

THE STRUCTURE AND TECTONICS OF
MESOZOIC DIKE SWARMS
IN EASTERN NEW ENGLAND

by

Mark T. Swanson

A Dissertation

Submitted to the State Univeristy of New York at Albany

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Science and Mathematics

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ABSTRACT

Continuous outcrop mapping (1:240) along coastal exposures in southern Maine has led to the recognition of a complex brittle structural history that established the pre-existing structural grain for, and culminated in, the intrusive development of several Mesozoic dike swarms. The structural grain within the Rye Formation of the southern part of the field area consists of a dominant NE-trending near-vertical gneissic (mylonitized) foliation on which is superimposed the intense brittle shear fracturing of the pseudotachylyte-bearing Fort Foster Brittle Zone. This brittle shear fracturing was responsible for the later localization of explosive igneous breccias and felsic melts above the largely unexposed Gerrish Island Igneous Complex. The later emplacement of the dominant N25E-trending dike swarm, possibly Late Jurassic to Early Cretaceous in age, was primarily independent of the pre-existing structural grain and directly related to a system of late rusty-weathering open brittle fractures. The structural grain within the Kittery Formation of the northern part of the field area consists of a prominent N60E-trending vertical planar bedding-anisotropy as limbs of Acadian fold structures and a second N45E-trending vertical planar cleavage-anisotropy related to a late Z-shaped asymmetric fold and dextral shear zone development. These bedding-cleavage anisotropies are responsible for the structural localization of a prominent N60-45E trending dike swarm, possibly Early Triassic to Early Jurassic in age, associated with the alkaline syenite complex at Agamenticus. The bedding-anisotropy is found to play an important role in determining the character of strain accommodation between en echelon dike terminations. A younger NNW-NNE trending secondary dike swarm is interpreted as a termination structure

for the prominent N25E-trending dike swarm exposed farther south at Gerrish Island. The emplacement of this N25E-trending dike swarm and the development of the related late brittle fracture system involves a N65W-S65E, Late Jurassic - Early Cretaceous, crustal extension and its interaction with the prominent N60E-trending vertical bedding-anisotropy and the large rigid cylindrical Agamenticus intrusion. Finally, a regional synthesis of Mesozoic structural developments in eastern North America results in a model for a complex decoupling history during central Atlantic rifting. This model incorporates the varied interaction between dextral shear, extension, sinistral shear and final crustal separation along a wide, arcuate, near-pole, small-circle transform system and the linear belt of pre-existing Appalachian structural grain. The N60-45E and N25E trending dike swarms studied in southern Maine would most likely be related to the Triassic-Jurassic extensional phase and final Jurassic-Cretaceous crustal separation phase, respectively, within the proposed model.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT	i
LIST OF FIGURES	iii
LIST OF TABLES	xvi
LIST OF PLATES	xvii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xviii
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem	1
Description of Field Area	1
Investigative Methods	8
CHAPTER II - GERRISH ISLAND EXPOSURES	10
Rye Formation of Gerrish Island	10
Brittle Faulting Associated with Pseudotachylyte Generation	15
Description of Pseudotachylyte	17
Fracture Geometry	25
Associated Structures External to the Pseudotachylyte Generation Zones	30
Failure of Anisotropic Rocks	36
Discussion of Pseudotachylyte Generation and Associated Faulting	38
Regional Relationships of the Fort Foster Brittle Zone.	46
Summary of Pseudotachylyte Generation	49
Late Kink Band Structures at Gerrish Island	50
Gerrish Island Igneous Complex	52
Dike Intrusion at Gerrish Island	56
CHAPTER III - CAPE NEDDICK EXPOSURES	60
History of Research	60
Fabric Zone	62
Fabric Elements	69
Interpretation of Fabric Zone	74
Dike Intrusion at Cape Neddick	78
Styles of Internal Dike Deformation	81
CHAPTER IV - BALD HEAD EXPOSURES	87
History of Research	87
Structural Framework	90
Quartz Vein Systems	94
East Point Sigmoidal Quartz Veins	94

