, a little of hype-ness, and behind that hype a lot of violence as well, showing who is badda, who can defend themselves, who really can stand up and put up a fight against anyone... At the same time, it involves a lot of enjoyment—high level of sexual enjoyment.<sup>56</sup> So basically the songs that are singing in the dancehall, if not sexually oriented, it involves violence but it can also be peaceful and productive. (Cedric)

The definitions of the dancehall show some variety. In one instance it is a site of 'profiling' (displaying an enviable version of one self) and in another instance it is a site for the working out of sexual resistances and taboos such as homosexuality, cunnilingus, fellatio. In a third instance it is a site for competition (which is a part of profiling), as well as enjoyment and violence. Sexual queerness, as non-conforming 'non reproductive behavior,' is made to disappear (through symbolic violence) as queer behaviors, performed as excessive masculine sartorial display, are called forth. Read differently,

---

<sup>56</sup> Cedric also uses the dancehall as a site of escape from the many violent experiences of his life—including witnessing several murders. For him the dancehall is a liberatory space where he goes to forget himself. That he seeks liberation in a space reputed for rigid policing and restriction of MSM indicates that much is left unsaid in how the dancehall space is presently engaged in academia and Human Rights discourse.

perhaps the one sexual performance or iteration must be silenced in order to compensate for the concessions made to other sexual possibilities. Thus dancehall, as a contested site of queerness, welcomes and symbolically refuses the MSM simultaneously.<sup>57</sup> The interviewees also suggest that the dancehall is also, despite its violent and competitive features, a site for relaxation and enjoyment. In its reproduction of sexual disciplining as well as performative acts of display (profiling) the dancehall is produced as both colonial and anti-colonial. It is a meeting ground for the interpretive legalities created by colonial and neocolonial laws as well as freedom-focused Afro-Caribbean activities developed during plantation slavery.

What is stranger than the assertion that the dancehall allows some queerness to emerge is the multiple ways dancehall is cited as *needing* queerness, in particular queer men:

Dem (they) [gay men] help too wid di dressing, because mi see some yute wehy really know how fi put themselves together. Dem [gay men] love di(the) tight pants, cause I never see a gay inna big clothes, so when dem come now, dem ever look good and dem fashion out ... Di [straight] man dem see how di [gay] man dem dress and dem run goh buy it and yu know sey inna di dancehall [it's about] who look good from who noh look good, and who appealing from who does not. (Frederick)

Yes. Without gay men, half of them [artists] can't write...they spend so much time writing about gays and bantering gays; if gays never exist, they wouldn't have anything to talk or sing about and half of them would not

---

<sup>57</sup> What I find interesting about this discussion is the way the dancehall continues the previously mentioned work/politics of the Street: signifying what is not acceptable, building reputation (through profiling), and initiating participants into the realm of Black sexuality. Dancehall venues are often street corners and entire streets. In fact the 'street dance' is one very popular type of dancehall event which is regularly on a particular street co-opted for that purpose. I suggest that the persistence of the street continues to shape the dancehall in that the (hyper) masculinity of the dancehall is shaped by the masculinity required to survive in the openness of the community street.

have careers ....[Plus] you have all these dressmakers, hairdressers and stylists and all that stuff who were inspired by a lot of gay things and gay people and even myself working in [the industry]....It's not like you're gonna say let me give them [the public] a bit of gay and they don't know, it's more like ok, do [sic] society love a bit of gay sometimes? So let's *perform* for them and give them what they want – so it's really about what's in at the time and these [feminine looking dance] moves are in and we can get a forward [popularity] from it, so let's do them and get a forward. (Jah Truth)

Queerness, rather than being marginal, is central to several aspects of the dancehall scene. Queerness as sexual practice and sartorial excess shapes the dancehall space, giving it the newness and 'nowness'—for which it is renowned. Queerness, or the denial of it, also offers stability to dancehall artists, giving them constant 'creative' fodder (a point I will consider later). The twin elements of economics and service to heterosexuality cannot be denied in these narratives. Specifically, queer men are accepted in the dancehall when they provide fashion worthy of imitation, service in the beauty and creative industries, and mock-able figures for 'heterosexual' dancers.<sup>58</sup> Thus, though queerness is permitted, it is allowed within strictly demarcated lines and is valued, it seems, as a characteristic of straight men.

These processes bring to mind the South African notion of “economic bisexuality” as documented by Xavier Livermon: effectively male and female Black South Africans were pardoned for homosexual behavior if it was not premised on love but rather for economic gain. The “economic bisexual” retained heterosexual privilege

---

<sup>58</sup> Admittedly this refers to a specific brand of queerness. A queerness that is not stereotypically masculine. There are probably many other visibly gender-conforming queer men existing in the dancehall and contributing in still unexplored ways.

and a normative gender role because the queer act was not queerness but rather queer sex by an otherwise straight person (306). The queer performances undertaken by assumed heterosexual dancehall participants allow them to transgress into the (economically fertile) realm of queerness without losing status because their heterosexual reputations remain intact. Economic bisexuality inadvertently or deliberately folds queer men's labour into compulsory heterosexuality as an adornment to attract (hetero)sexual mates or a performance through which straight actors can make more money. I argue, however, that the service queerness provides to heterosexuality does not diminish the subversive work it does by appearing in the first place. Such a reading, separated along gay/straight lines, threatens to reify unnatural binaries and cover over resistance work by queer dancehall participants through foregrounding (again) straight members. The presence of queer hairdressers, stylists and fashionistas in the dancehall space disrupts the received meaning of the space and radically expands the 'who' of dancehall.<sup>59</sup> The salience of queer men to dancehall aesthetics unsettles discourses that claim gay Jamaicans do not exist, as time and time again supposedly straight dancers produce the queer man on their own bodies.

---

<sup>59</sup> The tense relationship between dancehall and queerness is blurred along class lines. Jah Truth, for example, as a powerful member of the dancehall industry is 'allowed' to tie his queerness to his queer male body *and* receive validation differently. His role in the fashion industry) coupled with his power (through numerous television appearances) allow him some flexibility to admit that his queer expression is a result of his (sexual) queerness. It is to be noted, however, that his queerness does function to promote several dancehall artists, which may allow him these 'freedoms.' But even so he admits he "butches it up" for sessions in the ghetto and is more relaxed "uptown."

### Story Thirteen: “Yu Haffi Be A Clown Fi A Reason”—Power and the Right to Queered Expression

The freedom to initiate queer expression is another issue discussed in some depth by all interview participants. The consensus is that status and power are necessary to legitimize the *introduction* of queer performance by straight men, especially with regards to fashion. Status is less important for the *replication* of the performance since all men in the dancehall space are accorded a de facto heterosexuality and any queerness is read as an attempt to ‘stay in style’ rather than a declaration of queer identity.

Question: “If a man who has no money and no status came in an [Avant-garde] outfit like the one that you came in, what would be his experience?”

Jah Truth: people would waa [want to] know who him be and if it too tight [they would assume] him a battyman... the only reason it could work for him is he's gonna come as a dancer. So him can't come as himself, he has to comes as *somebody* or as a *foreigner* or something; there has to be some underlying to it<sup>60</sup> ... You haffi sey him a foreigner, or oh yeah, he's into fashion, or yeah, he's a dancer; it has to be something... You haffi be a clown for a reason.

