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Postcolonial Songs of Protest: A Study of Bob Marley's Music and Lyrics

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, Bob Marley has become one of the most influential figures of modern history. While he was alive, and even posthumously, he received several awards and honors. For example, in 1978 he was awarded the Peace Medal by the United Nations, and in 1981 he was given an Order of Merit by the Prime Minister of Jamaica. For what concerns his musical career, instead, Marley, together with the Wailers, was *Rolling Stone*'s band of the year, in 1978, and in 2005 he won a posthumous Grammy Award.

All the recognition that he has received explains why, during the last years, many people have focused on studying his life and his music. Even if there are several works that have Bob Marley as their main subject, such as “Frith (2001), Stephens (1998), Stephens (1999) and Dawes (2012)”, Cosmas Amenorvi notes that “the majority of these works on Bob Marley are more biographical, social and cultural in nature” (Amenorvi 2019a:117). This is also one of the reasons why, in this thesis, I have decided to analyze Bob Marley's music from a literary perspective. Obviously, this task brings forth a major issue: can music, and thus lyrics, be considered as a form of literature?

First of all, it is very hard to define what literature is. Many people, throughout the centuries have tried to categorize and distinguish literary works from non-literary works; among these attempts probably one of the most notable was Jean-Paul Sartre's *What is Literature?*, published in 1948. However, nowadays it seems like a more fluid definition of literature is gradually replacing old views, such as the distinction between high and low literature. In this perspective, Amenorvi mentions Halliday and Hasan (1976) who define a text as:

“not just a string of sentences. It is not simply a large grammatical unit, something of the same kind as a sentence, but deferring from it in size – a sort of a super sentence, a semantic unit. A text best is thought of as not a grammatical unit at all, but rather as a unit of a different kind: a semantic unit. The unity that it has is a unity of meaning in context, a texture that expresses the fact that it relates as a whole to the environments in which it is placed” (Halliday and Hasan 1976:293 cited in Amenorvi 2019a:117-118)

In Amenorvi's view "meaning, therefore, is central to what a text is. In that regard, any piece of information that is meaningful, for example, a whole book, a paragraph, a sentence, or a single word or indeed a song is a type of text" (Amenorvi 2019a:118). For this reason, paraphrasing Singhi and Brown (2014) he claims that lyrics, just like poetry, are "meaningful ways by which humans express their thoughts, feelings, emotions and ideas" (Amenorvi 2019a:118). Moreover, he also adds that, since lyrics are both coherent and cohesive, they can be regarded, and thus studied, just like any other text.

The proof that more and more scholars are beginning to evaluate lyrics as meaningful texts, worthy of being analyzed, lies in the ever-growing body of studies that are being made on singers and lyrics in general, such as the works by Risdianto (2016) and Arbain (2016).

I must acknowledge that I have discussed too briefly about this argument, regarding literature and lyrics, however, I believe that a small introduction would not be sufficient to deal with such a huge and controversial topic, and I hope, instead, that this small reference of mine might be useful to encourage further studies on whether lyrics, and also other kinds of texts, can be studied and regarded as literature.

Considering now music in the light of a postcolonial discourse, it is undoubtful that music has always been related with the social and the political. Some notable contemporary examples of this are surely Bob Dylan, Jamies Brown, Jimmy Cliff and Bruce Springsteen, who supported civil rights movements and conveyed through their songs anti-war messages. Moreover, many artists, such as Bono Vox and Adam Yauch, were also social activists who fought for poor people and advocated for their rights.

Talking specifically about reggae, it is evident that this musical genre has always been connected with the concept of third world liberation. In fact, taking into account Marley's music, in 1980, when Zimbabwe obtained its independence, Bob Marley was invited as a guest

for its celebration, because his music had inspired people to fight for their freedom. In addition to that, Marley's songs were also the protagonists of several others public manifestations and celebrations. For example, *Get Up, Stand Up* was played by Chinese students in 1989 during their marching protest in Tienanmen square, and *Three Little Birds* was also one of the songs that was played while people celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall (Chang and Chen 1998:2-4).

Considering the evidence that I have mentioned thus far, I have decided to analyze Bob Marley's songs and lyrics, trying to place them into a postcolonial frame, and also trying to show how his works have undoubtedly many literary elements within them. For this purpose, this thesis is going to be divided into three chapters.

The aim of the first chapter will be to introduce postcolonialism and postcolonial literatures in order to understand how Marley can be analyzed in the light of this critical school of thought. Moreover, I am also going to briefly summarize the history of Jamaica, beginning from its colonization during the 15th-16th century; and, in addition to that, I am also going to focus on the religious history of Jamaica, with a particular emphasis on Rastafarianism, since it was a major influence on Bob Marley's life. In general, this first chapter is going to provide the foundations for the analysis of his songs from a socio-historical perspective.

The second chapter will instead center around the figure of Bob Marley and his music, taking also into account the development of the musical genre called reggae. His life is surely an indispensable element that is needed in order to fully understand the references that can be found in his songs, and, at the same time, the development of reggae brings with it also historical aspects that relate to Jamaica's colonial past, and this is something I am going to show in the second section of this chapter.

Finally, in the third chapter I am going to analyze some of Bob Marley's songs, taking into account all the arguments discussed in the previous chapters. In particular, I am going to study these songs from a thematical perspective, and then I am going to focus on the literary elements that can be found within his lyrics. To complete this study, I will lastly analyze *Redemption Song* which can probably be considered as his most elaborate song, both for its themes and for the several allusions that characterize this text.

CHAPTER 1: POSTCOLONIALISM AND JAMAICA

1.1 Understanding the term 'postcolonialism'

In *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* (2012), Ato Quayson traces the birth of the term postcolonialism and, consequently, of postcolonial studies:

Though it is now conventional to ascribe the birth of the field of postcolonial studies to the publication of Edward Said's landmark *Orientalism* in 1978, with further insights being extrapolated from Ashcroft et al.'s already mentioned and now classic *The Empire Writes Back*, the prehistory of the term 'postcolonial' itself proves slightly more colourful than generally supposed. The earliest instance of the word, used in a largely temporal sense and with a hyphen, appeared in academic writing in a 1910 essay by T.W. Allen in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* with reference to some minor poets of the pre-Homeric era. (Quayson 2012:4-5)

Nonetheless, before defining what postcolonialism is, it is paramount to explain the connotation that the word 'colonialism' has in this context. In general, colonialism "can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods" (Lomba 2005:8). However, this term assumes a more complex meaning, if we realise that, although colonialism has always existed since the beginning of empires, modern colonialism has brought a much more intricate array of changes in the colonised countries. First of all, it is important to note that the expansion of countries such as England, France and Germany, between the 17th and the 20th century, were driven not only by economic reasons, but also by the belief that "the uncivilized Other (Chinese, African, Caribbean, Southeast Asian) [...] needed to be reformed through the light of reason and colonial governmentality" (Quayson 2012:7). Hence, the colonizers also introduced new technologies and techniques in the colonized countries; from the one hand, they wanted to modernize those countries, but from the other hand, their main agenda was to exploit their resources in the best possible way.

In fact, as Thomas Bottomore points out, since modern colonialism was influenced by the development of capitalism,

“[it] did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered—it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonised and colonial countries.” (Bottomore 1983:81-85, cited in Loomba 2005:9)

And it was exactly this dynamic that has led to the impoverishment of several countries in favour of the growth of some capitalistic colonizing empires; this, in turn, has generated a relationship of dependency from the perspective of the colonised countries. Moreover, this interdependence has often continued even after the political independence of colonized states, resulting in what scholars today call ‘neo-colonialism’.

In the light of what we have just observed, we can now move onto trying to analyse what ‘postcolonialism’ is, which however is not really a simple task. First of all, the prefix is already source of controversy: ‘Post’ conveys the meaning of something that has already concluded, but in reality, oftentimes, the effects of colonialism have such a strong repercussion on the socio-economic structure of a country, that even if the colonised country acquires its own independence, it is actually still dependent on its previous colonizer. In fact, “a country may be both postcolonial (in the sense of being formally independent) and neo-colonial (in the sense of remaining economically and/or culturally dependent) at the same time” (Loomba 2005:12).

Furthermore, postcolonialism cannot even be defined on a chronological/temporal basis. This is due to the fact that American countries were among the first states to emancipate from modern capitalistic colonizers, and this process has been continuing at least up to the end of the 20th century. This means that it is impossible to draw an exact line between the end of the age of colonialism and the beginning of postcolonialism. The fact that the independence of all these colonised states was achieved in diverse historical and social periods, as well as different geographical areas, can also make us understand that the way the people were ‘managed’ and oppressed by the colonizers was completely different in almost each case. Moreover, depending on all the aforementioned factors, the results of the obtainment of independence were also completely different.

Furthermore, as Robert Young argues, trying to study postcolonial countries only in relation to the period following their independence can give a very limited and imprecise view of their socio-cultural heritage. First of all, because “colonialism did not inscribe itself on a clean slate, and it cannot therefore account for everything that exists in ‘postcolonial’ societies” (Loomba 2005:20-21); in fact, “placing the emphasis on independence rather than colonization, [...] is in its own ways as problematic, given that it too can be accused of implicitly erasing pre-independence indigenous cultures” (Young 2001:60). Secondly, it can also become quite controversial to determine when a specific country has actually obtained its independence, since, in some cases, “the moment of independence was sometimes indeterminate, without a visible, theatrical movement of the transfer of power”, especially in those colonies that already had a certain degree of internal self-government and therefore “achieved independence through gradually pushing at the limits of their legal status” (Young 2001:60). In this perspective, Young provides the example of Ireland and Egypt, arguing that it is impossible to define whether the first one achieved its independence in 1924 or 1948, and, for what concerns the second one, it was such a complex process that there are as many as four different years that are linked with its independence. Lastly, Young argues that not all colonialism is over, and nowadays we are also witnessing “the politics of the ‘fourth world’”, which refer to countries or populations that are located within decolonized countries (as for example the Ainu in Japan or the gypsies in Spain) (Young 2001:60). So, a general model of postcolonialism based on a temporal criterion, as for example post-independence, would prove to be inaccurate in several cases.

As Helen Tiffin briefly explains,

Post-colonial cultures are inevitably hybridised, involving a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create or recreate independent local identity. Decolonisation is process, not arrival; it invokes an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them; between European or British discourses and their post-colonial dis/mantling (Tiffin 1995:95)

Considering all the controversy that is linked with the meaning of postcolonialism, Loomba highlights that “it is more helpful to think of postcolonialism not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism.” (Loomba 2005:15). The advantage of this way of thinking is that, in this way, it is possible to consider as ‘postcolonial’ also “people geographically displaced by colonialism such as African-Americans or people of Asian or Caribbean origin in Britain” (Loomba 2005:16). A similar point of view is also the one argued by J. Jorge Klor de Alva, who claims that postcolonialism should be understood, and consequently studied, not in relation to the previous relationship between the colonizer and the colonised, but rather on the basis of a post-structuralist approach, focusing on the ‘multiplicity of histories’ that postcolonialism has generated, instead of trying to deduce a ‘general and all-encompassing history’ out of it (de Alva 1995: 244-246).

In conclusion, as Charlotte Epstein asserts, probably, “the category of thought that best captures what the postcolonial has to offer is that of experience” (Epstein 2014: 296)

1.2 Postcolonial theory and literature

“Postcolonial theory is not even a theory in the strict sense of the term, that is ‘the deduction, on the basis of a number of axioms, of an abstract model applicable to an indefinite number of empirical descriptions’ (Foucault 1972:144) What it has done is to develop a set of conceptual resources [...] there are shared political and psychological perceptions, together with specific social and cultural objectives, which draw on a common range of theories and employ a constellation of theoretical insights”(Young 2010:64)

Ajiaz Ahmad argues that postcolonial studies became a prominent critical field as “part of an attempt to politicize and focus the concerns of fields such as Commonwealth literature and the study of the so-called New Literatures in English which had been initiated in the late 1960s” (Ahmad 1995:9 cited in Ashcroft et al. 2000:168). Therefore, literature has always been a major concern in the field of postcolonial studies. Although, as we have already said, it is quite

controversial to define what can fall within the word 'postcolonial' and what instead does not belong to it, literary critics have managed to find some thematic parallels in several different literary works written in English that are linked with postcolonialism.

First of all, a frequent subject is 'struggle', which often translates into struggle towards the obtainment of independence. This theme obviously reflects the conditions that many people living in colonized states have had to experience, given that, in the large majority of cases, colonizers would strip native people of their governmental freedom, and also of their individual freedom. Linked to this, there is also "the theme of the dominating influence of a foreign culture on the life of contemporary post-colonial societies" (Ashcroft et al. 2000:28).

Another important theme is that of 'identity' and 'place/displacement'. The loss of their native culture has always been a major trauma and source of concern for colonized people, and this situation has often led to a fragmented identity and the inability to associate themselves with the place in which they were living (either because of forced emigration or because of the drastic changes that their native land had undergone). In this perspective, a very interesting point is the one highlighted by Epstein. She explains how "the specific forms of alienation at work in the postcolonial condition have proven an especially fertile terrain for analysing the role of norms in the formation of the subject, or what Foucault has analysed as 'normation' " (Epstein 2014:307). As Michel Foucault defines it, the normation is the initial drawing of a norm that is usually conveyed through education, in order to be instilled in the minds of people. Gradually, as the time goes by, the normation becomes a norm in effect which is often legally disciplined. This concept of normation is surely helpful to understand how important the influence of education was, as well as the introduction of new laws, in the formation of the identity of postcolonial people.

Lastly, there are also some literary features that have been found to be very frequent in postcolonial texts, “such as a distinctive use of allegory, irony, magic realism, and discontinuous narratives are characteristic of postcolonial writing” (Ashcroft et al. 2000:28).

In conclusion, as Ashcroft et al. claim,

“The existence of these shared themes and recurrent structural and formal patterns is no accident. They speak for the shared psychic and historical conditions across the differences distinguishing one postcolonial society from another. For instance, the theme of exile is in some sense present in all such writing since it is one manifestation of the ubiquitous concern with place and displacement in these societies, as well as with the complex material circumstances implicit in the transportation of language from its place of origin and its imposed and imposing relationship on and with the new environment” (Ashcroft et al. 2000:28)

However, shifting from a strictly literary point of view, postcolonial texts have also often played an important role in the process of raising awareness and uniting the people that were living in colonized states. Drawing from Pêcheux (1975), Richard Terdiman claims that ‘textual revolution’ is one of the starting points in the process of achieving “structural change of the social formation” (Terdiman, R. 1985: 80). Moreover, as Tiffin highlights, in many cases “literary revolution in post-colonial worlds has been an intrinsic component of social ‘disidentification’ from the outset” (Tiffin 1995:97). A similar opinion is the one argued by Chinua Achebe, who believes that texts had a crucial importance in postcolonial countries and that they relevantly stimulated and affected revolutions (Achebe 1975:167–74). So, we can understand that literary texts have acquired so much importance in the field of postcolonial studies, because they have in fact contributed to the development of both a socio-political and an individual identity in postcolonial people.

These bodies of literature that influenced postcolonial countries were often going against the dominating force, namely the colonizers, trying to “offer ‘fields’ of counter-discursive strategies to the dominant discourse” (Lee 1977:32–3 cited in Tiffin 1995:96). Frantz Fanon uses the term ‘combat literature’ to refer to this kind of works. He even argues that, at first native intellectuals address their works to their oppressors in order to criticize them and

denounce their way of managing/oppressing native people; however, later on, the addressees of these writings become the native people themselves.

“This may be properly called a literature of combat, in the sense that it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation. It is a literature of combat, because it moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons; it is a literature of combat because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space” (Fanon 1995:156)

As Fanon summarises in a single sentence, “there is no other fight for culture which can develop apart from the popular struggle”.

In this chapter I have attempted to analyse what postcolonialism is, trying to give an account of all the major controversies that surround this term. Moreover I have shown how postcolonial studies have developed a deep interest in literary works, since they represent a vivid reflection of the experiences of postcolonial people. Lastly, I have also noted how literature can, in some cases, become a medium for raising social unity and making people aware of the oppressing conditions in which they are living. Particularly this last point will prove to be very useful in order to understand the importance of Bob Marley and the impact that his songs have had on Jamaican people, as well as people outside Jamaica.

After having provided this brief overview of postcolonialism, I believe that, in order to understand the socio-cultural and political conditions in which Bob Marley was raised, it is necessary to give an outline of the history of Jamaica and its colonial past, and in fact this will be the main focus of the second section of this first chapter.

2.1 The beginning of Jamaica’s history of slavery and oppression

Jamaica’s independence has been achieved in 1962, however, its history of oppression and rebellion begins much earlier than this.

The first country to colonize Jamaica was Spain. The original inhabitants of the island were the Tainos (or Arawake), who, however, were completely annihilated because of the diseases that European people brought there, and because of the hard labour that they were forced to do.

In fact, as *The West Indies and Caribbean Year Book* (1968) reports:

“Jamaica was discovered on 4th of May, 1494, and occupied by the Spanish between 1509 and 1555. The Arawake, the original inhabitants, quietly died off from European diseases against which they had no immunity, cruelty by the Spaniards, and self-destruction” (Skinner 1968:209).