	<u>Page</u>
Boudined and Planar Quartz Veins at Bald Head.	98
Summary of Pre-existing Structural Framework	112
Distribution and Structural Control of Dike Intrusion at Bald Head	113
Multiple Swarm Relations	117
Orientation Distribution of Dike Intrusions	125
Swarm Discriminations	128
Scottish Tertiary Dike Systems	133
Characteristic Swarm Parameters	138
Age of Dike Swarms	141
Tectonic Setting	141
 CHAPTER V - MECHANICS OF DIKE INTRUSION IN ANISOTROPIC ROCKS	 145
Dike Termination Morphology	145
Narrow Tapered Terminations	145
Blunt-Rounded Terminations	152
Transform Terminations	152
Propagation Directions	155
Extensional Terminations	159
Rotated Slab-Rotated Block Terminations	160
Kinked Terminations	167
Origin of Kink Terminations and the Nature of the Stress Field Variation	173
Dilation Mechanics	178
 CHAPTER VI - LATE BRITTLE FRACTURE SYSTEM	 183
Nature and Distribution of Late Brittle Fractures	183
Structures Developed During Late Brittle Shear Fracturing	192
Summary of the Mechanics of Fault Gouge Formation.	205
 CHAPTER VII - SUMMARY OF STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT	 211
Role of Pre-existing Structures on Minor Structural Development and Reactivation during Dike Intrusion	211
Regional Structural Significance of Minor Structures and Intrusions	212
 CHAPTER VIII - REGIONAL TECTONIC SYNTHESIS: THE TRIASSIC- JURASSIC DECOUPLING HISTORY OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA DURING OPENING OF THE CENTRAL ATLANTIC.	 217
Introduction	217
Continental Reconstruction for the Assembly of Pangea.	218
Implications of Dextral Transform Shear for Eastern North America.	221
Pre-existing Structural Grain	224
Mid-Late Triassic Dextral Shear.	229
Late Triassic-Early Jurassic Extensional Phase	235
Middle Jurassic Sinistral Shear Phase.	236

	<u>Page</u>
The Relation of Eastern New England Dike Swarms to the Proposed Mesozoic Tectonic Model	250
Multi-plate Mosaic Interactions	252
Conclusions	258
REFERENCES	264

LIST OF FIGURES

		<u>Page</u>
Figure 1	- Location index map for specific names and localities used in the text from York 15' quadrangle	3
Figure 2	- Location index map for Plates 1-6	4
Figure 3	- Geologic map of southern Maine (after Hussey & Pankiwskyj, 1976)	5
Figure 4	- Intersection of major regional structures in New England with field area location in southern Maine	6
Figure 5	- Coast-parallel positive elliptical gravity anomaly, (after Kane <u>et al.</u> , 1972, +20 mgal, 5 mgal contours, Devonian calc-alkaline gabbrodiorite ∇ , and Mesozoic White Mountain ∇ intrusives	7
Figure 6	- Schematic geology and structure of Gerrish Island, (after Hussey, 1980)	12
Figure 7	- Sketch map of the dominant outcrop-scale fault pattern within the Fort Foster Brittle Zone with pseudotachylyte developed within generation zones along oblique and layer-parallel shear surfaces	18
Figure 8a	- Pseudotachylyte generation zone in thin section showing an internal shear fracture geometry, pseudotachylyte veinlets (black) and layer-parallel bounding shears top and bottom	19
Figure 8b	- Resorption haloes around xenolithic clasts within pseudotachylyte	20
Figure 8c	- Feldspar(?) microlites within pseudotachylyte at vein extremities	21
Figure 9	- Morphology of pseudotachylyte generation zone vein systems, in heavy black, and the host rock layering, lighter black	23
Figure 10	- Stereographic projection of poles to dominant shear fractures within several pseudotachylyte generation zones, layer-parallel bounding shears ($\square$), dextral ($\bullet$), sinistral ($\circ$), and class "c" ($\ast$) shear fractures.	26

