Overstanding Idren:
Special Features of Rastafari English Morphology

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> "Me no stutter, no stammer, so nah try feh edit me grammar.
> Power gone, you cannot duplicate I sound."
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> Prezident Brown & Axx of Jahpostles
> "I Sound Is From Creation"
> *I Sound Is From Creation* (2012)
> Tads Records

1 Intro

> Far from being simply a dialect of English or an anglophone Creole (or just a variant of Jamaican patois), "Dread Talk" reflects the speaker's resistance to perceived oppression (both historical colonial prejudice and current economic disenfranchisement) and the sense of the overwhelming potential spiritual redemption that Rastas can achieve. Here patterns of speech really do reflect patterns of thought. (Pollard 2000: xiii)

As Pollard (2000) indicates, "Rastafari English", "Dread Talk", "Iyaric", "Livalect" etc. has a number of features which distinguish it from both Jamaican Creole ("patois") and other varieties of English. One of the aspects of Rastafari English Pollard (2000) examines are lexical/morphological features, grouping innovative forms into three categories: Category I "in which known items bear new meanings"; Category II, "words whose phonology bear/are made to bear the weight of their phonological implication"; Category III, "/ai/ words".

I concentrate here on two particular morphological, word-building processes of Rastafari English; specifically, what I refer to as OVERSTANDINGS (Slade 2009, Zwicky 2009), roughly corresponding to Pollard's Category II words (the two sets are overlapping but non-identical) and I-WORDS, Pollard's Category III.

In his introduction to Pollard (2000), Rex Nettleford remarks regarding Pollard's Category II words:

> There are also words which bear the weight of their phonological implications though in need of explanation for understanding. "Downpress" which is used for "oppress" makes more sense to the Rasta man, then, since if one is being pressed (weighted) down by the injustice and marginality of his Babylonian captivity, this cannot possibly be "up" (sc. "op"). (Nettleford, in introduction to Pollard 2000: xi)

The characterisation of this class of words is adopted directly from Pollard's text, "words [that] bear the weight of their phonological implications" (Pollard 2000: 24), though elsewhere she formulates the class in slightly different, "active" terms as "words whose phonology is made to bear the precise burden of meaning" (Pollard 2000: 9). This latter definition is preferable, given that this particular class of words exhibits a specific type of morphophonological reformation. Pollard (2000: *passim*) provides numerous examples of this category of words (her Category II) — though I would suggest that her Category II does not actually form a homogeneous class.

One of the goals of the present study is to distinguish overstandings from, on the one hand, folk etymology (change in the form of a word based on misunderstanding or unfamiliarity of speaker with one or more of its components), and on the other hand from punning and other types of wordplay. Overstandings resemble both of these morphological processes, and, indeed, some of Pollard's Category II words are not overstandings but superficially similar types of wordplay. I examine the principles underlying the process of forming overstandings, and present formal criteria for distinguishing these from seemingly similar processes.

I-words, I would argue, are even further removed from word-play and punning than are overstandings. Thus I disagree with Nettleford's assessment:

> The play on words—a Jamaican facility that extends from theatrical punning to everyday speech—is artlessly embraced by the Rastafarian in the repertoire of "I" (ai) words which Mrs Pollard indicates will, on closer examination, disclose that "ai" is not merely used as a pronominal form to replace the Jamaican Creole "mi" but is also used as prefix to some nouns a replacement for the initial sound in any number of words of varying function in a sentence.(Nettleford, in introduction to Pollard 2000: xi–xii)

The examination of I-words constitutes the other half of this study: the other major goal of this study being to delve into the diachronic evolution of I-words. I suggest that reformations in the pronominal system of Rastafari English ultimately do in fact form a primary source for the productive morphological process of I-word formation, though perhaps not the sole source. I suggest a possible path of development for I-words, and provide some discussion of their phonological and semantic properties.

2   Overstandings

Overstandings involve a morphological reforming based on (1) a perceived morphological analysis of a word, (2) switching of an element standing in a binary opposition to the other member of the opposition, in accordance to perceived positive/negative connotations of the words. The concept of "comprehension" is positive, but *understand* is perceived to be composed of *under* in the sense of "below, lesser, lacking" (cp. *underling*, *underhanded*, *underfunded*, *underdeveloped*, *underpay* etc.)[1] and *stand*. *Under* stands in a binary opposition to *over*, and thus the word is reformed as *overstand*, as if *understanding* meant "a lesser, lacking comprehension" and *overstanding* thus "a higher, full comprehension".[2]

At first blush overstandings appear to be a type of folk etymology[3], where a speaker's unfamiliarity with one or more morphemes (or putative morphemes) of a word, either due to the obsolescence

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[1]Historically, the *under* of *understand* had the sense of "amongst, in".

[2]A nice illustrative quotation: "Babylon try fi keep the people Under-Stand, but Rasta come fi mek them Over-Stand!" from http://goo.gl/clWoR.