We don't know much about the history of the Tainos, however it is important to highlight that Jamaica's own name derives from the Taino word 'Xaymaca' which means 'Land of Wood and Water'. During their rule, Spanish people introduced two very important elements that have affected Jamaica's history until contemporary day: “they brought sugar cane and slaves from Africa to cultivate the cane” (Mcnish 2002:190).

After about two centuries of Spanish domination, in 1665, the English people invaded and conquered Jamaica. With this invasion, Britain capitalised on the nascent sugar industry; “this was the beginning of what was to become the economic backbone of Jamaica for the next three centuries of British dominion over the island” (Mcnish 2002:191). However, Spanish people did not immediately give up on reconquering the land. One of the strategies that they employed in order to wear down the English was to free the slaves so that they would “harry the English with irregular warfare” (Black 1965:50). Although Spain didn't eventually manage to conquer Jamaica back, the British people, because of their numerical inferiority, were unable to subdue several of these slaves, who took this opportunity to escape and hide in the mountains (in particular in the Cockpit, a hilly and extremely inhospitable area in the west-central area of Jamaica). Later on, these slaves were also joined by others coming from the southern plains and together they began to be called 'Maroons'. The origin of this name is uncertain, however, James Carruti argues that it could derive from the Spanish word 'Cimarrón' which means 'wild' (Carruti 1961:854).

The first slave revolt happened in 1690 in Clarendon, and, in that very same year, a man called Cudjoe emerged among the lines of the Maroons; he became one of its major leaders, and was later joined in this task by Quaco and Nanny. These generals were able to fight against the British for decades. The fight dragged for so long also because the British troops were unaccustomed to the geography of the country; moreover, they had not any experience in warfare within the jungle, so they often suffered heavy losses in the clashes that they had with the Maroons. Only in 1738, the two sides signed a treaty, with which the Maroons were granted some lands where they could live freely; however, this peace only lasted until 1796, when the second Maroon War began (Barrett 1988:36-37). It is in this year that this rebellious group of slaves met their demise and many of them were forced to leave Jamaica and go to Nova Scotia. However, the Maroons still left a trace of their history in Jamaica. In fact, looking at today's map of the country, it is possible to notice a relatively large area in which there are no roads nor cities; this emptiness is what the Maroon country has left behind: a wilderness of rain forest, mountains, which takes the name of Cockpit (Davis and Simon 1977:191).

2.2 The birth of political parties in Jamaica and its independence

At the beginning of the 18th century there were more than 200,000 slaves in Jamaica, and the white inhabitants feared a rebellion, given that they were outnumbered by more than ten times. Some revolts did occasionally occur, but the most important one is undoubtedly the 1831 revolt led by Thomas Sharpe, since it is also partly due to this revolt that slavery was abolished in 1838 (even though the slave trade had already ceased in 1807). However, emancipation did not bring with it political, social and economic freedom (McNish 2002:191).

It is at the end of the 19th century that one of the most prominent figures of contemporary Jamaican history was born, namely Marcus Garvey. He was born in 1877 at Saint Anne's Bay, and, since he had Maroon origins, he experienced poverty and prejudice already from his young

life. His interests were broad: from politics, to religion, culture, etcetera; more importantly, he was also involved in politics for the improvement of the conditions of the working class, which comprised the vast majority of the Jamaican population.

In 1914, Garvey founded the 'Universal Negro Improvement Association' (UNIA) with the objective of uniting "all Negro peoples of the world into one great body to establish country and government absolutely their own" (Shaw 1998:22). In a few years, the UNIA became the largest Pan-African organisation that had ever existed, and it had more than a hundred branches in forty different countries (Martin 1983:2). However, after having been accused of irregularities with his taxes, he was imprisoned in America, and then deported back to Jamaica, where his influence grew smaller and smaller, until he died in 1940. Though Garvey's effort would not probably seem to have strongly affected Jamaica, he was one of the first to engage in politics in order to improve the conditions of Negroes, and he also had a major role in the origins of the Rastafarian movement, although he was not a Rastafarian himself.

As Vilma Mcnish argues,

"Although there were antecedents, such as the rise of Marcus Garvey and his preaching of black consciousness in the 1920s, for most political historians the movement toward self-government and independence in Jamaica genuinely began in the 1930s. This period of political turmoil saw the birth of the two major political parties, which have dominated politics in Jamaica since then - The Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), and the People's National Party (PNP), founded by Alexander Bustamante and Norman Manley, who are today considered fathers of the nation. The parties emerged out of the dynamic trade union movement, which had by then developed to demand better labour conditions, often through violent protests" (Mcnish 2002:192).

The birth of these political parties finds its reasons also in the historical events that were unfolding during those years. In fact, Jamaica's population had significantly increased between the 1920s and the 1930s due to reduced emigration, and the economy was further hit by the Great Depression of 1929. The combination of these two factors led to an increase in poverty, and the general discontent eventually led to the labour rebellion of 1938, which is often regarded as the beginning of modern political history in Jamaica.

The labour rebellion also marked the appearance of Alexander Bustamante in the political scene. Taking advantage of the social instability, Bustamante acted as a mediator for the labour dispute, blaming the governor and the police for the aggressive way in which they were handling the situation (Eaton 1960:38). Through his speeches, Bustamante was able to gain the favour of the workers, and, over the time, he managed to become one of the most influential figures of the trade union. Another person that contributed both to the outbreak and the development of the rebellion was surely Norman Manley, who, in the early 1930s had founded the Jamaica Banana Association, a cooperative that wanted to protect small farmers' interests. When Bustamante was arrested in 1938, Manley, who had already acquired a certain political influence, unofficially became the new negotiator for the labourers, and this consequently led to the rise of his political career.

Following the aftermath of the rebellion, the first Jamaican political party was founded: the People's National Party (PNP). The leaders of this newly formed party were both Norman Manley and Alexander Bustamante, and its main agenda were self-government, economic and social development and universal adult suffrage. However, the effort of this new movement came to a halt with the beginning of the Second World War, which made Jamaica a war territory (Eaton 1960:77). Moreover, because of the continuous disagreements between Bustamante and Manley, the former decided to challenge the PNP and, in 1942, he founded its own party, called Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), in order to face the PNP in the 1944 elections (Eaton 1960:85). This turn of events led to the establishment of a two party-system, and, in 1943, the JLP became the dominant political party, eventually winning also the general elections in 1944 and 1949.

The years after the 1944 election were marked by political violence and riots, that had been caused by the polarisation of the working class, given that there were two separate political parties that intended to represent them, and that the two leaders of the parties had engaged in a relentless fight of manipulation and mutual defamation. However, in these years, some

members of the JLP were accused of unlawful acts, which caused a growing distrust towards the party. This, in turn, led to the victory of the PNP in the 1955 elections.

The years following the end of the Second World War had witnessed a gradual transition to full political independence in Jamaica. In 1958, after several years of new constitutional amendments, Jamaica became an independent country for what concerned its internal affairs, while the international matters were still dealt by the Queen (McNish 2002:192). After the referendum of 196, full independence was finally obtained in 1962, though Jamaica kept being a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Bustamante won the general elections of 1962 and became the first prime minister of Jamaica.

3.1 Religion and Ethiopianism in Jamaica

According to Horace Campbell, the Rastafarian movement is a combination of the “heritage of the Maroons, the religious movement- called Ethiopianism- and the emergent Pan African movement which culminated in [Universal Negro Improvement Association] U.N.I.A along with the influences of the inspired work of Marcus Garvey” (Campbell 1987:1). But who are the Rastafarians? In order to address this question, we need first to understand the evolution of religion in Jamaica.

At the beginning of the colonization of Jamaica, Spanish people tried to convert the African slaves to the Roman church, however, this process came to a halt following the arrival of Britain. The new colonizers did not force the slaves to become members of the Catholic faith, on the contrary, “The English planters in Jamaica adamantly refused to share their religion with the slave population” (Barrett 1988:17). For this reason, the slaves began to develop a sort of religion on their own, by taking some of the elements that they remembered from the religious practices of their homeland. In fact, among those African slaves, there were people that used to be priests and priestesses, who turned to sorcery and started practising exorcisms and

divination. In particular, they performed *myal* ('being in a state of possession'), which was a ritual that was accompanied by a dance that is nowadays known as *Kumina*. In his study of Rastafarians, Leonard Barret exhaustively explains what *Kumina* was:

A *Kumina* is called on special occasions, especially for ceremonies surrounding the rites of passage (birth, puberty, marriage, and death). But other calamities, such as sickness and other natural or unnatural occasions, may necessitate a *Kumina* service. This service is accompanied by drumming and dancing. A sacrifice is always necessary; alcoholic spirits are always present; and the dancing continues until spirit possession is achieved. These spirits are always the ancestors of the dancers of the person who calls the *Kumina*. Under spirit possession a revelation is given by the ancestors concerning the occasion for which the *Kumina* is called" (Barrett 1988:19)

This kind of religious practices kept on developing until the 19th century, when a syncretic process between Christianity and this African-based religion began to take place. Barret also argues that, in 1861, Jamaica was also involved in the 'great revival' (also called 'Great Awakening) that was spreading all over the English colonies in America. As Jason Toynbee highlights, "the importance of Revival is that it was national in scope, and thus helped the Jamaican people to 'forge an identity and a culture by subversive participation in the wider polity' " (Toynbee 2013:61). It is also important to note that, in this new religious movement converged both Christian practices and African-based beliefs.

Contemporarily, a new religious movement was emerging, namely Ethiopianism, which was to become one of the primary sources from which Rastafarians developed their own beliefs; in fact, as Barret argues "the emergence of the Rastafarians will remain a puzzle unless seen as a continuation of the concept of Ethiopianism which began in Jamaica as early as the eighteenth century". (Barrett 1988:68) The most prominent members of Ethiopianism argued that Ethiopia was one of the oldest civilizations of the world, and it had also been one of the first nations to have a 'developed culture', in relation to religious and social customs.

The reason why African descendants in America envisioned Ethiopia as their homeland was twofold. First of all, thanks to the spread of Black churches, people were beginning to learn the Bible, and, among all the verses, one gradually started to acquire a deeper meaning. The verse

I am referring to is the 31st verse of Psalm 68, which says: “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God” (Simpson, G. 1985, p.286). This verse led people to believe that the second coming of Jesus was going to take place in Ethiopia. Secondly,

“By the time of the emergence of the Black churches, Africa (as a geographical entity) was just about obliterated from their minds. Their only vision of a homeland was the biblical Ethiopia. It was the vision of a golden past – and the promise that Ethiopia should once more stretch forth its hands to God – that revitalized the hope of an oppressed people. Ethiopia to the Blacks in America was like Zion or Jerusalem to the Jews. It began to take on an eschatological dimension” (Barrett 1988:75).

In Jamaica, with Marcus Garvey, Ethiopianism further developed, and “from [an] ideology, it became a movement (Barrett, L. 1988: 79). Moreover, as Barry Chevannes argues, another reason for the growth of Ethiopianism in Jamaica was “the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1935. The invasion of Italy by the fascists aroused a wave of anger throughout the hemisphere and in Africa” (Chevannes, B. 1994:41). The reason for this anger was that “black people throughout the world interpreted the war as a racial war” (Campbell, H. 1987:73), since the League of Nations only gave military resources to Italy, neglecting Ethiopia and its people. This was eventually the motivation that led many people “in the anglophone Caribbean, including Jamaica [...] to enlist as volunteers” (Chevannes 1994:41).

Nowadays, Barrett identifies three main Afro-Christian sects in Jamaica: *Pukimina*, the Revival cult, and Revival Zion. While *Pukimina* is the one that mainly takes after African practices and beliefs, Revival Zion is mostly Christian; the Revival cult, instead, is partly African and partly Christian (Barrett 1988, p. 22).

In conclusion, to summarize, we can identify four main periods for what concerns religion in Jamaica:

“the pre-Christian period, up to 1784 with the arrival of the Baptist preacher George Lisle; the period of Christian evangelization from 1784 to 1900; the Pan-African years, from the launching of Robert Love’s Pan-African Association in 1901 and Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914, to 1930; the Rastafari years, from the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1930.” (Chevannes 1994:34)

This last period, ‘the Rastafari years’, will be the main focus of the last section of this chapter.

3.2 Rastafarianism

“The Rastafarian movement of Jamaica is the most recent religious expression of a people who have experienced a bitter history of exploitation and oppression. Its emergence comes as a reaction not only to the native religions which the Rastas see as unreal in the presence of formidable sociopolitical forces, but also against the missionary religions which they view as the religious arm of colonial oppression” (Barrett 1988:28).

From a socio-historical perspective, the Rastafarians are essentially native Jamaicans belonging to the lower classes, who began a movement in the 1930s in order to protest against their socio-economic situation.

Given the influence that Ethiopianism had had on Rastafarianism, the members of the latter movement “held to the belief that they and all Africans in the diaspora are but exiles in “Babylon”, destined to be delivered out of captivity by a return to “Zion”, that is, Africa, the land of [their] ancestors, or Ethiopia, the seat of Jah, Ras Tafari himself (Chevannes 1994:1). This view had also been further reinforced by Marcus Garvey, whose “Back to Africa idea” became one of the most important influences on Rastafari teachings (Chevannes 1994:41). Moreover, in one of his speeches, he explicitly exclaimed “Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black King; he shall be the Redeemer”, which was seen as a prophetic statement by many when, in 1930, Haile Selassie I became Emperor of Ethiopia (Barrett 1988:81). This can be considered as the shifting point from Garveyism to full Rastafarianism. At this point, it is also important to reiterate that, as the theological scholar Leo Erskine writes, “the divinity of Haile Selassie and the claims concerning biblical warrants that justify this claim are being made in the socio political context in which the vast majority of Rastafari are at the base of the socio economic ladder” (Erskine 2005:74), and this explains why these beliefs became so popular among Jamaican people.

Born Ras Tafari, the new emperor of Ethiopia, who was to rule until 1974, adopted the name Haile Selassie I (“Might of the Trinity”) when he was crowned. To his new name, he also added several epithets, such as “King of Kings” or “The Lion of the Tribe of Judah”, which gave him a further sense of grandeur. His coronation was so spectacular that many people believed that this new Ethiopian king was truly godly, just like Garvey had announced a few years before. Among all these people, the most relevant ones to the history of Rastafarianism are four Jamaicans: Leonard Howell, Joseph Hibbert, Archibald Dunkley and Robert Hinds (Barrett 1988:81).

“Throughout the Rastafari movement Howell is universally credited with being one of the first if not the very first preacher of Rastafari.” (Chevannes 1994:121). Howell’s main objective, already from the first years, was to build a community of believers. This is why, in 1933, he decided to move to St Thomas, “a parish with a proud history of anticolonial resistance [and he later bought and settled] on Pinnacle estate in St. Catherina in 1940” (Chevannes 1994:122). Here he founded his community which was later to be known as “Pinnacle”, taking after the name of the estate.

The preachings of Howell and the other leaders of the movement was able to convince many Jamaicans also because of the social conditions of that period. In fact, following the Great Depression, many had fallen in poverty, and, in a world that seemed full of hopelessness, the new Ethiopian emperor represented a brand new hope. Given that the majority of these people came from the illiterate low-class “the main channel in passing on Rastafari beliefs was the street meeting, where the speakers expounded the doctrine, backed up their words with references from the Bible or from documents relating to the coronation of Ras Tafari”; in addition to that, they would also sing “choruses and hymns and choruses already familiar to people” (Chevannes 1994:120).

“One of the main strengths of Howell was his defiant anticolonialism [...] his very approach to organization was a criticism of colonialism” (Chevannes 1994:122). It is also during these first years of Pinnacle that Rastafarianism developed a strong relationship with ‘ganja’, since they cultivated it in the area surrounding the estate, and they used it during their rituals.

However, this initial development of the Rastafarians was hindered by the government. In fact, many were afraid that this emerging movement could generate social unrest, given that Rastafarianism preached the superiority of all Negroes and wanted to destroy the established colonial rule. As Campbell reports, the state was afraid because the Rastafarians had begun to call themselves ‘Nya men’, thus “linking their ideas to the anticolonial movement of Kigezi, Uganda – *Nyabingi* – which called for ‘Death to Black and White Oppressors’ “(Campbell 1987:72); moreover, the most worrying threat that the movement carried was linked with the “new sense of solidarity and self-reliance [that they were building] among the rural poor [since it] posed long-term problems for the planters and their police guardians”. In this perspective, The Rastafarians were beginning to break “some of the old capitalist habits which had become ingrained in the rural areas” (Campbell 1987:96). Since Jamaica’s colonial history had established a society divided between rich and poor, white and black people, Rastafarianism tried to challenge this structure by depicting black people as superior and rich, and by recognizing Haile Selassie, the living God, as their leader.

For this reason, in 1933, the four founding leaders were imprisoned for the activities linked to the movement. In this period the State used multiple weapons as a deterrent against the development of the Rastafarian community: “the Dangerous Drugs Law, arresting them for the possession of ganja; the Vagrancy Act; and placing them in the mental hospital at Bellevue in Kingston” (Campbell 1987:96).

