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Jamaican Culture through Jamaican Cinema

SETTORE SCIENTIFICO-DISCIPLINARE DI AFFERENZA*: L-ART/06 Cinema, Fotografia e Televisione

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INTRODUCTION: CINEMA IN JAMAICA.

The cinema industry has had a long relationship with the Caribbean islands, and this is especially true for Jamaica. On one hand, this country has been involved in the business since its beginnings. On the other hand, however, Jamaican cinematographic tradition is very young, if compared to the history of worldwide cinema. This is easily explained by the fact that Jamaica has been used by foreign companies as a “location” since the beginning of the 20th century, but the local cinema began only in 1972.

1. JAMAICA AS THE IDEAL LOCATION FOR FOREIGN PRODUCTIONS.

Hollywood has always cherished Jamaica as a location, starting in the 1910s to shoot on the island. The first film shot on location in Jamaica was probably *Railroad Panorama Near Spanishtown, Jamaica*, in 1903. Then many films were made in the 1910s, such as *Flame Of Passion* and *The Pearl Of The Antilles* in 1915; *A Daughter Of The Gods*, *The Ruling Passion* and *A Woman's Honor* in 1916; and *Queen Of The Sea* in 1918. From then the industry has never ceased to shoot on location in Jamaica¹.

Jamaican government has rightly been trying to make the most out of this relationship, inviting foreign production companies to make films on the island. As the web site of Jamaica Trade and Invest advertises:

Jamaica is one of the most naturally attractive locations for filming [...] While overseas filmmakers have been coming to the island since the early 1900s, during the 1980s there was a drastic increase in the number and types of film projects shot here. Since the establishment of the Jamaican Film Commission in 1984, we have serviced over 3,000 film projects, ranging from the traditional full-length feature film to the rapidly growing documentary, and everything in between. [...] Over 150 films are shot in Jamaica annually.²

When an “exotic” location is needed, Hollywood directors look at Jamaica, or another island of the Caribbean, to find the right spot. Actually, the Jamaican landscape, with its beautiful beaches and its lush mountains, can be used for various locations. It can also be used to represent non-Caribbean countries. For instance, Jamaica can stand for African landscapes, so that directors can use the island when they want to save budget money. It is less expensive to go to Jamaica than to Africa, and the result of the shooting is quite similar. This is what happened for example

¹ See “Titles for Jamaica filming locations”, <http://www.imdb.com/List?locations=Jamaica&&endings=on&&tv=on&&nav=/Sections/Countries/Jamaica/include-filmedin&&page=Locations&&heading=7;Titles;Jamaica%20filming%20locations>, accessed January 02, 2008.

² Welcome to Film Jamaica, <http://filmjamaica.com/>, accessed December 29, 2007. Jampro (Jamaica Promotions Corporation), later renamed Jamaica Trade and Invest, is a governmental office, which deals with the making of films in Jamaica, both local films and foreign productions. The Film Office is located in a department of JTI called Creative Industries.

with the film *Instinct*, shot in 1999 by Jon Turteltaub with Sir Anthony Hopkins and Cuba Gooding Jr in the leading roles. A section of the film is set in an African country, but it was actually shot in Jamaica.

Hollywood has shot dozens of important films in Jamaica. *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*, *A High Wind In Jamaica*, *Clara's Heart*, *Cocktail*, *Dr. No*, *Golden Eye*, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, *Island In The Sun*, *Legends Of The Fall*, *Lord Of The Flies*, *Marked For Death*, *Papillon*, *Popcorn*, *Prelude To A Kiss*, *The Mighty Quinn*, *Treasure Island*, and *Wide Sargasso Sea* are only few examples of “on location” Hollywood movies.³

What is not always acknowledged, however, is that Hollywood cinema has always followed unwritten rules when dealing with the Caribbean, and these rules are not favourable to the guest countries.

When a foreign film is shot in Jamaica, it generally makes use of some stereotypes that are perpetuated by the film industry itself. As a Caribbean island, the most common idea about Jamaica is that of a kind of Eden. This obviously is due to the beautiful and various landscapes the country offers: not only gorgeous beaches, but also mountains with lush vegetation, valleys and plains, woods and waterfalls, and some important historical sites. As an advertisement to promote Jamaica to foreign film companies says,

Jamaica, with an area of over 4,000 sq. miles (11,424 sq. km), ranks fifth in the world in the diversity of its terrain.⁴

Almost any landscape a director might need for a film can be found in Jamaica. The scenes shot on the country, especially those regarding the seaside, give an exotic flavour to the film, and help the audience believe that the island is a paradise. In a way, this helps tourism. Actually, some people might want to go to the Caribbean after having seen in a film the landscape that can be found there. Others might want to follow the actors that went to the islands when shooting a film. In any case, what foreign directors are promoting is an image of the country that does not fully correspond to the realities Jamaicans have to face.

In recent years, another stereotype has been created and perpetrated by the film industry. Especially during the 1980s, Jamaica has started to be associated with the consumption of marijuana. Related to the use of weed was the idea of its trading, not only in Jamaica, but also (and especially) in North America. The cinema industry has exploited this idea in many films,

³ Welcome to Film Jamaica, http://filmjamaica.com/index.php?action=ja_films, accessed December 29, 2007. Other examples of movies shot on location in the Caribbean can be found in Keith Q. Warner, *On Location – Cinema And Film In The Anglophone Caribbean*, London and Oxford, MacMillan Education Ltd., 2000. Warner also provides an analysis of how these movies relate to the countries where they were shot, and to the people living on those islands.

⁴ *Location Jamaica*, a publication by Jampro/Jamaica Film Commission, printed in Jamaica by Lithographic Printers Ltd.

creating a negative stereotype for the country and for the Rastas in particular. Many directors have fashioned a connection between the international trading of drugs and Jamaica, so that in many movies, whenever there is a drug dealer, he must be Jamaican, and generally he has to wear dreadlocks⁵. It must be said that usually the movies featuring such characters are action movies, a favourite genre of the average spectator, and thus they are viewed by a wide audience, which may then believe that Jamaica is a place to avoid because it is the hiding place of murderous drug dealers. This has also helped to strengthen the stereotype that Jamaica is a violent country, especially in its capital, Kingston. Actually, a favourite location for these gangster stories are Kingston's ghettos, depicted as the den of all the evils of the world, as every bad man comes out of there.

Things are not better when it comes to the depiction of Jamaican people. Many times directors have tried to avoid employing natives. When it was not possible, or when they wanted some local people in their films, they used them in a negative way. In foreign movies, especially those of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, Jamaicans have always been silent. They have not been allowed to recite, but for short lines. Generally they have also been requested to talk with a strong Jamaican accent, in order to mark their difference from the other (white) characters. Moreover, the characters they have been asked to play were always those of waiters, servants of various kinds, slaves, and the like. They have never been protagonists, but always secondary figures. They have always represented only a touch of folklore, useful for the white protagonists' stories, but never necessary. They have always been in the background. What is important to notice is that they have always been depicted either as docile, subservient characters, or as threatening characters trying to harm white characters (such as, for instance, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*⁶) – and thus, in the latter case, condemned to annihilation by the white characters themselves. Obedience or annihilation are the stereotypes to which Hollywood wants them to conform.

A slight change in this trend occurred when directors started to exploit the drug dealers stereotype. In these movies, Jamaicans have become protagonists, though in violent situations. However, they have still conformed to Hollywood's rule that wants them subservient. Actually, these traders have always been killed or put into prison at the end of the movie. And it has always been demonstrated that their characters are weak and doomed to destruction because of

⁵ A telling example is that of *Predator 2*, a USA movie made in 1990 by Stephen Hopkins, with Danny Glover, Gary Busey and Kevin Peter Hall in the role of the predator. Here the alien monster is constructed as a Jamaican Rasta, in that he is given locks. There are also other characteristics that link him to the Jamaican drug gangs in Los Angeles, but also to Vodun, in yet another instance of the use of clichés and of the ignorance of the director, who did not realize that Vodun is practiced in Haiti and not in Jamaica, and that anyway Vodun is a religion, not the set of stereotypes promoted by Hollywood cinema. An interesting analysis of this aspect of the film can be found in Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993, pp.47-53.

⁶ John Duigan, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Australia, Laughing Kookaburra Productions, 1993.

their evil nature, while the white hero is always strong and winning. For instance, this is what happens in a movie like *Marked For Death*⁷.

There is a hidden racism in Hollywood's stereotypes. Even though the average audience may not be aware of it, they serve to promote the idea that white characters are better than black ones, and that Jamaicans are dangerous or ready to sell themselves to the white tourists on the island. This is the reason why Jamaicans generally do not identify themselves with the characters of these movies, and for instance, with marijuana traders. Nor can they do it with the kind of Jamaican depicted in a movie like *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*⁸. This film encourages people to think that all Jamaicans are ready to prostitute themselves to white female tourists, for money or a visa to go to the United States. Though it happens, it is not the norm for Jamaicans. And the island's audience do not like to see themselves depicted in such a way.