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 11 - Internal shear fracture geometries from pseudotachylyte generation zones	27
Figure 12 - Generalized internal shear fracture geometry with the layer-parallel pseudotachylyte generation zones	29
Figure 13 - Quartz vein structures (in black) from associated gneissic outcrops (scale bar = 2cm) . .	32
Figure 14 - Dextral and sinistral brittle-ductile shear structures	33
Figure 15 - Conjugate contemporaneous shear fractures . .	34
Figure 16 - Stereographic projection of poles to dominant shears (dextral ● ; sinistral ○) and extension cracks (□) with representative shear planes and foliation anisotropy from associated gneissic exposures	35
Figure 17 - a) development of layer-parallel generation zones within compressional bend in oblique dextral shear, b) conjugate layer-normal shortening structures c) Reidel-type shear fracture system (dextral synthehtic) (dextral synthetic dominant). .	39
Figure 18 - Schematic model for pseudotachylyte generation zone development with the injection of melt into the internal shear fracture system (internal conjugate shear fracture geometry after Grocott, 1981).	43
Figure 19 - Sequential development of pseudotachylyte generation zones: a) formation of conjugate "internal" shear fractures until system locks, b) development of a single through-going layer-parallel shear fracture which truncates the earlier formed structures, c) development of a second through-going layer-parallel shear fracture which, in truncating the earlier formed oblique structures, effectively brackets the earlier "internal" shears between two principal bounding shears . . .	45
Figure 20 - Schematic diagram for a regional brittle E-W dextral shear structure with total offset of 1-2 kilometers	48

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 21 - Stereographic projection of poles to kink band boundaries and related shear structures, (dextral ● , and sinistral ○) at Gerrish Island	51
Figure 22 - Dike trend histogram for Gerrish Island . . .	57
Figure 23 - Sketch map of the Cape Neddick Gabbroic Complex showing approximate distribution of measured fracture fabric orientations	63
Figure 24a - Fracture fabric (fine dark lineations) and felsic veining within mafic dikes	65
Figure 24b - Extensive irregular veining along fracture fabric trend within mafic dike	66
Figure 24c - Fine felsic veining and incipient brecciation along fracture fabric trend within mafic dike	67
Figure 24d - Coarse felsic veining and brecciation along fracture fabric trend within mafic dike . . .	68
Figure 24e - Hornblende concentrations (with no preferred orientation) along fabric element in Kittery quartzite (plane light).	70
Figure 24f - Quartz concentration along fabric element in Kittery quartzite (crossed Nicols)	71
Figure 24g - Intracrystalline microbrecciation of plagioclase phenocrysts along fabric element in felsic dike (crossed Nicols)	72
Figure 24h - Intracrystalline microbrecciation and hornblende alteration of augite phenocrysts along fabric elements in mafic dike (plane light). .	73
Figure 25 - Dike trend histogram for Cape Neddick.	80
Figure 26 - Styles of internal dike deformation as reported in the literature:	
a) Z-shaped oblique internal foliation due to sinistral shear (Pitcher & Berger, 1972),	
b) complex oblique internal foliation due to multiple deformation of dextral followed by sinistral marginal shear (Eyal, 1980),	
c) internal dike deformation structures induced by dextral shear that include a low angle oblique foliation, intermediate angled quartz veins and high angle jointing (Blyth, 1950),	

	d) bend folding and marginal amphibolite due to sinistral shear (Escher <u>et al.</u> , 1975),	
	e) possible shear-induced deformation structures as intense jointing along the margins of the dike,	
	f) medial brittle shear structure partially injected by late felsic melts,	
	g) internal dike deformation due to dextral shear developed during an oblique dilation that includes low angle melt-injected shear (?) fractures within the dike margin, high angle joints and bending of host rock layers,	
	h) internal dike deformation structures due to sinistral shear that include Reidel-type low angle synthetic sinistral shear fractures, high angle antithetic shear fractures which both crosscut intermediate angled quartz-filled extension gash veins	82
Figure 27	- Original sketch map of Bald Head dike intrusion pattern (Kemp, 1890)	88
Figure 28	- Stereographic projection of poles to bedding (●), and oblique cleavage (o) at the Bald Head exposures, north and south	92
Figure 29	- Stereographic projection of poles to dikes; includes the main NE-trending dike swarm (●), and the secondary NNE to NNW trending dikes (o), at the Bald Head exposures, north and south. . . .	93
Figure 30	- Outcrop map of sigmoidal en echelon quartz veins (q); dike intrusions (hatched, single lines-diabase, coarse hatching-felsic porphyry), late brittle fractures (dashed) at East Point, north York Harbor	95
Figure 31	- Morphology of sigmoidal quartz veins at East Point	97
Figure 32	- Pattern of quartz veining (q) and dike intrusion (hatched) at North Bald Head	99
Figure 33	- Stereographic projection of poles to boudined (●) and planar (o) quartz veins with representative cleavage and bedding planes for the Bald Head exposures	100
Figure 34	- Cross-cutting planar quartz veins within quartzite layers, deformed and boudined quartz veins within pelitic layers, North Bald Head	102