The imprisonment of the leaders of the Rastafarians slowed down the expansion of the movement, whose members however carried on with its activities in secrecy. “The period

between the destruction of Pinnacle and 1959 was one of regrouping. It was a time of intense hatred for the establishment and especially for the police. The name *Babylon* was now given to the establishment” (Barrett 1988:88-89).; as Campbell highlights, “the name Babylon was linked to all oppressive forces, whether it was the imperialist states, the local black oppressors or the police who carried out the wishes of the state” (Campbell 1987: 01). And this was exactly the period in which Rastafarianism developed a bad reputation with the rest of the Jamaican people, especially because of some violent incidents that were to culminate in 1960 with the ‘Henry Fiasco incident’ and in 1963 with the “Holy Thursday Massacre”. “Another reason contributing to the negative image of the Rastafarians is their strange hairstyle known as ‘dreadlocks’ [...] the Rastas adopted the dreadlocks during their ‘jungle existence’ in the hill country where the movement developed its early characteristics” (Barrett 1988:xv), Lastly, the use of ‘ganja’ was also not particularly well perceived by the other people.

Only in 1955 Rastafarianism began to gain a prominent position once again, following the news from the Ethiopian World Federation that the emperor Haile Selassie had prepared 500 acres of land to host poor Jamaican people. Another element that helped the movement to regained momentum was a convention in 1958 called *Nyabingi*, where the Rastafarians practiced their rites in the center of Kingston. This led many people to learn the practices and beliefs of the movement, that had been, until that moment, practiced only in secret. However, the movement was fated to meet another failure in 1959, with the ‘aborted repatriation’ of Reverend Claudius Henry.

Finally, on 21st April 1966, the Ethiopian emperor himself came to Jamaica; this later became a “holy day” for Rastafarians, calling it “Grounation day”. Although, as Barret highlights, “the visit of Haile Selassie to Jamaica had nothing to do with the Rastafarians”, still “the Emperor’s visit gave the Rastafarians a great boost in prestige” (Barrett 1988:158-160); moreover, “encouraged by the publicity during the emperor’s visit the movement was challenged to prove itself worthy of the positive evaluation given”(Barrett 1988:161). “The period of 1961 to 1971

might be designated as the period of “ambivalent routinization” for the Rastafarians” (Barrett 1988:146), and this was also thanks to Sam Brown’s 21 points that became a foundation for the Rastafarian movement. In addition to that, Rastafarianism popularity increased as a consequence of a study by three scholars of the University of the West Indies that wanted to investigate the growth of this Jamaican movement. Partly thanks to this, Rastafarians also reached an agreement with some politicians that gave them the chance to go to Africa at the expense of the Government (though this possibility was only limited to some of the leaders of the movement).

3.3 Rastafarian Language

Before talking about the linguistic strategies employed by Rastafarians, it is important to give an outline of the linguistic situation of Jamaica in general. Although English is the official language of the island, the wide majority of people speaks a Jamaica dialect. However, as Frederic Cassidy explains in his study, there is actual a vast spectrum of dialects. ‘Jamaica-talk’ exists in two main forms which Cassidy illustrates as lying at the opposite ends of a scale. “At one extreme is the type of ‘Jamaica-talk’ that emulates the ‘London standard’ or educated model spoken among many of the elite. At the other extreme is the inherited talk of peasant and labourer who remain largely unaffected by education and its standards” (Barrett 1988:4). This situation was the results of several linguistic influences, among which, “African is the largest and most profound; it appears not only in the vocabulary, but has powerfully affected both pronunciation and grammar” (Cassidy 2007:394).

Talking about the Rastafarians, they “have taken the language they inherited, and [...] have made a deliberate attempt to develop subdialect” (Chevannes 1994:167). In fact, around the 1950s, among the members of the movement a new vernacular language was emerging, as an act of opposition against the established order. This way of speaking was later defined as ‘Dread

Talk’, even though the Rastafarian call it ‘Iyaric’, which comes from the merging of the first-person pronoun ‘I’ and ‘Amharic’(a language spoken in Ethiopia).

The pronoun ‘I’ carries a very important meaning for Rastafarians, in fact, one of the most evident changes that they have introduced in their language is related to personal pronouns. Considering their past of slavery and exploitation, Rastafarian people refused to use the object pronoun “me”, which they replaced with the pronoun “I” because the speaker is always the subject, and cannot ever be objectified, even through grammar. This concept is carefully described in the second chapter of *The Empire Writes Back*, which I am quoting at length:

The Rastafarians attempt to ‘deconstruct’ what they see as the power structures of English grammar, structures in themselves metonymic of the hegemonic controls exercised by the British on Black peoples throughout Caribbean and African history – controls no less present today, though they may take different forms. While the language remains as it is, however, there is no hope of genuine ‘freedom’, and consequently the Rastafarians have adopted various strategies by which language might be ‘liberated’ from within. Although the basis of Rasta speech is Jamaican Creole, it is deliberately altered in a number of ways. In Jamaican Creole the first person singular is usually expressed by the pronoun ‘me’; ‘Me see me ’oman in street.’ The plural form substitutes ‘we’ for ‘me’. To the Rastafarians, however, both ‘me’ and ‘we’ as objects of the sentence are always dominated or ‘governed’ by the subject, in the way in which white Europeans governed the slaves. On the purely verbal level too, ‘me’ conjures the subservient attitude into which Blacks were forced for their own survival under the plantation system. Consequently, the Rastas insist on the use of ‘I’ for the personal pronoun in all positions: The pronoun ‘I’ has a special importance to Rastas and is expressly opposed to the servile ‘me’. Whether in the singular (‘I’) or the plural (‘I and I’ or briefly: ‘I-n-I’) or the reflexive (‘I-sel’, ‘I-n-I self’) the use of this pronoun identifies the Rasta as an individual . . . Even the possessive ‘my’ and the objective ‘me’ are replaced by ‘I’ (Owens 1976:65-66 cited in Ashcroft et al. 2000:47-48).

In addition to this, also other changes were made. For example, some words were modified: “‘Oppression’ becomes ‘downpression’, an ‘holy’, rejected because ‘anything holey runs a leak’, is replaced by ‘hola’, ‘because it is whole’ ”(Chevannes 1994:168).

In this chapter I have attempted to set my thesis within the critical field of postcolonialism, which I have briefly described at the beginning, I have given an account of Jamaica’s history, focusing particularly on the slavery and oppression that Jamaican people have endured during

the centuries, and lastly, I have described the characteristics and evolution of the Rastafarian movement. In particular, Rastafarianism was surely a key aspect of his life, and he himself was a key figure of Rastafarianism, given also that, according to Campbell,

“Rastafarianism as a force exploded in the Eastern Caribbean, projected by the image of Bob Marley and the sounds of Jimmy Cliff and Burning Spear. These Rastas, who showed that dread culture did not have to glorify Ethiopia, were inspired by the album *Rastaman Vibrations*, and in many ways the lyrics of this album were made household words in the region” (Campbell 1987:142).

All these elements are indispensable in order to understand the context in which Bob Marley lived, and how we can interpret his music in the light of the history of colonialism (and postcolonialism) that Jamaica has experienced.

CHAPTER 2: BOB MARLEY AND REGGAE

1. Bob Marley's life and the Wailers

“History has given to mankind outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to society and who, in fact, are significant because of their contribution. It is the task of the chroniclers of history to make a proper analysis of the role of these individuals (Eusi Kwayana cited in Campbell 1987:147-148)

There happen to be many different versions of Bob Marley's biography, and, to a certain extent, all of them differ from each other. For this thesis I have chosen to draw mainly from Jason Toynbee's *Bob Marley: Herald of a Postcolonial World*, since, among the biographies that I have read, I believe it is one of the richest and most accurate. Even though, I have obviously also taken into account other resources.

Robert Nesta Marley was born on the 6th of February 1945, in the rural parish of St. Ann. His parents were Cedella Malcolm and Norval Sinclair Marley. Cedella was the daughter of Omeriah Malcolm, who was a land-owning black man; instead, Norval was a white Jamaican and a captain in the British West Indian Regiment (Toynbee 2013:44). The two of them met in 1944, when Cedella was only sixteen, and, after she got pregnant, they married in June of the same year. However, the day right after the wedding, Norval left for Kingston and began working there as a foreman. He only returned in 1945 in order to give a name to his newly born son, whom he named Nesta Robert Marley (Booker 1997:15-29). After this occasion, Norval went away once again and even his correspondence eventually stopped.

At the age of four Bob started attending the Stepney School, and here, according to one of his mother's accounts, he already distinguished himself from the other children since his teacher “Mrs. Isaacs, praised him so much [...] she always used to tell [Cedella] how bright he was and how helpful he was to her” (Davis 1990:14). Two years later, Norval appeared once again and decided to take Bob away and relocate to Kingston in order for him to receive a better education. Cedella remained in her hometown and, for a whole year, she was not allowed to see Bob, for

Norval claimed that his family would not accept her. During the first months Norval replied back to Cedella letters, but then her following letters remained unanswered for several months. Eventually, she received a report from Maggie Simpson, who told her that Bob was not attending a boarding school and was instead wandering in the streets of the city (Booker 1997: 40). This convinced Cedella to go look for Bob in Kingston, where she found out that Bob was living with an elderly woman, called Mrs. Grey, and that Norval had left him there and had never come back. Cedella never saw Norval again until 1955 when she met him in court after denouncing him because he had married once again; the charges against Norval were eventually dropped because he was declared senile, and he died just a few months later (Booker 1997:45-47).

Cedella and Bob returned to St Anne, where they went back to their past ordinary life. However, in 1995 Cedella was offered a job as a housekeeper in Kingston, and thus left Bob to his grandfather. As Toynbee notes,

“Crucially, though, this journey of hers was not an isolated event. In the post-war period migration from the countryside, long a feature of Jamaican life, was intensifying sharply. By 1960 around half Kingston’s inhabitants had been born elsewhere in the island, with a concentration of rural migrants in the poorest and most overcrowded areas of the city, especially West Kingston” (Clarke 2006: 185–9, cited in Toynbee 2013: 46).

Bob joined her mother after almost two years, in 1957, when Cedella was able to afford an apartment which was big enough for the two of them, and this set the beginning of Bob’s urban life.

Before going on with the account of his life, it is also worth mentioning that Bob lived a relatively good life in the countryside because of his grandfather’s wealth, and also, as far as we know, even though he was of mixed race, he wasn’t subject to any particular form of discrimination. Moreover, Nine Miles, the community in which he used to live, was essentially modern for a rural area, since “there were primary schools and mass literacy [furthermore]

radios could pick up music broadcast from Cuba and the US [thus] villagers were in touch with the sounds and symbols provided by mass communication” (Toynbee 2013:48)

During his new life in Kingston, the young Bob attended many schools, such as Ebenezer, Wesley and St. Aloysius, before he completed his formal education in 1960 when he was fourteen. Over the course of this period, Cedella and Bob moved to a ‘government yard’ called Trench Town, which was a neighbourhood built as a part of the “public rehousing schemes [that] represented a central plank of the social policy adopted by both PNP and JLP. By 1959, 40,000 people were living in government housing projects across Jamaica. (Toynbee 2013:58). At the same time, Bob, thanks to his mother, had been able to find a job as an apprentice in a welding shop.

In the 1960s Bob took his first steps into the musical career, a career that would have lasted for more than 20 years, with him becoming “a spokesperson for the Rastas and other oppressed peoples in a manner which had not been attempted since the time of Garvey” (Campbell 1987:140). Though he had already been singing from his early childhood, both in the church and in the grocery shop in which Cedella worked, he now began to make connections that would influence his development as a singer, as well as his whole life in general. In fact, around 1959 Bunny (Neville) Livingstone’s family moved near Bob, and the two of them quickly became lifelong friends (Davis 1994:31). During this period, Bob also got to know Joe Higgs, a Rastafarian who lived nearby there, and who, together with Roy Wilson, was part of the duo that sang *Manny-O*, a 1959 hit of Jamaican dancehalls. As Toynbee notes,

“The fact that Higgs was a Rastafarian, yet also had success as a singer and songwriter was highly significant. At the beginning of the 1960s few musicians belonged to this dissident religious movement. Higgs’s affiliation thus pointed the way forward towards that coming together of Rastafari and musical creativity which would increasingly characterize reggae, and in which the Wailers’ own conversion would represent something of a tipping point” (Toynbee 2013:59).

Higgs, without asking for any payment, had begun to teach harmony, singing and song writing to a group of young promising musicians, among which there were Bob, Bunny and another

boy named Peter Tosh, born Winston Hubert McIntosh (Farley 2006: 62-4 cited in Toynbee 2013:59).

It is also worth to highlight that, as Campbell claims,

“His adolescent years, spent in the urban areas of Kingston, taught him to fully appreciate the problems of police brutality, poverty and harassment of Rastafari. Marley’s father was an Englishman and his mother an African-Jamaican, but unlike many other Jamaicans of mixed parentage, Marley clung to the society’s roots of African heritage and turned his back on the deformities of the society which turned mulattoes into ambivalent citizens torn between Europe and Africa” (Campbell 1987 p.140).

In 1961, Bob finally left his job, as a consequence of an accident with a torch that had hit him in his eye; according to him this was a sign that he had to stop working as a welder’s apprentice and focus only on his passion: music (Booker 1997: 85). So, in 1961 Marley had already begun writing songs and was also trying to find a producer. Following Desmond Dekker’s advice, who was a fellow worker at the welding shop that had already started singing a few years before, he met a fourteen year old Jimmy Cliff, who was becoming an emergent singer at time, and, thanks to him, Bob was introduced to Leslie Kong, who decided to record two original songs that he had written, namely *Judge Not* and *Terror*, and also *One Cup of Coffee*, that was a “ska version of a song which had been a hit for US country singer Claude Gray the previous year” (Farley, C. 2006: 52-53, cited in Toynbee 2013: 73). However, since he was not a known singer, these recordings did not sell much. But “rather than be discouraged Bob simply changed direction and threw all his effort into the vocal group that he had started working on with Bunny Livingstone and Peter Tosh” (Toynbee 2013:73).

Taking into account his personal life, these were tough years for Bob. In 1962, his mother had had a daughter, Pear Livingston, with Bunny’s father, and, after that, she eventually married Edward Booker, and moved to the United States. For some time, Bob lived with Pearl at Taddy Livingstone’s place, but, because of a disagreement with Taddy’s new girlfriend, he was kicked out when he was eighteen, and he became homeless. In 1963, he used to sleep with a friend of

his, Vincent ‘Tartar’ Ford, next to a kitchen on First Street. Nonetheless, in spite of the condition in which he was living, Bob still aimed to build a group together with Bunny and Peter.

Thanks to the *buru* drummer Alvin ‘Seco’ Patterson, that Bob had come to know during his rehearsals in Higgs’ yard, he was introduced to Clement ‘Coxsone’ Dodd, the leading sound system operator and producer of the Jamaican Recording and Publishing Company Limited, also called Studio One. Bob and his group (who included also three more youths other than Bunny and Peter) that went by the names “Wailing Rude-boys” or “The Teenagers” played some songs at the audition with Coxsone, and, after a few months he released their first song, *Simmer Down*, and “offered them a recording deal: £20 for each song recorded, and as was customary in Jamaica, a weekly retainer” (Toynbee 2013:80).

“After the success of *Simmer Down* in the early 1964, Clement Dodd allowed Bob to sleep in a shed at the back of Studio One” (Toynbee 2013:96). As Coxsone himself said in a later interview, “Bob Marley was more or less like an adoption ‘cause he used to stay [with] me” (Chang and Chen 1998: 93). Furthermore, Bob “was now acting as a talent scout for the producer, checking out the new acts that were coming up to Brentford Road” (Toynbee 2013:96) and the group was also now recording regularly at Studio One. As Toynbee claims,

“From the first recordings at Studio One, Bob and the Wailers had shown a political stripe. ‘Simmer Down’ was a striking piece of social reportage, while later songs like ‘Hooligan’, ‘Rude Boy’ and ‘Jailhouse’ went a stage further. They empathized with working-class youth, sometimes glorifying rude boy culture and its resistance to the strong-arm tactics of the police. But significant as they were, these songs effectively belonged to a ska subgenre, that of the rude boy record” (Toynbee 2013:116).

The Wailers kept on recording with Coxsone until 1966, and during this period their music slowly evolved from the rhythms of ska, and it was instead getting closer to the sounds of rock steady. However, already in 1956, things were starting to change. In fact, the other members of the group left, since young Marley was becoming more and more demanding, and so only Bob,

Bunny and Peter remained; for this reason, Bob decided to rename the group “Bob Marley and the Wailers”.

It is in this same period that Bob also met a girl who was to become one of the most important people of his personal and musical life. As Toynbee reports, “each day walking up to the studio from Trenchtown, the Wailers passed the house of Rita Anderson who was also a singer, with a girl group called the Soulettes. Rita and the boys chatted and flirted” (Toynbee 2013:98) Eventually, the Wailers introduced the Soulettes to Coxson, who decided to record some of their songs with the help of Bob, who had to musically train the group. After a while, Bob and Rita fell in love, and given the bad conditions in which Bob was still living, Rita offered him to come to live with her at her aunt’s place.