Jah Truth, Cedric and Frederick all point to status, international travel, and a desire to ‘not be left behind’ as legitimizing dancehall’s most recent queer turn. The metrosexual aesthetic, they opine, was introduced by Jamaicans who had traveled overseas, visiting foreigners and, in particular, dancehall artists. The pre-approval provided by the artists and other dancehall power players allowed the contradictory look to spread quickly

---

<sup>60</sup> The denotation of the queerly-presenting person as a ‘somebody’ implies their status. The denotation as a foreigner is less simple. Foreigner in itself implies a kind of status, especially white foreigners. Their actual class and geographic privilege is negligible, they are imbued with power based on their white skin. Thus their performances are taken very seriously as indications of what is happening “out there” away from dancehall and as fodder for dancehall diversification. The foreigner is also excused from the rigid gendered and sexual boundaries of the dancehall based on the assumption that he or she may not know them or, in some cases, may not know better.

through the space.<sup>61</sup> But as Jah Truth suggests this particular ‘queer turn’ is but one of many:

Well, with fashion, I've seen the history because my mother used to love go dance; I grew up with a ghetto mumma (laughter) who love go dance ...and the fashion has always been changed. Because I know [in] my father's old picture they have on tight pants. And [then] dem [dancehall artists] sing say man pants fi have room ... Dancehall really surround fashion so much and anything is possible around dancehall because of the culture itself. Jamaica is not necessarily wanting to stick to what's wearing, they want changes. The average ghetto girl want to change her hairstyle, guys we don't have much hairstyle fi change and so forth, so as we get an opportunity to wear colour pants and get some changes, we jump on change. But fashion in dancehall has been ever-changing from I know myself and I know dancehall itself. It is going to take different shapes and different forms so I expected it [the new metrosexual wave]. (Jah Truth)

Thus, as I have previously suggested, the dancehall, as a black space, has always been inherently queer. The men within it have always functioned in excess of traditional European masculinity and moreover, feel limited by it, readily grasping opportunities to express differently. But the meaning of queerness has changed significantly between Jah Truth's generation and that of his father. Jamaica, functioning as a part of the West, is affected by contemporary queer and related LGBTQ politics that positions queerness as a lifestyle and identity, rather than a practice. For example the men in this sample *do* locate

---

<sup>61</sup>On the role of the dancers: they have a part to play in it. They want to be distinctive, they want to sell themselves, *their image as a celebrity*, so basically, they have to change their image and look different so not only the tight clothing... dem start tone dem face and skin... a lot of young girls see it and sey it look nice, cute and all a dat, young girls run dung di dancers them, run dung di bwoy dem wid it so. (Cedric) The dancers are imbued with an always already existing heterosexuality: their activities and the activities of boys who imitate them are for the attention of women and girls. The assumed heterosexuality of dancehall's core participants, coupled with their power, allows them to express queerly without fear of repercussion

themselves within the LGBTQ discourse by self-identifying as gay and bisexual. Despite situating themselves within LGBTQ discourse, though, their relationship with it is fraught. Frederick explicitly categorizes queerness as foreign:

[Before] dem [Jamaicans] neva use to talk ‘bout it dem neva use to have the homosexual thing. In the 90s when [Jamaican] people used to go foreign regular... yu neva need visa to goh England, yu just need an invitation - soh people go up dere and adapt to the style and bring it back and people start gravitate towards it and start to like it as like the porn videos. Is not everybody whey go up dere [to the North] dweet [turns gay]; the internet have an influence pon the world too caw people go pon the internet for different reasons, soh young people... when dem goh pon di computer, whey [what] yu think dem looking at?  
(Frederick)

The implied relationships are telling. If queerness is perceived as coming *into* Jamaica along transnational lines, what are the received ideas about queerness that young men such as Frederick encounter? If we can agree that the brand of queerness most visible and most visibly reproduced by the media in the Global North locates such identities around “coming out,” high fashion, body conscious identity, what is required of the Black MSM in order to be ‘properly’ queer? And how would the need to perform that queerness have been contested by the baggy clothes and hyper masculine aesthetic of dancehall that preceded more recent queered trends? Moreover queerness continues to be fed, for some dancehall MSM, by external images. Cedric, though recognizing queerness as *not* foreign to Jamaica, cites North American TV shows such as *Degrassi* and *Glee* as informing his own understanding of queerness. *Glee* and *Degrassi* have the potential to open up and/or complicate queer identities, but they are still invested in queer as lifestyle/identity/preppy/pretty tropes. These Northern tropes, combined with direct and

indirect associations between queerness as foreignness/whiteness, continue to guide queer Jamaican men as they work through their own individual queer expression today.<sup>62</sup>

Recognizing the multiple and conflicting locations from which MSM speak also renders dancehall MSM intelligible and de-centers Western imperialist understandings of both (queer) resistance and colonial respectability. I suggest that the internalization of some aspects of Northern queerness qua identity has complicated the relationship between dancehall and queerness: it gives straight dancehall participants a list of characteristics that were ‘identifiably’ queer (display of the body through tight clothes, close attention to grooming) while giving same-gender-desiring Jamaicans an identical check list of legitimizing queer characteristics. Thus, while dancehall participants became aware of the often damaging power of queerness in the early 2000s—queer boycotts of dancehall artists and events and international discourse that positioned Jamaica as a ‘backward’ non-queer friendly nation—the local queer community also became familiar with the ‘look,’ and implicit demands of ‘legitimate’ queerness. The end result, I suggest, was the creation of a class of MSM men who could no longer easily access the dancehall space, not because of the homophobia, but because they *looked* (Northern) queer and dancehall participants were already privy to, and could detect and mark and name this (Northern) look as queer. A group of men were now exploring a specific kind of gendered expression and identity, which coincided with the rise of homo-antagonism

---

<sup>62</sup> It is important to recognize that the ways in which dancehall queers inhabit LGBTQ identity is markedly different from white middle class Northern subjects. They do not feel compelled to come out and do not think their deployment of certain heterosexual performances delegitimizes their bisexual and gay identities: “I would say [a person is] gay, because interest lies with the same sex, it doesn’t matter if it’s mentally gay or physically gay and it can be financially gay” (Jah Truth). In this way Jamaican MSM expand commonsense understandings of LGBTQ positionalities while locating those identities within black communities.

engendered by Northern anti-Jamaican interventions and accusations of Jamaican homophobia; dancehall MSM were thus doubly barred from the space for their newly seeable identities and their assumed queer practices.

Contrary to Northern belief, the dancehall space is not automatically repulsive to same-gender-desiring people. Jamaican MSM who are raised in the ghettos, who also participate in and inform dancehall cultures, remain a part of the dancehall community and desire access to the space; the dancehall is, in many ways, their ‘home.’ How then could they navigate the new tensions between their personal expression of self and dancehall’s new landscape? I suggest the response is queer maroonage which unfolds as a doubled effort to queer the dancehall space and the strategic deployment of heterosexual signifiers in an attempt at misdirection. These queer practices are supported by ‘cultural labour’ that will, perhaps, foster acceptance within the broader communities. The first action, creating a queer space within a homo-antagonistic realm, emerges from rumors and stories. Living in the hybrid dancehall/queer space for years, I have been privy to the rumors of which artists are same-gender-desiring people and which are artists are not. While I will not name the artists—even academic use of rumors must be sensitive—I strongly assert that the artists most often cited by interviewees and non-interviewees as responsible for importing the queer aesthetic are the artists most often rumored (within the queer community) to be MSM. In the process of importation they continue the work of bringing Northern queerness into Jamaica but also a longer history of queered dancehall expression. These two factors push up against each other to create the specificities of the queer dancehall—the familiarity of sartorial queerness and the ‘foreignness’ of sexual queerness—which give rise to queer marronage.

## **Rumours Dem Spreadin': In Defense of the Knowledge of the Oppressed**

There is no measurable or apparent discursive 'truth' about queerness in the dancehall. Dancehall artists complicate queer culture, refusing to delineate its parameters and patterns. The homophobic nature of the space, at the present moment, does not allow for a visible queerness. To look too deeply would destroy the careers of some of these undercover queer importers—an outcome that neither the straight *nor queer* persons in the dancehall are willing to facilitate. There are and have always been, however, rumors of same-gender-desire and activities collapsing in on and momentarily characterizing specific dancehall artists. With this in mind, if we imagine the 'folk' as holders of knowledge, then we can imagine an entire world of knowledge that is closed off from those invested in respectability and appropriateness. The employment of rumor in an academic setting is an unlikely undertaking, but Toni Morrison supports my thinking:

If my work is to confront a reality unlike that received reality of the West, it must centralize and animate information discredited by the West – discredited not because it is not true or useful or even of some racial value, but because it is information held by discredited people, information dismissed as “lore” or “gossip” or “magic” or “sentiment” (388).

This reading of dancehall maroonage begins, unapologetically, in rumors. It is rumored that the (secretly) MSM dancehall artists are responsible for introducing the metrosexual aesthetic to the dancehall space. It is rumored that one of dancehall's most prolific dancers, also responsible for propagating sartorial queerness, is secretly MSM as well. It is rumored that many of the male dancers, who are responsible for making

particular ‘queer’ looks universal to dancehall are secretly MSM themselves. What *could* this mean? It could mean that powerful (MSM) dancehall men, knowing the freedom the blind spots and marroonage practices allowed, queered the dancehall space. It could mean that (assumed heterosexual) dancehall artists, equally subject to Northern queer discourse, also started experimenting with queerly gendered expression, but were not chastised because of their privilege. It could also mean that the de facto heterosexuality assigned to dancehall artists, coupled with their continuing homophobic performances, actually encouraged queerness in the space. It could mean that in the dancehall, queerness flourishes in plain sight, recoded as something else so as not to upset the dominant heterosexual narrative that invokes colonialism, nation, and sexual respectability. At the very least, this means that a queerly influenced aesthetic, growing in mainstream popularity overseas, made its way into the dancehall on the bodies of dancehall men.