[3]Folk-etymologies are also sometimes referred to as "eggcorns" (Liberman 2003), particularly when not well-established, or representing one-offs. For a collection of a number of English folk etymologies, see Palmer (1882); also see the Eggcorn Database [http://eggcorns.lascribe.net/] for modern examples.

of that element in the language, or because the word is from a foreign language unfamiliar to the speaker, or due to a more general mishearing or misunderstanding on the part of the speaker.

Examples of folk-etymologies from loan words into English include:

(1)   a.   *woodchuck* "N. American marmot, also known as a groundhog" < an Algonquin form like *otchek*, perhaps Cree *wuchak*
       b.   *cockroach* < Spanish *cucaracha*
       c.   *crayfish* < Norman French *creveis*
       d.   *cold slaw* "a salad made with raw cabbage and mayonnaise/buttermilk, usually served chilled" < *cole slaw* (an anglisation of Dutch *koolsla* "cabbage salad")
       e.   *sparrow grass* < Latin *asparagus*

Examples of folk-etymologies from native English words where one of the elements became archaic include:

(2)   a.   *bridegroom* < Old English (OE.) *brydguma* "bride-man" (OE. *guma* "man")
       b.   *hangnail* < OE. *angnægl* (where *ang-* "pain" is cognate with *anguish* etc.)
       c.   *sand-blind* (as if "blinded by the sand") < OE. *sam-blind* "half-blind" (*sam-* is a once-common prefix cognate with Latin "semi-")

Example of folk-etymologies arising from mishearing or misunderstandings include:

(3)   a.   *when all is **set*** and done* [*=*said*]
       b.   *a new **leash*** on life* [*=*lease*]
       c.   *a **hare's*** breadth* [*=*hair's*]
       d.   ***baited*** breath* [*=*bated* (cognate with *abate*, i.e. "halted breath")]

Overstandings differ sharply, in fact, from folk etymology, when the features of these processes are examined. Folk etymologies all involve morphological reformations where the new phonological form is similar to the earlier phonological form. Thus *sparrow grass* is similar, phonologically, to *asparagus*, /gɹuːm/ is minimally different from /gum/ etc. In some cases there is an attempt to preserve some sort of sense: having sand in one's eyes is sort of like being half-blind, cole slaw is often served cold, asparagus has green stalks, like grass etc. Though in some cases, e.g. *woodchuck*, there is little sense in the folk-etymologicalised form—though note that it still bears an obvious phonological similarity to the original Algonquin form.

The process of overstanding involves no requirement that the resulting form have any phonological identity. Rather, the constraint on the resulting form is that the perceived semantics of the component pieces of morphology have to bear a compositional relationship to the perceived semantics of the word as a whole. Thus *understanding* violates this constraint, if the semantic contribution of *under* is taken to be something like "lesser", "lacking" etc., as this would suggest that *understanding* should mean something like "lesser comprehension". The transformation to *overstanding* thus matches the expected interpretation of "fuller comprehension".

An examination of overstandings shows that all of the transformations involve "flips" of elements in binary oppositions, one negatively-charged, one positively-charged. See the examples in (4); here we observe the following binary oppositions: under:over, down:up, out:in, hate:love, dead:(a)live, respectively. This binary opposition of negative:positive might be even better formulated as Babylonian:Zionic, as *downpression* and *outformers* are associated with Babylon, with *apprecilove* and *livication* are associated with Zion—in the sense that Rastafari English has a clear lexicalisation of the concepts of "our group" vs. "(hostile) outsiders" in the terms *Zion* and *Babylon*. Note that overstandings fit into Rastafari English's linguistic pattern of reversal, i.e. black vs. white,

e.g. *blackheart man* "a righteous, good-hearted man".

(4) a. *overstand < understand*
     b. *downpress < oppress* (as if *up-press*)
     c. *outformer < informer* (in the negative sense of "grass, snitch")
     d. *apprecilove < appreciate* (as if *appreci-hate*)
     e. *livicate < dedicate* (as if *dead-icate*)

(5) a. "Ras Mandingo, you original question puts a serious limitation pon the overstand-ing of Rastafari. Cause Rasta a not no 'organized religious faith' like some church denomination. Seen." [4]
     b. "Babylon School Downpress Rasta" [5]
     c. "Cockney say grass, We say outformer man" [Smiley Culture, "Cockney Transla-tion", 1984][6]
     d. "I-man personally highly apprecilove the courageous and lucid analysis's that led this Elder to confront rhetoric (formal discourse) of Rastafari Livity with effective negative realities resulting from Babylonian behaviours plaguing InI communit-ies."[7]
     e. "Livicate rasta concentration energy to goodness sake, from any plutonium, uranium or yellow cake." [Midnite, "Vibration", *Ina Now* (2009)][8]