Meanwhile, Cedella had written to Bob in order to tell him that she had managed to save enough money to buy a ticket for him to go to the United States, and she urged him to come there since it was a place full of job opportunities. Bob decided to take this opportunity, and after having married Rita, on February 1966 he went to Delaware where he stayed for the following nine months, and during this period he changed several jobs: in fact, he worked as a laboratory assistant, as a shift worker on a car assembly line for Chrysler, and he also worked in a hotel. Bob disliked the fast-paced life and work of the United States; nonetheless, even though Bob was so busy with his work, he still kept on writing music in his spare time. At the same time, Bunny and Peter were still recording under the Wailers name.

Bob eventually returned to Jamaica and here he moved back with his bride. With Bob back in Kingston, the trio was reunited even though the music had gradually changed during his absence: “now not only was the tempo slower, but the metre was changing too. And there were new textures and new musical ideas to appropriate from the US as soul music became tougher and more militant” (Toynbee 2013:99-100). 1966 was also the year in which the Wailers began to produce songs that were influenced by their Rastafarian beliefs. In fact, in this same year

they recorded *Put It On*, “a quasi-Rastafarian spiritual which anticipated the emergence of this theme in reggae at large by at least two years” (Toynbee 2013:111). These were also the years in which, drawing from Rastafari culture, Bob’s songs were starting to include messages of criticism toward the ruling establishment (what the Rastafarians called ‘Babylon’). As Toynbee argues,

The scepticism of Rasta concerning narratives of national progress chimed well with the secular alienation of Bob Marley’s generation of working-class youth for whom Jamaican independence did not represent liberation so much as more of the same poverty and racial subordination. As we have seen, the long history of the maroons and slave rebellion provided a certain kind of popular narrative of resistance. But in the mid-twentieth century it was Rastafari that really kept alive the notion of redemption from suffering, and the possibility of true emancipation. Most of all, Rastafari affirmed blackness, and the autonomy and self-respect of the masses. (Toynbee 2013:60)

As we had already anticipated, in 1966, the Wailers were no more ‘under Coxsone’s wing’, since, “Despite recording over one hundred songs for Coxsone, and having five of the top ten songs on the Jamaican charts at the same time, the Wailers were not seeing any financial rewards for their efforts” (Stephens 1988:255); however this meant that they “were also without the support of the leading music entrepreneur in Jamaica. What followed their departure from Studio One turned out to be six years of struggle just to survive as working musicians” (Toynbee 2013:114). The Wailers founded their own record label called “Wailin’ Soul Records”. At first, it seemed that things were going well, however, they had no business experience and no connections, so, eventually they had to come up with a new plan. Bob and Rita decided to open a shop in which they could sell the records of their own songs, in order to later reinvest that same money in song production. Yet, “The first single on the label, the Wailers’ own *Bend Down Low*, sold only a few copies because they had no effective means of distributing it across the city” (Toynbee 2013:116). Bob Marley himself commented on this experience by saying:

“I thought I wasn’t going to work for anyone again, so we split Coxsone to form Wail’n’Soul. But I don’t know anything about business and I got caught again. ‘Bend Down Low’ was number one in Jamaica but they were pressing and selling it in a black market type of business” (Stephens 1988:255)

In the same period, Bob and Rita, who was pregnant at that time, moved to Nine Miles, and they stayed there for six months. “Still, brief as it was, the sojourn in Nine Miles signalled an important change in Bob’s thinking, a shift towards a ‘conscious’ way of work and life” (Toynbee 2013:116), also because he was gradually getting closer to the Rastafarian movement. In fact, in these years, he got in touch with the Rasta leader Mortimer Planno, “who for the next few years would provide the Wailers with both management and spiritual guidance” (Toynbee 2013:116). Eventually, in 1968 they returned back to Kingston, because their first son, Ziggy, had been born.

In 1968, after having definitely closed with the experience of Wailin’ Soul Records, at Rastafarian ground, called *Satta Ammassagana*, Bob was introduced to Jonny Nash., an African American pop singer, who had become internationally famous with his song *I Can See Clearly Now*. Nash, together with his friend Danny Sims, had started a record label called JoDa in 1964. At that time, he was in Jamaica because, after producing a few hits that had a distinct Jamaican influence, and given the success that these hits had had all over the world, he had become more interested in Jamaica in general, and especially in Rastafarianism.

Nash and Sims “were looking for a new sound and had picked up on rocksteady. When Bob and the Wailers played their songs, the Americans were highly impressed” (Toynbee 2013:129). The two of them wanted to promote the Wailers internationally, and so they agreed to sign a contract, with which the Wailers earned a weekly retainer of one hundred and fifty dollars. However, as Toynbee highlights,

These are some of the least successful Wailers’ recordings. At the exactly the moment reggae – the new, more spiky successor to rocksteady – was being honed in Jamaican studios, it seemed that the Wailers and JAD (Sims and Nash’s company) were producing a kind of reggae muzak, completely lacking in dynamism. (Toynbee 2013:129)

In fact, the collaboration between Sims, Nash and The Wailers only lasted a for a short while. Toynbee speculates on the reasons for this failure, saying that probably Sims only focused on

promoting Jonny Nash, and also, he wasn't able to come up with a successful form of reggae music that could suit the music market of the United States (Toynbee 2013:129-131).

The next producer that significantly influenced the career of The Wailers was Lee 'Scratch Perry', the owner of the Upsetter label, whom they had first known when they had worked for Coxsone. Perry not only played the role of producer for The Wailers, but he also helped with lyrics and music. This resulted in a great improvement in the songs The Wailers, who, during this collaboration with Perry, recorded many masterpieces such as *Stand Alone*, *Don't Rock My Boat*, and *Kaya*, to mention a few. Many of these songs became also "dancehall and radio hits, finally reversing The Wailers' catastrophic bad fortune over the previous three and more years" (Toynbee J. 2013:135). Moreover, Perry was even able to sign a partnership with the British "Trojan" label, and so, The Wailer's songs reached even the UK, with the album *Soul Rebels*. According to Toynbee, Penny was a crucial figure in the history of the Wailers since he "brought Bob back to the cutting edge of reggae, guiding him towards the emergent 'roots' sound and helping to restore his confidence", but most importantly he "may even have kept the Wailers together at a time when they were drifting apart" (Toynbee 2013:136).

However, even the collaboration with Perry eventually ended, since apparently the Wailers thought that he was not' paying "them the royalties that they deserved" (Toynbee 2013:136). The break happened in 1971, even though, around 1970 and 1971 The Wailers had already begun supporting other groups as a backing band, in order to earn money and improve from a musical perspective. Finally, with the release of *Trench Town Rock*, given the popularity that this song had, especially within ghettos, The Wailers earned enough money for Bob and Rita to have the chance to open a new establishment of their own: Tuff Gong Records. This was one of the most prolific periods of the group, releasing several songs over the course of just a few months.

1971, however, is also the year in which Bob's history with politics began. In fact, the Wailers decided to ally and support the PNP, whose leader at that time was Michael Manley son of Norman Manley. Since many years of JLP government had not brought the changes that many people hoped for, and, most importantly, considering that Manley was the one that had invited the emperor Haile Selassie to come and visit Jamaica in 1966, the PNP was obviously their favorite choice.

Going back to Bob's musical career, things were not going too well once again. The Wailers had signed a contract with Nash's company (CBS), but, as it had already happened before, this did not end well for Bob, since Sims and Nash suddenly disappeared and abandoned the Wailers during their tour in England, without giving them any money. Without any means to return to Jamaica, Bob went to see Chris Blackwell, who was a pioneer producer in Kingston that had then relocated in London in 1962 where he had built Island Records, and sold Jamaican records in Britain (Toynbee 2013:143). The Wailers were able to go back to Jamaica, thanks to some money that Blackwell had given them in advance, and in 1972 the first album that they produced together with Island Records was *Catch a Fire*.

In this period, the music of the Wailers underwent a further evolution. In fact, The Wailers integrated some of the aspects of rock into their music, since it was the most trending music of that period, and they wanted to get into the rock market." We can hear the 'rock-ification' of the Wailers most clearly on the first track, *Concrete Jungle*" (Toynbee 2013:145). Moreover,

"As Bob and the Wailers moved across into the rock system of production, they had to learn very quickly how to present themselves on stage. As we have seen, reggae was rarely performed live. Rather it depended on record playback in the dancehalls" (Toynbee 2013:176).

Thanks to this new style their music became more appealing to the general public, and they toured the UK in 1973, gradually becoming more and more famous worldwide, up to the point that they even appeared "on the BBC's television rock show, *Old Grey Whistle Test*" (Toynbee 2013:151). As Toynbee claims, "everything that Danny Sims and JAD had failed to do, Island

were now succeeding in it seemed. The British rock promotion system was fully engaged. In July the band also played a few dates in Boston and New York” (Toynbee 2013:151). In addition to this, in 1976, their new album *Rastaman Vibration* reached the Top 10 in the US charts (Toynbee 2013:153). “By the end of the decade the band had cracked the markets of Europe, Australasia and Japan too” (T Toynbee 2013:157).

However, both Bob’s musical career and his personal life were going through several changes during these years. First of all, Bob had set in 1937 a community in a mansion in uptown Kingston, where everybody was welcomed, both friends and coworkers, and even homeless people. “This was the setting for a complex of activities: music making, football, welfare for the indigent, but also sexual seduction and a succession of longer term relationships with women”. Moreover, in 1974, following Blackwell’s advice, after eleven years of history together, Bob kicked Bunny and Peter from the group, for the first one “had refused to tour, while there had been bitter arguments with Peter about leadership, and singing and writing” (Toynbee 2013:156). He then restructured the group, adding “a three vocal backing group [composed by] Rita Marley, Judy Mowett and Marcia Griffiths”, and consequently renamed the group as “Bob Marley and the Wailers” (Toynbee 2013:157).

In 1976, episodes of violence were rapidly increasing in Kingston, since the elections were getting closer and there was a harsh battle between the PNP and the JLP, to the point that “gangs” were forming in Kingston to support either of the two sides. Bob eventually got involved in this fight for power too.

Michael Manley gave Bob permission to do a concert, ‘Smile Jamaica’, on the 5th of December, and then anticipated the elections to the 15th of December, because he wanted to make it look as if Marley actively and explicitly supported the PNP. In the two months preceding the concert, Bob received several threats from JPL supporters, and, on the 3rd of December, three people intruded in his home, and shot him, together with Don Taylor, and Rita Marley. Neither of them

died, and Bob and Rita, with still their bandages on, performed on the concert anyway. But, as Toynbee reports, “Bob had been traumatized by these events”, and it is for this reason that he “left Jamaica for a fourteen-month period” (Toynbee 2013:157). He returned only in February 1978, and the ‘One Love’ concert was organized for the 22nd of April of the same year at the National Stadium.

In 1977 Bob hurt his toe while he was playing football, and the wound became cancerous. He had been diagnosed by a doctor in the UK and, although “amputation was recommended Bob refused. He was highly suspicious not only of the doctor, but of Babylon medical practice more generally, and he turned instead to natural remedies” (Goldman 2006:269–72 cited in Toynbee 2013:192).

In 1979 the Wailers recorded the album *Black Survival* (that later became just *Survival*, following Kingston’s advice) which was “the most militant attack on the Babylon system Bob would produce” (Toynbee 2013:193). Moreover, it is also important to note that “the album as a whole has a Pan-African theme which is strikingly secular and contemporary in its focus” (Toynbee 2013:193). Following this, in 1980 Bob and the Wailers flew to the capital of Zimbabwe, at their own expenses, and played two concerts to celebrate its newly obtained independence.

Lastly, at the end of 1980 he collapsed when he was in New York, during the tour for the *Uprising* album. “His last months were spent in the Bavarian Alps under the care of a Dr Issels who used ‘holistic’ cancer therapy. But there was no magic on this mountain” (Toynbee 2013:193). So, when they realized that his condition was very grave, they decided to make him go back to Jamaica, to spend his last days there. However, he only managed to get to Miami, where he died on the 11th of May 1981.

At this point, after having reconstructed Bob’s life, I believe it is important to highlight some of the most important elements that have characterized Bob’s life.

First of all it is worth clarifying that Bob belonged to a “generation growing up in an *emergent* social structure, and [...] that this generation was keenly aware, through collective memory, of the long history of struggle” (Toynbee 2013: 55), and this undoubtedly shaped his character as well as his social and political ideas. In order to change this ‘social structure’, Bob employed music and love because, as Campbell argues, “like Che Guevara, he understood that one could not aspire towards changing the world unless one were guided by the principles of love” (Campbell 1987:141).

Taking into consideration his contribution to the Rastafarian movement, “he helped to shift the movement away from mysticism and idealism”, and he had addressed his music to all the oppressed people, “following the tradition of Howell and the first Rastas who had broken the petty distinctions between rural and urban people (Campbell 1987:141-142)

However, Bob was also a character full of controversies and contradictions. In fact, taking into account his personal life, even though he was such a great advocate of love, he mistreated Rita, who even accused him of having raped her once. Instead, for what regards his socio-political views, even though he sang songs like ‘Get Up, Stand Up’ and ‘Revolution, which “represent strong advocacy of social transformation to achieve social and economic justice”, he still was “a political abstentionist”. As Toynbee argues, “this is the contradiction: powerful advocacy of popular struggle for radical change combined with eschewal of any practical means for achieving it” (Toynbee 2013:168-169). Yet, for what concerns this last point, his choice of not actively getting involved in politics, was also due to the fact that he focused more on ‘inner revolution’ rather than on a concrete (sociopolitical) revolution and believed that his objective was to awaken people through his music.

Music itself is going to be the central topic of the next section of this chapter, as, in my opinion, it is also necessary to know how reggae music developed and its links with Africa and African traditions inherited from the slaves that were forced to migrate to America, in order to fully

understand not only the meaning behind Bob Marley's songs, but also the heritage that his music genre carried.

2. Mento, Ska, Rock-Steady and Reggae

Cultural poems spring from the history and experiences of the people who develop them, so are calypso and reggae products of the historical experiences of Africans in the Caribbean. But, while the medium of expression of protests and sentiments of the Africans in the Americas have taken varying forms, we find the content and spirit of Jazz and Blues in Afro-America, and the present Reggae in Jamaica reflect the same message – a reaction to the exploitation and oppression of the Africans in the New World” (Hylton 1795, cited in Campbell 1987:124-125)

As the ethnomusicologist Robert Witmer claims, we need to take into account the “almost entirely undocumented Afro-Jamaican folk or traditional music culture”, that had originated during the centuries of Jamaican slavery, “running parallel to the [pre-1960] mainstream urban popular music culture” (Manuel 1995:152), in order to understand how these traditions fed into mainstream Jamaican music.

The first examples of music in Jamaica date back to the early years of slavery. In fact, musical forms became the only means of communication among a population that had been stripped of its own language. As Campbell argues, “African culture in Jamaica took shelter in the religious expressions of Cumina, the Bongo Men, and the drumming of ‘John Canoe’, only to explode triumphantly out of the confines of the persecution in the form of reggae” (Campbell 1987:125). It is also important to note that, “at the base of the secular and spiritual black music of Jamaica was the drum” (Campbell 1987: 126).

These traditions were passed on for centuries, up to contemporary Jamaica. In fact, modern Neo-African drumming originates “from the ceremonial dances practiced by the slaves, such as “the *etu*, *tambu*, and *gumbe* traditions” (Manuel 1995:152). However, as Peter Manuel argues, “not all the older traditions available to Jamaicans during this period were religious” (Manuel 1995:153). One example of this was *mento*, that “had no special association with any

particular community, region, religion, or social group within Jamaica” and was a kind of popular music that derived from “a creolizing process that blended elements of a variety of European social-dance musics” such as the lancer, the mazurka and the quadrille, “with African-derived stylistic features” (Manuel 1995:153-154). Mento was later influenced by Trinidadian calypso, and around the 1950s both mento and calypso began to be commercialized in order to lure tourists to come to Jamaica; a relevant example of this is the song *Day O*, which was made famous by Harry Belafonte (Campbell 1987:125).

Toynbee claims that “the most important way in which mento fed into the reggae tradition was through continuity of singers and musicians” (Toynbee 2013:119). He also identifies Laurel Aitken as one of the most prominent figures in this regard, since Aitken recorded what may well have been the first Jamaican R and B side, ‘Aitken’s Boogie’, that still retained elements of local music, in particular mento (Toynbee 2013:119-120). Moreover, mento was also a major influence on Bob Marley’s music. In fact, “*Judge Not* from the first recording session with Lesley Kong in 1962 featured a tin whistle, an instrument with mento connections”, and also later songs, such as “*Rude Boy* had a series of mento references in its lyrics” (Toynbee 2013:120-121). In this perspective, then, mento was “a key strand in the musical skein that linked Bob Marley and the emerging reggae tradition to Jamaica’s colonial past and, beyond it, precolonial Africa” (Toynbee 2013:121).

Proceeding with the history of music in Jamaica, Toynbee argues that, at the basis of the development of reggae lies a socio-economical reason:

“We need also to think about music as a segment of the whole national economy, and in turn the location of Jamaica within the global capitalist system. The key factor from this perspective is the incursion of US capital which generated the late colonial boom of the 1950s. Inflowing dollars on the back of bauxite mining and tourism gave the Jamaican working class a degree of buying power, and with this a limited repertoire of consumer products and services. For present purposes what matters is that there was now critical mass for the development of a reggae infrastructure built upon the foundations of the growing macro-economy” (Toynbee 2013:81).