In order to avoid the stereotyping both of the country and of its people, at a certain point Jamaicans decided to create a cinema on their own. They had the equipment, the means and the skilled professionals necessary to make a motion picture different and independent from Hollywood filmmaking, following Jamaican rules. As Paul Rosele Chim says on this subject:

La Jamaïque, Puerto Rico et Costa Rica, possédant une main d'œuvre bon marché, non syndiquée, de bons niveaux de qualification, mais aussi d'extraordinaire décors, ont été des zones d'accueil des activités de délocalisation d'Hollywood. Bien que ces stratégies ne se déroulèrent pas sans conflits, néanmoins, elles eurent des effets positifs, car elles créèrent un contexte permettant la transmission des connaissances et de l'expérience en la matière.⁹

Hollywood, however, has always thought about Jamaica and the Caribbean islands only as a location, and never as a partner. It has flooded the world with its films, without acknowledging the development of autonomous cinemas. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam point out:

Although arguably the majority cinema, Third World cinema is rarely featured in cinemas, video stores, or even in academic film courses, and when it is taught it is usually ghettoized. [...] Despite the imbrication of "First" and "Third" Worlds, the global distribution of power still tends to make the First World countries cultural "transmitters" and to reduce most Third World countries to the status of "receivers".¹⁰

⁷ Dwight H. Little, *Marked For Death*, USA, Victor & Grais and Steamroller Productions, 1990.

⁸ Kevin Rodney Sullivan, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, USA, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 1998. It must be said that "Stella" was based on the real life experiences of Terri McMillan, the author of the novel by the same title (1996). She recently divorced the Jamaican man (in 2005) after finding out he was homosexual. Even if in this case the story really happened, it has nonetheless been adapted to fit the fiction, and the message the film conveys does not change.

⁹ Paul Rosele Chim, *Economie du Cinéma de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication - Le Monde Caribéens et Hollywood*, Paris, Publibook, 2003, pp.41-42.

¹⁰ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism - Multiculturalism and the Media*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994, p.30.

This is why countries such as Jamaica, where it is quite difficult for a native to make a film, have tended to concentrate on other, even though related, branches:

Les résolutions des gouvernements et des organismes professionnels relatives à la promotion de l'industrie du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel dans la Caraïbe coïncident avec deux formes de dynamique productive :

D'une part, une myriade de petites sociétés de production et de réalisation de film de cinéma et de programmes de télévision est dynamique dans le secteur publicitaire et de la vidéo [...]

D'autre part, les monopoles locaux sont réorganisés en réseaux d'échanges intégrant les salles, plusieurs canaux de diffusion télévisuelle, la vidéo, la radio et la presse.¹¹

Indeed, in Jamaica the production of commercials and of music videos is great, while the production of feature films is very small. This is due particularly to financial problems. As Shohat and Stam note:

Sever IMF-provoked "austerity" crises and the collapse of the old developmentalist models [...] have led to the "dollarization" of film production and consequently to the rise of international co-productions or to a search for alternative forms such as video.¹²

Another reason why Caribbean cinema has never been fully acknowledged by the rest of the world is that the few films made are often critical of Hollywood, and always very different in their aesthetics and goals from American and European films:

Une fraction de la production cinématographique endogène a été ouvertement critique. Elle affirme une identité culturelle. Son influence s'est amoindrie, car ouvertement politique et contestataire. Les films produits ne s'intègrent que très difficilement dans les circuits de distribution. Ils constituent un phénomène informel, souterrain qui est souvent qualifié '*underground movies*'. Les capitaux investis dans ce types de produits connaissent des difficultés profondes de reproduction. Ce créneau est faiblement développé.¹³

However, notwithstanding all the difficulties the directors face to be able to put together a film in Jamaica, some autonomous films were made through the years.

2. THE MANY PROBLEMS OF LOCAL PRODUCTIONS.

Jamaican cinematographic tradition started in 1972. Since that date, only fourteen films have been shot by Jamaicans, including four co-productions with the United States. Two more films have been issued recently, but not yet released out of festivals and cinema circuits at the time of writing. From that date Jamaican cinema started to show the island as it really is: not only its

¹¹ Paul Rosele Chim, *Op. Cit.*, p.46.

¹² Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Op. Cit.*, p.29.

¹³ Paul Rosele Chim, *Op. Cit.*, p.45.

beautiful landscapes, which are not the focus in indigenous films, but mainly the “real” life of the Jamaicans, and of the country.

Jamaican cinema is discontinuous in time, films are not created on a stable basis. As Chris Browne notes, “It’s like every five years [...] they make a film. It’s always a wide gap. It’s never a constant film-making thing.”¹⁴ The first films were made during the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, when there was a “blowing of minds, a bursting of creativity”¹⁵, as Trevor Rhone explains this productive period. Then nothing was produced during the 1980s. In the 1990s some films were made again, mainly with the support of Chris Blackwell, founder of Island Records, who saw it as a means to sell both films and soundtracks at the same time. His idea was simple:

Everything is package the film with an album. Use the film to get around the world, and people watch and hear the music, and then they will want to buy the album also, and lots of films.¹⁶

Finally, in the 2000s, few films were made, even if it seems that affirmed and new directors are trying to give renewed impulse to the industry.

The fact that there are so few films released on the island since 1972 does not mean that Jamaican directors do not have ideas or the desire to shoot a movie. The main problem to start a cinematographic project, for a local production, is that of funding. In a quite paradoxical trend, governmental offices dealing with filmmaking and production companies prefer to support foreign movies using Jamaica as a location rather than trying to help local productions. The explanation is simple. A foreign company will immediately bring capital on the island, thanks to the crew spending time and money when they are not at work, the equipment they can rent and the local staff they are forced to employ. Then international filmmaking attracts tourism, both people wanting to be in an earthly paradise, and those who want to be where their favourite stars were. Thus, Jampro provides nine years of tax break and duty-free import for the equipment coming to Jamaica for international companies¹⁷. It must be said that these incentives are offered to local companies too, but these cannot use them because they do not have the funds necessary to make a film.

International production companies are big, have many connections, and are able to find capital to make whatever movie they want. For local Jamaican productions it is not so easy. No one is willing to invest in cinema, because the profits are not sure. The people who have the money to start the projects underestimate cinema. Jampro, who could also help in finding funding for local companies, prefers to facilitate foreign productions, for the reasons explained above. If a

¹⁴ Chris Browne, in conversation with me, November 15, 2007.

¹⁵ Trevor Rhone, in conversation with me, November 16, 2007.

¹⁶ Chris Browne, in conversation with me, November 15, 2007.

¹⁷ Nardia McKenzie, on behalf of Dell Crooks, Jampro Office, in conversation with me, December 11, 2007.

Jamaican director wants to make a movie, he has to find the money almost by himself. Many invested their own money. Perry Henzell, for example, got broke after the making of *The Harder They Come*, and it took him years to recover the investment. Chris Browne explains it quite clearly:

In the First World, America, England, Italy, [...] there is a chain. There's the writer, there's the producer, there's the director, there's the distributor. [...] They all have their own things to work, whereas we don't, because we don't really have an industry. Our industry is more based on music videos and commercials. That's what people do to make a living in the industry. Then, anybody who is really interested in films [...] will try to write his film, will try to raise the money. But there's never a structure. There's no one person you go to: what they do is produce, what they do is write, so... That's the problem we have. You know, it's funny but when Perry made the film in '72, and now in 2007, we're still in the same place where he was. Only, of course, with the technology it's easier to make films.[...] But it's just as hard.¹⁸

The reason why no one wants to invest in cinema is that Jamaican movies are not sure to earn much. They are distributed only in few countries apart from Jamaica, and the return of money is not as elevated as one could wish if he/she invests a large capital. Though the response to the movies is generally overwhelming on the island, it is not so outside of it. In a kind of vicious spiral, no one invests in a film because it will not bring big profits, but until a film will not have enough money to get proper distribution, it will be impossible for it to make big profits.

Nowadays the situation has not changed. Many directors have ideas, scripts, and the necessary professionals to make a film. But they do not have the money to start their projects.

3. WHAT IS A JAMAICAN FILM?

The first question one should ask before starting an analysis of Jamaican films is: what is a Jamaican film? What defines it as a Jamaican film? What are the necessary characteristics needed to label a film as Jamaican?

As a broad category, Jamaican cinema can be said to belong first of all to what Jim Pines and Paul Willemsen have defined in 1989 as "Third Cinema"¹⁹, that is a body of films made by Third World people for Third World peoples, different in themes and aesthetics from the dominant cinema of Hollywood and Europe. They took this name from the manifesto "Toward a Third Cinema" by Argentinean filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, who in 1969, along with other "Third Worldist" directors in the late 1960s and early 1970s,

¹⁸ Chris Browne, in conversation with me, November 15, 2007.

¹⁹ Jim Pines and Paul Willemsen eds., *Questions of Third Cinema*, London, British Film Institute, 1989.

Valorized an alternative, independent, anti-imperialist cinema more concerned with provocation and militancy than with auteurist expression or consumer satisfaction. The manifestoes contrasted the new cinema not only with Hollywood but also with their own countries' commercial traditions, now viewed as "bourgeois", "alienated", and "colonized".²⁰

Third Cinema, as explained by Pines and Willemen, is different from European counter-cinema that rebels from the mainstream one because of the aesthetic strategies adopted. Third Cinema does not refute everything coming from Hollywood; instead it keeps what can be useful, and it uses it for its own purposes.