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 35 - Morphology of quartz-filled boudin trains within pelitic layers (layering parallel to top and bottom of page) at South Bald Head. .	103
Figure 36 - Summary of proposed models for rhomb boudin formation: a) spaced layer-parallel shears, b) rotation by brittle shear mechanisms within a ductile matrix, c) en echelon extension fractures opened by near layer-parallel transform type shears.	105
Figure 37 - Formation of boudined and planar quartz veins by initial layer-parallel sinistral shear and later layer-parallel dextral shear deformation localized within the pelitic layers	106
Figure 38 - Histogram of structural elements in rhomb boudin vein forms relative to the dominant bedding anisotropy for the southern Bald Head exposures	108
Figure 39 - Strongly sigmoidal quartz vein within dike-injected shear zone at Bald Head and the proposed sequential evolution. Minor sinistral shears crosscutting quartz veins are strike-slip components of the late brittle fracture zone	111
Figure 40 - Histogram of dike trends at Bald Head (north and south)	114
Figure 41 - Pattern of dike intrusion at Bald Head, showing cleavage- and bedding-parallel dike segments (refer to Plates 3 & 4A)	115
Figure 42 - Pattern of dike intrusion at south Bald Head showing the main N60E layer-parallel dike swarm and the secondary cross-cutting dike swarm (refer to Plates 5 & 6)	116
Figure 43 - Dike-injected dextral shear structure at Bald Head (refer to Plates 3 & 4A)	118
Figure 44 - Opening directions vs. orientation for dikes from entire field area, dashed lines represent multiple dike segments	120
Figure 45 - Secondary dike swarm relations with layer-parallel transform structures (refer to Plates 3 & 4B)	122

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 46 - Multiple cross-cutting relations for NE and NW trending dikes near East Point	123
Figure 47 - Combined histogram of all dike trends for the entire field area	126
Figure 48 - Comparison of dike trend histograms for entire field area (minor NW-trending dikes have been excluded from this comparison figure)	127
Figure 49 - Histogram of observed opening directions for entire field area (5° intervals).	129
Figure 50 - Hypothesized termination structure for the prominent N25E-trending dike swarm at Gerrish Island (dikes are not to scale and are shown offshore of coastal exposures)	131
Figure 51 - Schematic diagram for double dike swarm model (dikes not to scale) including swarm termination structures (Figure 50)	132
Figure 52 - Expected reorientation of principal stresses and dike trends about an intrusion in a linear dike swarm - central intrusive complex model and the actual observed pattern of dike intrusion about Cape Neddick. Axis of linear swarm and stress trajectories aligned parallel to the prominent trend of dike intrusion at Gerrish Island to show that the dikes in these two areas may not be related to the same swarm	135
Figure 53 - Triple dike swarm model with linear dike swarms associated with each central intrusive complex, (also note the occurrence of an additional phase of NW-trending dikes developed sporadically throughout the field area)	137
Figure 54 - Generalized classification of en echelon dike termination structures (variable scale)	146
a) narrow taper;	
b) blunt rounded;	
c) transform faulted;	
d) extensional;	
e) rotated slab;	
f) rotated block;	
g) kinked	