It is important to note that, during these years there were two main media through which music was beginning to be broadcasted and played. The first one was the radio. In fact, in 1950 the first commercial station, Radio Jamaica and Rediffusion (RJR) was launched. However, in this period, Jamaica radio stations only played white American singers' music, such as Elvis Presley, so "people had to develop their own institutions, called Sound Systems" which were usually played in big yard, "where the music of Jamaica and of black America could be played without restraints" (Campbell 1987:126-127).

For what concerns radios, only in the late 1950s there was a shift in the music that was broadcasted. In fact, since now "R and B format stations were broadcasting from the US with signals strong enough to be picked up in Jamaica" (Toynbee 2013:84), rhythm and blues, began to be most popular music genre in Jamaica. It is also important to highlight that, "R and B was stylistically diverse and included many regional variants. But one in particular held sway on the dance floor; shuffle boogie blues" (Toynbee 2013:81-82). At the same time, a new commercial station was also launched, the Jamaica Broadcasting Company (JBC). The most important thing about this new station is that it wanted to focus more on Jamaican music rather than mainstream US songs. This eventually led to an evolution of tastes, or, as Toynbee argues, the "musical taste had been indigenized", given that "in 1960 the most popular twenty-seven records of the year were all Jamaican (Chang and Chen 1998:221, cited in Toynbee 2013:85). At the same time, due to the growth of the dancehall market, there was an increase in the demand of new records. However, it is in this same period that the boogie style, which was so popular in Jamaica, was gradually disappearing from the US scene. This led to a shortage of new records, and, in order to solve this issue, the sound system operators began to "make R and B recordings in Kingston, custom made for the taste of the dance hall audience" (Toynbee 2013:86). It is also important to highlight that, "one mass medium that the privileged classes in Jamaica did not control was the 45 rpm record"; and, given that the privileged classes only amounted to a very small portion of Jamaican population, "not surprisingly, local producers aimed for the largest

record-buying market, and in Jamaica, this meant the struggling masses of ordinary citizens” (Manuel 1995:164).

It is in this very period that a new form of music was beginning to develop. In fact, though people enjoyed R&B records, they still wanted a music that had a faster tempo. In order to meet this demand, “Jamaican entrepreneurs hired local musicians to make records in the older R&B style” (Katz 2003:14, White 1998:16 cited in McCarthy 2007: 191) adding also some Jamaican elements to them. In particular, two music producers are responsible for the birth of these new recordings, namely Buddy Goodison and Coxson. “These recordings had a variety of names: ‘Jamaican Blues’, ‘half-blues’, ‘Bluebeat,’ ‘Jamaican Boogie’ or ‘Jamaican R&B’, labels which emphasize their links to American R&B records with only a hint of their indigenous features” (McCarthy 2007:191). However, as Garth White (1982) suggests, ‘proto-ska’ is a better term, since it relevantly takes into account the African heritage of this new musical genre. Among the influences of proto-ska there is obviously mento, as well as Nyabinghi, and Revival. Proto-ska, however, did not only draw from the musical elements of this previous genres, but also from their dances. In fact, as McCarthy argues, this new music became so popular because people “were making corporeal movements from folk traditions which they had been making since they were children” (McCarthy 2007: 194). In addition to this, he believes that this growing popularity of local music “paralleled Jamaica’s move toward national independence [since] a feeling of self-reliance in the cultural sphere was a boost to the nationalist feeling among the black masses (Stolzoff 2000:60 cited in McCarthy 2007:201).

During the 1960s, when the seeds of Jamaica’s indigenous popular music were being planted, West Kingston was a new and rapidly expanding urban fringe made up of migrants from various parts of the island [...] It was they who laid the foundations of what was to become a thriving urban musical culture [...] Whether at church, in dance halls, at *buru* gatherings, in *Kumina* yards, or in any number of other musical contexts, these ordinary Jamaicans, possessing little or no formal musical training, regularly made music that fulfilled a variety of social functions. For them the act of making music was enmeshed in community life (Manuel 1995:151-152)

According to McCarthy it is hard to define precisely when proto-ska evolved into proper ska, since “most historical information comes from participants’ memories which are often contradictory” (Katz 2003: 1-59 cited in McCarthy 2007:202). What we can say is that ska emerged as early as 1959 and it differed from proto-ska because there had been added more Neo-African elements. From a technical perspective, for example bass drum were heavier and piano and guitar parts became louder. Taking into account its themes, though love was still the central themes, as it had been in the past, ska also drew from several other thematic influences, such as, Pocomania, revivalist gospel and the rhythms of the Rastafarian.

One more thing needs to be said about ska, and that is that “with Jamaican independence set for August 1962, ska was the perfect music for this time” (McCarthy 2007:208). In fact, even Edward Seaga, who was the minister of culture at that time, thought that “music and dance forms were of crucial importance to the building of national sentiment” (Stolzloff 2000: 74), and ska was the perfect symbol for this growing national sentiment. In fact, ska is also the first Jamaican popular music that begins to address the tension between low classes and higher classes, downtown and uptown. In particular, as Manuel notes, “the first major expression of proletarian consciousness in Jamaica popular song centered on the theme of the ‘rude boy’, the rebellious urban youth whose response to squalid living conditions was petty crime, violence, and a boastful, aggressive stance” (Manuel 1995:164).

At this point it is also important to highlight the importance that Rastafarianism had in influencing the development of Jamaican music. In fact, Howell had already begun to “incorporate the Congo-based drumming, songs, and ritual language of the local Kumina religion into its vision of Ethiopian divinity”, and this tradition was later continued by early Rastafarians, who “adopted Kumina and transformed it into the liturgical music of their Rastafarian faith” (Manuel 1995: 159-160). In this period, many Rastafarian musicians were beginning to appear on the scene, and, among them, the most prominent figures related to ska music are probably Count Ossie, who is often regarded as one of the inventors of ska, and John

Folkes. Between 1958 and 1959, the two of them recorded *Oh Carolina*, which was also “one of the first songs ever recorded in the studios of [JBC]” and “turned out to be a smash hit, partly because of the novelty of hearing Rasta drums and percussion grafted onto a proto-ska rhythm-and-blues beat” (Manuel 1995:163). Later on, as Campbell argues, Rastafarians contributed to “the development of reggae music and its circulation [since this] was part of a deliberate effort by the Rastafarians to present their message to the wider Jamaican community and to the black world” (Campbell 1987:134).

Going back to Jamaica’s musical history, by 1996 ska had undergone so many changes that a new style was emerging: rocksteady. McCarthy identifies some of the reasons for the emergence of rock-steady. First of all, the rise of unemployment after independence. In fact, this had led many young unemployed people to become confrontational, who “were labeled ‘rude boys’ (or rudies) [...] rudies rarely liked to dance fast, preferring instead to move in a style that they called ‘the rocksteady’”. In addition to this, ska was further modified by the influences of African American R&B and Soul Music (McCarthy 2007:212-213). In regard to the technical characteristics of rock-steady, “the biggest changes [were] the slower tempo, the absence of swing grooves, and an implicit sixteenth-note subdivision” (McCarthy 2007:213).

“The transition from rock steady to reggae was, like the transition from ska to rock steady, an imperceptible process which was both a response to and a reflection of the changing social conditions of the society. Where rock steady had the legacy of singing the sex and romance songs of Jackie Opel and Lord Creator, reggae laid emphasis on Africa, black deliverance and redemption. This emphasis in the lyrics was combined with a bass line and drumming which harked back to the conditions of slavery. (Campbell 1987:134)

Following Jamaica’s independence, and its consequent search for a national identity, many Jamaicans felt that they need to go back and ‘resurrect’ their own roots. In fact, by the late 1960s, rock-steady was becoming more and more distinctively Jamaican. This process led to the birth of a new musical genre: reggae. As with all the previous genres that we have examined, there are many contradictory accounts related to the birth of reggae, however as Randall Grass highlights, the term reggae, in its previous form ‘reggay’, first appeared in 1968 in a song called

Do The Reggay sung by Toots & the Maytals; it was Toots himself the first to give a definition to this word, saying that “[reggay] was an expression [...] meaning, roughly, ‘ragged, everyday stuff’ ” (Grass 1982:45). According to McCarthy, there are three main elements that contributed to the shift from rock-steady to reggae: the technological innovations of keyboards “(electric pianos, clavinet and synthesizers), guitar effects (fuzz, distortion and wah-wah) and especially multi-track tape recorders”, the influence of Rastafarian philosophy and music, and the work of five Jamaican producers “Coxsone Dodd, Clancy Eccles, Leslie Kong, Bunny Lee and Lee Perry”, who chiefly promoted this new music genre (McCarthy 2007:223). Manuel, however, argues that this Rastafarian influence did not contribute directly to the birth of reggae but rather to its politicization and subsequent popularity. In fact, according to him, only after the culture reawakening of the 1970s, “Rasta themes and imagery – and especially, the emphasis on Africa – came to occupy a central place in popular culture and music” (Manuel 1995:165).

From a technical perspective, in reggae, the sounds of the guitar and the organ were modified up to the point that they “seem to be functioning more as percussion instruments than as providers of harmony” (Witmer 1981:109 cited in McCarthy 2007:224). Moreover, McCarthy also highlights that, reggae songs were often modified when they were performed live, since, in live performances the audience also participated to the song, “using work song-style call and response chants/ bobbins” (McCarthy 2007:232). Lastly, reggae lyrics presented a language which was closer to Jamaican Creole rather than English.

On a further note, even though we usually call reggae all the music with these characteristics that was developed from the late 1960s up to at least the late 1970s, McCarthy argues that we can actually distinguish three different reggae styles:

“ ‘Early reggae’ (c. 1968 to the early seventies), is similar to rocksteady, but with greater intensification of the neo-African characteristics [...] 2) ‘Roots reggae’ (early to mid-seventies), is Nyabingi influenced [...] sometimes featuring *burru* drums or similar patterns played on other instruments [...] 3) ‘Rockers’ (aka ‘steppers’), starting in the mid-seventies, uses a different bass drum pattern (called ‘militant drumming’)” (McCarthy 2007:232)

One last point needs to be made here before the end of the chapter, and that is the importance of Bob Marley and The Wailers in the history of reggae.

First of all, according to Toynbee, “Bob Marley and the Wailers were amongst the very earliest Jamaican popular music makers to return to the agenda effectively set by *Oh Carolina*” (Toynbee 2007:122). In fact, throughout their career they experimented with new music genres and tried to link their music to Africa. Secondly, and most importantly, despite the fact that Jamaican music was gradually becoming popular in the UK, “before the release of the Wailers’ Island albums the weekly music press had more or less ignored reggae”; in particular, their first song to reach worldwide fame was *I Shot the Sheriff* from the album *Burnin*, that managed to reach the first place on the ‘Billboard Hot 100’ in 1974. With their successive albums and songs, Bob Marley and the Wailers had become the most influential artists that have led to the growth of reggae.

After having analyzed both Bob’s life and the evolution of the Wailers, and after having reconstructed the history of Jamaican music, with a particular focus on reggae, this thesis will finally proceed to its most important section which is going to deal specifically with Bob Marley’s music and albums, through an in-depth study of some of his most important songs and their meaning.

CHAPTER 3: BOB MARLEY'S SONGS: BEYOND THE LYRICS

In song after song and in interview after interview, Marley makes it clear that music is his hope of healing. He describes himself as a revolutionary who uses music as his weapon [...] Bob Marley's art was devoted to speaking truth as best he knew it and understood it [...] He was on a mission. [He] wanted to free the people with music (Dawes 2002:52-53).

In this last chapter of my dissertation, I am going to deal with Bob Marley's songs. In particular, in this first part, I am going to analyze some of his songs, taking into account the different themes that we can find in most of Marley's works. In the second part, instead, I am going to focus more on the literary elements that can be traced in his lyrics, and for this purpose I am going to concentrate mainly on his last three albums, as they are the probably the most elaborate and literary rich works of his life. Finally, in light of the analysis of the previous two sections, in the third part I am going to comment on *Redemption Song*, which is probably one of his deepest songs, as it also represents a testament of the singer himself, given that it was written when Marley was already terminally ill.

1. Contextualizing Bob Marley's songs and their themes

Bob Marley's songs deal with several different topics, ranging from self, friendship, love and sex, as well as religious and spiritual arguments; but mostly they always tend to criticize his society and environment, by addressing themes such as freedom, justice, war, slavery, revolution and so on. More often than not, more than one theme is present in a single song.

For what concerns this study, I am going to analyze just some of the many songs that Marley has written and sung during his life, reporting the whole text or just a portion of it. I will try to understand the meaning of these songs, on the basis of the socio-economic background, as well as the historical and religious situation of Jamaica. In particular, given the aim of this thesis, I

am going to focus mainly on those few songs (see the list of the songs analyzed in this section in Table 1) that deal with religion and society, though I am also going to include some songs on self and love.

Table 1. List of Songs Analyzed

<i>Trench Town</i>	<i>Revolution</i>	<i>Africa Unite</i>
<i>Concrete Jungle</i>	<i>Trench Town Rock</i>	<i>One Foundation</i>
<i>Babylon System</i>	<i>Real Situation</i>	<i>One Love</i>
<i>Slave Driver</i>	<i>Crazy Baldheads</i>	<i>Jammin</i>
<i>Get Up, Stand Up</i>	<i>Ambush in The Night</i>	<i>Ride Natty Ride</i>
<i>War</i>	<i>Buffalo Soldier</i>	

Trench Town

[...] There I vision through the seas of oppression, oh-oo-wo! / Don't make my life a prison. / We come from Trench Town, Trench Town (Trenchtown) - / Most of them come from Trench Town. / We free the people with music (sweet music); / Can we free the people with music (sweet music)? / Can we free our people with music? - With music, / With music, oh music! / Oh-y, my head, / In desolate places we'll find our bread, / And everyone see what's taking place, oh-oo-wo! - / Another page in history. / We come from Trench Town, / Come from Trench Town; / We come from Trench Town. / Lord we free the people with music (sweet music); / We free the people with music (sweet music); / We free our people with music, / With music, oh music (oh music) / [...] They say, "Can anything good come out of Trench Town?" / (Trench - Trenchtown) / That's what they say, (Trenchtown); (Trench - Trenchtown) / Say (Trench - Trenchtown) we're the underprivileged people, / So (Trenchtown) they keep us in chains: / "Pay (Trench - Trenchtown) - pay - pay tribute to -" (Trenchtown). / We come from (Trench - Trenchtown) [...]

In the song *Trench Town*, Marley criticizes the conditions in which poor people are living, and he also goes against the supposed belief that nothing good can come out of Trench Town ("They say, 'Can anything good come out of Trench Town?' "), since, in fact, Trench Town was where many working-class people lived. As it can be seen from the text, he refers to these people as

being victims of “seas of oppression” and compares this kind of life to “a prison”, since in fact “they keep us in chains”; obviously in this case the chains are not physical, as it was during the years of slavery, but they are invisible chains dictated by the economic and class systems. The oppression that is taking place in Trench Town is, according to Marley, “another page in history”; this phrase is probably also a reference to the past of slavery, meaning that what is happening in Trench Town is just the continuation of what had already happened in the past. Ultimately, he wonders whether it is possible to liberate people from this “prison” through the power of music (“Can we free people with music?”). This, as we have already seen, seems to have been his principle aim in life.

Concrete Jungle

[...] Where is the love to be found? (ooh-ooh-ooh) / Won't someone tell me 'cause/ Life (sweet life) must be (got to be) somewhere to be found (out there somewhere out there for me) / Instead of concrete jungle (Jungle, jungle, jungle!), / I said where the living is hardest (concrete jungle!). /Concrete jungle (jungle, jungle, jungle) / Man, you got to do your best (concrete jungle!) /Wo-ooh / No chains around my feet / But I'm not free/ I know I am bounded in captivity; oh now / (Never known) Never known (what happiness is) what happiness is; / (Never known) I've never known (what sweet caress is) what sweet caress is yeah / Still, I'll be always laughing like a clown; (ooh-ooh-ooh) / Oh someone help me 'cause I (sweet life) - / I've got to pick myself from off the [...] concrete jungle (jungle!) - collusion (concrete jungle!) / Confusion (confusion). Eh! / Concrete jungle (jungle!): we've made it, We've got it. [...]

The song *Concrete Jungle* draws from an event that happened in Marley’s life in 1971, when, because of an urban renewal project, Bob and many others were forced to relocate from West Kingston. The people of the ghetto started then to call that area as ‘The Concrete Jungle’ (White :229). This ‘Concrete Jungle’ becomes once again a symbol for the oppression and Babylon System, and it represents “the personification of the economic and political elite who are actually responsible for the bleak existence in Trench Town and other urban working-class communities”. In fact, these people are “in captivity without chains around their feet [because

of forces such as] capitalism, anti-African racism and patriarchy” (Nangwaya and Onuora 2018:314).

With this song Marley also wants to warn people. In fact, he juxtaposes the words ‘concrete jungle’ and ‘collusion’, implying that progress, symbolized by this urban renewal project, can often be nothing but a way to deceive people and only make one’s own interest (in this case the interests of the people in power). However, it seems that amid this confusion and deception, there might still be hope for a better future; in fact, to cite his own words: “Life (sweet life) must be (got to be) somewhere to be found (out there somewhere out there for me) / Instead of concrete jungle”.