**Story Fourteen: Undercover Chi-Chi—Dancehall Queerness as Modern Day  
Maroonage**

The behaviour of gay men/MSM in the dancehall constitutes a contemporary marronage: a deliberate hiding away ‘in plain sight’ made possible through the superior knowledge of dancehall geographies. Specifically the maroons (runaway slave warriors) of Jamaica “developed a superb system of espionage” (Campbell 7), which the Spanish attributed to their being “thoroughly acquainted with the region and so expert in the bush” (Wright qtd in Campbell 8). I suggest that MSM in the dancehall carry out maroon-like practices and resistances through their superior knowledge of dancehall geographies. MSM are intimately acquainted with the workings of homophobia through

their exposure to homophobic performance as male socialization. The absence of a distinctive ‘ghetto queer culture’—of the kind that might allow a person to be raised primarily in non-homophobic settings—means both straight and MSM boys in the ghetto are raised within a context of (neo)colonial compulsory heterosexuality: they are privy to the (dangerous) signifiers of queerness as well as the (productive and appropriate) signifiers of heterosexuality. But, as Walcott states “while black queers and black heterosexuals share a common historical past, how that past is understood and utilized in relationship to contemporary injustices can be quite different” (“Homopoetics,” 235). Thus the call to compulsory heterosexuality is engaged as resistance activity rather than a demand for conformity, and plantation era marronage practices are recast in the present day, by Black MSM, in order to access liberation strategies.

The poverty-driven geographic restrictions of ghetto life, as well as the centrality of the communal street as a male-social space, leaves dancehall and ghetto MSM with very few places to hide.<sup>63</sup> They are necessarily in common space, because in the ghetto almost all space is shared. As a result dancehall MSM are close enough to the homophobic ‘performers’ to parse projection from actual objection; thus knowing *where* they do and do not have spatial freedoms corresponds with where queerness can and cannot exist. In order to exist across the (questionable) divides between Jamaican (black) inner-city and queer, Jamaican MSM, who are active participants in the dancehall, must

---

<sup>63</sup> Barry Chevannes researches “The Role of the Street in the Socialization of Caribbean Males,” especially those from working class communities, and found “the perceived need, particularly in the poorer communities, to use the Street as a training ground in male survival skills. Moreover, it is a necessary part of male sexual initiation” (231). The street is central to most men—straight and MSM—in working class communities and as such both sets have the same intimate understanding of appropriate Jamaican masculine expression. It is also the site for the transfer of compulsory heterosexuality as norm which is exacerbated, in poorer communities, by a demand for hypermasculinity which is informed by (feminizing) poverty. The street is a site for the local interpretation and application of (persistently) colonial law.

practice invisibility, being present but absent at the same time. In these spaces their activities are bold, brave and even contradictory, stemming from their locations at multiple sites of radical subjectivity: blackness, queerness, Global Southness and poverty which are differentially articulated within the context of an assumed heterosexual masculinist geography. Within these geographies they activate their superior knowledge for queer marronage, living in the blind spot.

### **Yu Haffi Out an' Bad: Living in the Blind spot**

The genesis of queerness in the dancehall may be 'unclear' or fueled by rumors, but all three participants agree upon the changes it brought for MSMs in the space. Below they respond to the following question: "Have the changes to the look of the dancehall made it any easier for you to navigate the dancehall or to be in the dancehall space"?

Yeah, it make a difference, caw me know say now me can go inna mi tight pants and mi go inna mi tight clothes and nobody naw look-look pon mi because everybody a dweet (do it)... It mek it much more convenient fi me soh mi can just nicely fit in. (Frederick)

I would say definitely yes because a lot of the stuff that they're wearing right now, they can get away with it. Once upon a time you couldn't get away with it; you'd be called battyman, gay, boom bye-bye. I'm not saying that they are not saying it, but it's a different level now because everybody is accomplished, everybody waan top dem game... [back]in those days, you could come out in a t-shirt, a little pull-up t-shirt with some stripe and you're high fashion but nowadays, high fashion dash whey; everybody a high fashion now soh yu haffi come out like a clown. (Jah Truth)

Yeah, because you can easily fit in now, you don't have to tell yourself that you don't [or that] your clothes look too tight because it's already in. I'm a fashionable person, I like

to express myself in various dimensions of fashion, I'll dye a part of my hair in brown and another part in purple or a little tip of red, not just for dance but for everyday look. People don't even look, and if I'd done it ten years ago, people would be saying "you dye you hair?!"(Cedric

The changes to the space have made it more accessible to MSM who express queerly and participants all agree that there has been an increase in the number of MSM men in the space since the changes. They feel less at risk because everybody looks queer. Imagine, for a moment, that these changes were not commandeered by MSM but rather initiated by them; the liberatory power of those actions would be awe-inspiring. A class of men who actually *changed* a space and its geographic meanings by moving themselves from hypervisibility and invisibility (because they were always called up in the space but never allowed in it), to invisibility and, with this, blending in with the other men in the space by encouraging those men to queerly express themselves. Even if the initiation of queer expression cannot be attributed to queer men, it is certain that they have inhabited it for their own resistance activity. By claiming more space in the dancehall they propagate and modify the existing queerness, expanding the "acceptable" masculine gendered expressions in the space within the blind spot of assumed heterosexuality. In so doing they have made the space accessible to even more queer men and alternative sexual practices.

### **Story Fifteen: Man a Gangsta—Symbolic Violence as Dancehall Masculinity**

Thus there have been some gains for queer men in the dancehall space. But despite being queered the dancehall is still not, visibly, queer-friendly. Queer men are

therefore still required to deploy certain heterosexual markers. The performance of homophobia, though seemingly the most straightforward way to assert compulsory heterosexuality and straight masculinity, is actually not preferred. All three participants acknowledge that they do not partake in the ‘bunning out’ of gay men through song or symbolic gun-fire; they also remark that several straight participants ignore it as well. Rather than denouncing homosexuality explicitly, they perform heterosexuality through asserting masculinity, violence, and ‘cool pose’:

When I get to dance ... I just stand, listen and look; I might have a cup in my hand drinking... Where I might be dramatic and as my friends would say, over-the-top, I don't behave that way in the dance. When I go to dance; I love the mix-up so I will watch because I know who and who don't really chat so I like the excitement and when it's time to dance, I dance. One thing I can assure you, I never hear one of those homophobic songs play and buss a blank, I just act still and I'm not the only person acting still, some straight also act still. (Cedric)

The terms “thug” and “gangster,” as synonymous with heterosexuality, also appeared repeatedly in interviews:

I know this guy in the ninth grade and the way him move and how him talk, mi can definitely know say him a one a da person deh [queer]. But how him move and how him behave, dem [other students] always a trouble him and waa [want to] beat him. But how me move now, most of my friends at school now can never know that because how me move, mi *just move like a gangster*. (Frederick)

Even with all the dance moves and the tight clothes, you can't be posing like a girl you have to *thugs it out*. (Jah Truth)

Moving like a gangster and ‘thugsing’ it out are psychological and physical undertakings premised on the restriction. For Jah Truth it means only dancing in certain ways, avoiding ‘feminine’ gestures, and adopting a ‘masculine’ demeanor. Interestingly, the male dancers at the centre of the space, who do have power by virtue of their role in the dancehall, actively adopt the gestures and postures he avoids—yet when they stop dancing they too return to the ‘rude boy’ pose.<sup>64</sup> Frederick also replicates these kinds of gestures but only when he is wining and gyrating with a female partner. However, Jah Truth, despite his gatekeeper status, is not a male dancer and (unlike Frederick), no longer lives in the ghetto. He is also functionally ‘out’ in some dancehall circles. As a result, despite his power, his relationship to the space is modified and there are new prohibitions placed on his body and he can no longer access certain forms of expression. Being gangster means adopting a ‘not to be messed with’ profile that implies violence. The message is: there’s nothing funny. Funny here implies the jovial (funny as in amusing) as well as the sexual (funny as in sexually queer). In Jamaica, gay men are referred to as “funny guys” and are identifiable by their (womanish) gaiety brought about by their ignorance of (black) reality: the rightness of heterosexuality, and the dangers of the Northern ‘easy life’ (which Black men attempt to access through queerness) which makes men soft (and queer). Living in the ghetto often produces and requires a masculinity that is necessarily serious, concerned with survival, prepared to do whatever is necessary to ensure safety. Given these conditions there is little space for public joviality, as softness is taken as weakness. In order to fit in the gay man must perfect

---

<sup>64</sup> For more on the history of coolness and cool pose in Black communities see bell hooks *We Real Cool* and Richard Majors *Cool Pose: The Dilemma of Black Manhood in America*

projecting this brand of serious (read: potentially violent) masculinity.<sup>65</sup> For Jah Truth it means limiting his dancing body to only a certain set of identifiably ‘masculine’ moves.