Figure 55	- Observed variations in dike termination structures	148
	a) normal transform with narrow tapers;	
	b) oblique extensional transform with narrow tapers and en echelon dikelets;	
	c) complex transform with narrow taper and extensional fingers;	
	d) double transform with narrow tapers;	
	e) kinked oblique transform;	
	f) rotated block with narrow taper;	
	g) rotated slab with kinked margins and narrow tapers;	
	h) rotated slab;	
	i) kink-transform single termination structure;	
	j) oblique sinistral kink;	
	k) single dextral kink with extensional finger;	
	l) double rotated slab with extensional finger	
Figure 56	- Generalized classification of sill-laccolith termination structures (variable scale, after Pollard 1968; 1972; 1973).	150
	a) narrow taper;	
	b) single yield hinge (domed intrusion);	
	c) double yield hinge (flat-topped intrusion);	
	d) peripheral extensional diking;	
	e) blunt conjugate faulted;	
	f) normal faulted;	
Figure 57	- Three-dimensional schematic model for dilation of offset en echelon transform dike segments (variable scale)	154
Figure 58	- Examples of offset en echelon dike segments (bedding parallel with the top and bottom of the page)	157
Figure 59	- Schematic model for the development of the rotated slab and rotated block dike termination structures	162
	a) en echelon narrow tapers with initial slab definition and rotation;	
	b) moderate rotation of the slab upon dike dilation with the formation of small extensional dike fingers;	
	c) detached slab of wall rock, full rotation and eventual detachment as a free-floating xenolith;	
	d) en echelon dike terminations with extensional dike fingers which structurally isolate the rotated intervening block;	

- Figure 59 (cont'd) - e) further dilation accommodated by the lateral propagation of narrow tapered dike tips bypassing the rotated block termination structure;
f) bypass may be complete as in the formation of a dike shoulder or partial as in the progressive slabbing of the wall rock
- Figure 60 - Schematic model for the evolution of the rotated block and transform termination structures and the origin of true vs. apparent opening directions (variable scale): 164
- a) en echelon narrow tapers;
b) definition and rotation of intervening block upon dilation;
c) widening of the dikes and the extensional fingers propagating along the margins of the block;
d) detached remnant intervening block and the resulting true and apparent opening directions;
e) en echelon narrow tapers;
f) formation of transform fault as accommodation mechanism during dilation;
g) breaching of the transform with further widening of the dike;
h) significantly widened dike with stepped margins.
- Figure 61 - Outcrop map of large rotated block en echelon termination structure in the south Bald Head exposures (refer to Plates 5 & 6) 166
- Figure 62 - Outcrop map of south Bald Head conjugate kink field (refer to Plate 6), (the near-vertical bedding-anisotropy strikes parallel to the top and bottom of page) 169
- Figure 63 - Outcrop map of doubly kink-terminated dike segment, north Bald Head exposures, (refer to Plate 4A), the near-vertical bedding-anisotropy strikes parallel to the top and bottom of the page. . . 170
- Figure 64 - Outcrop map of single kink-transform dike termination structure, south Bald Head exposures (refer to Plate 6) 171
- Figure 65 - Outcrop map of single kink-transform dike termination structure, south Bald Head exposures (refer to Plate 6) 172

	<u>Page</u>	
Figure 66	- Stereographic projection of poles to dextral kink band boundaries (●,○) associated rotation axes (▲,△) and represented bedding and kink planes for Bald Head showing discrimination of upright (solid symbols) and inclined (open symbols) sets of kinks	174
Figure 67	- Stereographic projection of poles to sinistral kink band boundaries (●,○), associated rotation axes (▲,△) and representative bedding and kink planes for Bald Head showing discrimination of upright (solid symbols) and inclined (open symbols) sets of kinks . . .	175
Figure 68	- Stereographic projection of poles to conjugate dextral (●) and sinistral (○) kink band boundaries and associated rotation axes (triangles) for Bald Head.	176
Figure 69	- Three-dimensional schematic drawing of the combined kink-transform mechanisms and the upward bifurcation of sheet intrusions (variable scale).	182
Figure 70	- Histogram of late brittle fracture trends (upper curve 5° intervals); D, dextral; S, sinistral; N, normal, as the number of fractures in each orientation set with the observed component of slip)	186
Figure 71	- Schematic model for the development of the late brittle fracturing system (1:120,000) as a northeasterly propagating N25E-trending extensional system and the structural complications within the anisotropic Kittery Fm. and about the periphery of the Agamenticus intrusion.	187
Figure 72	- Prominent topographic lineaments summarized from Plate 8	190
Figure 73	- Quartz and calcite filled rhomb pull-apart structures associated with late brittle shear fractures (light stippled layers-quartzite; white layers-pelite)	193
Figure 74	- Layer-parallel sinistral brittle shear structure at York Cliffs	195