The notion of counter-cinema tends to conjure up a prescriptive aesthetics: to do the opposite of what dominant cinema does. [...] The proponents of Third Cinema were just as hostile to dominant cinemas but refused to let the industrially and ideologically dominant cinemas dictate the terms in which they were to be opposed.²¹

Teshome H. Gabriel, in *Questions of Third Cinema*, distinguishes three different stages in these kind of films. The first phase is called the "unqualified assimilation", where themes and styles are copied from dominant cinema. In the second phase, the "remembrance phase", the themes are closer to the countries where the films are made (for instance folklore, mythology, rural and urban life, traditional and modern values, and so on), but the styles remain close to that of Hollywood, though it slightly changes to adapt to the new subjects.²² The third phase is called the "combative phase". Here film making becomes "a public service institution".

The industry [...] is not only owned by the nation and/or the government, it is also managed, operated and run for and by the people.²³

The themes faced consider the "lives and struggle of Third World peoples", and the film becomes "an ideological tool"²⁴.

A phase 3 film-maker is one who is perceptive of and knowledgeable about the pulse of the Third World masses. Such a film-maker is truly in search of a Third World cinema – a cinema that has respect for the Third World peoples. One element of the style in this phase is an ideological point-of-view instead of that of a character as in dominant Western conventions.²⁵

One of the advantages for the audience in making "Third" films is that

²⁰ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Op. Cit.*, p.248.

²¹ Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, *Op. Cit.*, p.7.

²² *Ibidem*, pp.32-33.

²³ *Ibidem*, p.33.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p.34.

The viewer or subject is no longer alienated because recognition is vested not only in genuine cultural grounds but also in an ideological cognition founded on the acknowledgement of the decolonisation of culture and total liberation.²⁶

Being a product of non dominant culture for non dominant people, Third World cinema is difficult to interpret by the dominant elite.

The difficulty of Third World films of radical social comment for Western interpretation is the result of the film's resistance to the dominant conventions of cinema, and of the consequence of the Western viewers' loss of being the privileged decoders and ultimate interpreters of meaning.²⁷

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam make yet another categorization of what can be called Third Cinema:

1. a core circle of "Third Worldist" films produced by and for Third World peoples (no matter where those people happen to be) and adhering to the principles of "Third Cinema";
2. a wider circle of cinematic productions of Third World peoples (retroactively defined as such) whether or not the films adhere to the principles of Third Cinema and irrespective of the period of their making;
3. films made by First or Second World people in support of Third World peoples and adhering to the principles of Third Cinema;
4. a final circle, somewhat anomalous in status, at once "inside" and "outside", comprising recent diasporic hybrid films, for example those of Mona Hatoum or Hanif Kureishi, which both build on and interrogate the conventions of "Third Cinema".

By far the largest category would be the second: the cinematic productions of countries now designated as "Third World".²⁸

Indeed, Jamaican cinema belongs to the second category. The films made in Jamaica are subsequent to the birth of Third Cinema, and they do not always follow the "rules" of the trend. But they belong anyway to the category; they just had to modify themselves to keep the pace with the times, the subjects and the audience's tastes.

The diversification of esthetic models has meant that filmmakers have in part discarded the didactic Third Worldist model predominant in the 1960s in favor of a postmodern "politics of pleasure" incorporating music, humor and sexuality.²⁹

However, to define what is a Jamaican film, one needs to be more specific. As it should be quite clear, I do not consider foreign productions shooting bits of a film in Jamaica as Jamaican films. They are international productions which use the island because of its landscapes.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p.37.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp.38-39.

²⁸ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Op. Cit.*, p.28.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p.29.

A Jamaican film is a feature film in which most, if not all, of its crew and staff are Jamaicans³⁰. I think that for a film to be Jamaican it should have a Jamaican director, Jamaican actors, and Jamaican technicians. But most of all, it must have a Jamaican story: it must tell something that is clearly Jamaican, something that Jamaicans can view as a representation of themselves. Because the primary audience of a Jamaican film is Jamaican, both on the island and in the Jamaican communities abroad. Only after having reached that target audience does the film broaden to encompass a (possibly) worldwide audience.

It must be said that not all the directors of Jamaican films are Jamaicans. For instance Lol Crème and Rick Elgood are English, while Theodoros Bafaloukos is Greek. And the films made in collaboration with the United States deserve a special attention, because they have been labelled as Jamaican, but they do not really fit in the above mentioned description. They will need further explanations of their “Jamaican-ness”.

Even if some directors are not Jamaicans, the films they made in Jamaica can be seen as Jamaican films because they feature Jamaican actors and technicians, and the stories they screen are unmistakably Jamaican.

4. JAMAICAN FILMS.

“Jamaicans like to see action movies and comedies, and they like good movies. They are able to distinguish between bad and quality movies. The movies that sell well are those featuring Jamaican actors and music in the story (for example *Dancehall Queen* and *Third World Cop*). The Jamaicans like to see themselves in the movies and to identify with the characters or in the story”. This is how Melanie Graham, marketing manager of Palace Amusement Company, describes Jamaican taste for films, and this can explain in part why Jamaican films are mainly gangster films or comedies.³¹

The first Jamaican feature film was *The Harder They Come*³², made in 1972 by director Perry Henzell. In many ways this film reflects the Jamaican society of those years. It is a sharp critique of the Jamaican social and political situation: it denounces the corruption of every powerful level of society, from the church, to the music industry, to the government and the police. Moreover, this film also mirrors what happened in Jamaica in that period. There had been a political change, an alteration in the society due to this change, and there was a creative

³⁰ I concentrate on feature films in this thesis, but there are other kinds of films in Jamaica. For instance, there are Jamaican documentaries. Perry Henzell, at the beginning of his career, directed documentaries, while other directors work in the music videos and/or in the advertising industries.

³¹ Palace Amusement Company Ltd. is the only chain of cinemas in Jamaica. Melanie Graham talked with me in a telephone conversation, November 30, 2007.

³² See Appendix 1, pp.341-342.

explosion because of the new socio-political situation and the support of the new political party in power to intellectuals (for instance, Michael Manley, leader of the PNP in 1972, knew Henzell very well, and approved of his work). Mbye Cham sees the new surge of creativity as a Caribbean phenomenon, discernible in every island, not just Jamaica. Politically, the Caribbean had experienced “new currents of political awareness among different strata of society”³³. Culturally,

New articulations of a distinct Caribbean identity began to emerge on the foundations of the thought and practice of literary/political/intellectual figures such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Joseph Zobel, and Edouard Glissant of Martinique; Jean Price-Mars, Jacques Roumain, and Jacques Stephen Alexis of Haiti; C.L.R. James of Trinidad; and Roger Mais, V.S. Reid and Louise Bennett of Jamaica; as well as the Caribbean heritage of oral traditions. [...]

Underlying their project is a strategy to rediscover and appropriate the diversity that is the Caribbean in order to construct a new, more authentic sense of identity.³⁴

The Harder They Come was also the first film made after independence, and this is also reflected in it. The country was searching its own way, as were the director and the co-writer of the script, and as is Ivan in the story. This film can be interpreted on various levels, and this is what gives it its status as a cult movie, more than thirty years after its release. People can still watch it finding in it values that are suitable today, and they can still appreciate it because its story was and still is strong and genuine.

A couple of years after *The Harder They Come*, in 1974, Trevor Rhone shot the film *Smile Orange*³⁵. It is the cinematographic version of the play by the same title, published by Rhone in 1973³⁶. This film presents a strong social satire, and an Anancy character, typically Caribbean, known as a trickster, who manages to survive in harsh conditions, to fool the people who want to exploit him, and to make the most out of every situation. This is exactly what the protagonist of the film does, and in the meantime he also uncovers the failures of the tourist industry in Jamaica. On one hand, the film exposes the patronizing behaviour of the (mainly) American tourists. On the other hand, it shows the behaviour of the Jamaican workers, who try to dupe both the tourists and the boss of the hotel, but who also prostitute themselves in order to make a few dollars.

³³ Mbye Cham ed., *Ex-Iles – Essays On Caribbean Cinema*, Africa World Press, Trenton, New Jersey, 1992, p.3.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p.3 and p.4.

³⁵ See Appendix 1, pp.343-344.

³⁶ Trevor Rhone, *Smile Orange*, Kingston, Jamaica, Longman Caribbean Writers, 1988. The first staging of the play is dated 1971.

Smile Orange faces a serious and difficult subject, but it manages to do it with great irony. In this way, the audience laughs at what they see, but they also have to reflect on what is presented to them, because they could be on one or the other side of the tourist industry.

After these two movies, three others were shot in Jamaica, in a few years. Keith Warner calls it “the Rastafarian trilogy”, because they

Would all show varying aspects of the lifestyle of the country’s Rastafarians, who were vilified by some and admired by others for their beliefs and strengths.³⁷

These movies are all based on Rasta characters and Rasta stories. They are all quite sympathetic to Rastafari, and they try to explain and give a glimpse of the Rastafari way of life.

Theodoros Bafaloukos made the first of these three films, *Rockers*³⁸, in 1978. It is inspired by the Italian neorealist film *Bicycle Thieves*³⁹, and it is mainly a staging of reggae music. Thanks to a quite simple plot that allows many musical performances, this film becomes an exaltation of the greatest reggae talents of the end of the 1970s. The soundtrack has the same importance as the story, it is an integral part of it.