The geography of these performances is significant. Both Frederick and Cedric report that they are most comfortable on the borders of dancehall’s inner circle. Both choose that space because it is the site of highest activity and “drama.” Frederick avoids the outer boundaries of the dancehall space because that is where the thugs, gangsters, and gunmen hang out. They intimate, then, that for a person attempting to *perform* thug, but who is *not* a thug, the centre of the dancehall is most productive. I suggest that the location is already a site of performance: because of the ways the seal is used in spiritual ceremonies and the dancehall itself, it is always already an acknowledged site of projection, fantasy, and alter/native universes where a person displays who they *might* be rather than whom they are in their daily lives. The history and geographies of the seal, as a centralized and stage like location of theatrics and re-possession, make it more attractive for queer men/MSM. Specifically it is the ideal site for deployment of heterosexual signifiers because, from that location, their performances of heterosexual masculinity, which signify who they ‘might be,’ is amplified within the dance and thenceforth into the community and beyond: the unquestionable ‘straightness’ of the performer is cemented into the mind of all viewers. While the absolute centre of the seal may be too active and require a type of performance certain MSM are unwilling to undertake, the edges of the seal are just as visible and just as productive.

---

<sup>65</sup> For Frederick pseudo-violent profiling is coupled with ensuring the safety of his reputation by having a girlfriend at school. In his community he uses his academic pursuits to explain not having a girlfriend, and since he is a good student, he is excused. The substitution of productivity for re-productivity in accessing value is a theme that persists throughout the interviews. Frederick notes that the boys in the “fast stream” of his school are pardoned for not having girlfriends because they are “nerds”.

By undertaking these performances, dancehall MSM effectively secure a position within the heterosexual dancehall while refusing compulsory heterosexuality. By moving (undetected) from the metaphorical fringes of the dancehall into its place of highest visibility they trouble the division between margin and centre:

Pratibha Parmar argues that creating identities as black woman is not done “in relation to”, “in opposition to”, or “as a corrective to”...but in and for ourselves. Such a narrative thwarts that binary hierarchy of centre and margin: the margin refuses its place as “Other.” (Pile 187)

Dancehall MSM’s refusal to be defined in opposition to their community or to be held up by their community as the outer limit of black sexuality spurs them to action. Retrieving themselves from the binds of compulsory Otherness, they elide heterosexuality yet claim space that is normally preserved for privileged heterosexuals. They create space for queerness by using the power engendered by the blind spot, which acts in opposition to queer visibility and, instead, deploys queered optics.

### **There are (Still) No (Visible) Queers Here: The Underside of Marronage**

The process of acquiring geographic privileges, as is usually the case with subaltern communities, has been at some cost. While the dancehall space has begun to look more queer, the ritualized performance of homophobia has retained its salience and the actions of dancehall queers to retain heterosexual privilege may not explicitly disturb the overarching moral expectations that emerge from colonial scripts of sexual respectability. It is telling, however, that the purpose and productivity of homophobic

performance has changed over time. Jah Truth refers to the dancehall as “pretentiously homophobic,” saying that homophobia is now a tradition in the dancehall space. He recognizes homophobic music as not always being a representation of how artists feel but rather as texts that are “saying and doing things that everybody can agree on.”<sup>66</sup> Cedric, in response to my question “Is dancehall music a true reflection of how Jamaicans feel?” explains:

No. sometimes not. I think it's for the hype and for the music to sell or it's just a character. The world is a stage and we are all performing. Sometimes actors take on roles that they don't like... in terms of the dancehall, you want your music to sell ...the society accepts homophobic music; you just do as the Romans do. The artistes want to know that if fifty dances are held, you get booked for thirty or forty. If you go sing something that the people don't want to hear, nobody naw book you. You wouldn't even get radio play.

It is therefore possible that the actions of dancehall MSM have changed the levels of real homophobia in the space. But despite its presence as performance (versus action ), homophobia still persists. Participants report feeling safer on inside of the dancehall than on the outside of it; yet the lack of safety *outside* the dancehall is influenced by the music projected from within the dancehall.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> All three participants agree that if an artist's career is failing or if a young artist is trying to gain popularity, homophobic music has the most cultural currency; it sells. Despite the presence and salience of homophobic music partying/girls tunes are the most popular today. Usually several homophobic songs are played in a segment, gayness is symbolically burned out of the space and the party resumes. Thus the image of dancehall's rabid homophobia projected internationally needs to be tempered and brought up to date.

<sup>67</sup> The feeling of safety inside the dancehall is attributed to two things: 1) the assumption that all men in the space are truthfully conveying their sexualities, which diminishes policing (Jah Truth) and 2) a shared economic imperative to keep the party going (Cedric). Starting a fight, of any kind, will disrupt the party which means the promoter, the selector, and vendors will lose money. Based on a shared understanding of

The queer labour to claim (hetero)sexual space in the dancehall is thus muddled. Marronage, as a slave era undertaking, was equally complicated. Over time maroon communities signed Treaties with the British government agreeing to return runaway slaves in return for their own freedom. In the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 it was the maroons who tipped the scales in favour of the British through their activities against other Blacks. Their superior knowledge of the land was exploited by the British to defeat Paul Bogle and his Black rebels (Hutton, “The Defeat of the Morant Bay Rebellion” 30). Though maroon communities emerged as an important location of liberation for the enslaved, the maroons’ actions to secure their own freedoms made them complicit with the oppressors. Thus while they did free hundreds of Black slaves, they acted against them as well. While very different, the complex parallels between the actions of the maroons and dancehall queers are worth noticing: though MSM in the dancehall do not ‘bun fire,’ their selective projection and decisions leave the impression that there are no gay men in a space which is unquestionably heterosexual yet always being invisibly queered.

Despite the complications of dancehall queerness there is still the possibility for change. The work of shifting the dancehall does not only happen in the dancehall space itself, it also happens in the communities that inform dancehall music/psycho/land/scapes. By eschewing ‘out-and-proud’ politics MSM in the queer diaspora opt for a space at ‘home’ in their communities. By remaining in the space unannounced, they access a kind of community that is often denied to Black queer

---

the need for money, as well as the possibility of a backlash from the participants—directed towards the fighters—altercations are limited in the dancehall space. Cedric also implied that fighting was minimized because of the purpose of the space—for relaxation and enjoyment—which no one wanted to disrupt with unnecessary violence. With that being said there are still incidents of gang and other violence in the dancehall space and homophobic violence remains a possibility.

persons within the black community. They are also able to change the meaning of “home.” The issue is messy: MSM are able to remain in the dancehall space because they deliberately deploy heterosexual signifiers. But two participants imply that though they would never come out in the dancehall space, persons in their communities know they are not straight and remain committed friends. Question: Do you feel that people are under more pressure to act like they are homophobic in the dancehall or outside in the community?

Well it’s kind of balance because [in the community] they deem you as being gay by basically your lifestyle: dem no [they don’t] see you wid no woman or a look [pursue] no woman; because you might look good and still naw look [pursue] no woman. And yet still you have a lot of straight friends who will still talk to you in the open. You live in a community and they know you, and *know that you are a nice person*, they like to talk to you so they don’t pay that any mind. (Cedric)

For persons employing a Human Rights framework, which demands confession, visibility, and (near absolute) knowability, the value of this community-based acceptance may be lost. But Xavier Livermon suggests that for many Black queer people “cultural belonging” may be just as, if not more important and productive, than human rights (299). Indeed because blackness and same-sex-desire cum queerness have been historically and contemporarily created as mutually unintelligible, the “cultural labour” required of black queer persons must be directed at relocating queerness inside blackness, as a legitimate part of (diasporic) African cultures, especially in the imaginaries of their peers. Thus, “[w]hile the state can create rights through legislation, it is only within the

spaces of black communities that real protection lies” (304). The work of securing the acceptance and protection of peers is therefore integral to the liberation of black queers. Additionally, since these same communities create dancehall music, peer-group acceptance of queerness by community members will necessarily have a positive impact on dancehall’s dealings with sexual difference.