Examples like (4-b), (4-d), (4-e) make it clear that folk etymological processes may be involved in the process of overstanding, but they are not necessary, nor do they represent an end result. That is, *oppress* is (re-)analysed as if it were *up+press*, before being transformed to *down+press*. *Dedicate* is analysed as if it were *dead+icate*, though etymologically its composition is *de+dicate*. These are processes which are at least very similar to folk-etymology, though perhaps they represent wilful folk etymologies (it is not clear that the original Rastafari speakers who performed these overstandings would have actually felt that, for instance, *dedicate* contains the morpheme *dead*). It is the reformation along binary lines that constitutes the overstanding. But overstandings, despite their reliance on semantic oppositions, do not operate to create antonyms but rather constitute "corrective" forms with the same core meaning as their base. That is, *overstand* does not mean the opposite of *understand*, rather it "corrects" the putative negation connotations of *understand*. These features make overstandings clearly distinct from other previously identified morphological processes.

Overstandings also superficially resemble puns and word-play of the punnish sort (see Nettle-ford's comment above), that is, forms like *apprecilove* look like puns based on the similarity of certain phonological sequences of the original form (i.e. /eɪt/) with certain words (i.e. *hate*, real-ised as /eɪt/). That is, puns depend on identity or similarity of phonological forms of elements which bear distinct meanings. Thus in (6) Shakespeare puns *son* with *sun*, two words with identical pronunciations, but very different meanings.

(6) Now is the winter of our discontent Made glorious summer by this son of York [W. Shakespeare, *Richard III*, I.i.1-2]

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[4] http://rastafaritimes.com/rasnews/viewnews.cgi?newsid1046656525,67496,.shtml
[5] From a forum post from a Rasta whose Catholic school won't let him grow dreadlocks: http://www.rastafarispeaks.com/repatriation/index.cgi?noframes;read=34648
[6] http://youtu.be/vvPuj4f5CKw
[7] http://rastaites.com/news/feedforward/nomoregoddess.pdf
[8] http://www.midnite-culture.com/lyrics/midnite-ina-now/vibration/

Puns operate when there is a phonological form associated with two opposed meanings (or two phonologically similar forms, with distinct meanings), such that the text can be interpreted in two different ways, according to two different scripts as it were (see Zwicky & Zwicky 1986 and Hempelmann 2003 for more extensive discussion). Thus in (6), there is one reading of the text in which winter is changed into summer by the *sun*, another in which a bad situation is made better by a *son* of the House of York clan.

(7) How do you fix a train that can't hear? With an engineer.[9]

    a.   with an engineer "a train operator; a person who practices engineering"

    b.   with an engine-ear "an ear for an engine"

The pun in (7) provides another example of how puns operate by referencing two separate interpretations, where each fits an accessible scenario: the first interpretation is contextually-appropriate in that an engineer is an appropriate person to interact with trains in technical ways (even if a train not being able to hear is a non-standard train issue), the other interpretation ("engine-ear") addresses the "not able to hear" issue.

(8) provides other representative examples of puns. As in example (7), these puns operate by referencing a "target" word/phrase, which is not overtly present, but which is summoned up via its phonological identity or similarity to the overtly present punning word/phrase.

(8) Examples of Puns (taken mainly from Sobkowiak 1991)

    a.   ingot we trust ("in god we trust" [printed on U.S. currency])

    b.   lava come back to me (lover come back to me)

    c.   where there's a pill* there's a way (*=will)

    d.   nobody knows the rubble* I've seen (*=trouble)

    e.   a crazy mixed up squid* (*=kid)

    f.   buy sheep*, sell deer* (*=cheap,dear)

The type of pun which bears the most resemblance to overstandings is the type which treats the target word/phrase as essentially meaningless or involving a less appropriate or at least less salient meaning than the pun word/phrase. This process which well with proper names (which behave usually as meaningless designators of people/places), as shown by examples in (9); the typically effect is to produce a derogatory form. Thus punning reformations as in (9) treat the "target" names as needing of modification which "reveals" the "true" character of the person/place/object. The reformation in (9-d), for instance, suggests that city would be more appropriately named by referring to its homicide rate.

(9) Puns involving reformation[10]

    a.   Smellmo (Elmo)

    b.   Gay-vy Crocket (Davy)

    c.   Apple iBad (iPad), Apple iMoan (iPhone), Amazon Swindle (Kindle)

    d.   Bodymore, Murdaland (Baltimore, Maryland)

    e.   Shitsburgh (Pittsburgh)

    f.   Filthadelphia (Philadelphia)

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[9]http://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/1bvtpg/what_is_the_bestworst_pun_youve_ever_heard/c9ajhol

[10]Place-name puns taken from http://ask.metafilter.com/78838/More-like-St-Smellmo; the tech examples are all from Richard M. Stallman, iBad and iMoan from http://stallman.org/archives/2010-sep-dec.html, Swindle from https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/copyright-versus-community.html; Gay-vy

Note that in all of these examples of puns, (6)–(9), the meaning of the punning form cannot replace the meaning of the target form. That is, both meanings must remain present; where the target meaning disappears, the pun both fails to be a pun and also either becomes uninterpretable/nonsensical (e.g. without the meaning of the target iPhone, iMoan makes little sense or suggests an entirely different product) or misleading (e.g. if the hearer believes, for instance, that a person is actually named Smellmo, and that this name is a non-meaningful designator like other names).

