



## Charting a Convivial Continuum in British Post-war Popular Music 1948–2018

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On June 22, 1948, the Empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury Docks on the River Thames carrying one of the first large groups of post-war Caribbean migrants. Under the 1948 Nationality Act, commonwealth citizens were recognised as British citizens, an agreement revoked in subsequent iterations of this Act. Many of the commonwealth citizens that migrated from the West Indies to Great Britain during this early post-war period never claimed the British passports that were rightfully theirs and remain undocumented. Under the UK government's 2010 policy of a 'hostile environment'<sup>1</sup> for illegal immigrants, this group of now elderly undocumented migrants of the 'Windrush generation' has been denied public services and threatened with deportation. In 2018, the unfair treatment of these British citizens created a scandal that engulfed the government, forcing the then Home Secretary Amber Rudd to resign. This manifestation of institutional racism in the year of the seventieth anniversary of the arrival of the Windrush appears to be in direct opposition to the convivial formations Paul

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Gilroy detected in the early 2000s, what he described as the emergence of ‘Britain’s spontaneous, convivial culture’ (Gilroy 2004: xi).

## CONVIVIALITY

In this chapter, conviviality is understood as the social formations and cultural practices that emerge through an experience of living with difference, what Magdalena Nowicka and Steven Vertovec describe as ‘the ways, and under what conditions, people constructively create modes of togetherness’ (2014: 342). For Gilroy, conviviality as a concept is specifically useful when exploring British racial identity politics because it addresses formations where

racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not – as the logic of ethnic absolutism suggests they must – add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication. (2006: 27)

For Magdalena Nowicka and Tilmann Heil, the possibility of convivial formations departs from the question ‘How is minimal sociality possible?’ (2015: 12); this understanding of a minimal sociality is useful here because it indicates formations that suggest ‘consensus, consideration and respect’ but can equally accommodate ‘tension, conflict and frustration’ (Nowicka and Heil 2015: 13). The duality of conviviality and hostility evident in experiences of post-war Caribbean migration and how they find expression within popular music is a recurring theme in this chapter.

Popular music is an important site at which to trace convivial formation and its relationship with migration within the UK because it offers a productive site at which vibrant intermixture, combination and cross-fertilisation have taken place. Within Caribbean influenced post-war British popular music, it is possible to trace a clear convivial continuum<sup>2</sup> in which the combination and radical intermixture of musical forms from Africa, the Caribbean, Britain and the United States is a defining characteristic and thread of continuity. As such, the music of the convivial continuum exists firmly within what Paul Gilroy terms the Black Atlantic (1993). Although the music of the convivial continuum is defined by the heterogeneous elements from which it borrows, it is at the same time the product of the traditions and histories of the localities in which it is produced and experienced making it possible to identify a tradition of British popular music

that is creole but that remains distinctively British in character (Gilroy 2003; Gilbert 2014; Reynolds 2013; Hancox 2018).

### CONVIVIAL CONTINUUM PLAYLIST

A convivial continuum of British creole popular music can be traced through calypso, reggae, post-punk, jungle, two-step garage, dubstep and grime. In an attempt to capture key points along this convivial continuum, I structure this chapter around a playlist of selected tracks. The earliest recording included here is Lord Kitchener's calypso *London Is the Place for Me* (1948), the most contemporary is Novelist's grime track *Stop Killing the Mandem* (2018), and these tracks bookend a selection of music spanning 70 years, beginning with the arrival of the Windrush and ending in 2018 with the Windrush scandal and the consequences of the British government's hostile environment for illegal immigrants. I hope that readers of this chapter will also be listeners and use the selection of music referenced throughout the text as a soundtrack complimentary to their reading.

#### *Playlist Track 1: 'Has It Come to This' The Streets (2002)*

Popular music is one important site where Paul Gilroy observes emerging convivial formation in the UK during the 2000s, and it is in *Has It Come to This* (2002) that Gilroy hears articulation of a convivial British identity in which 'racial difference is not feared. Exposure to it is not ethnic jeopardy, but rather an unremarkable principle of metropolitan life' (2004: 105).

The influence of Jamaican reggae, British two-tone ska, European electronic dance music, British jungle and American hip hop are all evident in the music of The Streets, making them an excellent example of British artists that borrow from and exist along the convivial continuum that I map in this chapter.<sup>3</sup> In combining distinct and disparate elements into harmonic coordination, the music of The Streets and other music along the convivial continuum is able to provide a 'grass roots' or 'bottom-up' articulation of social formations that disrupt essentialised racial categories. I argue here that these processes of combination and intermixture are best understood in terms of creolisation and that it is in the composition and performance of creolised music, and in the listening practices that surround it, that potential is afforded for the enacting of convivial formation. Creolised music is considered here as both signifying-practice (Hebdige 1999 [1979]) and for its potential to enact corporeal affect (Gilbert 2009).