The relationships between dancehall and queerness are complex. Dancehall MSMs inhabit the dancehall space for various liberatory activities, some of which may be read as complicit in perpetuating dancehall’s homophobic performances. I maintain that the resistance work must be read as just that: resistance. In order to honour these difficult liberatory possibilities, we must decenter received notions of “proper” or “effective” resistance and re-center the experiences of those who inhabit and embody multiple sites of oppression—as well as those that do not necessarily conform to identity politics. Also important is the cultural labour undertaken by dancehall MSM to secure space as same-gender-desiring subjects in their own communities. Their work bleeds over into the dancehall and is just as responsible for changes to the sound of dancehall as international intervention or other local-global political initiatives. Dancehall MSM claim space for themselves as themselves: as same-gender-desiring people who, in part because of the geo-historical framings of black sexualities, do not engage in an explicit ‘coming out’ or identity claim rituals—and with this, they change the meaning of dancehall space for all those within it.



## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

#### Towards a Caribbean Queerness

By situating Jamaican same-gender-desire and homophobia in colonial, post-Independence and neo-colonial contexts this thesis intervenes into contemporary queer rights debates. I have called attention to how queer communities outside the Caribbean and in the (white) Global North perceive Jamaican MSM as fundamentally ‘different’ and always already victimized, just as they assume straight Jamaicans are brutish, always already homophobic, and pre-modern. These insights have been read against different moments in the history of sexuality in the Caribbean, which are intrinsically tied to legal traditions that seek to manage Black sexual excess and also narrate Black respectability and Black compulsory heterosexuality to the outside world. These colonial and legal traditions are circulated and are reframed by individual acts of policing and local interpretations of the Law. It is these individual acts and surveillance practices, informed by a longstanding commitment to state sanctioned heterosexuality, that queer/non-conforming persons must navigate. But, as I hope I have also shown, Black subjects have *never* had full access to compulsory heterosexuality, because their Blackness made them inherently queer. Thus, despite the rabid policing of Black sexuality by the British Common Law Constitution and resultant Caribbean Common Law Constitutions as well as Caribbean citizens, Black subjects have failed and refused to try to fit neatly within Laws that were built up to highlight their difference. More recently, but extending this history of colonial sexualities, queer Caribbean citizens fall short of and are excluded from ‘Rainbow Modernity’ because of how LGBTQ politics are being conceived.

Specifically, “normative queer history posits gay liberation as infancy and rights talk as adulthood and maturity. In such a trajectory ... people from the global south are... still at the sexual liberation stage (if even there)—at the childhood stage (Walcott, “Queer Returns” 10). Thus even as queerness is presented as the radical new “thinking (wo)man’s” sexuality by some feminist literatures, people of colour and people from the Global South remain, again, two steps behind in the bid for queer respectability (read: queer whiteness), since they continue to do queer differently (read: incorrectly, outside of identity politics). Efforts to modernize same-sex-desiring persons in the Global South mark the march to ‘Rainbow Modernity’ that travels very similar colonial lines that trampled Africans/diasporic Africans/Afro-Caribbean persons not so long ago.

When local and institutional legalities meet up in the Jamaican dancehall they produce a space that is heavily policed and surveilled but simultaneously unruly, playful, and queer. This is a space that is grasped by dancehall subjects for resistance through liberation and enjoyment and is a practice long observed in the African diaspora. Ethnographic observation of two dancehall events reveal the replications of geographic principles that guided plantation era African spirit possession ceremonies, as well as theatre in the round, through which dancehall subjects create a locus of hypervisibility. From this site, in the video light at the centre of the dance, they project ideal versions of themselves premised on strong family and love relationships, sexual purity and skill, and economic and social success. These performances are directed to local audiences inside the dancehall as well as external audiences who view video footage of party goers. These performances work against technologies of Black erasure that attempt to render Black subjects invisible or as inhuman objects to be observed. Through a combination of the

hypervisibility of the space as well as the music, which ritualizes symbolic homosexual expulsion, dancehall geographies create a geo-psychic blind spot wherein all who enter are assumed heterosexual.

This heterosexual assumption is useful for MSM who, by occupying the literal and metaphorical centre of the dancehall, have influenced the aesthetic of the space moving from hyper-visibility (because of their gendered difference) to invisibility (always invoked but never seen), to invisibility (indecipherably different). They blend in with all the other queered men just as they queer the inhabitants of the dancehall. Some may argue that the actions of queer men in the dancehall space are not liberatory since, in a superficial reading, they leave dancehall's homophobia unchallenged. I suggest that their activities should instead be viewed as "how the realm of freedom is conceptualized by those who have never been free" (Gilroy qtd in McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds* 39). That is to say the specific raced and gendered oppression of dancehall MSM, as exemplified by Anglo-Caribbean homo hatred, pushed dancehall MSM into new geographies of freedom; contested and conflicting geographies but liberatory spatializations nonetheless. However in the thrust towards the liberatory it is important to note that such geographic resistances are necessitated by the unequal positions of power occupied by Jamaican MSM, which also uncovers how violence is a real part of their everyday lives.

The MSM's desire to remain home, in the dancehall, has established itself as mutually unintelligible with queerness and this may be another factor guiding dancehall MSM resistance. Organizations and queer Jamaicans on the ground recognize that given the legacy of colonialism change will be slow and is best effected on the individual level

through cultural labour in communities which should then be supported by the government (Frederic and Jah truth) and (if possible) the dancehall fraternity (Cedric). Continuing to demonize Jamaicans and front load US influence (as economic intervention) in queer interventions within and regarding Jamaica will only strengthen the developing tie between nationalism and homophobia and complicate the experiences of queer people on the ground. Queer interventions must privilege Jamaican experiences and organizations and locate themselves as allies rather than as guides or saviours. And queer interventions, especially the local kind, must continue to occur.

This research also reveals that dancehall is but one site of struggle for Black subjects vis-à-vis sexuality and coloniality. And like all these other sites, dancehall has changed. The virulent homophobia for which dancehall is/was known has passed and in its wake there is a hyper-heterosexuality, located around the same desire to control the feminine that spurred dancehall's homophobia. Still, homophobic acts are present in the Jamaican society but are paradoxically less likely to happen in the dancehall space where the homophobic music is most concentrated. Thus some MSM feel safer in the session than out of it. Outside of the session the compulsion to police one's own sexuality as well as that of people in the vicinity is more urgent because, without dancehall's ritual cleansing, not everybody can be assumed straight. Thus if dancehall does have an impact on homophobic performance it is more likely to be seen outside of the dancehall space than within it. However, since the queered aesthetic of the dancehall has moved out along the same lines as its homophobia, some MSM report less tension when walking the streets.

An interesting area of research I was unable to take up here is the classed dimensions of queer experience vis-à-vis dancehall. That is to say, despite dancehall's primary producers being from the ghettos, the music and the culture are 'boundaryless' (Niaah 151) transgressing class and geography. How does the masculinity purported by dancehall affect gay and straight middle and upper class men's policing of their own sexuality and how does dancehall contour homophobia as experienced by the middle and upper classes? An additional question is how is dancehall taken up by Jamaican MSM in MSM spaces and how can their deliberate occupation of homophobic music be read as something other than their failure to think reflexively. How might a resistance that deliberately seeks out and queers homophobia expand present resistance undertakings and also widen the lens with which we view agency?

This project revisits the Jamaican dancehall 20 years after its initial entanglement with local and international queer rights movements. By unsettling commonsense notions about Jamaica's inherent homophobia and the automatic victimization of Jamaican MSM, this thesis re-engages queer debates by deliberately centering the queer Jamaican man *inside* the dancehall as holder and creator of knowledge. The paper does not ask, as others before it have, why they do not 'come out' or take their decisions to not come out as always already a sign of oppression. Rather, the discussion discloses and engages the different ways of being queer that are located within an African-diasporic/Afro-Caribbean tradition of queerness as praxis rather than identity. This paper considers the radical potential of queer invisibility that allows the queer to stay at home and change the meaning and possibility of the space. At the same time, it nods to the ways in which selective visibilities do important strategic liberatory work by unsettling commonly held

misconceptions about queer people as pathological and criminal. By viewing selectively coming out or not coming out as political activity, this project contributes a new narrative of queerness and brings a new set of voices to the debate. By conceptualizing dancehall's geo-psychic blind spot this paper unearths the ways homophobia conspires with, rather than works against queerness, and reveals how queer liberations may be sought outside of a Human Rights framework even as homophobia persists. Thus this thesis offers other and Other ways of queerly *being* that *may* more comfortably fit Afro-Caribbean subjects while interrupting the homohegemony of white-western-middle class queerness. In so doing this research creates space for the articulation of queerness and dancehall and legitimates the possibility of dancehall within queerness and dancehall as articulated as queer diaspora geography.