Babylon System

We refuse to be / What you wanted us to be / We are what we are: / That's the way (way) it's going to be. If you don't know! / You can't educate I / For no equal opportunity: / (Talkin' 'bout my freedom) Talkin' 'bout my freedom / People freedom (freedom) and liberty! / Yeah, we've been trodding on the winepress much too long: / Rebel, rebel! / Yes, we've been trodding on the winepress much too long: / Rebel, rebel! / Babylon system is the vampire, yea! (vampire) / Suckin' the children day by day, yeah! / Me say: de Babylon system is the vampire, falling empire / Suckin' the blood of the sufferers, yea-ea-ea-ea-e-ah! Building church and university, wo-o-oooh, yeah! / Deceiving the people continually, yea-ea! / Me say them graduatin' thieves and murderers / Look out now: they suckin' the blood of the sufferers (sufferers) Yea-ea-ea! (sufferers) / Tell the children the truth / Tell the children the truth / Tell the children the truth right now! / Come on and tell the children the truth / Tell the children the truth / Tell the children the truth / Tell the children the truth / Come on and tell the children the truth / 'Cause - 'cause we've been trodding on ya winepress much too long: / Rebel, rebel! / And we've been taken for granted much too long: /Rebel, rebel now! / (Trodding on the winepress) Trodding on the winepress (rebel): /Got to rebel, y'all (rebel)! We've been trodding on the winepress much too long - ye-e-ah! (rebel) / Yea-e-ah! (rebel) Yeah! Yeah!/From the very day we left the shores (trodding on the winepress) / Of our Father's land (rebel) / We've been trampled on (rebel) / Oh now! (taken for granted) / Lord, Lord (rebel) / Go to rebel (rebel)

This song represents one of the most explicit attacks that Marley has ever made towards the established system, which Rastafarian usually called ‘Babylon’, as we have already seen in the first chapter. In particular, in this song, the ‘Babylon System’ is mainly a reference to

capitalism. “The ‘blood of the sufferers’ under the Babylon system [represents] the labour power of the sufferers, which is the basis on which the wealth in society is created” (Nangwaya and Onuora 2018:316). Just like a vampire does when he sucks the blood out of his victim, capitalism, and the higher classes, exploit the workers, and they get stronger and wealthier through the efforts of the sufferers. Nangwaya and Onura also link this with Karl Marx, arguing that “the inability of the worker to set the conditions under which they work also drains them of their life-force, and is a manifestation of the alienation of labour as articulated by Karl Marx in *the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*” (Nangwaya and Onuora 2018:316). Moreover, when Marley says that the Babylon System is “deceiving the people continually” he means that the poor classes are also victim of the “ideological hegemony of the capitalist class over society, that allows the sufferers to share the former’s worldview as their own” (Nangwaya and Onuora 2018:316).

In this song Marley mentions churches and university, linking them to the concept of deception, because he firmly believed that these institutions had not a positive influence on people, but rather they promoted wrong visions of life and God, and at the same moment they supported the false ideology of the “Babylon System”; in fact, he addresses the people connected to these institutions as “graduating thieves and murderer[s]”.

Despite *Babylon System* is an attack against capitalism in general, we can also spot some references to Jamaican history and society, as well as African diaspora. In fact, when Marley says, “no equal opportunity”, he is definitely referring in general to the class system and how poor people have not the same opportunity as those who belong to higher classes. However, he is also probably implying that equal opportunity, that should have been brought by Jamaican independence, is only just an illusion, since the difference in opportunities between people in Jamaica is still immense. As for the African past, instead, the sentence “from the very day we left our shores – Of our Father’s land” is obviously a reference to slave trades, and it is also an

allusion to the fact that Africa is the land of God, which is one of the core beliefs of Rastafarianism.

Lastly, it is also important to highlight that in this song Marley is stressing the importance of the next generations and their education. In fact, it seems that, in order to get out of this ‘Babylon System’, the only way is to educate children in a better way.

Slave driver

Ooh-ooh-oo-oo. Oo-oo-oo! Oo-oo-oo / Slave driver, the table is turn; (catch a fire) / Catch a fire, so you can get burn, now. (catch a fire) / Slave driver, the table is turn; (catch a fire) / Catch a fire: gonna get burn. (catch a fire) Wo, now! / Ev'rytime I hear the crack of a whip, / My blood runs cold. / I remember on the slave ship, / How they brutalize the very souls. / Today they say that we are free, / Only to be chained in poverty. / Good God, I think it's illiteracy; / It's only a machine that makes money. / Slave driver, the table is turn, y'all. Ooh-ooh-oo-oo. / Slave driver, uh! The table is turn, baby, now; (catch a fire) / Catch a fire, so you can get burn, baby, now. (catch a fire) / Slave driver, the table is turn, y'all; (catch a fire) / Catch a fire: so you can get burn, now. (catch a fire) / Ev'rytime I hear the crack of a whip, / My blood runs cold. / I remember on the slave ship, / How they brutalize the very soul. / O God, have mercy on our souls! / Oh, slave driver, the table is turn, y'all; (catch a fire) / Catch a fire, so you can get burn. (catch a fire) / Slave driver, the table is turn, y'all; (catch a fire) / Catch a fire

In this song Marley portrays the way in which slaves were exploited and the brutal conditions in which they had to live and work. A powerful symbol contained in this song is the ‘whip’, that represents the power of the slave-traders over the slaves. Once again, Nangwaya and Onura link this concept with Karl Marx’s idea of alienation, saying that, Marley’s *Slave Driver* provides us with an image of “the workers not being in a position to exercise substantive power over how their labour is deployed in the production process” (Nangwaya and Onuora 2018: 317).

According to Jacobs, in this song,

“[Marley] exhibits what is called today the ‘biogenetic memory’: every time he hears the crack of a whip his ‘blood runs cold’, as, Pavlov-like, his mind and body show a conditioned reflex, in which his mind remembers the experience of the so-called ‘middle passage’ and slavery itself by the sound

of a whip being cracked. Again, Marley is almost Marxist in outlook when he observes that today we are 'free' only to be 'chained in poverty' (Smith, M. G. 1960: 27-8, cited in Jacobs, C. 2015: 8).

Capitalism here works once again as a link between postcolonial Jamaica and the previous centuries of slavery. As Walter Rodney said, referring to Jamaican people, "... our people have been operating within the aegis of capitalism for five hundred years which is longer than the working- class in the United States. We have been confronting capital, firstly, on the slave plantation, and then subsequently on that same plantation after slavery" (Rodney 1990:73, cited in Nangwaya and Onuora 2018:318). Marley surely shared this vision that Rodney had, and he never failed to communicate this concept through his songs.

If we investigate the meaning of "slave driver", we can find two different connotations. Nowadays slave driver is an idiomatic expression that is used to address someone (namely a boss) who acts tyrannically and in an oppressive way to the people under him/her. However, in the past, with this term people referred to those slaves that were given 'higher privileges' and who commanded and oppressed other slaves. This interconnection is likely intentional, because it implicitly alludes to the slave past of Jamaica, but also to the poverty and oppressive conditions which people still experience in postcolonial Jamaica, where, despite the fact that independence has been achieved, the power relations have remained the same.

With the phrase "the table has turned", which is an expression that frequently appears in Marley's songs, the author wants to imply that a revolution is gradually happening, where the power relations are going to be subverted. Moreover, when he says 'catch a fire' he subtly makes a link between this revolution and reggae music. In fact, this term was originally used in reggae as an equivalent of 'catch the beat'; however, fire is obviously intertwined with the concept of revolution, and so, in a way, Marley is here implying that the spark of the revolution can be ignited by reggae music.

Lastly, it is important to highlight the meaning of the sentence “It’s only a machine that makes money”. Through these words, Marley is explicitly defining capitalism itself. In fact, eventually, even slave traders, or modern plantation owners are just victims (or slaves) of an economic system that transforms them into soulless mechanisms of a gigantic engine that only focuses on production, efficiency and wealth, which is capitalism.

Get Up Stand Up

Get up, stand up: stand up for your rights! / Get up, stand up: stand up for your rights! / Get up, stand up: stand up for your rights! / Get up, stand up: don't give up the fight! / Preacherman, don't tell me, / Heaven is under the earth. / I know you don't know / What life is really worth. / It's not all that glitters is gold; / 'Alf the story has never been told: / So now you see the light, eh! / Stand up for your rights. Come on! / Get up, stand up: stand up for your rights! / Get up, stand up: don't give up the fight! / Get up, stand up: stand up for your rights! / Get up, stand up: don't give up the fight! / Most people think, / Great God will come from the skies, / Take away everything / And make everybody feel high. / But if you know what life is worth, / You will look for yours on earth: / And now you see the light, / You stand up for your rights. Jah! / Get up, stand up! (Jah, Jah!) / Stand up for your rights! (Oh-hoo!) / Get up, stand up! (Get up, stand up!) / Don't give up the fight! (Life is your right!) / Get up, stand up! (So we can't give up the fight!) / Stand up for your rights! (Lord, Lord!) / Get up, stand up! (Keep on struggling on!) / Don't give up the fight! (Yeah!) / We sick an' tired of-a your ism-skism game - / Dyin' 'n' goin' to heaven in-a Jesus' name, Lord. / We know when we understand: / Almighty God is a living man. / You can fool some people sometimes, / But you can't fool all the people all the time. / So now we see the light (What you gonna do?), / We gonna stand up for our rights! (Yeah, yeah, yeah!) / So you better: / Get up, stand up! (In the morning! Git it up!) / Stand up for your rights! (Stand up for our rights!) / Get up, stand up! / Don't give up the fight! (Don't give it up, don't give it up!) / Get up, stand up! (Get up, stand up!) / Stand up for your rights! (Get up, stand up!) / Get up, stand up! (...) / Don't give up the fight! (Get up, stand up!) / Get up, stand up! (...) / Stand up for your rights! / Get up, stand up! / Don't give up the fight!

This is one of the most militant songs written by Marley. In fact, apart from trying to raise awareness of the condition in which people are living, here he’s asking these same people to take an active role in fighting the ones who oppress and deny them their own rights. In the lyrics of this song, Marley also implies that, accordingly to his Rastafarian beliefs, God is not in heaven but on Earth (“Almighty God is a living man”). Another evident aspect of Rastafarianism that is evident in this song is the focus on self-help. In fact, Rastafarians believe

that a person has to rely only on himself, or herself, and as such, Marley here is inviting everybody to stand for their own rights.

In this perspective, Marley is also harshly criticizing preachers, because they always try to make people envision a life which is only lived in perspective of the afterlife in heaven. In fact, Marley believed that life on Earth was what really mattered, and that dreams of an afterlife only distracted from the real purposes of life. However, Marley once again sends a message of hope by saying that “You [preachers] can fool some people sometimes, / But you can't fool all the people all the time”.

An important thing to note about this song is that here Marley explicitly criticizes society and cultural-religious conflicts. In fact, with the sentence “we're sick an' tired of-a your ism-skism game”, Marley is condemning all those ideologies which ends with -ism (for example, racism, capitalism, nationalism, communism), as they were all sources of conflicts, and they always split the people in at least two groups (the oppressors and the oppressed); “Schism” instead is term used to define a division within a group of people, often belonging to a religious organization.

War

Until the philosophy which hold one race superior / And another / Inferior / Is finally / And permanently / Discredited / And abandoned / Everywhere is war / Me say war / That until there no longer / First class and second class citizens of any nation / Until the colour of a man's skin / Is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes / Me say war / That until the basic human rights / Are equally guaranteed to all / Without regard to race / Dis a war / That until that day / The dream of lasting peace / World citizenship / Rule of international morality / Will remain in but a fleeting illusion to be pursued / But never attained / Now everywhere is war - war / And until the ignoble and unhappy regimes / That hold our brothers in Angola / In Mozambique / South Africa / Sub-human bondage / Have been toppled / Utterly destroyed / Well, everywhere is war / Me say war / War in the east / War in the west / War up north / War down south / War - war / Rumours of war / And until that day / The African continent / Will not know peace / We Africans will fight - we find it necessary / And we know we shall win / As we are confident / In the victory / Of good over evil /

Good over evil, yeah / Good over evil / Good over evil, yeah / Good over evil / Good over evil,
yeah!

This song is based on a speech, entitled “What life has taught me”, made by Haile Selassie on 4th of October 1963 in front of the UN. In this song Marley criticizes the concept of race, which is only an arbitrary and socially constructed idea. In fact, paraphrasing his own words, there won't be any liberty or peace until there is still the belief that a race can be reputed as superior or inferior to another (“Until the colour of a man's skin / Is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes”); and since this is a problem that affects the entire world, “everywhere is war”. Apart from racial discrimination, in this song Marley also addresses the issue of social classes, when he says that “until there no longer – First class and second-class citizens of any nation [...] Me say war”. As long as these two kinds of distinctions are going to be alive, according to the singer, “the dream of lasting peace [...] will remain in but a fleeting illusion to be pursued but never attained”.

Lastly, the singer once again makes a reference to his African heritage by saying “We African”, and as he does in many others of his songs, he invites people to fight for their freedom, giving also an omen of hope, by saying “we know we shall win / As we are confident / In the victory / Of good over evil”.

Revolution

[...] It takes a revolution (revolution) to make a solution; / (doo-doo-doo-doo) / Too much confusion (aaa-aaah), so much frustration, eh! / I don't wanna live in the park (live in the park); / Can't trust no shadows after dark (shadows after dark), yeah-eh! / So, my friend, I wish that you could see, / Like a bird in the tree, the prisoners must be free, yeah! (free) / Never make a politician (aaa-aaah) grant you a favour; / (doo-doo-doo-doo) / They will always want (aaa-aaah) to control you forever, eh! / (forever, forever) / So if a fire make it burn (make it burn, make it burn) / And if a blood make ya run (make ya run, run, run), / Rasta de 'pon top (aaa-aaah), can't you see? (doo-doo-doo-doo) / So you can't predict the flop. Eh-eh! (doo-doo-doo-doo) [...]

In this song Marley expresses how things are probably not going to change unless a revolution happens (“It takes a revolution to make a solution”). Even though, as we already know, when Marley says ‘revolution’, he generally does not mean a violent revolution, in this song we can see some elements that might make us think otherwise. In fact, in-between the lines we can read “so if a fire make it burn, and if a blood make it run”, which might imply that even if some blood is going to be spilled, and so even if some lives are taken, they still have to keep the fire of the revolution alive, for in this way they will emerge victorious.

Once again, in this song we can see that Marley is criticizing politicians, by warning people to “never make a politician grant you a favor, [because] they will always want to control you forever”. So in general, what the singer is saying here is that even though politicians might promise something or might give people some privileges, in the end this is just another way to maintain their control over the oppressed.

Trench Town Rock

[...] One good thing about music / When it hits you feel no pain / One good thing about music /
When it hits you feel no pain / So hit me with music / This is Trench Town Rock. / [...] Give the
slum a try, Trench Town rock / Never let the children cry, Trench Town rock [...]

In this song Marley presents music as an alternative to violence, because “when it hits you feel no pain”. In particular, with *Trench Town Rock* Marley is addressing the people of Trench Town, a place where violence was a common occurrence, and he’s suggesting them to “give the slum a try”, especially having in mind the future generations.

Real Situation

Check out the real situation: / Nation war against nation. / Where did it all begin? / When will it
end? / Well, it seems like: total destruction the only solution, / And there ain't no use: no one can
stop them now. / Ain't no use: nobody can stop them now [...]

In this song Marley is commenting on the constant battles and wars that nations fight, one against the other. Here he addresses the impossibility of tracing back the origins of all these conflicts (“where did it all begin?”), and at the same time he sadly wonders “when it will end?”. Differently from the rest of the production of the Jamaican singer, this song has more of a pessimistic tone to it. In fact, he even goes as far as saying “there ain’t no use: no one can stop them now”.

Crazy Baldheads

[...] I'n'I build a cabin; / I'n'I plant the corn; / Didn't my people before me / Slave for this country? /
Now you look me with that scorn, / Then you eat up all my corn. [...] Build your penitentiary, we
build your schools, / Brainwash education to make us the fools. [...] Here comes the con man [...]
Coming with his con plan / We won't take no bribe / We have got to stay alive [...]

In this song Marley gives an exemplification of how exploitation works; in fact, first the working classes “plant the corn”, but then it’s the owners who benefit from it and thus “eat up all the corn; through this song, Marley “instructively warns the people [...] of the behaviour of hostile forces that seek to maintain their division or subordination through political skullduggery” (Nangwaya and Onuora 2018: 319).

As we have already seen in other songs, even in *Crazy Baldheads*, there is a reference to the slave past, when he says “Didn't my people before me / Slave for this country?”. Moreover, once again Marley warns against the deception of the education promoted by those people who hold the power, since, according to him, it’s just another tool to ‘brainwash’ and oppress people.