## CREOLISATION

Caribbean influenced British popular music that demonstrates radical intermixture and combination is often described as hybrid (Gilroy 2004; Gilbert 2009; Hancox 2018), but in this chapter, I choose instead to define these processes in terms of creolisation. I use creolisation as a compliment to conviviality, in-part because theories of creolisation are better suited to capturing the hostility that remains intertwined with conviviality. Here, I take Stuart Hall's definition of creolisation as a point of departure:

Creolization in this context refers to the processes of 'cultural and linguistic mixing' which arise from the entanglement of different cultures in the same indigenous space or location, primarily in the context of slavery, colonization and the plantation societies characteristic of the Caribbean and parts of Spanish America and Southeast Asia. (Hall 2015: 15)

Hall suggests that as a concept, creolisation can be expanded from its 'meanings and conditions of existence in the French Antilles to other parts of the Anglophone Caribbean' and that it can also be relevant in application to black British cultural forms (ibid.: 25). In this broader definition, creolisation within cultural production thus becomes

a potential new basis from which popular creativity which is distinctive, original to the area itself, and better adapted to capture the realities of life in the postcolony, can be and is being, produced. (Hall 2015: 19)

Creolisation as a concept is also useful here because it avoids the biological connotations that the term hybridity carries and the implication of evolutionary processes in which there is linear progress advancing towards a desired, stable and normative social formation. Creolisation also aligns closely with conviviality with Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez detecting in creolisation an analogue to the fluidity, and breakdown of dichotomies and hierarchies captured within conviviality. For Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2015: 97), 'creolization stands at the heart of a political and ethical project of conviviality'.

*Playlist Track 2: 'London Is the Place for Me'*  
*Lord Kitchener (2002 [1948])*

The arrival of the Empire Windrush in 1948 has become a defining moment in the narrative of post-war British Caribbean migration as well as an important event for British popular music (Boakye 2017: 343; Hall 2003: 419; Hancox 2018: 33; Stratton and Zuberi 2014). One of the passengers on the Empire Windrush was Trinidadian calypsonian Aldwyn Roberts, who used the stage name Lord Kitchener. Legend has it that Lord Kitchener composed the first two verses of his song *London Is the Place for Me* during the voyage itself, and there is Pathe News Reel footage of him singing the song as he disembarks at Tilbury Docks. *London Is the Place for Me* gained a new contemporary audience when re-released in 2002 on a critically acclaimed compilation of British calypso.

*London Is the Place for Me* has the distinctive rolling two-beat of a Trinidadian calypso, but on this recording, the percussive elements are low in the mix with the voice and lyrics prominent, the melody is carried by the voice but also brass and woodwind instruments. This track is significant as a document of the beginning of a convivial continuum within post-war British popular music because it marks the emergence of the first distinctively creole musical form popular with a mass audience in the UK (Hall 2003: 423). Calypso carries with it a history of creolisation not only in the speech patterns in which it is sung but also in the influence it carries from Trinidadian carnival. It is here that Christian celebrations and pagan ritual were appropriated, combined and translated within plantation society, becoming what Stuart Hall describes as a 'ritualized popular resistance' (Hall 2003: 423). This ritualised popular resistance finds expression in lyrics that document both positive and negative experiences of migration. In the second verse of *London Is the Place for Me*, Lord Kitchener poignantly asserts his rights to belonging, singing that he is 'glad to know my mother country'. Although the lyrics on *London Is the Place for Me* are upbeat and positive, the lyrics on other Lord Kitchener tracks of this era like *Sweet Jamaica* (1952a) and *If You're Not White You're Black* (1952b) are more cynical capturing experiences of racism and the trials of migrant life. The vivid storytelling tradition within British calypso leads Hall to claim that it is the form of expression that offered the 'most telling insights into the early days of [Caribbean] migrant experience' (2003: 424).

The contradictions of a local British creole vernacular are also audible in the incongruous musical juxtapositions evident on the track *London Is the*

*Place for Me*. Particularly striking is a simple solo piano motif that opens and closes the track. On first listen, it seems out-of-place, disconnected from the rest of the music. On re-listening, it is clear that the sparse piano chords pick out the melody of Big Ben's chimes, an aural symbol of Britishness. The chimes of Big Ben are of course evocative of London, a central character in the song, but the sedate lullaby cadences of this opening and closing motif are at odds with the upbeat dance rhythms of the rest of the song, this contrast making the piano sound slightly sinister, perhaps even melancholy in comparison with the positivity of the rest of the track. This drawing together of disparate elements, the re-imagining of Big Ben a symbol of British Parliamentary democracy and authority as a lullaby, is consistent with processes of mimicry and recombination evident in Trinidadian carnival culture from which calypso emerged. This incongruity is consistent with a creole aesthetic in that it captures processes of what Hall terms translation. For Hall, concepts of translation or transformation are useful in capturing the contradictory nature of creole culture. While Creole culture may be creative and vibrant, it also remains troubled and unfinished. For Hall,

Translation always bears the traces of the original, but in such a way that the original is impossible to restore. Indeed, 'translation' is suspicious of the language of the return to origins and originary roots as a narrative of culture (Hall 2015: 16).