Apart from excellent reggae music, *Rockers* stages a narrative conflict between Rastafari and Babylon, which is the oppressive system that tries to keep them down. Babylon is identified not only with everything related to the government, but also with any person or structure whose aim is to exploit and submit a part of the population. As Yasus Afari explains:

Babylon is defined by the RASTAFARIANS as the system of evil which seeks to promote and perpetuate injustice, downpression and evil.⁴⁰

Or, in a more detailed explanation,

The unjust worldwide system of western imperialist civilization, which uses the convenient and unholy marriage of church and state to cultivate, implement and justify the demonic and savage system of slavery and colonialism is seen as Babylon system by RASTAFARIANS. The neo-colonial systems, peoples and institutions which maintain that same system of down-pression, injustice, inequality, international immorality, white supremacy, economic and cultural imperialism and other evils and corruption, are recognized as the same old Babylon system.⁴¹

Rockers shows how Rastafari manage to overcome, using only their methods, the system that keeps promoting injustice and oppression of Rastafarians especially. The film is a praise of Rasta goodness: they are non-violent people who rebel against discrimination, and who manage to win over the powerful but evil people fighting against them.

³⁷ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.91.

³⁸ See Appendix 1, pp.345-347.

³⁹ Vittorio De Sica, *Bicycle Thieves*, Italy, Produzioni De Sica, 1948. Original title *Ladri di Biciclette*.

⁴⁰ Yasus Afari, *Overstanding Rastafari – “Jamaica’s gift to the world”*, Senya-Cum, Jamaica, 2007, p.83.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p.219.

The second film of the trilogy, *Children Of Babylon*⁴², is slightly different. It was made in 1980 by Lennie Little-White. The kind of Rasta shown in this film is somewhat a violent and tyrannical male chauvinist. The protagonist of the story is for the first time a woman, who leaves a rich and “baldhead”⁴³ boyfriend because she falls in love with the Rasta. But the relationship with him is more difficult than what she expected, as he behaves more as a dictator than as a lover.

*Countryman*⁴⁴, the last film of the trilogy, was shot in 1982 by Dickie Jobson. It follows in part the path of *The Harder They Come*: it has a political overtone, and it gives great importance to music. Though the story is focused on Countryman, the Rasta hero, it allows nonetheless a critique of the government’s corruption and of the neo-colonial behaviour of the United States in the Caribbean. The soundtrack is mainly based on Bob Marley’s songs, thus presenting excellent reggae music.

The film is a praise of Rastafari and of everything related to it. The protagonist is depicted as a superhero just because he is a Rastafari, and throughout the film he explains Rasta philosophy and livity⁴⁵. Though the film sometimes lingers on some Hollywood stereotypes about Jamaica, its aim is to highlight the goodness of Rastafari, and it succeeds in doing this, arriving now and then to blind idealization.

Arguably, Jamaican films, though dismissing Hollywood stereotypes about their country, do also create new ones on their own. The depiction of Rastafari, for instance, is nearly always positive. In reality, Rastas are people like any other, and thus there are “good” and “bad” Rastas. In the films, we arrive almost at a one-dimensional representation of these characters. The stereotype of the good-natured Rasta is promoted only by Jamaican films, that seem to ignore the fact that a Rasta is a human, and as fallible as any other human being.

After the Rastafari trilogy, the decade of the 1980s passed without any local feature film being made in Jamaica. The production started again in 1991, when Lol Crème directed *The Lunatic*⁴⁶. The film is based on the novel by the same title written by the Jamaican author Anthony C. Winkler in 1987⁴⁷. This film is quite different from the others, because of its plot. As the title

⁴² See Appendix 1, p.348.

⁴³ Rastafari identify as baldhead the non-Rastafari males. The distinction is made because of the difference of hair styles: whereas Rastas wear locks, (Jamaican) non-Rastas cut their hair so as to appear bald. There is also a more “spiritual” definition of a baldhead: “One who deliberately puts up a mental block to understanding Rastafari. A person who is not politically or culturally conscious.”, in Jah Ahkell, *Rasta, Emperor Haile Selassie and the Rastafarians*, Kingston, Miguel Lorne Publishers, 1999, p.viii.

⁴⁴ See Appendix 1, pp.349-350.

⁴⁵ Yasus Afari gives the following definition of Livity: “The Spiritual, Divine way of life of The RASTAFARIANS; Culture of Spirituality”, *Op. Cit.*, p.327, or “the Livity (life) of the RASTAFARIAN is essentially a re-definition of culture along moral perspectives.”, *Ibidem*, pp.71-72.

⁴⁶ See Appendix 1, pp.351-352.

⁴⁷ Anthony C. Winkler, *The Lunatic*, Oxford, MacMillan Publishers Ltd., 2006, first published in 1987.

says, the plot revolves around the mad protagonist, whose life is upset when he meets a German tourist interested only in sex and photography. In a way the film can be seen as a criticism of the sexual tourism white women practice in Jamaica. But it also faces other problems such as the rigid class divisions and the racism that are still present in Jamaican society. However, all the themes are handled with great irony, since this film was meant to be a comedy.

The fact that the film is set in the countryside, and not in the city, and that it does not deal with violence in the ghetto, are two other indicators of the diversity between this and the other Jamaican films.

In 1997, directors Rick Elgood and Don Letts shot the film *Dancehall Queen*⁴⁸. The story is that of a modern Cinderella, who lives in one of Kingston's ghettos. The point of view seems to be that of a woman⁴⁹, and the story is that of her struggle to survive in the harsh condition of life she has to face. This is the big difference from the other Jamaican films: for the first time, the tough character is a woman. The audience is given another view of the problems of the ghetto.

However, the traditional ingredients are still present: there is some violence, and the soundtrack is essential to the film. If in the previous movies there had always been a reggae soundtrack, in this one, as the title suggests, there is the exaltation of dancehall music. This may appear as problematic, since there has been, in the Caribbean especially, but also in the Caribbean communities in America and Europe, a long debate about the value of this kind of music. Some scholars see it as a vilification of the women, because of the explicit and sometimes vulgar lyrics. Others see it as an offspring of reggae, exalting the role of women in society and sexuality, and corresponding to committed songs, especially those written by some specific artists⁵⁰. Making a film on this kind of music means that some of the audience may not want to see it, even though the final message is utterly positive.

A couple of years after *Dancehall Queen*, in 1999, Chris Browne shot the film *Third World Cop*⁵¹. This is one of the most popular local films in Jamaica and abroad. The plot may seem to follow the path of the good cop versus the bad man, but actually the story allows some reflections on other subjects. The film is shot in the ghetto, and it presents life in that part of the city. The plot deals with violence and illegal businesses in that area. However, being shot by a Jamaican, the film does not recur to easy stereotypes, and it does not give a superficial explanation for the

⁴⁸ See Appendix 1, pp.355-356.

⁴⁹ The point of view *seems* to be that of a woman, because even if the protagonist is a woman, and the film tells her story, it was nonetheless written by a man, and the directors are men. So that, in the end, the point of view is that of men trying to give a woman's point of view.

⁵⁰ An example of this kind of debate can be found in Carolyn Cooper, *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture At Large*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, N.Y., and Hampshire, England, 2004.

⁵¹ See Appendix 1, pp.357-358.

harsh life conditions of the ghetto. Probably this was one of the reasons why it was appreciated by Jamaican people, along with the excellent realization of the film itself.

After *Third World Cop*, quite a long time passed with no local films being produced. Jamaica had to wait six years for the next feature film. It was in 2005 when *One Love* was shot by Rick Elgood and Don Letts⁵². The original screenplay was written by Trevor Rhone, based on an original story of the 1960s by Yvonne Deutschman. This film is quite unusual if compared to the other Jamaican films, mainly because it is set in the countryside, and because it tells a love story. There is little violence, and no ghetto settings. It is a kind of Jamaican *Romeo and Juliet*, where the lovers are separated not by their families' hatred, but by religious differences. This film pays attention to the differences between Rastafari and Christians, but also shows that love can overcome any obstacles. It may at times seem a bit naïf, but the overall atmosphere is that of a nice and fresh film.

The fact that the protagonists are both singers gives predominance to music. This is a common characteristic of Jamaican films, and this one is no exception. Music is important, it is an integral part of the plot.

The most recent film produced on the island, *Glory To Gloriana*⁵³, was shot in 2007 by Lennie Little-White. It is based on a real story, that of a woman, born as a poor girl in the countryside, who managed to surmount all the difficulties of her life in order to make enough money to buy and run a luxurious hotel in Montego Bay. As in *One Love*, this film is sometimes naïf. It seems that it was meant to be an edifying story, something to be taken as an example. It certainly has educational goals, but it lacks credibility in the way the story is told.

Few other local feature film has been shown since then. Some films are being made now, by young directors who try to give an impulse to the industry. A film called *Better Mus' Come*, by Storm Saulter, has been screened in 2008, but is not yet available at the time of writing⁵⁴. And Perry Henzell's second feature, *No Place Like Home*⁵⁵, is being shown in film festivals, but not yet released for the public at the time of writing.

Apart from these purely Jamaican films, others have been labelled as local products, but are not really so. They are co-productions between the United States and Jamaica. This means that directors are Americans, and part of the crew too. These movies were shot partly in the United States and partly in the Caribbean island. Some of the team and some of the actors were

⁵² See Appendix 1, pp.362-363.