## Bibliography

- "Advocacy Group Mounts Court Challenge Against Buggery Law." *GleanerPower 106 News*. The Gleaner, 11 Feb. 2013. Web. 9 Dec. 2013.
- Alexander, Bryant Keith. *Performing Black Masculinity: Race, Culture, and Queer Identity*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2006. Print.
- Alexander, M. Jacqui. "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy." *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Durham [N.C.: Duke UP, 2005.] 21-65. Print.
- Alexander, M. Jacqui. "Imperial Desire/Sexual Utopias: White Gay Capital and Transnational Tourism." *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Durham [N.C.: Duke UP, 2005.] 66-88. Web. 15 Sep. 2013
- Alexander, M. Jacqui. "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas." *Feminist Review* Autumn.48 (1994): 5-23. Web. 6 Jan. 2012
- Allen, Jafari S. "Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18.2-3 (2012): 211-48. Web. 5 Aug. 2013
- Amina Mama. "Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence Against Women in Africa." *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Ed. M. Jacqui. Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. New York: Routledge, 1997. 46-42. Print.
- Bakare-Yusuf, Bibi. "Fabricating Identities: Survival and the Imagination in Jamaican Dancehall Culture." *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 10.4 (2006): 461-83. Print.

- Bakker, Isabella. *The Strategic Silence: Gender and Economic Policy*. London, UK: Zed in Association with the North-South Institute/l'Institut Nord-Sud, 1994. Print.
- Barriteau, Violet Eudine. "Theorizing Ruptures in Gender Systems and the Project of Modernity in the Twentieth-Century Caribbean." *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean*. By Linden Lewis. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 2003. 25-52. Print.
- Beckford, Sharlene T., Lucia F. O'Sullivan, and Susie Hoffman. "Gender Scripts Guiding the Sexual Relationships of Caribbean Americans." *Sex, Power & Taboo: Gender and HIV in the Caribbean and beyond*. Ed. Dorothy E. Roberts, Rhoda Reddock, Dianne Douglas, and Sandra Reid. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2009. 110-25. Print.
- Beckles, Hilary. "Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery." *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. By Rhoda Reddock. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies, 2004. 224-43. Print.
- Beckles, Hilary McD. "Freeing Slavery: Gender Paradigms in the Social History of the Caribbean." *Slavery, Freedom and Gender the Dynamics of Caribbean Society*. Ed. Brian L. Moore, BW Higman, Carl Campbell, and Patrick Bryan. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies, 2003. N. pag. Print.
- Beckles, Hilary McD. "'War Dances': Slave Leisure and Anti-slavery in the British-colonised Caribbean." *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora*. Ed. Verene Shepherd. New York: Palgrave, 2002. 223-46. Print.
- Bennett, Jane. "A Gender Analysis of National Poverty Reduction Strategies." *Agenda* 23.81 (2009): 48-63. Web.6. Jan 2012
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.

- Blomley, Nicholas. "Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93.1 (2003): 121-41. Print.
- Bloodsworth-Lugo, Mary K. *In-between Bodies: Sexual Difference, Race, and Sexuality*. Albany: State University of New York, 2007. Print.
- Blunt, Alison, and Jane Wills. *Dissident Geographies: An Introduction to Radical Ideas and Practice*. Harlow, England: Prentice Hall, 2000. Print.
- Boyce Davies, Carole, and Monica Jardine. "Imperial Geographies and Caribbean Nationalism: At the Border between "A Dying Colonialism" and U.S. Hegemony." *The New Centennial Review* 3.3 (2003): 151-74. Web.
- Boykin, Keith. *Beyond the down Low: Sex, Lies, and Denial in Black America*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2005. Print.
- Brand, Dionne. "Elizete, Beckoned." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. 70-77. Print.
- Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1971. Print.
- Brennan, Denise. *What's Love Got to Do with It?: Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. Print.
- Brickell, Chris. "Performativity or Performance?: Clarifications in the Sociology of Gender." *New Zealand Sociology* 2.18 (2003): 158-78. Web. 7 Jul. 2012
- Brown, Aldith. "Economic Policy and the IMF in Jamaica." *Social and Economic Studies* 30.4 (1981): 1-51. Web. 6 Aug. 2012
- Brown, Jarrett. "Masculinity and Dancehall." *Caribbean Quarterly* 45.1 (1999): 1-16. Web.
- "Cameron Threat to Dock Some UK Aid to Anti-gay Nations." *BBC News*. BBC, 30 Oct. 2011. Web. 7 Dec. 2013.

- Campbell, Mavis Christine. *The Maroons of Jamaica: 1655-1796*. Trenton NJ: Africa World, 1990. Print.
- Charles, Christopher A.D. "Representations of Homosexuality in Jamaica." *Social and Economic Studies* 60.1 (2011): 3-29. Web. 6 Jan. 2013
- Chevannes, Barry. *Learning to Be a Man: Culture, Socialization, and Gender Identity in Five Caribbean Communities*. Barbados: University of the West Indies, 2001. Print.
- Chevannes, Barry. "The Role of the Street in the Socialization of Caribbean Males." *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean*. By Linden Lewis. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 2003. 215-33. Print.
- Chevannes, Barry. "What We Sow and What We Reap: Problems in the Cultivation of Male Identity in Jamaica." Lecture. The Grace, Kennedy Foundation Lecture. Jamaica, Kingston. Kingston: Grace, Kennedy Foundation, 1999. Print.
- Chin, Timothy S. "'Buller' and 'Battymen': Contesting Homophobia in Black Popular Culture and Contemporary Caribbean Literature." Ed. Thomas Glave. *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. 78-96. Print.
- Cohen, C. J. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3.4 (1997): 437-65. Print.
- Collins, Damian, and Robin Kearns. "Under Curfew and Under Siege? Legal Geographies of Young People." *Geoforum* 32.3 (2001): 389-403. Web. 6 Sep. 2013
- Connell, Raewyn. "Neoliberal Globalization, Masculinity and Gender Justice." *The World Financial Review RSS*. The World Financial Review, n.d. Web. Nov.-Dec. 2012.
- Cooper, Carolyn. *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender, and the "vulgar" Body of Jamaican Popular Culture*. Durham: Duke UP, 1995. Print.
- Cooper, Carolyn. *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Print.

- Cowell, Noel M. "Public Discourse, Popular Culture and Attitudes Towards Homosexuals in Jamaica." *Social and Economic Studies* 50 (2011): 31-60. Web. 14 Aug. 2013
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "From Private Violence to Mass Incarceration: Thinking Intersectionally About Women, Race, and Social Control." *UCLA Law Review* 59 (2012): 1418-472. Web. 8 Nov. 2013.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* Jul., 1991 43.6 (1991): 1241-299. Print.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Race, Gender, and Sexual Harassment." *Southern California Law Review* 65 (91): 1467-476. Web. 8 Nov. 2013.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking Back to Move Forward." *Connecticut Law Review* 43 (2010): 1253-352. Web. 12 Sep. 2013
- Cresswell, Tim. *In Place/out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996. Print.
- Crichlow, Wesley E. A. "History, (Re)Memory, Testimony, and Biomythography: Charting a Buller Man's Trinidadian Past." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. 101-31. Print.
- Crooms, Lisa. "'All Man Come Together and Say Boys Mus' Dead': Hyper-heterosexuality, Afro-Jamaican Culture, and the 1997 Condom Riots." *Sex, Power & Taboo: Gender and HIV in the Caribbean and beyond*. Ed. Dorothy E. Roberts, Rhoda Reddock, Dianne Douglas, and Sandra Reid. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2009. N. pag. Print.
- Cruz-Malave, Arnaldo, and Martin F. Manalansan. "Introduction: Dissident Sexualities/Alternative Globalisms." *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. Ed. Arnaldo Cruz and Martin F. Manalansan. New York: New York UP, 2002. N. pag. Print.