It is this refusal of return that 'troubles' (ibid.) creole culture, opening it up as a site that can accommodate both expressions of conviviality and hostility.

## REGGAE

Although calypso was the first post-Windrush Caribbean music to find mass popularity among British audiences (Hall 2003: 423), the musical genre that remains pivotal, and continually referenced and re-versioned, along the convivial continuum is reggae. In their writing about reggae, both Stuart Hall and Denis-Constant Martin recognise it as a creolised form. Stuart Hall describes how reggae appears as if it were

grounded in an authentic African source and the return to origins, [but it] turns out, when examined more closely, to be another variant in the long and complex creolization repertoire. (Hall 2015: 24)

Similarly, Denis-Constant Martin places reggae as a creolised form, supporting his claim through musicology:

Reggae took shape when drums and rhythms preserved in maroon communities – therefore construed as coming from Africa – were used to fertilise borrowed North American rhythm and blues, and soul music. (Martin 2013: 26).

Jamaican reggae's mixing of African rhythms with American blues, soul and R&B was then mixed again with British influences as reggae records were shipped from Jamaica to Caribbean communities in London, Birmingham and Bristol to be played out by local sound systems<sup>4</sup> where these records could be 're-versioned'<sup>5</sup> in the process of performance for local audiences. Diverse expressions of local British reggae emerged from these processes of re-versioning producing popular styles that permeated deep into mainstream British pop culture.

### *Playlist Track 3: 'Silly Games' Janet Kay (1979)*

One of the most distinctively British variations of reggae that emerged during the 1970s was lovers rock. A defining record within this genre was *Silly Games* (1979), sung by Janet Kay, but written and produced by Dennis Bovell.<sup>6</sup> Bovell describes how lovers rock and *Silly Games* were designed to show Britain was an innovator and agenda-setter within international reggae. *Silly Games* was recorded with both Caribbean and British born musicians and Bovell maintains that this style of music could never have been produced anywhere else but Britain (Bradley 2000: 370).

The track's principle innovation within reggae was its distinctive drum beat, played mainly on the hi-hat near the bell of the cymbal with an occasional off-beat played on the snare drum. Bovell describes this new British 'riddim'<sup>7</sup> as 'sort of remotely African and a bit calypso' (Bradley 2000: 370), placing *Silly Games* firmly as part of a British creole repertoire. *Silly Games* was hugely popular reaching number 2 in the UK singles chart. Bovell describes how during the summer of '79 it dominated the airwaves and public space:

For about a month it's like all you can hear on the radio or in shops or at discos [and] because this was the height of summer so everybody's got their windows open. (Bovell in Bradley 2000: 372)

The mainstream success of reggae tracks like *Silly Games* demonstrates how creolised musical forms seep into the soundscapes of everyday British life creating a shared musical space, affording convivial formation in both the mundane practices of radio listening and shopping and the communal experiences of dancing in clubs.

*Playlist Track 4: 'Newtown' The Slits (1979)*

Reggae is also an important ingredient in other variants of British creolised music. Intermixture and combination between punk and reggae are for example well documented in Dick Hebdige's seminal analysis of punk subculture and its articulation of resistance through music and fashion (1991 [1979]). Hebdige recounts how reggae was one element taken up in the processes of bricolage that were integral to the distinctiveness of punk (1991 [1979]: 27). Gilroy also emphasises the significance of Caribbean culture to this subculture arguing that the history of punk cannot be properly understood without recognising the influence of reggae on its 'white ethnicity' (Gilroy 2003: 387). Processes of intermixture between punk and reggae in the UK can be seen for example in the converging of their audiences into movements of social mobilisation such as Rock Against Racism (RAR) and the huge outdoor concerts and festivals in which punk and reggae musicians performed together in solidarity against the rise of the far right.

The Slits were one of those groups active within RAR and within who's music the influence of reggae can be clearly heard. On The Slits' track *Newtown* (1979), we hear a deep reggae bassline combined with spiky punky guitars and lyrics that deliver a biting critique of the cultural conformity of Britain's 1970s town planning. *Newtown*, like *Silly Games*, is produced by Dennis Bovell, a central figure within both the British reggae and post-punk<sup>8</sup> scenes. In her autobiography, The Slits' guitarist Viv Albertine describes how the band chose Bovell as producer because he understood reggae and its influence on their music (2014: 212). It was Bovell himself that 'played' matches, cigarettes, a glass and spoon to create the dub reggae like percussion that builds *Newtown's* quirky dance rhythms (Albertine 2014: 219–220).