⁵³ See Appendix 1, pp.366-367.

⁵⁴ In August 2009, Dr. Rachel Moseley-Wood told me that the film had not been released yet. It was screened at Film Festivals, but the director had not finished working on it.

⁵⁵ The film was actually shot soon after *The Harder They Come*, but the footage got lost, and was recovered by Henzell in New York only a few years ago. He decided to finish the editing, and to release the film in 2006.

Jamaicans. There is a group of four films that have been defined as Jamaican, but that Jamaicans do not see as belonging to them.

The oldest of these movies is *Klash*⁵⁶, shot in 1995 by Bill Parker. Jamaicans did not like this movie. The story is that of good versus bad guys, with great attention to the soundtrack. Actually, as the title indicates, the story is set during a music competition (called a clash), and revolves around the stealing of the benefits of this event. It presents a stereotypical view of the Jamaicans, and this is probably the reason why it was not appreciated on the island, along with the fact that it had Americans playing Jamaican characters. The Jamaicans presented in this movie are drug dealers, murderers, and thieves. The hero is the American protagonist, who is in trouble because of a Jamaican woman, depicted as a femme fatale interested only in money. The director used the island as a place of ill-fame, exploiting the stereotype of the link between Jamaica and drugs.

In 2003 and 2004 two movies were shot, partly in the United States and partly in Jamaica, by the same producers and the same family. *Rude Boy – The Jamaican Don*⁵⁷ and *Gangsta's Paradise*⁵⁸ present the same kind of story, of gangsters working in the States, but with strong connections with Jamaica.

Rude Boy was shot in 2003 by Desmond Gumbs. Following an American trend, he tried to stage Jamaican singers as actors. So the audience can see Beenie Man and Ninja Man, among the others, playing the roles of bad men. It must be said that in these films, the singers only act. They never sing, as would happen in other movies. Nonetheless, the Jamaican audience immediately recognized them, and they liked the fact that there were dancehall singers playing in a movie. However, the roles they were given are not edifying. They fall again into the stereotype of the Jamaican as a drug dealer and a gangster. It tries to be, as the title shows, an up-to-date version of the rude boy celebrated by *The Harder They Come*. But whereas that film had a moral status, these movies only use these common ideas to gather an audience. There is nothing moral in these films, they just want to make money, no matter how much they have to recur to stereotypes to make it.

⁵⁶ See Appendix 1, pp.353-354.

⁵⁷ Donna Hope gives the following definition of “don”: “ ‘Don’ is a title of distinction afforded to men who are perceived to be of high social, political and economic status in Jamaica. It is particularly used to denote status among men from the lower socio-economic levels and in the inner city context and is commonly used in ghetto and dancehall slang. The Jamaican definition of Don draws significantly from the distinctive label given to Mafia overlords of the kind immortalized in the movie *Godfather*; however it is oriented around indigenous symbols of the “ghetto gunman” who may sometimes have political and/or narco-political linkages. Many practicing Dons have been accused of illegal or extra-legal activities in Jamaica.” Donna Hope, *Dons and Shottas : Performing Violent Masculinity in Dancehall Culture*, p.115, in *Social and Economic Studies*, Special Issue on Popular Culture, Vol. 55, Nos. 1 & 2, March & June, 2006, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, University of the West Indies, Jamaica, pp.115-131. For details on the film, see Appendix 1, pp.359-360.

⁵⁸ See Appendix 1, p.361.

If *Rude Boy* is not a good movie, *Gangsta's Paradise*, shot in 2004 by Trenten W. Gumbs, is even worse. It pushes the stereotypes further, linking the Jamaican criminality to the Italian mafia in San Francisco. In this way, it presents the worst bad men together to the American audience. The story is very similar to that of *Rude Boy*, and the scenes and directing too. But it was inevitable, since both the movies were made by the same family working together. The Jamaican actors are the same, too: Beenie Man, Ninja Man, and Ras Kidus, that is dancehall singers playing the roles of dealers and gangsters working between the island and the United States. However, whereas *Rude Boy* has at least a logical plot, *Gangsta's Paradise* has none. The story has no strict logic. The characters have no consistency, and the links between them are ephemeral. The connection with Jamaica is somewhat forced, actually there is no plausible reason for the appearance of Jamaican characters. This movie is labelled as Jamaican, but in fact it has nothing to do with the island or with its inhabitants.

The last film partly American and partly Jamaican is *Shottas*⁵⁹, shot in 2005 by Cess Silvera. Though lingering on some stereotypes, it is the best of these films. The link with Jamaica is consistent, half of the movie is shot there and the other half in Miami. The story is typical: some Jamaicans rule the drug and extortions markets through blind violence, connecting the United States with Kingston. In this film, the director decided to cast as protagonists only Jamaicans. Beside the acclaimed actor Paul Campbell, he staged also Ky-Mani Marley and Spragga Benz. Marley is pursuing a career as an actor, along with his career as a singer; Spragga Benz is only a singer. There are other incursions from the music world, such as the minor role played by the Haitian singer Wyclef Jean. As happens for the other US/Jamaican productions, the story told in this film is about violence. However, the great difference from the other movies is that *Shottas* tries to have a moral status: it does not deal only with murders and gang rivalries, but also with an "elevated" theme such as friendship. The film tries to demonstrate that there are things which are more important than money and power, and that real relationships cannot be destroyed by anything. The film can be seen as a modernization of the rude boy exalted in *The Harder They Come*. It is different from *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta's Paradise*. The shottas⁶⁰, which is the contemporary name for rude boys, have a moral status, even though they are violent murderers and drug dealers. And among them there is also a good character, which not accidentally is a Rasta.

⁵⁹ See Appendix 1, pp.364-365.

⁶⁰ Shotta is a synonym for Don: "In Jamaican dancehall culture, the contemporary Don/Shotta is a being whose entire existence is circumscribed and defined by violence, deviance and lawlessness, as defined by traditional, middle-class Jamaican more." Donna Hope, *Op. Cit.*, p.119.

This film has been appreciated outside of Jamaica, but it has never been shown in cinemas on the island⁶¹. This is due to the fact that the director never paid the crew for their jobs, and Jamaica has “banned” the film in the cinemas. However, this is the best film among those representing Jamaica by stereotypes. It is the least USA- influenced as regards the point of view towards the Caribbean island and its inhabitants.

In this thesis, I will analyse all the films together, with no distinction between Jamaican indigenous films and Jamaican/USA co-productions. I will consider them all as Jamaicans. If a differentiation will be important in my analysis, I will specify which films I am looking at.

5. JAMAICAN FILMS IN THEIR CONTEXT.

As any “realistic” films does, the Jamaican ones want to represent the society in which they are made, which is the only way for the Jamaican people to identify with the story. Some of these films also have a political message, so they are even more immersed in the social order. However, the Jamaican government never intervened in the making of the movies.

The socio-political context is relevant only for *The Harder They Come*, because it is the more committed of these movies. Though the political party in power never disturbed the shootings, it nonetheless influenced them⁶². Moreover, the release of the film coincided with the elections and the change of government, from the right wing JLP to the leftist PNP. If the former political party saw the film as a piece of anti-government propaganda⁶³, the new political party in power eliminated any obstacle and welcomed it. This was due in part to the party’s support of intellectuals, and in part to Henzell’s support to the party.

The Harder They Come was released in a critical moment, since elections in those years in Jamaica were always accompanied by social turmoil. The various areas of the ghetto were affiliated to the different parties, and they fought each other during the election period. This is true still today, but the violence is somewhat diminished. Moreover, the film was the first made after independence, and it was also the first independent film ever made in Jamaica. There were great expectations about Henzell’s work, and he fulfilled them all. This is one of the reasons why the government never intervened in the making of the movie. The other, as I already said, is that there is no censorship in Jamaica⁶⁴.

⁶¹ It has been however distributed in DVD, since many Jamaicans have seen and appreciated it.

⁶² For example Perry Henzell told me, in an e-mail dated July 19th, 2005: “In order to get the use of the army Hugh Shearer, the prime minister, made it a condition that I should not mention Jamaica specifically as the location of the story, and in fact Jamaica is never mentioned.”

⁶³ Reggae meets western shoot-up, http://www.canoe.ca/JamMoviesReviewsH/harder_come.html, accessed December 06, 2002.

⁶⁴ Perry Henzell told me in an e-mail dated July 25th, 2005, that “We have less censorship in general than anywhere else I know”, and Brian St-Juste, in a conversation with me, November 29th, 2007, confirmed that there is no

Countryman is another political film. But neither did this one have problems with censors or the government, even though the rightist JLP had returned to power in the meantime. Indeed, the film does speak about corruption and the American intervention in the politics of foreign countries, but it is not specifically about Jamaica. It is clearly a Jamaican story, but the political overtones could refer to any Caribbean island. Actually, the American intervention in the politics of these countries was experienced by almost all of them: Jamaica, but also Cuba, Grenada, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and so on. In any case, what is more important in this film is the praise of the Rastafari.

The other films are not politically committed; they only try to make social critiques, and so never risked having problems. The directors always worked with total freedom. The governmental office dealing with the making of movies only wants to know the subject of the films, and then allows the directors to make their own choices⁶⁵.

Generally, all Jamaican films were welcomed by the Jamaican audience when released. Jamaicans like to see home-made films, and they responded to them with affection.