Overstandings differ from puns in that they need not reference two different meanings. Once *downpress* has been formed, it does not depend on *oppress* for its meaning, or even necessarily summon up *oppress* in hearers' minds; in fact, within Rastafari English, a successful overstanding replaces its source.[II]

Note that Rastafari English does engage punning and wordplay in addition to overstandings, as illustrated by (10) and (11).

(10)   Negatively-charged Rastafari wordplay
    a.   politricks (politics) [Peter Tosh]
    b.   shitstem (system) [Peter Tosh]
    c.   sufferticket (certificate)
    d.   liesbury (library)
    e.   Combullus (Columbus)

Example (10-a) involves a minor modification of the phonological form of the form, playing with the phonological similarity between *-tics* and *tricks*; likewise *shitstem* involves phonological identity of the second syllable of both pun and target, and phonological similarity between *shit* and *sys-*. Example (10-c) is more complex, as the pun form involves word-internal metathesis; this example is almost one of intentional folk-etymology (since the pun form is made of two common English words, with the target being more formal, Latinate). The wordplay in (10-e) associates Columbus, seen negatively in the Rastafari community, with *comb*, also a negatively-charged word for Rastafari, who often eschew combs and keep uncombed locks.

The positively-charged examples of Rastafari wordplay in (11), work similarly, again these instances of wordplay are similar to folk-etymologies, though apparently intentional rather than accidental.

(11)   Positively-charged Rastafari wordplay
    a.   Rasta Far Eye (Ras "Prince" Tafari [proper name] > rastafari)
    b.   Jah-man-can (Jamaican; [Pollard 46 c.II])
    c.   Carried-beyond (Caribbean; "because we were carried beyond Africa" [Mystic Revelation of Rastafari, *Carried beyond* (2007)])

Returning to true overstandings, *overstand*, *downpress* and their derivatives seem to be the best established overstandings. *Apprecilove* and *livicate* are also common. However, the overstanding operation is a live, active morphological process in Rastafari English, and so new overstandings continue to appear, including some potential one-offs.

An overstanding which enjoys a fairly wide usage and which appears to represent a more recent coinage (it does not appear in Pollard 2000) is *fulljoy*, for which see examples below in (12).

Crocket from http://goo.gl/kttAF.

[II]Manget-Johnson (2008) in fact refers to *downpress* as corresponding to Standard English *depress*, so there truly seems to be no necessarily synchronic connection between the overstanding and its Standard English source.

(12) a. "'I am keeping my father's legacy and ambitions alive, of natural and sustainable ideas, of giving back, of sharing, and of making the world a better place - all the values of a true Rastafarian. I am just a vehicle for carrying on what my father started. He was the first entrepreneur. He ran a recording studio in the backyard, a press implant for pressing vinyls, a record shop, and he made T-shirts. So I am proud to do this. I don't just enjoy it, I fulljoy it,' Rohan [Marley] told Open Magazine." [12]

b. "Sometimes we try to transform words and change them around even though it's all in the Rasta community where a man would say, 'enjoy' and we would say, 'FULL-joy' or a man would say, 'judgement' and we would say 'FULL-ment'." [Bushman, interview][13]

c. "The [band] name [Fulljoy], says guitarist Mark Cosgrove, is a nod to Jamaican patois. 'When the Jamaicans say "enjoy," it sounds like "end joy," and they don't want to end joy,' he said."[14]

It is notable that in many places where *fulljoy* appears, it appears either alongside of *enjoy* or with an explanation, which also suggests its newness. As indicated by (12-c), *fulljoy* is an overstanding of *enjoy*, treated as *end+joy*. *Fulljoy* is somewhat deviant, as overstandings go, as it doesn't utilise a replacement form which is a polar opposite of *end*. However, I have located one example of an overstanding of *enjoy* which does just this: *startjoy*, see the example in (13).