- Davidson, Joyce, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith. "Geography's 'Emotional Turn'"  
Introduction. *Emotional Geographies*. Ed. Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. N. pag. Print.
- Davidson, Joyce, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith. "Introduction: Geographies 'Emotional Turn'" *Emotional Geographies*. Ed. Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. N. pag. Print.
- De Bruin, Marjan. "Jamaican Adolescent's Sexual Behaviour Analysed from a Gender Perspective." *Sex, Power & Taboo: Gender and HIV in the Caribbean and beyond*. Ed. Dorothy E. Roberts, Rhoda Reddock, Dianne Douglas, and Sandra Reid. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2009. 191-215. Print.
- Delaney, David. "The Space That Race Makes." *The Professional Geographer* 54.1 (2002): 6-14. Print.
- Dennis, Suzanna, and Elaine Zuckerman. *Gender Guide to World Bank and IMF Policy-Based Lending*. Publication. Washington: Gender Action, 2006. Print.
- DuBois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Gramercy, 1994. Print.
- Ellis, Nadia. "Out and Bad: Toward a Queer Performance Hermeneutic in Jamaican Dancehall." *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 35th ser. 15.2 (2011): 7-23. *Project MUSE*. Web. 11 Mar. 2011.
- Eng, David L. "Queering the Black Atlantic, Queering the Brown Atlantic." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17.1 (2011): 193-204. Web. 5 Aug. 2013
- Foster, Thomas A. "The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20.3 (2011): 445-64. Web. 5 Aug. 2013
- Foucault, Michel, and Robert Hurley. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. [S.l.]: Allen Lane, 1978. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon, 1977. Print.

- Frazier, Edward Franklin. *Black Bourgeoisie*. New York: Collier, 1962. Print.
- "Gay in Zimbabwe: "Chop off Their Heads"" *Radio Netherlands Worldwide Africa*. Radio Netherlands Worldwide, 2 Sept. 2013. Web. 13 Dec. 2013.
- Germann Molz, Jennie. "Guilty Pleasures of the Golden Arches: Mapping McDonald's in Narratives of Round-the-world Travel." *Emotional Geographies*. Ed. Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. N. pag. Print.
- Girvan, Norman, and Archie Singham. "50 Years of In-Dependence in Jamaica: Reflections." Proc. of SALISES 50-50 Conference 'Critical Reflections in a Time of Uncertainty, Kingston. 1-20. Web. 23 Sept. 2012.
- Glave, Thomas. "Whose Caribbean? An Allegory, in Part." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. 177-90. Print.
- Gopinath, Gayatri. *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke UP, 2005. Print.
- Grewal, Inderpal. "Women's Rights as Human Rights: Feminist Practices, Global Feminism, and Human Rights Regimes in Transnationality." *Citizenship Studies* 3.3 (1999): 337-54. Web. 14 Jan. 2012
- Griffith, Glynne. "Struggling With a Structure: Gender, Agency, and Discourse." *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean*. By Linden Lewis. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 2003. 275-93. Print.
- Gutzmore, Cecil. "Casting the First Stone!" *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 6.1 (2004): 118-34. Print.
- Henry, Davina. "J-FLAG Stands behind Dancehall - Gay-rights Group Bats for Reformed Dancehall Artistes." *Jamaica Gleaner Entertainment RSS*. Gleaner Power 106 News, 16 Dec. 2012. Web. 07 Dec. 2013.
- Hooks, Bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston, MA: South End, 1992. Print.

- Hope, Donna P. *Man Vibes: Masculinities in the Jamaican Dancehall*. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2010. Print.
- Hope, Donna P. "Of "Chi-Chi" Men- The Threat of Male Homosexuality to Afro-Jamaican Masculine Identity." 26th Annual Caribbean Studies Association Conference. Maho Bay, St. Maarten. 27 Mar. 2001. Lecture.
- Hope, Donna P. "Passa Passa: Interrogating Cultural Hybridities in Jamaican Dancehall." *Small Axe* 21st ser. 10.3 (2006): 125-39. Web. 10 Oct 2011
- Hubbard, Phil. "The Geographies of 'Going Out': Emotion and Embodiment in the Evening Economy." *Emotional Geographies*. Ed. Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. N. pag. Print.
- Hutton, Clinton. "The Creative Ethos of the African Diaspora: Performance Aesthetics and the Fight for Freedom and Identity." *Caribbean Quarterly* 53.1/2 (2007): 127-49. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Nov. 2011.
- Hutton, Clinton. "The Defeat of the Morant Bay Rebellion." *The Jamaican Historical Review* XIX (1996): 30-38. Print.
- Hutton, Clinton. "Forging Identity and Community Through Aestheticism and Entertainment: The Sound System and the Rise of the DJ." *Caribbean Quarterly* 53.4 (2007): 16-31. Web. 5 Aug. 2012
- Jackson Miller, Dionne. "Highlights - Day 4- Maurice Tomlinson v TVJ, CVM,& PBCJ." Web log post. *News and Views by Dionne Jackson Miller*. N.p., 31 May 2013. Web. 27 Sept. 2013.
- Johnson, E. Patrick. ""Quare" Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned From My Grandmother." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 21.1 (2001): 1-25. Web. 5 Aug 2012.
- Keith, Michael, and Steve Pile. *Place and the Politics of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.

- Kempadoo, Kamala, Jyoti Sanghera, and Bandana Pattanaik. *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2005. Print.
- Kempadoo, Kamala. *Sexing the Caribbean*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- King, Katie. "'There Are No Lesbians Here': Lesbianisms, Feminisms, and Global Gay Formations." *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. Ed. Arnaldo Cruz and Martin F. Manalansan. New York: New York UP, 2002. 33-44. Print.
- King, Rosamond S. "More Notes on the Invisibility of Caribbean Lesbians." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. 191-96. Print.
- Kuokkanen, Rauna. "Globalization as Racialized, Sexualized Violence." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 10.2 (2008): 216-33. Print.
- LaFont, Suzanne. "Gender Wars in Jamaica." *Identities* 7.2 (2000): 233-60. Print.
- LaFont, Suzanne. "Very Straight Sex: The Development of Sexual Mores in Jamaica." *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 2.3 (2001): n. pag. Print.
- Lewis, Linden. "Caribbean Masculinity at the Fin De Siecle." *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities*. By Rhoda Elizabeth. . Reddock. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies, 2004. 244-266. Print.
- Lewis, Linden. "Caribbean Masculinity: Unpacking the Narrative." *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean*. By Linden Lewis. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 2003. 94-125. Print.
- Lewis, Maureen Warner. *Central Africa in the Caribbean: Transcending Time, Transforming Cultures*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies, 2003. Print.

- Livermon, Xavier. "Queer(y)ing Freedom: Black Queer Visibilities in Postapartheid South Africa." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18.2-3 (2012): 297-323. Web. 5 Aug 2013.
- Lorde, Audre. "Of Generators and Survival: Hugo Letter (1990)." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. 223-51. Print.
- Lumsden, Joy. "'A Brave and Loyal People': The Role of the Maroons in the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865." Ed. Verene Shepherd. *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. 467-89. Print.
- Majors, Richard, and Janet Mancini. Billson. *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*. New York: Lexington, 1992. Print.
- McKittrick, Katherine, and Clyde Adrian Woods. "No One Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean." *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. Ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods. Toronto, Ont.: Between the Lines, 2007. N. pag. Print.
- McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2006. Print.
- McKittrick, Katherine. "Freedom Is a Secret." *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. Ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods. Toronto, Ont.: Between the Lines, 2007. N. pag. Print.
- McQuaid, Ian. "Reclaiming Dancehall from the Homophobes." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 15 Nov. 2013. Web. 19 Dec. 2013.
- Mgadmi, Mahassen. "Black Women's Identity: Stereotypes, Respectability and Passionlessness (1890-1930)." *Revue LISA / LISA E-journal* Vol. VII – N°1 (2009): 40-55. Print.

- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Morrison, Toni. "Memory, Creation, and Writing." *Thought* 59.235 (1984): 385-90. Web. 01 Nov. 2013
- Msibi, Thabo. "Not Crossing the Line: Masculinities and Homophobic Violence in South Africa." *Agenda* 23.80 (2009): 50-54. Web. 7 Jul 2012
- Mullings, Beverley. "Neoliberalization, Social Reproduction and the Limits to Labour in Jamaica." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 30.2 (2009): 174-88. Web.
- Murray, David. *Flaming Souls: Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Social Change in Barbados*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2012. Print.
- Nash, Catherine. "Performativity in Practice: Some Recent Work in Cultural Geography." *Progress in Human Geography* 24.4 (2000): 653-64. Web. 7 Jul 2012
- Nurse, Keith. *The Caribbean Music Industry*. Rep. Cavehill: Caribbean Development Agency, 2001. Print.
- Nurse, Keith. "Masculinities in Transition: Gender and the Global Problematique." *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. Ed. Rhoda Reddock. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies, 2004. 3-37. Print.
- "OutRage! Plan Protest at Buju Banton Performance." / *Britain / Britain/World / Home*. N.p., 18 Sept. 2004. Web. 04 Oct. 2012.  
<<http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/index.php/news/content/view/full/1656>>.
- "Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Global Justice, Democracy, LGBT Freedom, Environmentalism." *Peter Tatchell: BUJU BANTON 'S SIGNED STATEMENT*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Oct. 2012.  
<[http://www.petertatchell.net/pop\\_music/reggaecompassionateact-bujubanton.htm](http://www.petertatchell.net/pop_music/reggaecompassionateact-bujubanton.htm)>.