## CREOLISATION AND THE WORK OF CONVIVIALITY

Dick Hebdige understood punk and reggae, and its intermixture, as a site of representation and that it was through this signifying-practice that musicians and audiences, producers and consumers, could work to encode and decode meaning. It is through this process of both production and active consumption that the music of The Slits and Janet Kaye's *Silly Games* might be understood as what musicologist Denis-Constant Martin would call a site of identity construction (2013: 3), where music becomes a repository of collective memory, tangled and untangled through playing and listening and through this process offering identification with subjectivities that move beyond fixed and essentialised racial identities. For Martin, it is creolised music's potential to preserve and then reanimate long and hidden histories that make it an important site within processes of identity construction and even for the construction of narratives of reconciliation (2013: 49). Paul Gilroy follows a similar thread to Martin describing how the production and consumption of Caribbean influenced British music could have progressive potential as a site of 'cultural work that incorporated defensive and affirmative elements: working over and working through the memories of slavery and colonialism, past sufferings and contemporary resistances' (Gilroy 2003: 388).

Although acknowledging creolised music's progressive potential, we should remain attuned to its contradictory tendencies and be wary of simply singling out the 'creative vibrancy' and fluidity of identification within its processes of intermixture and combination. Hall's notion of translation, and the impossibility of complete translation, provides a useful way to acknowledge the disjuncture or hostility that can also be accommodated within creole cultural production. Hall argues that

Translation is an important way of thinking about creolization because it always retains traces of those elements that resist translation, which remain left over, so to speak, in lack or excess, and which constantly then return to trouble any effort to achieve total cultural closure. (2015: 16)

Dub reggae, the genre that Dennis Bovell so skilfully references in his production for The Slits song *Newtown*, is a good example of creole music in which this 'troubling' or lack of closure finds clear expression. Jamaican dub reggae producers and recording engineers were pioneers in establishing a tradition of music production where the recording studio itself is the

primary instrument of composition. Dub's key innovation was the stripping away of elements from an existing multi-track recording, removing the vocal, guitar or other key melodic elements, to leave only the bass and drums. Dub production is quite literally a process of translation or re-interpretation in which existing recordings become re-versioned and remixed. What is significant here is that it is dub's process of remixing or translation that is accepted as the primary site of creation. In dub reggae, the remixer or engineer is acknowledged as the primary author of the work, not the musicians or the composer of the song. In dub reggae, it is the incompleteness of the translation, the engineer's skill in balancing 'lack' and 'excess' that carries authorship and aesthetic value.

*Playlist Track 5: 'Steadie' by Blackbeard (1980)*

A good example of this genre in its British context is a track called *Steadie* (1980), from the album *I Wah Dub* (1980) another Dennis Bovell production recorded under the name Blackbeard. On *Steadie*, we hear how Bovell the dub mixer strips back the track to its bassline, dropping out and then reintroducing melodic elements like the guitar and piano; these melodic elements come often only in short bursts and with heavy reverb or echo added. The dynamics and progression of the track come from this re-versioning of a repetitive rhythm rather than harmonic progression or melodic variation. Another of dub reggae's defining characteristics that is evident on this track is the emphasis on deep bass frequencies and the potential they have when played loud on a reggae sound system to act on the body, to physically move or bind together a community of listeners.

The processes of subtraction or deconstruction that we hear on *Steadie*, the absence that defines this track against the original recording, together with the excessive use of reverb and echo, provide explicit expression of both the 'lack' and 'excess' that work as Hall describes to trouble total cultural closure. A lack of closure is also emphasised in an aesthetic that prioritises the continual re-working of a recording into numerous different versions. Hall uses Jacques Derrida's notion of 'différance', to capture the significance of the lack of closure or 'inbetweenness' that he finds evident within creolised culture:

No translation achieves total equivalence, without trace or reminder. This is the logic of 'différance' in the Derridean sense: of a kind of difference which refuses to fall back into its binary elements'. (Hall 2015: 16)

The fluidity of identification suggested in *differéce* is important in that it connects creolisation to conviviality's potential to disrupt binary oppositions and articulate identity positions that transcend absolute racial categorisation. This fluidity opens up the progressive potential of creolisation and conviviality, but it also allows us to be attentive to the disjuncture, incompleteness or hostility that also finds expression within calypso, reggae, post-punk and other music of the convivial continuum.

## JUNGLE

The processes of combination and intermixture that are evident in reggae and post-punk recur and develop through subsequent iterations of Caribbean influenced British popular music finding clear expression again in electronic dance music of the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. Reggae, particularly the production techniques of dub reggae, is an important influence on British electronic dance music and can be heard in dance music's emphasis on bass frequencies, its preference for repetition over harmonic progression and the centrality of re-versioning and remixing in its production aesthetic.