(13) "yeah man. mi 'startjoy' cape town!! plan to go back...hopefully before 2010."[15]

An apparent hapax legomenon is *downsession*, based on *obsession* [əpsɛʃən]:

(14) "It isn't really surprising to find erotism/amorism (in the West termed 'homophobia') in this book, as I-and-I are all aware that RastafarI fell into a **downsession** against gays approximately around that Imes, fuelled by dunza (money) greedy reggae stars who fed themselves on the colonial-induced brainwash of the Jamaican general Anancy population."[16]

Livealog(*ue*) in place of *dialog*(*ue*) appears at least twice:

(15) a. "Care must be taken about petitioning the government to allow I-n-I the facility of movement to eventually leave this blessed, yet accursed island. The level of contact with black states particularly on the continent should be a main priority. Starting and continuing an on-going **livalogue**, is of a vital and paramount importance, yet more importantly is to get them to have discussions among themselves, also on an ongoing basis, to fathom how best problems that will eventually arise can be tackled, and overcome."[17]

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[12] http://jamaica-star.com/thestar/20130304/ent/ent1.html

[13] http://www.reggaeville.com/nc/artist-details/artist/peter-tosh/news/interview-bushman-talks-the-bush-doctor/ac/news.html?tx_shreggae_pi1%5BnavNews%5D=3&cHash=36f1cfb8e562d51ec465a460050922b7

[14] http://www.reggae141.com/index.php/general-reggae-news/itemlist/tag/fulljoy%20reggae%20band

[15] http://www.reggaeboyzsc.com/forum1/showthread.php?t=10992

[16] http://www.amazon.com/review/R2RAPCZ1AQS4O3/?ie=UTF8&ASIN=1890358002&linkCode=&nodeID=&tag=

[17] In Girma Yohannes Iyassu Menelik *Rastafarians: A Movement Tied With A Social And Psychological Conflicts*, p.131.

b.   "Still looking for the Reasonings and the **Livalog**, I-man try to keep the faith."[18]

In addition to *informer* reformed to *outformer*, there exists also *outiquity*:

(16)   The words of their mouths ARE outiquity and deceit: they have left off to be wise, AND to do good.[19]

Truebrary replaces *library* "lie-brary":

(17)   "Lang time InI never see yuh at the African Roots Truebrary any more!!! did the I move to the new location yet or is the I still in the same location? I jus got a whole heap a books fi di Truebrary still. Nuff books on His Majesty and the Movemant, Marcus Garvey, Ithiopia, all from one bredrin donation."[20]

Similar to *apprecilove* is *crelove* (< *create* "cre-hate"):

(18)   a.   "JAH JAH favours those who watch his & her example and crelove it in themselves. He doesn't need to be bothered by the good. He is busy preparing for the wicked right ya now."[21]
       b.   "InI must chant Nyabinghi itinual... crelove the R energy that will carry in the word, and that word is JAH. InI know and sight the living God, in whose image InI are created."[22]

A number of overstandings turn on an opposition between *weak* and *strong*, replacing the morpheme *week*: *in the strong* "next week"[23], and *birthstrong* "birthday", but presumably formed from *birthweek*:

(19)   a.   "big up pon yuh birthstrong,Chaos6403"[24]
       b.   "Invites all to attend the first annual Empress Mennen birthstrong and Rastafari Womans Mother's Day Celebration"[25]

Birthstrong seems to be losing ground to an alternative *earthstrong (day)*, which presumably is itself a wordplay on *birthstrong*:

(20)   a.   "Perhaps I missed it if it is posted somewhere else, but today is anniversary of HIM's earthstrong."[26]
       b.   "Coming together to celebrate Bob Marley's 68th Earthstrong, the deep respect and gratitude the people of Jamaica, and the world, have for Bob Marley was felt in the positive vibration of the people attending."[27]

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[18]https://yaadbwoyintergalactica.wordpress.com/2009/06/12/african-union-libya-italy-jamaica-reparations-interesting-convergence-indeed-convergence-of-interests-well-see/

[19]https://www.facebook.com/melchizedekpsalms/posts/549704961708947

[20]http://jah-rastafari.com/forum/message-view.asp?message_group=2218

[21]http://jah-rastafari.com/forum/message-view.asp?message_group=3528

[22]http://jah-rastafari.com/forum/message-view.asp?message_group=2877

[23]According to Pollard 2000: 47—who oddly places it in her Category III /ai/-words. I have not found any examples of this phrase in use, however.

[24]http://forum.dancehallreggae.com/showthread.php/111974-big-up-pon-yuh-birthstrong-Chaos6403

[25]http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nyahbinghifyah/message/142

[26]http://forums.rasta-man.co.uk/smf/index.php?topic=5666.0

[27]http://www.bobmarley1love.org/inspirations/kingston-earthstrong

A few examples of *strong-start* as replacing *week-end* also appear:

(21) a. "One Love sistren Amber. Have a super strong start."[28]
      b. "Again if you can't attend this strongstart, the show will be up for a whole year."[29]

Strong-start is interesting in involving a double overstanding: *strong* for *week* and *start* for *end*.

Pollard (2000: 43) provides examples of *first* replacing *last* or *yesterday*, *first night* for *last night* and *firstday* for *yesterday*.[30] She also provides examples of *blind* [blaɪn] replacing *see* [si] in *cigarette* and *UCWI > blindgarette* and *youblind* (Pollard 2000: 10), which represent prototypical overstandings.