As regards the four co-produced movies, they were not really appreciated in Jamaica. The audience enjoyed the fact that there were popular dancehall singers in leading roles, but they did not appreciate the stories. This may be explained by the fact that they do not reflect Jamaican people. Jamaicans like to see themselves in the films, and to identify in the characters or in the story. And this explains why they did not appreciate the co-productions. Jamaicans are not all drug dealers or murderers. There is violence and criminality, but they are not the norm for every person. Moreover, these films promote stereotypes about the island and its inhabitants, and many people do not like them. Stereotypes are difficult to eradicate, and people outside of Jamaica who know only what they see on television about it will believe that Jamaica is just so. And this will promote further intolerance and incomprehension between people. Finally, Jamaicans are as cinema-educated as any other population. Their rejection of certain films have as much to do with the inappropriateness or incorrectness of the characterization as with the fact that, beside being based on stereotypes, the co-produced films are first of all badly made. This explains why Jamaicans like Jamaican films, while they do not really like United States productions that use the island as a place of ill-fame and that depict Jamaicans as bad and violent men.

copyright in Jamaica. However, Rachel Moseley-Wood, in August 2009, pointed out that “there was no direct intervention in the making of the film but the film was initially banned from cinemas”.

⁶⁵ Nardia McKenzie, in conversation with me on the behalf of Dell Crooks, December 11, 2007, told me that the government only asks before starting to shoot a film a copy of the script, the budget, and the summary of the movie.

6. A JAMAICAN TRADITION.

Jamaican films are few, but in this thesis I will try to understand if they can be said to have created a tradition. If one looks at the themes and subjects faced by the directors, it will be clear that many are similar. *The Harder They Come*, being the first and still today the more appreciated of the Jamaican films, set the trend for the following directors. Since then, every new Jamaican film has always been compared to it.

Even if they will never be fully considered by dominant cinema, because they are so few, they are low-budget films, and they come from a “Third World” country, Jamaican films are nonetheless enjoyable to see, and they give a glimpse on Jamaican society, on its complexities, and on its changing through the decades.

1. JAMAICAN FILMS' THEMES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

Jamaican cinema began in 1972, with Perry Henzell's film *The Harder They Come*. After decades of foreign (American) productions on the island, a Jamaican had finally the opportunity to make a feature film locally created. *The Harder They Come* was the beginning not only of local cinema, but also of the themes and characteristics of all Jamaican films. It became a model and a milestone for every Jamaican director who made a feature film after its release. *The Harder They Come* was the foundation, and it still is the paradigm for Jamaican cinema.

Many of the films made after *The Harder They Come* pick up one or more of its themes or of its peculiarities, trying at the same time to differentiate from it, introducing new subjects and keeping the pace with the changing times.

First of all, the great novelty of *The Harder They Come* was the use of Jamaican, instead of standard English¹. All the characters in the film speak Jamaican. It was a choice of Perry Henzell in order to render the story more authentic. The director wanted to give the audience a purely Jamaican experience, and so the use of the island's language was necessary to this end. All the following films made the same choice: Jamaican is heard in everyone of them. There is also the use of standard English, especially in *Children Of Babylon*, but it is spoken only by some people belonging to high social classes or to the Church. Moreover, some directors chose to go further than *The Harder They Come*, introducing not only Jamaican, but also what is called Rasta talk, a variation of Jamaican spoken by Rastafari. This is evident especially in the films dealing with Rasta themes, such as *Rockers*, *Countryman* and *One Love*.

The Harder They Come's second great characteristic is its use of music². In the soundtrack "reggae" is always present. It gives rhythm to the story, accompanying the characters and underlying the events taking place in the film. The soundtrack is so infectious and important that with some audiences it is more popular than the film itself. It had such a great success that in the following films the directors had no choice but to try to imitate it. In Jamaica film and soundtrack are inseparable: a movie is made for the soundtrack, and a soundtrack is made for the movie. The music is never inserted randomly, as in any good film. Generally the songs match with the scenes they are inserted in, or they are related to the overall theme of the film. And being Jamaican, generally the kind of music chosen is reggae, the distinctive rhythm of the island, in its various facets.

Music is fundamental in every film, with the only exception of *Smile Orange*, but it has the most important role in *Dancehall Queen*, *Rockers* and *One Love*. Along with *The Harder They Come*,

¹ Language is analysed in Chapter 2.

² Music in the films is analysed in Chapter 3, while a brief history of Jamaican music is presented in Appendix 2.

these films give music a role in the plot; it becomes the reason why the story takes place, and why the film was made.

Related to music is dance, also present in every film³. It has the most important role in *Dancehall Queen*, since it is a story about dance. But in the other films there is always a moment dedicated to dance, which is inspired by the infectious rhythm of the music.

Being the first, *The Harder They Come* hinted at many subjects that would be further developed by following directors. This happened for instance with the theme of religion⁴. Perry Henzell focused on the Church only to show its corruption and its attempt to keep people quiet not letting them think about their pressing problems and concentrating instead on what is coming up for them in heaven. Moreover, *The Harder They Come* showed for the first time a Rastafari actor. Even though the director did not really develop his analysis of this character and his religion, he represents nonetheless the most loving and peaceful part of society; he is viewed with sympathy and respect.

Four of the successive films took religion and Rastafari as the main theme of their stories. Soon after *The Harder They Come*, three different directors made what Warner refers to as “the Rastafari trilogy”⁵: *Rockers*, *Countryman* and *Children Of Babylon*. These three films have one or more Rastafari characters as protagonists, and this religion is showed and explained through words and deeds. The same happened some years later, in the film *One Love*, where the main character is a Rasta, and he is opposed to a Pentecostal pastor.

However, even if the other films do not particularly concentrate on Rastafari or religion, there are many Rasta characters in the stories. And every time a Rasta appears, he is viewed with respect, and becomes automatically a “good” character. Rastas are never depicted in negative ways, not even when the film is violent and the Rasta is involved in illegal affairs, as happens in *Shottas*. The only exception to this trend is Luke, the Rasta protagonist of *Children of Babylon*, depicted as a rude and backward male chauvinist.

Linked with Rastafari for cultural reasons, in almost every film there is the use of marijuana⁶, though it is not consumed only by Rasta characters. *The Harder They Come* started to show not only the smoking of the chalice, but also the ganja trade. It is one of the film’s main themes, used by Henzell to show the corruption of the Jamaican police and government. Ganja, another name for marijuana, is seen not only as a social habit, but mainly as a job for some and a source of money for others.

³ Dance, and dancehall culture, are analysed in Chapter 4.

⁴ Religions and Rastafari are analysed in Chapter 5.

⁵ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.91.

⁶ Marijuana, along with other minor themes, is analysed in Chapter 9.

In the following films, ganja will reappear, but its purposes will change. It is present in every film, except *Smile Orange*, *Dancehall Queen* and, strangely enough, *One Love*. It is used by Rastas, but also by “common” Jamaicans and by tourists. It is even used by a policeman, as the opening scene of *Third World Cop* shows. The films give the impression that ganja becomes something socially accepted, and it seems that it is something smoked by the majority of people on the island. The trade is not shown anymore, ganja becomes a habit just as are cigarettes.

The Harder They Come introduced other subjects that would be picked up by other directors. For instance, Ivan becomes a star when he kills a policeman, and this is possible only after he buys a couple of guns⁷. Weapons of any kind are very present in Jamaican movies, especially in *The Lunatic*, *Dancehall Queen* and *Third World Cop*. Directors paid great attention especially on guns, and in this way they created a particular depiction of the Jamaican male. Weapons are used by men only, and they become distinctive signs of the characters who own them. These weapons give the idea that, at least in the films, the Jamaican male is tough and violent. They create the image of “macho men”, who have power because of the use of weapons, no matter whether they are gangsters or cops.

However, guns are not the only objects that define a character⁸. Many subtleties are used to create a character. For instance, clothes are very important. In *The Harder They Come*, they mark the change of Ivan from a country boy to a rude boy. In *Countryman*, the absence of clothes differentiates the Rasta from the rest of the people. In *The Lunatic*, the rags Aloysius wears characterize him as a madman. *Dancehall Queen* is centred on the scintillating dancehall dress code. In *Third World Cop*, the policeman wears clothes that are more suitable for a gangster than for a man of the law. And in *Smile Orange*, the colour that predominates is orange, so as to create a link with the title and the alleged meaning of the fruit.

Besides clothes, accessories are fundamental to define a character. This happens especially in *The Harder They Come*, where hats, sunglasses and necklaces are shown off by Ivan and other characters. But it happens in other movies too. In *The Lunatic*, for instance, Service always wears a hat, sunglasses and he always has a machete. *Dancehall Queen* is full of accessories, both for women and for men. And Priest, the bad man, is characterized by an earring, coloured contact lenses and coloured hair. The same actor who played the role of Priest also played the role of the cop in *Third World Cop*, and here too he is characterized by earrings, guns and other accessories.

Finally, a character’s status is defined by the means of transport he/she uses. This is very evident in *The Harder They Come*. Ivan arrives by bus in Kingston, and at the beginning he has to walk, since he has no other means of transport. Then, as he moves up in his society, he starts to use a bicycle,

⁷ Guns and the particular kind of masculinity presented in the films are analysed in Chapter 8.