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 75	- Sequential schematic model for the development of brittle foliated layer-parallel shear zone structures within pelitic layers. 197
	a) formation of anti-reidel dextral shear fractures;
	b) rotation and flexing of anti-reidel fractures;
	c) locking of anti-reidel fractures (dots indicate offset compositional layering)
Figure 76	- Foliated brittle shear zone structures in pelitic units. 199
	a) internal structure and inferred offset after Bosworth (1982b), from central New York;
	b) internal structure and inferred sense of offset as observed in the field, from Kennebunkport, Maine.
Figure 77	- Outcrop sketch (from photograph) of brittle gouge formation in thinner quartzite layers, York Cliffs sinistral layer-parallel shear structure. 201
Figure 78	- Stereographic projection of poles to dominant shear fractures and corresponding planes, as measured in outcrop for the internal shear fracturing within the thicker quartzite layer, York Cliffs sinistral layer-parallel shear structure, (dextral ● ; sinistral ○). 203
Figure 79	- Fracture trend histogram for fractured thicker quartzite layer within the York Cliffs layer-parallel sinistral shear structure (5° intervals); degrees and fracture type orientations measured relative to the layering for layer-parallel sinistral shear and layer-normal shortening; D and S indicate domains of dextral and sinistral senses of offset. 204
Figure 80	- a. "layer-normal contraction" by oblique shear after Jaeger & Gay (1974);
	b. York Cliffs shear structure as a long pull-apart structure developing conjugate layer-parallel extensional (or layer-normal shortening) shear fractures;
	c. York Cliffs shear structure as layer-parallel sinistral shear structure developing conjugate Reidel shear fracture system. . . . 206
Figure 81	- Schematic comparison diagram of the observed mechanism for brittle fault gouge formation and pseudotachylyte generation (variable scale) . 209

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 82 - Comparison of continental reconstructions proposed by Van der Voo <u>et al.</u> (1976) with the LePichon & Fox (1971) realignment of fracture zone trends for ocean opening and the original fit of continental margins by Bullard, Everett and Smith (1965).	220
Figure 83 - Nature of interaction between an <u>arcuate</u> dextral transform shear couple and a linear belt of pre-existing structural grain with the expected styles of structural reactivation	223
Figure 84 - Distribution of extensional orientations within an arcuate sinistral transform shear structure and cross-cutting relationships to the linear belt of pre-existing structural grain	224
Figure 85 - Localization of Mesozoic Basin formation by a pre-existing regional Appalachian fault system (late Paleozoic)	237
Figure 86 - Possible structural and sedimentological correlation between the Newark Group sediments and basins of eastern North America and the Eagle Mills Formation of the Gulf Coast sub-surface during a proposed counter-clockwise rotation of Africa and South America relative to North America about a Saharan pole during the Triassic (distribution of the Eagle Mills Formation after Salvador & Green, 1980)	230
Figure 87 - Composite dextral transform shear structure within the reactivated Appalachian structural grain; extension in the Southern Appalachians along the Eastern Piedmont fault system (Hatcher <u>et al.</u> , 1977; Bobyarchick, 1981); compression in the Northern Appalachians along the Mineral Hill fault (MacFayden <u>et al.</u> , 1978) and a possible strike-slip pull-apart structure in the Central Appalachians along the ancestral Ramapo Fault (Ratcliffe, 1971; 1977; 1980).	232
Figure 88 - Biostratigraphic correlation among individual basins of the Newark Series (after Olsen, <u>et al.</u> , 1982)	233