Table 1 provides a summary of a number of overstandings and the linguistic oppositions they involve.

Negative (Babylonian) form	Positive (Zionic) form	Shift	Examples
under	over	under > over	understand > overstand
under	higher	under > higher	understand > higherstand
out	in	out < in	outformer < informer outiquity < iniquity
down	up	down < up	downpress < oppress downsession < obsession [əpsɛʃən]
blind	see/sight	blind < see	blindgarette < cigarette youblind < UCWI Blind'aga < (Edward) Seaga
lie	true	lie > true lie > truth	library > truebrary July > June-truth [see Douglas to appear]
die	live	die > live	dialect > livalect diatribe > livatribe [P. Tosh] dialogue > livalogue
dead	live	dead > live	dedicate > livicate
weak	strong	weak > strong	next week > in the strong week-end > strong-start birthday > birthstrong/earthstrong (day)
end	start	end > start	week-end > strong-start enjoy > startjoy (also fulljoy)
last yester	first	last > first yester- > first	last night > first night yesterday > first day
hate	love	hate > love	appreciate > apprecilove create > crelove

Table 1: Babylonian:Zionic oppositions and overstanding reformations

Certainly some of the hapax legomena represent latent morphological potential of the Rastafari English process of overstanding. The example of *downsession* (< *obsession*) cited above in (14) is

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[28]http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rastafari-org/message/3949

[29]http://www.rastafarispeaks.com/cgi-bin/forum/archive1/config.pl?noframes;read=86946

[30]Though she classes these as her Category I, "in which known items bear new meanings", rather than Category II, which would more closely correspond to my overstanding designation.

an excellent example of the overstanding as a live, active morphological process. Pollard (2000: 96–108) in her discussion of the globalisation of Rastafari English, examines a number of online Rastafari wordlists and notes a couple of illegitimate entries which she attributes to "new Rastas". One of these is *lovepreciate* (cp. *apprecilove*), since it does not eliminate the negative element *(h)ate* (Pollard 2000: 105). I note that *lovepreciate* is found in the wordlist of Faristzaddi (1982), from which many of the online lists appear to originate. Faristzaddi (1982) also seems to the source of *outvention*, as all online examples of this word are either definitional as in (22-a), or else clearly used by non-Rastas, as in (22-b) and (22-c).

(22) a. "Outvention replaces 'invention', because mechanical devices are seen as outdated, and because it is the inner experience of being a Rastafarian that is invention."[on a "How to Speak Rastafarian English" wiki page][31]

b. "Mind you, a rastafarian seeing it would probably think: 'outvention but, me aprecilove'. Apologies to any rastafarians for my poor Lyaric [*sic*] [*recte* Iyaric]."[comment on a posting about a car painted with "Rasta colours"][32]

c. "I and I bin thinkin' that all this be an politricks outvention of the followers of the Whore of Babylon to continue the downpression of the Rastafari...."[a sarcastic comment on a forum thread involving complaints about the "corruption" of the English language from Americanism or "slang"][33]

So *outvention* may be an illusionary word of dictionaries, but it does not violate the Rastafari grammar in the same way that *lovepreciate* would. *Deadity* also seems rather marginally grammatical. Examples like *downsession* show the active nature of the overstanding process.

A curious attested example of reformation in Rastafari English is *satisful(l)*, which could either be a blending of *satisfy* and *full* "fill (v)", or else a non-prototypical overstanding:

(23) a. "I was truly satisfull that Prince Emmanuel had been benificent towards me and Itations and happy to have achieved that even against the protestations from the Priests that the Prince DONT allow any more photographs to be taken in the camp"[34]

b. "'Mi satisfull (I am satisfied) with everything, man,' [Winston Rodney aka Burning Spear] says, managing another laugh. 'Remember nothing neva a gwaan (was happening) early on, yuh nuh, so when something a gwaan now yuh haffi (have to) give thanks.'"[35]

c. "Mi juss a lissen to the radio (as per usual) and mi hear one bwoy a chat to one radio host and a talk bout apprecilove and satisful. Bwoy dem a tek this thing way too far now." [non-Rasta complaining about overstandings heard on the radio][36]

It is not entirely clear whether the base *satisfy* is felt to contain a negative element (*satis+fie*?), which would be necessary if it constitutes an overstanding. In some cases, there exists no clear semantically-opposed replacement for a negative element, e.g. *praises*, analysed as "prey-ses"; in this case the I-transformation, examined in the following section, functions as a "last resort" operation to rescue

[31] http://www.wikihow.com/Speak-Rastafarian-English

[32] https://jellyandcustard.wordpress.com/in-the-begining/tickled-pink/

[33] http://www.pprune.org/jet-blast/265060-english-language-whats-happening-5.html

[34] http://goo.gl/5eHJk

[35] http://www.ipsnews.net/1999/03/music-jamaica-burning-spear-keeping-things-fresh/

[36] http://forum.dancehallreggae.com/archive/index.php/t-137792.html?s=4742fceb3c430e66bc6e1948544eafff

a positive-charged word from the negative-association of putative component morphemes: *praises* becomes *Ises*.