Jungle is an African diasporic dance music that like lovers rock before it combines together disparate musical elements to produce innovative music that is distinctively British. Jungle's primary innovation was to combine radically speeded-up breakbeats<sup>9</sup> with deep reggae like basslines. In jungle, the bassline runs at half-speed to the drums, dancing to jungle is like dancing to reggae, and one locks into the slower groove of the bassline not the hyperkinetic drums. Jungle producers developed sophisticated techniques for 'chopping-up', manipulating and reordering sampled breakbeats,<sup>10</sup> either emphasising syncopation to maximise the affective potential as a dance music, or creating computer programmed drum patterns that mimicked the virtuosity of a jazz drummer. Jungle is characterised by the 'cut and paste' aesthetic that music technologies like the digital sampler afford, enabling producers to bring together seemingly disparate elements into improbable harmonic coordination.

### *Playlist Track 6: 'Original Nuttah' Shy FX Featuring UK Apache (1994)*

*Original Nuttah* (1994) produced by Shy FX with vocals by UK Apache is a good example of the bricolage and radical combination of disparate source material that is evident within jungle and that remains a feature

of sample-based dance music along the convivial continuum. Shy FX the producer of *Original Nuttah* uses short sections from a variety of existing recordings to build a complex musical collage. The track starts with siren-like horns taken from the Cypress Hill track *I Wanna Get High* (1993), and the breakbeat is sampled from *Amen, Brother* (1969) a funk track by The Winsons.<sup>11</sup> The vocal from UK Apache mirrors the diverse source material used to create the music. In the opening bars of the track, UK Apache switches between Jamaican and British accents, giving call outs to both Kingston and London, using lyrical phrasing common to Jamaican ragga<sup>12</sup> and also South Asian Bhangra.<sup>13</sup> Jeffery Boakye describes the first part of this vocal as a ‘chaotic introduction of self in which you can actually hear competing identities jostling for position’ (2017: 46).

UK Apache was born in London, the son of an Indian South African mother and an Iraqi father, his imitations of the Jamaican sound system MCs that he grew up listening to remain slightly incongruous, but nonetheless made him a cult figure within the jungle scene. In an interview for a BBC documentary in the year this track was released, UK Apache describes how jungle became an important site of identification and expression for him

Jungle, because it’s from England. I can really relate to it, it’s important to me because I’m born here. I’m from England and London, and nobody can tell me I’m not from here. Once I was ashamed of being British, but it’s like jungle draw me back into my roots, where I’m from. (UK Apache, BBC Jungle Documentary 1994 in Hancox 2018: 42)

Boakye describes how *Original Nuttah* and UK Apache’s vocal delivery resonated strongly with his own experiences of the fluidity of racial identification within the diverse communities of inner-city London:

He [UK Apache] legitimised non-black blackness. He made me realise that identity was a shifting idiosyncratic reality that had more to do with biography than geography. He represented a perfect storm of conflicting identities, an identity crisis made virtuous, the exact same construction of self that typifies second and third generation [British] people of colour. (Boakye 2017: 47)

Like lovers rock and post-punk, it is possible to see how jungle with its processes of combination and intermixture can be a site at which fixed or essential racial identities are contested at the level of representation making it a space where Martin’s ‘identity construction’ (2013) and Gilroy’s

‘cultural work’ (2003) can find expression, a space where identity positions that are fluid and complex can be explored through the processes of both producing and consuming music.

### CONVIVIALITY WITHIN CORPOREAL AFFECT

Although theories of representation offer one tool with which to decode the potential for conviviality within jungle’s radical bricolage, to understand the significance of creolised music along a convivial continuum, it is also important to examine how music and sound generate experience that moves beyond construction of meaning at the level of representation. Jeremy Gilbert applies theories of affect<sup>14</sup> to explore music’s potential to act on the physical body; ‘music’s specificity lies in the fact it is registered not just cognitively but at the level of the physical body, in ways which visual and linguistic media are not’ (2004: 3). Paul Gilroy is also attentive to the affective potential of the music of the Black Atlantic stating we should be wary of the ‘limited idea that we encounter sound only, or even mainly through our capacity to hear and make interpretive sense of it’ (Gilroy 2003: 391).