Ambush in The Night

[...] Your brother got to be your enemy, we-e-ell! / Ambush in the night, / All guns aiming at me; /
Ambush in the night, / They opened fire on me now. / Ambush in the night, / Protected by His
Majesty [...] Well, what we know / Is not what they tell us; / We're not ignorant, I mean it, / And
they just cannot touch us; / Through the powers of the Most-I (shoobe, doo-wa), / We keep on

surfacin' (shoobe, doo-wa); / Thru the powers of the Most-I (shoobe, doo-wa), / We keep on survivin'
[...]

This song is linked to the attempted murder which had Marley as a target in 1976. With the phrase “Your brother got to be your enemy”, Marley is obviously referring to his fellow Jamaican citizens who attempted to kill him. However, at the same time, according to Nangwaya and Onuora, here he is also alluding to “the racialised petite bourgeois that acquired power from the colonial masters have effectively fostered and politicised points of difference within the ranks of the labour classes”, which eventually leads to a situation where a fellow sufferer, “a brother” , becomes the oppressor himself (Nangwaya and Onuora 2018: 320).

Lastly, as we can see from these lyrics, Marley believes that Haile Selassie has saved him from death since he was “protected by His Majesty [...] through the powers of the Most-I”, and this shows the profoundness of his Rastafarian beliefs.

Buffalo Soldier

[...] Buffalo Soldier, Dreadlocked Rasta / There was a Buffalo Soldier in the heart of America / Stolen from Africa, brought to America / Fighting on arrival, fighting for survival / I mean it, when I analyze the stench - / To me it makes a lot of sense / How the Dreadlocked Rasta was a Buffalo Soldier / And he was taken from Africa, brought to America / Fighting on arrival, fighting for survival [...] If you know your history / Then you would know where you're coming from / Then you wouldn't have to ask me / Who the heck do I think I am[...]

The Buffalo Soldiers were African American soldiers who had to fight in 19th century against the Indian American. Their name was supposedly “given them by the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Apache tribes they encountered” (Franklin and Moss 1994:299). In this song, with the words “stolen from Africa, brought to America / Fighting on arrival, fighting for survival”, Marley wants to comment on the irony of these African people being brought from Africa to America, that had to first fight for their survival by working as slaves to eventually even be forced to fight battles for those same oppressors that had originally take them from Africa.

With this song, Marley also tries to make a connection between Dreadlock Rastas and Buffalo Soldiers. In fact, both of them are originally of African descent, and, just like Buffalo Soldiers did, Rastas have now to keep on fighting for their survival, even though they are not waging a war against Indian Americans but against a society that oppresses them.

Africa Unite

[...] Africa unite: / 'Cause we're moving right out of Babylon, / And we're going to our Father's land, yea-ea. / How good and how pleasant it would be before God and man, yea-eah! / To see the unification of all Africans, yeah! / As it's been said a'ready, let it be done, yeah! / We are the children of the Rastaman; / We are the children of the Iyaman [...]

This song is one of Marley's works focusing on the concept of unity, and expressing his Pan-African visions. As we can see, the singer is here asking for the unification of all the people of African descent, suggesting that they should all reunite in Africa ("our Father's land").

It is worth to highlight that *Africa Unite* begins with a segment of Psalm 133 ("How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity"), a Psalm where it is implied the return of Jews to Zion. Here instead, Marley is craftily using this reference in relation to the return of African to Ethiopia (and Africa in general).

One Foundation

[...] Got to put aside them segregation, yeah! / Got to put aside them organization; / Got to put aside them denomination. [...] Got to come together / We are birds of a feather; / We got to come together / 'Cause we are birds of a feather; / Got to come together / 'Cause we are birds of a feather; / Or there will never be (Lord, have mercy!) no love at all [...]

This is one of Marley's songs in which he conceptualizes his vision of unity and oneness with all the people of the world. In fact, here the singer is inviting people to recognize that they are all part of a whole ("we are birds of a feather"), and to put aside concepts such as segregation, organization or denominations, which are only means to divide people.

One Love

One Love! One Heart! / Let's get together and feel all right / Hear the children cryin' (One Love!) /
Hear the children cryin' (One Heart!) / Sayin': give thanks and praise to the Lord and I will feel all
right / Sayin': let's get together and feel all right [...]

This is one of Marley's most famous songs, surely because of its musicality and probably also because of its general message with which almost anybody can empathize. Once again, here the singer is calling for a unity that does not just involve people from African descent, but all humankind. With the word children, in this song, we can identify both the future generations, which are calling for a world united and full of love, and all the people in general, since, in Marley's view, everybody is a child of God (Jah).

Jammin

[...] No bullet can stop us now, we neither beg nor we won't bow; / Neither can be bought nor sold.
/ We all defend the right; Jah - Jah children must unite: / Your life is worth much more than gold.
[...] Jam's about my pride and truth I cannot hide / To keep you satisfied. / True love that now exist
is the love I can't resist, / So jam by my side. [...]

As we can see this song has two intended addressees. In fact he's making a call for unity, when he says "jam by my side" or "Jah children must unite", referring thus to all the people who are suffering, and in general to all Americans of African origins; however at the same time, it's like Marley is warning politicians and all people in power that "no bullets can stop us now" and that they "neither can be bought nor sold". This last expression is obviously also a reference to the past and slave trade.

Ride Natty Ride

[...] Dready got a job to do / And he's got to fulfill that mission / To see his hurt is their greatest ambition, yeah! / But-a we will survive in this world of competition, / 'Cause no matter what they do / Natty keep on comin'through [...]

Lastly, I wanted to mention this song because, rather than just portraying the hardship of this world, which is full of competition, it is also, according to Nagwaya and Onura, a good example of the different role that men had in Marley's songs in comparison to women. In fact,

the women characters in Marley's songs are love interests, nurturing mothers or mourning or sad women, whose existence is closely tied to their gendered lives in the domestic sphere and the world of private, personal or familial relationships. Marley's men are active, moral agents operating in the world of citizenship – the public realm – as exemplified in the song *Ride Natty Ride* [...] On the other hand the woman in Marley's song *Stir It Up* is a source of amorous affection and pleasure (Nangwaya and Onuora 2018:322-323)

For this reason, the two scholars believe that “Marley's women characters are overly identified with emotion and not reason. Impersonal political relations and active participation in hero-making collective social endeavours in the public sphere are not associated with them” (Nangwaya and Onuora 2018:325). This idea is definitely plausible given also the kind of relationship that Marley had with women throughout his life.

2. Literary and Aesthetic elements of Bob Marley's songs

In his book, Timothy White claims that the last three albums composed a trilogy, with *Survival* being a “fierce call to arms”, *Uprising* being “intended to offer support to the intended multitudes as they hastened to set their spiritual houses in order”, and lastly *Confrontation* which showed “the honesty of self-doubt, [with] Bob confronting the presence of good and evil inside his own soul” (White 1992:328-329). Precisely these last three albums are going to be the main focus of this section (even though occasionally we are going to mention songs that belong also to other albums). It is going to deal mainly with literary and aesthetic elements that

can be found in this musical trilogy (Table 2). It is important to note that much of this analysis has been informed by Professor Cosmas Rai Amenorvi's studies (2019a, 2019b, 2020). In fact, in a similar way to his research, this section is going to deal with Marley's use of language, his use of literary devices, and the titles and order of his songs, that seem to create a sort of narration themselves.

Table 2. List of Songs of the last three albums

<u><i>Survival</i></u>	<u><i>Uprising</i></u>	<u><i>Confrontation</i></u>
<i>So Much Trouble in the World</i>	<i>Coming in from the Cold</i>	<i>Chant Down Babylon</i>
<i>Zimbabwe</i>	<i>Real Situation</i>	<i>Buffalo Soldier</i>
<i>Top Rankin'</i>	<i>Bad Card</i>	<i>Jump Nyahbinghi</i>
<i>Babylon System</i>	<i>We and Dem</i>	<i>Mix Up, Mix Up</i>
<i>Survival</i>	<i>Work</i>	<i>Give Thanks and Praise</i>
<i>Africa Unite</i>	<i>Zion Train</i>	<i>Blackman Redemption</i>
<i>One Drop</i>	<i>Pimper's Paradise</i>	<i>Trench Town</i>
<i>Ride Natty Ride</i>	<i>Could You be Loved</i>	<i>Stiff Necked Fools</i>
<i>Ambush in the Night</i>	<i>Forever Loving Jah</i>	<i>I Know</i>
<i>Wake Up and Live</i>	<i>Redemption Song</i>	<i>Rastaman Live Up!</i>

2.1 Use of Language

Carefully reading the texts of these songs, it's possible to notice that many of them present lexical choices that purposefully increase the strength of the message conveyed to the listener.

Taking into account the first of the three albums, *Survival*, we can see that the concept of 'survival' is echoed in most of the songs comprised in this album. In the first song *So Much*

Trouble in The World, we can see the concept of survival is expressed through many images such as “bomb”, “men sailing”, and even the very title “so much trouble in the world” suggests that people need to face a lot of difficulties in order to keep living. It is also important to note that, in this song, Marley identifies himself with the oppressed people (the sufferers) and say that they are “strugglin’”. In *Zimbabwe*, the singer explicitly says that they have to “fight” because this is the only way to survive and “overcome” the oppression that they are experience. In the third song, *Top Rankin’*, Marley conveys the idea of survival through words such as “fussing” and “fighting”, that are counterposed to “killing” which is the exact opposite of survival. In the song *Babylon System*, which we have already seen in the first section of this chapter, there are not single words that are strictly linked with survival, but many more linked with the concepts of revolution or rebellion (“rebel”).

Marley strongly returns to the act of surviving in the fifth song, *Survival*, which is already quite evocative from its own title. Here, the singer shows through his words that people are “suffering”, thrown in “a world that force lifelong insecurity”. Yet, still, even if they are “thrown in the fire”, they will survive nonetheless because they are “survivors”. Just as it happens in *Babylon System*, even in *Africa Unite* we can’t find words directly linked with survival, since here the core of the message are instead union and exodus. In the seventh song, *One Drop*, Marley says that they are “resisting against the system”, and since “they made the world so hard”, “every day the people are dyin’”. Anyway, this is only a reminder for people to “keep on fighting”. In *Ride Natty Ride*, the concept of survival is further reinforced, for he says that they “will survive in a world of competition”, but in order to do so they need to “fight”, sometimes even “ridin’ through the storm”. With the penultimate song, the singer stresses, again, that even though “they keep [them] hungry”, nevertheless they still have to “keep on surfacin’” and “keep on surving”. Lastly, in the song *Wake Up and Live*, Marley invites the listeners to take an active role in their survival, by saying that “there’s work to be done”, that

people need to “rise”, “wake up”, and “flee” from all the things that cause division among men, without “bury[ing their] thoughts” and “put[ting their] dream to reality”.

Considering the album *Uprising*, once again its leitmotiv, ‘uprising’, can be observed in the majority of the songs of the album. In the first song *Coming in from the Cold*, it is possible to note words such as “kill” and “system” which give the listener an initial feeling of uprising or rebellion. This feeling is further reinforced in the third song, *Bad Card* and *We and Dem*. In fact, in the first one, there are some words that portray the bad condition in which people are living (“tired”, “disgrace”, etc.), while in the second one there are many

“lexical items conveying the theme of uprising like ‘innocent blood’, ‘shed’, ‘work’, ‘domination’, and ‘identity’. If there is ‘innocent blood’ ‘shed’ every day and people suffer ‘domination’, they would have to rise up and fight for their rights; [therefore] an uprising or a revolt is necessary” (Amenorvi 2020:165).

In *Forever Loving Jah*, we can spot some words linked to the concept of uprising, such as “changes”, “rages”, though the idea of rebellion itself is not even the topic of the song. Finally in the last song, *Redemption Song*, we can see that the message of uprising is embedded in almost every verse of the song, as much as in most of the vocabulary employed in it. In fact, just to list a few, we can read words such as “kill”, “slavery”, “emancipate”, “freedom”, “redemption” and many others. This proves that, as Amenorvi argues, “Marley’s lyrics can be reread to unravel novel interpretations which would otherwise be left untapped” (Amenorvi 2020:165).

The last album of this trilogy, *Confrontation*, which was published after Marley’s premature death, we can see the theme of ‘confrontation’ is not present in many of its songs. However, we can still find some example of lexical references to confrontation, as for example in the first song *Chant Down Babylon*, where, “one key lexical item and an expression stand out in projecting the theme of confrontation, namely, ‘burn’ and ‘chant down’. ‘Burning’ connotes destruction while ‘chant down’ encompasses similar negative connotation, both directed against ‘Babylon’ ” (Amenorvi 2019b:341). In *Buffalo Soldier*, Marley employs terms such as

“survival”, “fighting” and “soldier”. As we have already seen in the previous section, the theme of confrontation and battle strongly characterizes this song. To these words, Amenorvi also adds the term “stench” to the list, since he believes that “ ‘stench’ here certainly refers to the malodourous air in the slave dungeons” (Amenorvi 2019b:342), reinforcing thus the idea that this confrontation has a long historical root. In *I Know*, Marley compares this confrontation to a “race” that is “hard to run”, but he tries to encourage himself and the other people by saying “take courage, battle to be won”. Lastly, in the song *Rastaman Live Up!* he makes some references to mythical battles, “David slew Goliath with a sling and a stone” and “Samson slew the Philistines with a donkey jawbone”, and he asks people not to be “afraid” and to keep on fighting in this confrontation, by telling them “don’t give up!”.

2.2 Literary devices

Repetitions

One of the literary devices that Bob Marley frequently used in his song is *repetition*. As we have already seen, given the history of reggae as a musical genre, this is not much of a surprise, since music was also meant to be an interactive performance between the singer(s) and the listeners. In this regard, Amenorvi goes as far as count the number of times a certain expression or word is repeated through a single song:

The ‘so much trouble in the world’ in the song is repeated, either directly from Marley or from the backing vocalists for more than seventeen times out of thirty-nine lines. [...] In the song ‘Zimbabwe’, the name ‘Zimbabwe’ is repeated almost twenty-six times along “Brother you’re right” a great number of times (Amenorvi 2019a:119)

Personally, I believe that it is sufficient to say that Marley largely employs this literary device both as a direct consequence of the musical genre to which its music belongs, but also as a deliberate means to further stress the most important elements of his songs. In this perspective, it worth noting that, as Amenorvi highlights “Dupriez (1991) and Fleak et al. (1933) submit

that repetition as a figure of speech brings fullness to a story or a literary piece of work” (Amenorvi 2019a: 119), and so we can only say that ‘repetition’ contributes to the overall literariness of Marley’s songs.

Allusions

Paraphrasing Bernard Dupriez, Amenorvi defines the allusion as “a reference made to a person, idea or a thing outside of a given information” (Amenorvi 2019a: 119). Marley works are indeed rich of allusions, especially historical (as we have already seen in the song *Buffalo Soldier*) and religious ones, as he was an avid reader of historical and biblical sources. Here I am going to mention and analyze a few of the allusions that can be found in many of his songs, also with the help of Mervin Stoddart’s study (2007), which has been an invaluable source for the writing of this section.

So Much Things to Say is part of the collection *Exodus*, and the name of this album is already itself a reference to the story of the Bible that takes the same name. In this song Marley makes a direct reference to Jesus Christ, Marcus Garvey and Paul Bogle, the last one being “a Black Jamaica rebel executed by the colonizing United Kingdom”. According to Steven Jacobs,

“Marley references three historical individuals who worked to bring truth & liberation to Black Jamaicans. He encourages members of his community to recognize and appreciate the struggles of these men, to recognize their place in history as a part of a movement greater than themselves, and their responsibility to carry on the struggle of their forefathers” (Jacobs, S. 2009:67)

In addition to this, Stoddart claims that in *So Much Things to Say*, Marley’s words also “echoed Jesus’ words from the Sermon on the Mount with, ‘When the rain falls it don’t fall on one man’s house Top’ (Matthew 5:45)” (Stoddart 2007:92).

In *So Much Trouble in the World*, Marley uses a historical allusion to space travel with the words “space ship”, which are also associated also with the phrase “ego trip”. According to Amenorvi, through this reference, the singer is criticizing society:

“This historical allusion in the song ‘So much trouble in the world’ suggests that the advancement in any field of human endeavor in the midst of trouble is not as important as the survival of the human personality. To Marley, the survival of Africa and her people first is more important than any other achievements such as those of the ‘ego trips’ of space travel” (Amenorvi 2019a:120).

In the song *Survival*, we can find yet another biblical allusion when Marley says “like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego”. The singer is taking these characters from the third chapter of the book of Daniel, where these three Hebrew men are thrown naked in a furnace by the king of Babylon. Adding to this, he also makes a reference to the sixth chapter of this same book, by mentioning the story of Daniel and the lion’s den. What Marley wants to communicate through these allusions is that

“If Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could survive naked fire heated to an unbearable degree, and Daniel could survive the den of hungry lions, the ‘black survivors’ would survive any pressure mounted on them from ‘Babylon [...] just as the Biblical Babylon crumbled while God’s people survived, so would the ‘black survivors’ survive amidst the den of colonialism and the fiery furnace of the suppression of Africa” (Amenorvi 2019a:120).

In *Ride Natty Ride* Marley makes a direct quotation from the Bible, when he says: “The stone that the builder refuse / Shall be the head cornerstone”, which is taken from Psalm 118:22. Moreover, “Marley also repeated the Bible message that ‘his judgment could never be with water’ (2 Peter 3:5-7) but with the fire next time” (Stoddart 2007:90). As we know, with ‘fire’ Marley often referred to the fire of the revolution, so with this allusion, he’s likely implying that God will help them with their revolution.