- "Peter Tatchell: Human Rights, Global Justice, Democracy, LGBT Freedom, Environmentalism." *Peter Tatchell: Biju Banton Says Boom Bye Bye To Homophobia*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Oct. 2012.  
<[http://www.petertatchell.net/pop\\_music/bujubantonbyebyehomophobia.htm](http://www.petertatchell.net/pop_music/bujubantonbyebyehomophobia.htm)>.
- Powell, John A. "The Impact of Societal Systems on Black Male Violence." *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 16.3 (2008): 311-29. Web. 5 Aug 2012
- Powell, Patricia. "Dale and Ian." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. 296-303. Print.
- Puar, Jasbir. "Israel's Gay Propaganda War." *Theguardian.com*. Guardian News and Media, 01 July 2010. Web. 16 Dec. 2013.
- Puar, Jasbir K. "Global Circuits: Transnational Sexualities and Trinidad." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26.4 (2001): 1039. Print.
- Puar, Jasbir K. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer times*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. Print.
- Puar, Jasbir. "To Be Gay and Racist Is No Anomaly." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 02 June 2010. Web. 04 Oct. 2012.  
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jun/02/gay-lesbian-islamophobia>>.
- Ramchand, Kenneth. "Calling All Dragons: The Crumbling of Caribbean Masculinity." *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. By Rhoda Reddock. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies, 2004. N. pag. Print.
- Robinson, T. "Gender, Nation and the Common Law Constitution." *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 28.4 (2008): 735-62. Print.
- Roen, Katrina. "Transgender Theory and Embodiment: The Risk of Racial Marginalization." *Journal of Gender Studies* 10.3 (2001): 253-63. Web. 6 Jan. 2012

- Safa, Helen Icken. *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner: Women and Industrialization in the Caribbean*. Boulder: Westview, 1995. Print.
- Sandoval, Chela. "Dissident Globalizations, Emancipatory Methods, Social-Erotics." *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. Ed. Arnaldo Cruz and Martin F. Manalansan. New York: New York UP, 2002. 20-32. Print.
- Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2000. Print.
- Santiago, Silviano. "The Wily Homosexual (First - and Necessarily Hasty - Notes)." *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. Ed. Arnaldo Cruz and Martin F. Manalansan. New York: New York UP, 2002. 13-19. Print.
- Seaga, Edward, and Osmond Watson. *Revival Cults in Jamaica: Notes towards a Sociology of Religion*. Kingston, Jamaica: Institute of Jamaica, 1982. Print.
- Serrant-Green, Laura. "Living with the Stereotype: The Impact of Popular Images on Black Caribbean Men's Sexual Health." *Sex, Power & Taboo: Gender and HIV in the Caribbean and beyond*. Ed. Dorothy E. Roberts, Rhoda Reddock, Dianne Douglas, and Sandra Reid. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2009. 139-62. Print.
- Sharpe, Jenny, and Samantha Pinto. "The Sweetest Taboo: Studies of Caribbean Sexualities; a Review Essay." *Signs* Autumn 32.1 (2006): 247-74. Web. 12 Sep. 2013
- Sibley, David. *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- Silvera, Makeda. "Man Royals and Sodomites: Some Thoughts on the Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean Lesbians." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. 344-54. Print.
- "Slaveholders' Sexual Abuse of Slaves: Selection from 19th - 20th Century Slave Narratives." *National Humanities Center*. National Humanities Center, n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2013.

- Smith, Andrea. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Cambridge, MA: South End, 2005. Print.
- Smith, Andrea. *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. Print.
- Somerville, Siobhan B. *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000. Print.
- Stanley-Niaah, Sonjah. "Mapping Black Atlantic Performance Geographies From Slave Ship to Ghetto." *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. Ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods. Toronto, Ont.: Between the Lines, 2007. N. pag. Print.
- Stanley-Niaah, Sonjah Nadine. *Dancehall: From Slave Ship to Ghetto*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2010. Print.
- Stubbs, Edward, and Lord Moyne. *West India Royal Commission Report*. Rep. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1945. Print.
- Swarr, Amanda Lock., and Richa Nagar. *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*. Albany, NY: SUNY, 2010. Print.
- Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14.2-3 (2008): 191-215. Web. 5 Aug 2013.
- Toussaint, Eric. "The Third World Debt Crisis of the 1980s and the 1990s." *Your Money or Your Life: Tyranny of Global Finance*. Chicago: Haymarket, 2005. 137-47. Print.
- Toussaint, Eric. "World Bank and IMF Structural Adjustment Programs." *Your Money or Your Life: The Tyranny of Global Finance*. Chicago: Haymarket, 2005. 222-26. Print.
- Urry, John. "The Place of Emotions within Place." *Emotional Geographies*. Ed. Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith. England: Ashgate, 2005. N. pag. Print.
- Urry, John. "The Tourist Gaze Revisited." *American Behavioral Scientist* 36.2 (1992): 172-86. Web. 6 Aug 2013.

- "US Bars Sizzla." *Jamaica Observer News*. Jamaica Observer, 19 Nov. 2013. Web. 9 Dec. 2013.
- Vasciannie, Stephen. "Life and Debt in Jamaica." *Caribbean Today*. Caribbean Today, 1 Feb. 2002. Web. Nov.-Dec. 2012.
- Verstraete, Ginette, and Tim Cresswell. *Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility: The Politics of Representation in a Globalized World*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002. Print.
- Walcott, Rinaldo. "Fragments of Toronto's Black Queer Community: From a Life Still Being Lived." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. 360-67. Print.
- Walcott, Rinaldo. "Homopoetics: Queer Space and the Black Queer Diaspora." *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. Ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods. Toronto, Ont.: Between the Lines, 2007. N. pag. Print.
- Walcott, Rinaldo. "Queer Returns: Human Rights, the Anglo-Caribbean and Diaspora Politics." *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* 3 (2009): 1-19. Web. 12 Jul. 2012
- Walcott, Rinaldo. "Reconstructing Manhood; Or, The Drag of Black Masculinity." *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 13.1 (2009): 75-89. Web. 12 Jul. 2012
- Watson, Hilbourne. "The Globalization of the Discourse on Gender and Its Impact on the Caribbean." *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean*. By Linden Lewis. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, 2003. 53-93. Print.
- Weiss, Margot Danielle. *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality*. Durham: Duke UP, 2011. Print.
- Wekker, Gloria. *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora*. New York: Columbia UP, 2006. Print.
- Williams, Lawson. "On Homophobia and Gay Rights Activism in Jamaica." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. N. pag. Print.

Witter, Michael. *Trade Liberalization: The Jamaican Experience*. Rep. Kingston: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2005. Print.

Woods, Clyde. "Sittin' on Top of the World: The Challenges of Blues and Hip Hop Geography." *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. Ed. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods. Toronto, Ont.: Between the Lines, 2007. N. pag. Print.

Wynter, Sylvia. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3.3 (2003): 257-337. Print.

## Appendix A



June 17, 2013

Ms. Carla Moore  
Master's Student  
Department of Gender Studies  
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room D504  
Queen's University  
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GGEN-008-13; Romeo # 6008128

Title: "GGEN-008-13 Working Title: **Only Who Can Undastan' It Cross It: Mapping the Queer Black Geographies of the Jamaican Dancehall and Un-visibility as Modern Day Marronage.**"

Dear Ms. Moore:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GGEN-008-13 Working Title: **Only Who Can Undastan' It Cross It: Mapping the Queer Black Geographies of the Jamaican Dancehall and Un-visibility as Modern Day Marronage.**" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at [https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo\\_researcher/](https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/) and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at [https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo\\_researcher/](https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/) and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or [irvingg@queensu.ca](mailto:irvingg@queensu.ca) for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

John Freeman, Ph.D.  
Professor and Acting Chair  
General Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. Katherine McKittrick, Faculty Supervisor  
Dr. Jane Tolmie, Chair, Unit REB