Theories of affect and how they apply to music listening are particularly appropriate here because of the emphasis that reggae and electronic dance music place on bass frequencies and how they act on the body (Henriques and Ferrara 2014). Julian Henriques (2003: 451) describes the affective force of reggae sound systems as ‘sonic dominance’,<sup>15</sup> for Henriques, sonic dominance occurs ‘when and where the sonic medium displaces the usual or normal dominance of the visual medium’ (2003: 452). Steve Goodman (2010) describes this same affective potential of reggae and electronic dance music as ‘bass materialism’.<sup>16</sup> All these writers address in different ways the potential for loud music, particularly music that emphasises bass frequencies and affective rhythms, to transverse boundaries and transform the body. It is in this way that reggae and its sound system culture, and the electronic dance music which has borrowed from reggae, can be heard to enact a ‘community of listeners’ (Farinati and Firth 2017: 18; Gilroy 2003: 385), a group of people joined together through sound. In his study of bass frequencies in music and their potential to affect, Paul C. Jasen observes that ‘when bass permeates and modulates, it binds bodies together (putting them literally on the same wavelength)’ (2016: 22).

It is jungle’s ‘cosmopolitan and hybrid’ nature (Gilbert 2014: 183) and in its potential to enact corporeal affect that Jeremy Gilbert finds the music’s

progressive potential, arguing that jungle explores ‘new ways of feeling and being which can have wider social and political consequences’ (Gilbert 2014: 183). The political potential of creolised music and its potential to transfigure essentialised identity positions leads Gilbert to make the claim that during the 1990s and 2000s jungle

has clearly played a positive role in helping to inoculate London and the wider UK against the fascist virus, by creating shared modes of corporeal intensity which transfigure elements previously felt to be “black” and “white” into music and dance forms which move beyond these categories altogether. (2009: 4)

In this way, music’s potential for corporeal affect becomes another site at which the minimal sociality of convivial formation can be enacted.

*Playlist Track 7: ‘Distant Lights’ by Burial (2006)*

During the 2000s, British dance music continues to evolve, refine and develop the processes of re-versioning, combination and intermixture that are evident in dub reggae and jungle. One of these subsequent iterations of Caribbean influenced electronic dance music is dubstep, which in the 2000s emerged from the same London clubs, raves and pirate radio networks that had incubated jungle in the 1990s. Dubstep is primarily an instrumental music that like jungle before it uses breakbeats as its main rhythmic element, but in contrast to jungle’s hectic tempo in dubstep, the music is slowed to a sedate crawl. On the track *Distant Lights* (2006), we hear dubstep producer Burial, directly referencing dub reggae in his use of reverb and echo effects. We also hear the removal of melodic instrumentation in the mid-range frequencies between 3 kHz and 6 kHz that like dub gives this recording an eerie hollowed-out feel. The hollowness of the music is further emphasised because Burial uses only sampled vocals which he re-edits, processes and manipulates degrading the audio by removing frequencies important for intelligibility. Mark Fisher links Burial’s production techniques specifically to reggae and what he describes as dub’s ‘privileged role of voice under erasure’ (Fisher 2014: 99). A signature of Burial’s music is also its shrouding in a hiss of static reminiscent of vinyl crackle or analogue tape noise. For Fisher, these processes of sampling and collage, subtraction and erasure, and the referencing of older analogue technologies have a disorienting effect, evocative of a haunting.

## HAUNTOLOGY

To articulate the haunted nature of Burial's music, Mark Fisher and Simon Reynolds follow Stuart Hall to Jacques Derrida, but this time applying Derrida's concept of hauntology (1994), this develops further Derrida's earlier theory of *différance* in conceptualising the incompleteness of translation that Hall detects within creolised culture. In his writing on hauntology, Derrida evokes the figure of the spectre as a metaphor. A spectre is neither dead nor alive, present nor absent, it is a being that is simultaneously of the past and from the future (Derrida 1994: 12). The instability and fluidity of the spectre follow *différance* in allowing for a disruption of binary oppositions that is ontologically consistent with both creolisation and conviviality. Fisher places Burial and hauntological music firmly within a postcolonial context, arguing that 'hauntology begins in the Black Atlantic, with dub [reggae]' (Fisher: 2006).<sup>17</sup> I equate here the haunting that Fisher perceives within dub reggae and dubstep with what Hall describes as the 'troubling' (2015: 16) of creolised cultural production. Hauntology is useful in developing this thread further because as Fisher notes hauntology acknowledges a diachronic perspective in a way that *différance* does not (2014: 18).

An evocation of 'a time that is out of joint'<sup>18</sup> is a recurring theme in Derrida's writing on hauntology leading scholars to place hauntology and cultural production that permits a hauntological reading as a form of 'memory work' (Demos 2013; Fisher 2014; Reynolds 2006, 2011). Memory work here becomes a useful compliment to the 'cultural work' and processes of identity construction that Paul Gilroy and Dennis-Constant Martin hear afforded within the production and consumption of creolised popular music. Fisher draws on Freud to describe the haunting of Burial's music, its 'troubled' nature, in terms of an unresolved mourning (2014: 103). For Fisher, this mourning<sup>19</sup> is a progressive mode of memory work in direct opposition to the 'postimperial melancholia' presented by Gilroy as conviviality's countervailing force.