In the album *Uprising* we can find an allusion to Mathew 24:7 in *Real Situation*. In fact, with his “nation war against nation”, he is reflecting the prediction of the Bible where nations were fighting amongst each other. Amenorvi claims that in *Could You Be Loved*, when Marley says,

“Love would never leave us alone” he is actually “referring to I Corinthians 13:8, where it is said that ‘Love never fails’” (Amenorvi 2019a:167). Lastly in *Forever Loving Jah*, Amenorvi argues that when Marley says “Cause just like a tree planted/ planted by the rivers of water That bringeth forth fruits /bringeth forth fruits in due season”, Marley is drawing from Psalm 1:3, which states that “a righteous person grows in strength as does a tree planted in stream” (Amenorvi 2019a:167).

In *Jump Nyabinghi*, Marley says “When we troddin” down Jericho walls / These are the days when we'll trod t'rough Babylon, / Gonna trod until Babylon falls”, and this is clearly a reference to the events of the city of Jericho, which was the first city that Israelites conquered after having crossed the Jordan River. It is important to note that, as narrated in Joshua 6:20, the walls of Jericho were destroyed by the sound of the voices and the trumpets of the people, which were led by Joshua. According to Amenorvi,

“[Here] Bob Marley sees himself a Joshua figure to lead oppressed people of the world in the confrontation against the modern-day oppressor Babylon. We also note that the people of Biblical Israel used their voices and musical instruments to bring down the walls of Jericho. By the same fashion, Marley employs reggae music to fight against Babylon and by doing that, figuratively, the walls of modern oppressor Babylon will fall.” (Amenorvi 2019b: 343)

For what concerns the album *Confrontation*, in *Rastaman Live Up!* we can find historical as well as biblical allusions, in fact “the imageries of vulture and wolf pack were used to describe the Jamaican police who often swarmed Rasta dwellings and subjected them to police brutality” (Stoddart 2007:45). Moreover, as we had already briefly mentioned before, here Marley makes a reference to David and Goliath, and Samson and the Philistines, whose respective sources as traced back by Stoddard in “1 Samuel 17:50” and “Judges 15:15-16” (Stoddart 2007:45). Moreover, he also “alluded to Armageddon and to the Genesis 11:9 story of the Tower of Babel” (Stoddart 2007:90).

In his doctoral thesis Varus Soni claims that *Give Thanks and Praises* is a testament to Bob Marley’s steadfast and unwavering devotion to Ras Tafari. As Marley lay upon his deathbed,

his convictions and his faith deepened, and even though he was in tremendous pain, he still jubilantly and passionately gave ‘thanks and praises’ to Ras Tafari. In this song, Marley cites the Biblical lineage of Noah in order to theologically establish Ras Tafari as a divine African king. In fact, he recounts that ‘Noah had three sons – Ham, Shem, and Jaspeth’ but reminds his listeners that ‘Ham is known to be the Prophet.’ The Hamitic lineage has long been linked to Africa, and Marley Biblically legitimizes Ras Tafari by situating him within Ham’s prophetic lineage” (Soni 2010:106).

Apart from these major allusions, we can also find many more brief references to the Bible, as shown by Stoddart’s study, of which I am going to cite some sentences:

“In *Ambush In The Night* Marley echoed the Bible with, ‘They know not the hour’ (Matthew 24:36) and ‘Through the powers of the Most High’ (Psalm 77:10) [...] Marley mentioned the Bible books of Lamentation and Revelation to drive home his message in *One Drop* and he appealed to the biblical, apocalyptic Armageddon and the coming of the Danielic Son of Man to persuade mankind to come together in *One Love*. [...] *Real Situation* quoted from Matthew 24:7 in ‘nation war against nation’. [...] In *Trench Town*, Marley drew from Psalm 109:10 with the words ‘In desolate places we find our bread’ and he cited Joel 3:10 when he said ‘They feel so strong to say we are weak’ [...] In *Wake Up And Live*, Marley sounded out biblical imageries of ‘we’re more than sand on the seashore/We’re more than number’ (Joshua 11:4; Deuteronomy 7:7). [...] In *Zion Train* Marley repeated the warning of Jesus in: ‘Don’t gain the world and lose your soul’ (Matthew 16:26) and he repeated the message of Proverbs 16:16 in ‘Wisdom is better than silver and gold,’ while using the biblical ‘children’ to address his listeners” (Stoddart 2007:88-93)

Metaphors

In *Rastaman Live Up!* Marley uses two metaphors to refer to Babylon and oppressors in general. The first one is “wolf-pack”; in fact, oppressors come together to prey on those who are weaker than them, just like a wolf pack does, so “for the oppressed to win the confrontation against Babylon, they must not kowtow in fear, they must be united too” (Amenorvi 2019b:345). The second metaphor is “vulture” with which Marley once again wants to portray the ill-nature of Babylon. Since the vulture is an animal that feeds on animal corpses, the singer here wants to

imply that the oppressors are feeding themselves by exploiting people that are already hungry and on the verge of death, because of poverty.

Another metaphor is the one we have already analyzed in the previous section, when we have spoken about the themes of the song *Babylon System*, where the oppressors are compared to vampires that suck the blood of the sufferers.

In *Wake Up and Live*, the singer compares life to “a big road with lots of signs”, implying that life constantly puts us in front of many decisions and difficulties. A similar metaphor is also employed in *Mix Up, Mix Up* we can see that Marley uses the expression “stumbling blocks” to symbolize the obstacles that oppressed people need to face in order to regain their freedom.

In *One Drop*, we find yet another metaphor when Marley talks about “devil philosophy”. In fact, with this expression, Marley wants to condemn and criticize all those ideologies (e.g. capitalism, racism, etc.) that he had already directly addressed in the song *Rise Up Stand Up*, when he said we’re sick an’ tired of-a your ism-skism game”.

Rhythm and rhyme schemes

As we have already stated before, rhythm is also a major element of Marley’s songs. Obviously, this is not uncommon in music, especially in reggae, when repetitions and rhythm contribute to make it easier for the listener to memorize the song. In fact we can see many recurring rhyme schemes such as AAA BCC AB CB CD in *Chant Down Babylon*, or AA BB C DD EEEE in *Jump Nyabinghi*.

However, I believe that it is important to note that sometimes, rhyme schemes can convey more than just musicality or rhythm. This concept can be better understood through Amenorvi’s study. By analyzing the rhyming pattern of the album *Uprising*, he has noticed that the first parts (the first one or two stanzas) of the songs of this album have a regular rhyming whereas

the last parts have an irregular pattern. In his opinion, this was a deliberate choice made by the singer, since

“Marley is submitting via the regular patterning of rhyme at the initial part of his songs that the process for the uprising of the victims of the system, the downtrodden ones, would be smooth from the beginning much as the regular patterns of the rhyme that his songs of the ‘Uprising’ album follow. However, things could become difficult for them as the later part of this songs of the ‘Uprising’ album do not follow any regular pattern. The irregularity of the later parts of the songs as regards rhyming pictures the unpredictability of the process of uprising against the system that is ready to frustrate any plans of an uprising in its victims” (Amenorvi 2020:170)

2.3 Order of the songs

As we have seen, Marley’s three last albums are quite rich in literary and aesthetic devices. However, it is also important to highlight that the order of the songs in each of these three albums was not unintentional, for these songs altogether create a sort of third dimension of narration, which we are going to try to entangle here. As we will see, the development of these narrations is quite similar if we compare any of these albums with each other.

Survival

The first song of this album is *So Much Trouble in the World*, and with this song it seems like Marley is presenting the overall situation of sufferance in which people are living all around the world. After having made a general overview, Marley focuses on a specific nation, which is *Zimbabwe*, invoking its independence. After reaching independence however, the singer also tries to warn people against the danger of *Top Rankin*’; in fact, what Marley wants to communicate here is that “the African must focus on deeds, not the words of top ranking ones in order to survive. This is because the top ranking people, African or not, are deeply involved in ‘Babylon system’” (Amenorvi 2019a:121). *Babylon System* is exactly the following song, where the singer shows how ‘Babylon’ works and how it oppresses people.

After explaining how this establishment works, Marley asks his fellow people to fight and strive for their own *Survival*, and one way to do so is through the union of all the people of African descent, thus *Africa Unite*. Another strategy that the singer suggests in order to survive is to be happy and to appeal to the love of Jah, as he explains in the song *One Drop*. “Following from the advice to be happy and enjoy the ‘One drop’ rhythm of reggae, Marley moves on to the eighth song of ‘Ride Natty Ride’ where he shows that no matter what Babylon does, the African would continue to ride in ‘storm’ or in ‘calm’” (Amenorvi 2019a:121). Before concluding the album, Marley wants to give solid proof that it is possible to survive in this harsh world, and he does so by making a reference to his personal experience of having been shot. As a sort of summary of all the messages contained within this album, the singer ends with the song *Wake Up and Live*, which wants to encourage people to wake up and rise from their state of oppression and thus begin to live.

Uprising

With *Coming in from the Cold*, Marley wants to portray the situation in which oppressed people are; in fact “it is as if the victims of the world are put in the freezer; they are in the cold of sadness because of their suffering” (Amenorvi 2020:170). This image is further reinforced in the second song *Real Situation*, where the singer shows the global scale of this situation, and he implies “that the victims must not be under any illusion that they can stop the system as the system will always draw the bad card” (Amenorvi 2020:170). And it is exactly in *Bad Card* that Marley suggests alternative ways of fighting against the ‘Babylon System’, as for example through music and raising awareness. Another chance is the one highlighted in the following song *We and Dem*, where the singer once again appeals to God, saying that he will ultimately bring justice. This concept is also reinforced in the song *Work*, where “Marley seems to be saying that while the oppressed do not know exactly how to work it out with the oppressed

system, by divine help they should continue work in their fighting or rising up against the system” (Amenorvi 2020:172). In fact, if people continue to fight and struggle, eventually they will manage to ride on the Zion Train, which will bring them to their promised land, where they will not face oppression anymore.

Amenorvi claims that, in the next song of the album, *Pimper’s Paradise*, Marley is employing the image of a woman as a symbol for Babylon, and, in this perspective, he suggests that the singer wants to communicate to “the oppressed [that they] should not lose track of themselves by forgetting the hypocritical records of the oppressive Babylonian system, Marley suggests” (Amenorvi 2020:174). After this ulterior warning, Marley finally presents the solutions to this world of hypocrisy, which are mutual love, as expressed in *Could You Be Loved*, and loyalty to God, which he conveys in *Forever Loving Jah*. In the end, the singer asks his listener to join in him in his effort of raising people’s awareness through music, by singing with him *Redemption Song*.

Confrontation

In the first song, *Chant Down Babylon*, Marley expresses the aim of this last album, which is to bring down Babylon at once. He shows his listeners that it is indeed possible to face Babylon, as the *Buffalo Soldier* had already done in the past in America. Through the metaphors of *Jump Nyabinghi*, Marley further underlines the real possibility of destroying Babylon, which can be done by an active force (jumping) and through their voice and their singing, as we have seen when we have analyzed the biblical references within this song. So, although things could *Mix Up, Mix Up* and sufferers could face some obstacles (“stumbling blocks”), they should not lose faith in their victory, and they should instead *Give Thanks and Praises* to Jah, who has always guided them from the beginning of times, as he shows in *Blackman Redemption*. To reinforce his message, Marley draws once again from his personal experience in *Trench Town*, by

showing that even though he came from a dark and pitiful condition, he still managed to rise up and become a 'light' of hope for the world. In the last songs, the singer makes a final warning in *Stiff Necked Fools*, by saying not to fall into the deceptions of the 'Babylon System' and never to deny Jah, because he knows (*I Know*) that God is with them. "That is why the Rastaman can live up in *Rastaman Live Up!* as the last song of the album says" (Amenorvi 2019b: 349).

3. Analysis of the song *Redemption Song*

Old pirates, yes, they rob I / Sold I to the merchant ships / Minutes after they took I / From the bottomless pit / But my hand was made strong / By the hand of the Almighty / We forward in this generation / Triumphantly / Won't you help to sing / These songs of freedom? / 'Cause all I ever have / Redemption songs / Redemption songs / Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery / None but ourselves can free our minds / Have no fear for atomic energy / 'Cause none of them can stop the time / How long shall they kill our prophets / While we stand aside and look? Ooh! / Some say it's just a part of it / We've got to fulfill the book / Won't you help to sing / These songs of freedom? / 'Cause all I ever have / Redemption songs / Redemption songs / Redemption songs / Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery / None but ourselves can free our mind / Wo! Have no fear for atomic energy / 'Cause none of them-a can-a stop-a the time / How long shall they kill our prophets / While we stand aside and look? / Yes, some say it's just a part of it / We've got to fulfill the book / Won't you help to sing / These songs of freedom? / 'Cause all I ever had / Redemption songs / All I ever had / Redemption songs / These songs of freedom / Songs of freedom.

In the first stanza, Marley claims that he, as well as millions of African people, were robbed of their own freedom and sold as slaves to be sent to America; here he uses the word "pirates" as a form of allusion that trigger a comparison between pirates or thieves, who stole people of their belongings, and slave traders who stole people from their land. The condition in which they are condemned to live is similar to "a bottomless pit", a state of suffering from which there seems to be no escape. However, Marley is also convinced that he can withstand all this suffering and keep fighting because "his hand was made strong / By the hand of the Almighty", quoting Genesis 49:24. (Stoddart 2007:90); indeed, this is why he marches forward "triumphantly", because he knows that God is guiding him. He then asks all his listeners, all the sufferers, to

join him and help him “to sing / These songs of freedom”, for, as we have already seen, music was for Marley a means through which the fire of revolution could be sparked.

In the next stanza Marley makes a reference to “atomic bombs”, which is something that people might have strongly feared at that time, given that the singer had lived during the tensions of the Cold War between the USA and the USRR. In making this reference however, he tries to reassure people saying that even this destructive power, represented by the atomic power, cannot stop time and thus the process of history. Although, at the same time, even though Marley is trying to encourage people, he still asks them to take an active role in their own salvation by telling them not to “stand aside and look”.

Now I would like to concentrate on the meaning of the phrase “emancipate yourself from mental slavery”. We can attempt to make a first interpretation of this phrase through Carolyn Cooper’s words. She argues that “emancipation from mental slavery thus means liberation from passivity-the instinctive posture of automatic subservience that continues to cripple the neo-colonised” (Cooper 1999:124). As, Robert Hill notes in his article, Marley’s words seem to have been partly taken from Walter Rodney, and precisely from a speech that he delivered in 1938 where he said: “We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind” (Hill 2010:205). In this perspective, I think it is arguable that Marley took inspiration from Rodney’s idea in general for his musical production. In fact, as we can see from this passage, Rodney’s thoughts seem to strongly resonate with Marley’s agenda:

“The white man has already implanted numerous historical myths in the minds of black peoples; and those have to be uprooted, since they can act as a drag on revolutionary activity in the present epoch. Under these circumstances it is necessary to direct our historical activity in the light of two basic principles. Firstly the effort must be directed solely towards freeing and mobilising black minds [...] Secondly the acquired knowledge of Africa history must be seen as directly relevant but secondary to the concrete tactics and strategy which are necessary for our liberation” (Campbell 1987:128-129)

Aside from the literal meaning of the song, it is however important to highlight that this song presents another layer of meaning. In fact, as we have already seen, Marley's songs are full of biblical allusion, and this one makes no exception. In fact, the beginning of the song clearly takes after the story of Joseph, Jacob's penultimate song, which is told in the book of the Genesis. In fact, if we read the words of the Genesis 37:24-28), "And they took him, and cast him into a pit [...] Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted Joseph out of the pit", we can see that there is a striking resemblance with the lyrics of *Redemption Song*; even from a lexical perspective, the singer seems to employ the very same terms used in this passage of the Bible, for we can see that in both texts, the words 'took', 'pit' and 'merchantmen' are present. In addition to this, Marley probably makes a further reference to 'The Blessing of Joseph' (Genesis 49:24), where it is said that "his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob", just like the singer says in his lyrics "my hand was made strong / By the hand of the Almighty".

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to analyze Bob Marley's music and lyrics, taking into account the links between his texts and postcolonialism. Additionally, through the course of the thesis, I have also summarized the history of Jamaica, from a social, historical, and religious perspective, as well as the evolution of reggae music; and obviously, I have also tried to synthesize the biography of the singer.

Through the study of Marley's music, I have highlighted how the themes included in many of his songs are directly linked with the oppression experienced by Jamaican people, and how, in his lyrics, it is often possible to find references to the slave trade and to the past of Jamaica as a colonized country. Moreover, I have identified some literary elements that can be observed in the works of the singer, such as allusions, metaphors, repetitions and so on. In this perspective, the analysis of the song *Redemption Song* has been a vivid example of how Marley's songs carry with them a profounder meaning.

With this thesis, I believe that I have managed to provide enough evidence for justifying the study of this singer within the literary field and in particular within the frame of postcolonialism. Though this thesis might not be an all-encompassing analysis of the musical production of Bob Marley, I hope that this study can encourage further analyses in this field.

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