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 89 - Arcuate sinistral transform shear couple in relation to fan-shaped Jurassic dike swarm and the Triassic-Jurassic sedimentary basins within the Appalachians of eastern North America	240
Figure 90 - Fan-shaped distribution of post-Triassic Mesozoic dikes within the Appalachians (after King 1961, 1971)	242
Figure 91 - Structural relationship of Mesozoic dike swarms to regional deformation pattern in the Appalachians as proposed by DeBoer (1967) which involves a change from pure shear in the southern Appalachians with dikes along tension fractures to simple sinistral shear in the northern Appalachians with dikes along shear fractures	245
Figure 92 - Triassic-Jurassic diabase dikes in eastern North America, western Africa and northern South America with continents restored to the Bullard, Everett and Smith (1965) pre-drift reconstruction as proposed by May (1971)	246
Figure 93 - Geotectonic model of the Mesozoic Appalachians as proposed by DeBoer & Snider (1979) showing Triassic (Florida) and Jurassic (Blake Plateau) ridge-ridge triple junctions, a Carolina's hotspot, the extent of crustal bulging and the resulting rift valleys (subaerial-black; subsurface-dotted) with the inferred Jurassic stress pattern (dashed) responsible for fractures along which Jurassic dikes were emplaced	248
Figure 94 - Multi-plate mosaic interaction between the closure of Paleotethys and the opening of the central Atlantic (base map after Sengor, 1980)	254
a) Mid-Triassic - Late Triassic CCW rotation of Africa and the Gondwanaland continents as a dextral shear phase in the central Atlantic with subduction of Paleotethys and generation of Neotethys in a three plate mosaic;	
b) Late Triassic - Early Jurassic extension in the central Atlantic with beginning of closure and suturing of Paleotethys and continued Neotethys expansion;	
c) Mid-Jurassic CW rotation of Africa and the Gondwanaland continents as a sinistral shear	

- Figure 94 - phase in the central Atlantic due to
(cont'd) complete suturing of Paleotethys and
a return to a two plate mosaic with
continued Neotethys expansion;
d) Late Jurassic - Early Cretaceous (as
shown) extension in the central Atlantic
upon convergent accommodation of Neo-
tethys expansion
- Figure 95 - Summary of structural sequence in the pro-
posed Mesozoic decoupling history for
eastern North America during central
Atlantic rifting. 261
- a) arcuate dextral transform shear couple
and resulting mid-Triassic composite
structure along reactivated Appalachian
structural grain;
 - b) late Triassic-early Jurassic extension
with graben sedimentation and subsi-
dence;
 - c) arcuate sinistral transform shear
couple and resulting pattern of mid-
Jurassic dike injection.

LIST OF TABLES

		<u>Page</u>
Table 1	- Characteristic dike swarm parameters for southern coastal Maine.	139
Table 2	- Triassic-Jurassic White Mountain Intrusives: Isotopic Ages, Methods and References	142
Table 3	- Cretaceous White Mountain intrusives: Isotopic ages, Methods and References.	143
Table 4	- Summary of the possible age and correlations of minor small-scale structures within the Rye Formation	216
Table 5	- Summary of isotopic age determinations for Triassic-Jurassic igneous rocks in eastern North America	237
Table 6	- Summary of the proposed Triassic-Jurassic development of the Pangean continents from the Permian assembly of Van der Voo <u>et al.</u> (1976) and the Permo-Triassic Paleotethys reconstruction of Sengor (1979)	259

LIST OF PLATES

- Plate 1 - Pattern of Mesozoic dike intrusion and igneous brecciation above the Gerrish Island Igneous Complex (1:1200)
- Plate 2 - Pattern of Mesozoic dike intrusion about the Cretaceous Cape Neddick Gabbroic Complex (1:2,400 and 1:1,200)
- Plate 3 - Pattern of Mesozoic dike intrusion: Bald Head north to Perkins Cove (1:2,400)
- Plate 4A - Pattern of Mesozoic dike intrusion: Bald Head north to Perkins Cove (1:600)
- Plate 4B - Pattern of Mesozoic dike intrusion: Bald Head north to Perkins Cove (1:600)
- Plate 5 - Pattern of Mesozoic dike intrusion: Bald Head south to Pond Rocks (1:2,400)
- Plate 6 - Pattern of Mesozoic dike intrusion: Bald Head Cliff south to Pond Rocks (1:600)
- Plate 7 - Distribution of late brittle fractures in the York 15' Quadrangle (1:62,500)
- Plate 8 - Distribution of topographic lineaments in the York 15' Quadrangle (1:62,500)
- Plate 9 - Shear fracture pattern in thicker quartzite unit, York Cliffs layer-parallel sinistral brittle shear structure (1:2)

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