For Fisher, the power of a hauntological mourning lies not only in its potential to work through the past traumas of slavery and colonialism but also in its potential to evoke alternative futures. In this way, Fisher argues that the music of Burial allows us to be

haunted by events that had not actually happened, futures that failed to materialise and remained spectral. (2014: 107)

The translated, incomplete or troubled nature of calypso, reggae, post-punk, jungle and dubstep here all become creolised sites at which to articulate or experience identity positions that are non-binary and anti-essential. At the level of signifying-practice but also at the level of corporeal affect. In this way, there is an enacting of modes of togetherness that exist in a continual state of flux and transformation, both re-working past traumas but also conjuring better, but often transient, futures.

*Playlist Track 8: 'Stop Killing the Mandem' by Novelist (2018)*

Grime is one of the contemporary Caribbean influenced British musical genres that follows from calypso, reggae, post-punk, jungle, two-step garage and dubstep along the convivial continuum. The grime track I include here is *Stop Killing the Mandem* (2018) by Novelist released in the year of the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush. In his exhaustive history of grime, Dan Hancox traces its origins directly to post-war Caribbean migration and the musical traditions of reggae and jungle, arguing that 'grime is a direct product of Caribbean sound-system culture' (2018: 37) and that its innovative sound and distinctive vocal delivery results from the fact that the artists and producers are

mostly second- or third-generation black Britons who were just estranged enough from their cultural roots in the Caribbean or Africa, or both, and far enough along the lineage of unique - British dance styles – acid house, jungle, drum 'n' bass, UK garage – that they could draw from them all, while never being too in thrall to any of them. (Hancox 2018: 38)

Novelist is a good example of a second generation of grime artists whose lyrics demonstrate a clearer political engagement than one finds in jungle, dubstep or even the earlier iterations of grime (Hancox 2018: 282–284). *Stop Killing the Mandem* takes inspiration directly from a Black Lives Matter march that Novelist attended in 2016, with his lyrics critiquing both institutional racism and the narrative of black on black violence within British inner-cities. In the music, we hear synthesised sounds that Novelist uses to evoke, police sirens, car alarms or hospital heart monitors, all combined together with a furious sub-bass designed to physically move bodies on the dance floor (Novelist, August 2018). Novelist describes how the music mirrors the lyrics and is written to sound like a 'warning', to be 'alarming'



and ‘abrasive’. In an interview with a music production magazine, Novelist explains that

People should be alarmed when they hear *Stop Killing the Mandem*, because it’s an alarming message, it’s an alarming topic. [...] when you hear the song [...] It’s NOT supposed to make you right. It’s supposed to make you [aware that] people are getting killed [...] it is supposed to make you feel that this is important, so that’s why its abrasive. (Novelist, August 2018)

Although grime is often abrasive with lyrics articulating experiences of marginalised British African diasporic youth, it is a musical form that remains inclusive and representative of the broader convivial cultures evident within the ‘super-diverse’ East and South London districts from which it emerged (Wessendorf 2014: 392; Hancox 2018: 41). Hancox connects grime’s expression of conviviality to what he describes as a ‘neighbourhood nationalism’ (Back 1996). What Hancox sees in grime is a

positive identification with the local area and the people in it, one that often transcends racial divisions [...] even while racism and hostility remain common place in the city and the nation at large. (2018: 151)

Both Dan Hancox and Jeffery Boakye argue that grime’s neighbourhood nationalism can also accommodate broader imagined communities that stretch beyond the inner-city postcodes within which grime originated. One example of grime’s ability to connect with diverse audiences is its increasing popularity at the summer music festivals that attract huge audiences in the UK. Boakye notes that

For all its antagonism, paranoia, anger and aggression, grime is actually hugely inclusive [...] the fact that grime is becoming a festival staple is no accident, offering a unifying soundtrack for Millennials of all colours. (Boakye 2017: 339)

This celebration of creolised British music by audiences of tens of thousands at contemporary summer music festivals has strong parallels with the convivial formations enacted at RAR music festivals in the late 1970s, in both cases capturing the ‘minimal sociality’ within which Magdalena Nowicka and Tilman Heil see conviviality emerging (2015: 12). Although imperfect and transitory, this is one site where we see creolised music of the convivial continuum offering articulations of identity and belonging that