⁸ Clothes, accessories, cars and the like are analysed in Chapter 7.

then a motorbike, then a car, only to miss a boat and lose all means of transport in the end. *Rockers* is characterized by the use of motorbikes, and *Countryman* has a small fishing boat and his own feet to move. In *The Lunatic*, Aloysius walks wherever he has to go, until he meets Inga and he starts travelling with her motorbike. *Dancehall Queen* shows big cars. While Marcia has no means of transport, Larry drives a Mercedes Benz, and the dancehall stars have big or fancy cars. In *Third World Cop* the Don, the boss of the area, drives a BMW. In *One Love* there are the cars of the people of the Church opposed to the motorbike of the Rastaman. *Children Of Babylon*, being set in the countryside, gives more importance to horse riding. The means of transport are often opposed, in order to show the different wealth and social status of the various characters interacting in the story.

Cars, as well as houses, are full of objects. This is another characteristic of Jamaican films. In some of them there is a kind of “fetish” object that recurs throughout the story. In *The Harder They Come*, the transistor radio appears at every crucial moment of the film. In *Dancehall Queen*, there is an obsessive attention to clothes. And in other films, such as *Third World Cop*, the attention is addressed to those objects that denote wealth but also gangsterism, such as guns and big gold necklaces. All these objects can be said to have become part of the Jamaican films’ iconography.

Apart from these material things, *The Harder They Come* introduced other subjects that the following films keep dealing with. One of these is sexuality and nakedness⁹. There are people naked or having sex in almost every film. If today it is common to see such scenes in a film, it was not so in the 1970s. If compared to other (especially American) films of the same period, Jamaican films appear to be more free when they address this theme. This can be due to the fact that censorship in Jamaica has always been weak, but also to the more natural way the Jamaicans depicted in the films deal with sexuality, without the strict rules of the Christian churches. In 1972, *The Harder They Come* showed a man and a woman naked and having sexual intercourse. *Countryman* concentrates on the white woman’s naked body. *Smile Orange* shows attempted sexual intercourse as a payment for a ride, and deals with the prostitution of Jamaicans with white tourists. *The Lunatic* stages a German woman obsessed with sex, forcing two men to satisfy her desires. And *Third World Cop* opens with the cop having sex with a woman. The film most concerned with sexuality is *Children Of Babylon*, where the three protagonists are shown several times having sexual intercourse. The only films that do not show this aspect are *Rockers*, *One Love* and *Dancehall Queen*, though in the latter there are frequent hints at sexuality, both in the plot and in the dances. This demonstrates that easy generalizations are wrong, and whether Jamaicans are or not free in sexual matters will be debated in this thesis.

⁹ Sexuality is analysed in Chapter 9.

Being specific to a country, the films present some typically Jamaican features. For instance, several times we can see characters playing dominoes. Or, as in *The Harder They Come* and *Dancehall Queen*, we are shown the job of the street vendor. But what appears most of all is the character of the gangster, sometimes despised and sometimes praised.

Despite all these similarities, *The Harder They Come*'s main theme will be abandoned by the following films. Henzell's film was politically committed, showing the country's corruption and asking for real independence, not only from England, but most of all from the United States¹⁰. Only *Countryman* tried to make the same kind of statement. There is a corrupted army officer, and a fake attempt of the States to intervene in the country's election. But this will be the only film trying to follow *The Harder They Come*'s example, though it will not reach the same depth. All the other Jamaican films will focus on other subjects. Nonetheless, a subtle social criticism will appear in all of them, more or less overtly dealt with, which will substitute political commitment.

A last comparison that can be made between *The Harder They Come* and the other Jamaican films regards the setting of the story¹¹. Only three films are mainly made of interior shots. *Smile Orange* unfolds in a hotel, *Dancehall Queen* in some houses and in the dancehall club, and *Children Of Babylon* in a mansion in the countryside. All the other films generally have location shots. *The Harder They Come* is set in the ghetto streets, and so are *Rockers* and *Third World Cop*. *Countryman* is mainly set along the seaside and in the wilderness surrounding it. *The Lunatic* and *One Love* are set in the countryside. Films like *The Harder They Come*, *Rockers*, *Third World Cop* and, to a certain extent, *Dancehall Queen* give also a quite realistic description of the city.

However, if it is true that *The Harder They Come* is the role model for Jamaican films, it does not mean that later films show no novelties. For instance, *Smile Orange* and *The Lunatic* give a satirical description of the tourism industry in Jamaica¹²; the former through the daily life in a hotel, the latter through a white female tourist who longs for Jamaican men. *The Lunatic* also faces the theme of madness and sanity, showing that the borders between the two are often blurred.

A couple of films can be seen as a kind of homage to other, more worldwide popular, films. *Rockers* is inspired by the Italian Neo Realist film *Bicycle Thieves*, remaining nonetheless purely Jamaican. And *Third World Cop* pays homage to Francis Ford Coppola and his *The Godfather*, but has also in mind mafia stories and gangster films, since the director called his protagonist Capone, and since the Don is called by the people working for him "godfather".

¹⁰ Political commitment and social criticism are analysed in Chapter 9.

¹¹ Settings and locations are analysed in Chapter 6.

¹² Tourism is analysed in Chapter 9.

Children Of Babylon concentrates on ideologies and differences between social classes¹³. The wealth of one of the protagonists is criticized by Penny's Marxism, though she comes from a rich family herself. And they are both opposed to the working class, represented here by the Rastafari character.

One thing that must be noted about Jamaican films is that generally women do not have great relevance in them, though some attempts have been made to change this pattern¹⁴. The first film staging a woman as a protagonist was *Children Of Babylon*. Penny is an independent and emancipated woman, who lives her life as she wants to. What is striking is that this woman allows the Rastaman, with whom she falls in love, to dominate her, turning her into a victim instead of the free woman she claims to be. Only at the end will she be able to regain her status and her dignity, but she will have to renounce her love and her ideals for it.

The Lunatic is the second film in which a woman is the protagonist. Although the title refers to the main male character, it is the German woman who is the real boss in the story. She decides what has to be done, who has to do it, and she is dominant, especially in sexual matters. Her force will be reduced only at the end of the film, when her father compels her to go back to Germany in order to avoid prison in Jamaica.

Dancehall Queen tries to be a "feminist" story. It is first of all the story of Marcia, a woman. It hints at the compromises to which women sometimes submit themselves to have some money. But above all it shows the dancehall clubs, where women are the indisputable protagonists. Even though the dancehall songs may seem to be disrespectful towards women, in the clubs the women dictate the rules, and men can only obey them.

One of the latest films made in Jamaica, *Glory to Gloriana*, is another story of a woman. It is based on fact; it is Gloria's story. We are shown her difficult life, her obstacles and her sacrifices, and her final social victory. It is a kind of moral story, showing that with good will one can overcome any difficulty.

A different kind of discourse applies to the four films made in co-production by Jamaica and the United States. If they can be considered Jamaican, and if they have many common features with *The Harder They Come*, they nonetheless are very different from the other Jamaican films, for the very reason of having foreign producers working on them.

The most evident characteristic these films share with *The Harder They Come* is that they are "gangster stories". The protagonists are outlaws, and they are exalted just because of this. The only exception is *Klash*, where the main character is a photographer. But he is nonetheless involved against his will in shady deals, and the police believe that he is a gangster.

¹³ Penny's Marxism is analysed in Chapter 9.

¹⁴ Women stories are analysed in Chapter 9.

However, if in *The Harder They Come* Ivan becomes a hero, even though he is an outlaw, it is because he fights for his rights, and for justice for the poorest people of his environment. He is not selfish: he wants to be famous, but his battle ends up bringing better conditions to the whole community, and not to himself alone. However, at the end of the film he dies, losing all he had acquired, and those who gain something from his actions are the other dealers involved in the ganja trade.

This does not happen in these four films. The gangsters do not work to better their society, they just want to have a lot of money and undisputed power. The world depicted is that of the selfish underworld, where people go ahead regardless of everyone. Killing is very easy, and generally for futile reasons. So, if it is true that the idolization of the gangster reappears, it is very different from that in *The Harder They Come*.

The second characteristic shared by Henzell's film and these four, a characteristic directly consequent from the figure of the gangster, is that all these films are set in the drug world, apart from *Klash*, set in the music business. But this world has changed too. It is not joyous anymore, as it was in a certain way in *The Harder They Come*, nor is it a world of solidarity, where people are all at the same level, and all work together, because the fortune of one is the fortune of all. Now the underworld is violent, often too violent for no reason, and it has been dirtied. Gangsterism is not anymore the only job to survive, it is a business. And the people involved in this business are pitiless. Moreover, it is very likely that the kind of drug dealt with has changed too. The trade is not concerned anymore with ganja, but more probably with heavier drugs. This is why the amount of money involved in it is much greater, and this is why the gangsters are interested in the business, since only with such big money can they afford their expensive lifestyle.

As in all the other films, also in these characters are identified with their accessories. The kind of male represented is again an exaggerated macho, powerful because of his status as a gangster. All the outlaws possess big guns, many big cars, and showy gold jewellery.

The actions of these films generally take place in the streets, both in the United States and in Jamaica. This is due to the fact that the stories are about gangs rivalry, and the violence happens in the streets. So, as *The Harder They Come*, these films can be said to be made of location shots.