3   I-Words

Rastafari English replaces Jamaican Creole (Patois) /mi/ with *I* or *I and I* (*I an I* etc.), with second person pronominal *you* frequently replaced by *the/de I(s)*. In general, Jamaican Creole (and Standard English) forms are still available, but first person first are almost always replaced by Rastafari English forms and second person forms at a lesser frequency. See Table 2 for an overview, [37] and the examples in (24) for illustrative instances of use.

	Standard English	Jamaican Creole (Patois)	Rastafari English
1sg	I / me / my	mi	I, Iman, (I and I)...
2sg	you / your	yu	de I, de Iman (thy)...
3sg	he, she, it / him, her, it / his, her, its	im, (i, shi, ar)	(im, i, shi)...
1pl	we / us / our	wi	I and I, (I, we)...
2pl	you (all) / your	yu, unu	de Is, (unu)...
3pl	they / them / their	dem	(dem, dey)...

Table 2: Pronouns in English, Jamaican Creole, and Rastafari English

(24) a.   /ai man a faawod/
           "I am leaving now." (Pollard 2000: 8)
      b.   /ai and ai taakin tu di ai ier an telin di man dat di king av kings liiv diiz dakument ier . . . /
           "I have been talking to this man here and telling him that the king of kings has left these documents here." (Pollard 2000: 12)
      c.   /denfram di taim now ai an ai waakin wid ai an ai opan wi shuolda an wi get biitn far it . . . /
           "Then from the time that we have been walking with our religion wi shoulders and we have been beaten for it" (*Ibid.*)

The "Biblical" pronoun *thy* (the old singular second person pronoun of English) does not appear to be targeted in the same fashion, though of course this form only occurs in certain registers. *Thy* appears to be able to co-occur with I-replaced forms of *you*, e.g.:

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[37]Forms in round brackets are less common.

(25) a. "Glad to see **the IMan**$_i$ thriving and studying to show **Thyself**$_i$ approved unto Jah."[38]

b. "Thanking **the i**$_i$ for this day, for giving **i and i**$_j$ **our**$_j$ daily bread. And **thy**$_i$ Kingdom come, on Earth will be done as there is a Mountain Zion." [Israel Vibration, "African Unification"][39]

c. "Rather, seeing thy Trust (Faith) in His Majesty, Our Father, we appeal to **the I**$_i$ and **thy**$_i$ bredren as fellow kinsmen to BE STRONG in HIS MAJESTY, and in the Power of HIS MIGHT (Ephesians 6:10)." [The Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah Mission, Inc., Rastafari Order of the Church of KRSTOS (R.O.C.K.), LOJ Society of the Nazarene - Prisoners Outreach Ministry of the GOODNEWS of H.I.M....][40]

I-words appear to connected to this change in the pronominal paradigm. While the I-transformational process ultimately ended up being applicable to any word, replacing the first syllable with /ai/, it is plausible that this represents the final stage of a replacement process which originally was restricted to a more limited environment. That is, just as *I* replaced *you* (simplifying somewhat) in the pronominal system, so the early I-transformational process may have targeted words containing the phonological sequence /yu/, replacing it with /ai/.

(26) a. *human* /yuman/ > *I-man* /aiman/
b. *unite* /yunait/ > *Inite* /ainait/
c. *universal* > *Iniversal*

Potentially, this process also included replacing the orthographic sequence "me", if not the phonological sequence /mi/, if the ubiquitous *irie* derives from *merry* ("me+ry", but /mɛri/).

Other prominent—and thus potentially early—I-words include many whose standard English bases are vowel initial, suggesting that vowel-to-vowel transformations, involving less distortion, may have also formed an earlier environment for the application of this transformation:

(27) a. I-quality < equality
b. I-men < amen
c. I-ssembly < assembly
d. I-cient < ancient

Some examples suggest a more morphologically-based transformation, as a number of I-words appear to involve /ai/ replacing various prefixes:

(28) a. I-serve < deserve
b. I-sire < desire
c. I-ceive < receive
d. I-tinually < continually

Though certainly the I-transformation synchronically does not appear to be restricted either morphologically or phonologically (other than being confined, apparently, to replacing the word-initial syllable[41]), as in the examples below:

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[38] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyoTWUAkexY&lc=pzC4vDYAztDBvUObh_thi5eIGB_kTD1wsVHI8YDZmnA

[39] http://www.lyricsfreak.com/i/israel+vibration/african+unification_20657215.html

[40] http://www.lojsociety.org/aymero_pdf/prisoners_outreach_ministry_of_the_goodnews_of_him.pdf

[41] There exist some apparent counterexamples like *forIver*.