challenge the racism of the British government's hostile environment for illegal immigrants and its treatment of the Windrush generation.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have charted a convivial continuum within Caribbean influenced British post-war popular music. Beginning with the arrival of the Empire Windrush in 1948, I trace a continuum through calypso, reggae, post-punk, jungle, two-step garage, dubstep and grime. The convivial continuum describes a tradition of British popular music that is characterised by its processes of combination and intermixture. Creolisation is the preferred term to capture these processes of combination and intermixture because it captures the fluidity, the incomplete translation, that 'troubles' (Hall 2015: 16) this music. The music of the convivial continuum is significant within the British postcolonial context because it offers a site of 'cultural work' (Gilroy 2003). As a process of cultural work, this music can be a site of identity construction (Martin 2013) through signifying-practice, but also importantly within the music's potential for 'corporeal affect' (Gilbert 2009), when sound acts on physical bodies transforming them and affecting an interconnected community of listeners. In this way, calypso, reggae, post-punk, jungle, two-step garage, dubstep and grime can all become creolised sites at which to articulate or experience identity positions that are anti-essential and that disrupt racial hierarchies. Gilroy argues that it is within these convivial formations that racial difference becomes an 'unremarkable principle of metropolitan life' (2004: 105). This reading however leaves conviviality open to the criticism that it is inattentive to racism, prejudice and hostility within everyday lived experience. In acknowledging the spectres of the transatlantic slave trade and colonisation that haunt British creolised music, hauntology (Derrida 1994) becomes a useful corrective. It is the haunted, troubled or unfinished nature of British creolised music that opens it up as a site at which to mourn past traumas but also within which it is possible to imagine better but spectral futures.

## NOTES

1. The Home Office policy of a hostile environment for illegal immigrants came into effect in October 2010 under Theresa May as Home Secretary. In 2012, while serving as Home Secretary Theresa May stated, 'The aim is to create, here in Britain, a really hostile environment for illegal immigrants' (Hill

- 2017). Theresa May became British Prime Minister in 2016 and presided over the Windrush scandal.
2. The theory of a convivial continuum is inspired by the theory of the ‘hard-core continuum’ first posited by Simon Reynolds (1999, 2013) describing a lineage of British electronic dance music that exhibits radical combination and intermixture between Caribbean, United States and British popular music.
  3. On this track, Mike Skinner emphasises his position in a continuing tradition of British creolised music calling out to ‘all jungle and garage heads’, fans of genres earlier along the continuum. Jeffery Boakye (2017) also places Skinner and The Streets as a precursor to grime, a contemporary British creolised music.
  4. Sound system describes the powerful amplifiers and loudspeaker arrays that enable operators to play music at high volume. The speakers and amplifiers are designed to emphasise the affective potential of bass frequencies.
  5. Reggae sound system culture prioritises recorded music, with exclusive vinyl pressings of instrumental tracks called ‘dubs’ or ‘version sides’ used as the backing tracks for local vocalists to perform over.
  6. Denis Bovell was born in Barbados, moving to London aged 12. Bovell has been prolific as a musician, producer and reggae sound system operator, playing and recording music in genres as diverse as reggae, pop, rock and post-punk.
  7. Riddim is the Jamaican patois pronunciation of rhythm and denotes the instrumental accompaniment to a reggae song, specifically the drum pattern and bass line.
  8. The Slits are one of those groups defined as post-punk. A progression from punk in which artists retained punk’s DIY aesthetic and confrontational attitude but in which the influence of rock became less audible and influences from other music such as reggae, jazz, funk and the avant-garde became more important.
  9. The ‘breakbeat’ is a section of a funk or soul record where the other instruments drop away to leave only the drummer playing solo for a two or four bar measure.
  10. Sampling describes the process in which a producer uses digital recording technology to take part of an existing recording so that it can be used to create a new piece of music.
  11. *Original Nuttah* also contains samples from two reggae tracks by Anthony Red Rose *Fat Thing* (1985) and *Tempo* (1985) and samples of dialogue from the film *Goodfellas* (1990).
  12. Ragga is a subgenre of reggae in which the instrumentation is primarily electronic and the vocal delivery is often aggressive.
  13. Bhangra is popular music associated with the Punjabi diaspora in Europe.

14. For Jeremy Gilbert, “affect” is a term which denotes a more or less organised experience, an experience probably with empowering or disempowering consequences, registered at the level of the physical body, and not necessarily to be understood in linguistic terms’ (Gilbert 2004: 2).
15. Sonic dominance refers to the super-liminal whole-body experience of audition, immersed in the materiality of bass and the force of its physical presence in the bowl between the speaker stacks of a sound system (Henriques 2003).
16. ‘Bass Materialism is the collective construction of vibrational ecologies concentrated on low frequencies where sound overlaps tactility’ (Goodman 2010: 196).
17. Simon Reynolds also makes a convincing argument for dub reggae’s haunting observing that the word ‘dub’ may derive from ‘duppy’ Jamaican patois for ghost (2006: 26).
18. Simon Reynolds connects the time-out-of-joint nature of hauntology specifically to the processes of collage and combination that is made possible by sampling and the séance like process of bringing together music from different times and spaces to create new objects (2011: 314).
19. Paul Ricoeur interprets Freud’s concept of mourning as a process of reconciliation, in contrast melancholia is a mode of remembering where the object is lost without hope of reconciliation (1999: 7).

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