(29) a. I-kril < mackerel
      b. Imes < times[42]
      c. I-rits < spirits
      d. I-ses < praises
      e. Ital "'kosher', vegetarian food suited to Rastafari diets" < vital[43]

Other than being a visible marker that the speaker identifies as Rastafari, the I-transformation often has little effect on the semantics of the word it is applied to, though it generally imparts a basic "spiritual" connotation. Certain I-words, however, have denotations which differ significantly from their bases:

(30) a. Iman < human (but meaning similar to pronominal "I" (see above))
      b. Iration < creation[44]
      c. Ital "spiritually clean food, ~ kosher, halal" < vital
      d. Idren "male or female co-Rasta(s)" < bredren(brethren)/sistren
      e. Iwa < hour, but generally meaning "time"[45]

Interestingly, the I-transformation can even applied to words which have undergone the overstanding transformation, as:

(31) iverstanding < overstanding

Also, I-transformations can be involved in overstanding-like processes, which, while not prototypical overstandings, still work to remove perceive negative implications from word for things/concepts deemed to be positive. This seems to be particularly common in the case of morphemes with perceived negative associations with no straightforward semantic opposites in positively-charged words, for example *Ises*, an overstanding of *praises* [="prey-ses"], where *prey* has no obvious positively-charged polar opposite available for repair. In this case, the I-transformation can serve as a sort of last resort repair:

(32) Explanation of I-ses:
      Ises, is a Rastafari reasoning of removing the sound "Prey" from praises and making it personal, hence I-ses.[46]

(33) I-nana "banana" [Douglas to appear]

Pollard emphasises homophony of *I* with *eye*, and important of vision in Rastafari: *seen*. Also homophonous with *high* (with *h*-dropping), from which are derived many prominent Rastafari words: *iya* (> *iyaman* "Rastaman"), *ites*, *aily*

All of these elements combine to give *I* in Rastafari a certain mystical force. *I* in Rastafari is in some ways comparable with Sanskrit *om* (ॐ), which by late Vedic times had became the mystical syllable *par excellence*. *Om* is used prominently in the recitation of mantras and prayers today, often forming both the first and the latest part of the utterance of any vocal offering, as in for instance the recitation of the famous Gāyatrī mantra. It also becomes used as a way of indicating assent, as an utterance which can mean "yes", as in example (34).[47]

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[42]Note the phonological irregularity here; expected: /aiz/.

[43]*Ital* is an excellent example of the special semantic shifts that certain I-words undergo.

[44]Note here the phonological irregularity; expected: /aieit/.

[45]Though English *hour* can have this sense as well.

[46]https://www.facebook.com/raselijah.tafari.5/posts/10200311697171126

[47]The Chāndogya Upaniṣad spells this out explicitly:

(34) anuśiṣṭo nv asi pitreti **om** iti hovāca
"'Have you been instructed by your father?' 'Yes,' he said." [*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.2.1]

I also participates in utterances of assent, as in (35).

(35) a. "Yes, I"
b. "Yes, Iya"

In certain ritual contexts, *om* replaces syllables; one such case is prepausal, as in (36), where the word *tāriṣat* "slew" becomes *tāriṣo3m*[48].

(36) . . . yasyendraḥ pītvā vṛtrāṇi jaṅghanat
pra sa janyāni tāriṣo3m [=tāriṣat]
". . . Of whom having drunk, Indra slew the Vritras; may he extend (our) people."
[*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 2.20.14]

A more extreme example of syllable-replacing *om*—again in a ritual context—occurs in (37-a), which represents a transformation of (37-b).

(37) a. śoṁsāvom . . . śaṁsāmodaivom . . . [*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 3.12.1–4]
b. (*) śaṁsāva. . .śaṁsā madă eva
"Let us two recite . . . Recite, rejoice indeed." [See Hock (1991: 98–100) for discussion of this reconstruction.]

4 Outro

Overstanding and I-transformation are prominent word-creation processes used in the introduction of salient Rastafari neologisms like *downpression* and *Ises*. This study demonstrates that these two morphological processes are distinct from superficially similar processes such as punning, word-play etc. The formal properties of the two Rastafari English morphological processes discussed here are worthy of further study, as are the innovations in the Rastafari English pronominal system, itself apparently a source of the I-transformation process.

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(i) tad vā etad ajñākṣaraṁ yad shi kiṁ cānujānāti **om** ity eva tad āha
"This very (syllable) is a syllable of assent; for whatever one assents to, to that one says '*Om*'."

See Hock (1991) for extensive discussion of the use of *om* in Sanskrit; cp. Bloomfield (1890), Keith (1917).
[48]With the 3 representing *pluti*, the overlong, extended vowel.

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