As regards the language, the Jamaican characters talk in Jamaican, while the Americans talk in standard American English, with their accents. In *Gangsta's Paradise*, in addition to these two languages, there are also some characters representing Italian Mafiosi, thus speaking English, but with a pretended Italian accent.

Music is another characteristic of these films. *Klash* unfolds in the music environment, dealing with a concert that has to take place in Jamaica. As in other Jamaican films, music becomes a small part

of the plot, since part of this concert and the dances of the audience associated with the songs are shown.

Shottas, *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta's Paradise* do not have music as a specific element of the plot, but it is nonetheless present in an indirect way. Actually, some of the actors playing roles in these films are popular singers in Jamaica. In *Shottas*, two of the main characters are Ky-mani Marley and Spragga Benz, while a secondary character is played by Wyclef Jean. In *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta's Paradise* there are, among the others, Beenie Man and Ninja Man. This does not mean that music is not present in the background, though it is shifting towards rap rather than reggae, but that even if it has not the same relevance it has in Jamaican films, it is nonetheless constantly evoked through the actors playing in them.

Rastafari is also acknowledged in these film. It has not the same importance it has in purely Jamaican films, but it is mentioned in these ones too. In *Klash* the character who will be the smartest and will gain all the money without being involved in anything illegal is a Rastafari. In *Rude Boy*, Jimmy Cliff, who appears at the very beginning, is a kind of wise man who analyses the Jamaican situation with Beenie Man, who is another Rastafari. In *Shottas*, the protagonist is a Rasta, who is depicted, even though he is involved in illegal affairs, as a good character. He has in himself all the good qualities of Rastafari, and he tries to avoid violence when not necessary. As it happens in Jamaican films, even though Rastafari are involved in underworld life, they are considered with respect, and they always represent the good characters of the stories.

What appears different in these Jamaican American productions is the image of the man they give. In indigenous films, Jamaicans depict Jamaicans. They all come from the same place, they share the same experiences, they live the same kind of life. So their representation is quite realistic, authentic. They show Jamaicans without stereotypes, as they are. Of course, they use the artifices necessary to tell a story, but they are not influenced by the depiction of coloured people by non coloured cinema, or by the representation of Jamaicans by non Jamaicans. They just show Jamaicans as they appear, without prejudices.

This does not happens in the co productions. They are influenced by foreign, especially American, cinema. Therefore, as all Italians become Mafiosi when they are staged by non Italians in Hollywood films (and in *Gangsta's Paradise* too), so all Jamaicans become violent gangsters. They are drug dealers looking only for money. And to make clear that these characters are Jamaican, they make them physically appear as Rastas, since everybody associates locks with Jamaica. It does not matter if this is not how things really stand; what matters is that the audience immediately makes the connection between gangsters and Jamaica.

Among these films, the one that exploits less this stereotype is *Shottas*. This is probably due to the fact that it is the less American of the four, since the director and the actors are Jamaicans. This is why this film, though depicting the same kind of violent underworld and gangsters, tries to confer humanity to its characters. Before being a story of gangs' rivalry, this film is above all a story of friendship. Although it is violent, it tries nonetheless to pass a positive message to the audience.

Analysing these films, it is quite easy to see that *The Harder They Come* is the milestone of Jamaican cinema. It was the first, made in the worst conditions, but it is still today the bench mark for all the subsequent films made on the island. Besides trying to compare with it, the Jamaican directors also tried to follow the themes and subjects it faced. In this way, they justify the claim that *The Harder They Come* was the trendsetter of Jamaican cinema. And it remains a great film not only in the Jamaican tradition, but also in the history of cinema worldwide.

In this chapter I have outlined the themes which I think are the most relevant in Jamaican cinema. I will now analyse each one of them separately, trying to give an insight in Jamaican culture through the films which reflect it quite realistically.

2. “DIS A JAMIEKA”: LANGUAGE IN JAMAICAN CINEMA.

The first thing that immediately strikes a non-Jamaican audience when they start to watch a Jamaican film is that the actors do not speak in “English”. This is the same thing that makes a Jamaican audience feel that the film they are watching is something belonging to them. In Jamaican films, the actors speak in Jamaican “English”. At first sight, it could seem quite natural; but actually it has not always been unproblematic.

2.1 JAMAICAN LANGUAGE: FROM ENGLISH TO *PATWA*.¹

Jamaican is an English-based language, but it is not “English”. Everybody on the island understands Standard English, but not everyone can speak it. Jamaican formed through the centuries, mixing all the languages spoken on the isle by the various peoples who settled on it.

The present-day population of the West Indies consists of a variety of racial groups all more or less in ancestral exile, and all still subject to the hegemonic pressures of their former European owners, and, more recently, to that exercised in the region by the USA.²

This is why the base is English, the language imposed by the colonizers on the slave population, but many words and structures belong to other languages. The influences mainly come from African languages, imported with the slaves, mixed in their turn by them, since they came from different part of Africa and used different idioms.

The history of the slave trade and its social patterns made it impossible for the slaves to be unaware of the significant part language played in their continuing enslavement. Where possible, slaves were isolated from their common language group and transported and sold in ‘mixed lots’, as a deliberate means of limiting the possibilities of rebellion. This policy of language suppression was continued on the plantations of the New World wherever it could be implemented. The result was that within two or three generations (sometimes within one) the only language available to the Africans for communication either amongst themselves or with the master was the European language of that master. African slaves could not avoid an awareness of the cruel pressure of an imposed language and the loss of their own ‘voice’, a loss incurred, moreover, in an alien landscape. So, subject to a tragic alienation from both language and landscape, the transplanted Africans found that psychic survival depended on their facility for a kind of *double entendre*. They were forced to develop the skill of being able to say one thing in

¹ Jamaican English is usually referred to as Patwa or Creole. The difference of meaning between the two terms varies widely, as every person has their own idea of what Jamaican is. To avoid misunderstanding, I will refer to the Jamaican language as “Jamaican”. If I use the term “Creole”, I refer to the first stage of the language, when it was still in the process of becoming Jamaican, a kind of pidgin, while the term “Patwa” also refers to the Jamaican language as it is spoken presently.

² Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back – Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, London and New York, Routledge, 1989, p.144.

front of ‘massa’ and have it interpreted differently by their fellow slaves. This skill involved a radical subversion of the meanings of the master’s tongue.³

Moreover, Jamaican was influenced by the impact of the remnants of the Amerindian languages, spoken by the first inhabitants of Jamaica before the extermination under colonization, and of Chinese and Indian, brought by the indentured labourers in the 19th century. Finally, there is the influence of the languages spoken on the other Caribbean islands⁴. As a consequence, Jamaican is not English, but a language on its own. Even if Jamaica is considered an English-speaking country, Jamaican is very distinct from Standard English. The language that is currently spoken in Jamaica was called by Edward Kamau Brathwaite in 1984 “nation language”.

Nation language is the language which is influenced very strongly by the African model, the African aspect of our New World/Caribbean heritage. English it may be in terms of some of its lexical features. But in its contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English, even though the words, as you hear them, might be English to a greater or lesser degree. [...]

It is an English which is not the Standard, imported, educated English, but that of the submerged, surrealist experience and sensibility, which has always been there and which is now increasingly coming to the surface and influencing the perception of contemporary Caribbean people. It is what I call, as I say, *nation language*. I use the term in contrast to *dialect*. [...] Dialect has a long history coming from the plantation where people’s dignity is distorted through their language and the descriptions which the dialect gave to them. Nation language, on the other hand, is the *submerged* area of that dialect which is much more closely allied to the African aspect of experience in the Caribbean. It may be in English: but often it is in an English which is like a howl, or a shout or a machine-gun or the wind or a wave. It is also like the blues. And sometimes it is English and African at the same time.⁵

Some scholars identify the language spoken in the Caribbean as a “Creole continuum”. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, in their seminal work *The Empire Writes Back*, give this description of the Creole continuum:

The concept of a Creole continuum is now widely accepted as an explanation of the linguistic culture of the Caribbean. [...] The theory states that the Creole complex of the region is not simply an aggregation of discrete dialect forms but an overlapping of ways of speaking between which individual speakers may move with considerable ease. These overlapping ‘lects’, or specific modes of language use, not only contain forms from the major languages ‘between’ which they come into being, but forms which are also functionally peculiar to themselves. Thus

³ *Ibidem*, pp.144-145.

⁴ For instance, the Jamaican word “pickney”, meaning kid, probably comes from the Spanish word “pequeño”.

⁵ Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice – The Development of Nation Language in the Anglophone Caribbean Poetry*, London and Port Of Spain, New Beacon Books, 1984, p.13.

they meet the paradoxical requirements of being identifiable as stages on a continuum without being wholly discrete as language behaviours.⁶

Imagining a scale of language going from the “lower” levels of dialect to Standard English, the renowned Professor Kenneth Ramchand gives a clear description of the contemporary linguistic situation in the Caribbean, where Standard English is not (or rarely) spoken, but still viewed as something more valuable than Jamaican.

In the twentieth century, we have to give up the notion of separate languages (Creole English and Standard English) and we have to envisage a scale. At one end of the scale is what we have been calling ‘Standard English’. In the strictest sense, Standard English ought to be spelt out as Standard English English, the language of British expatriates. Whether it is actually practiced in the islands or not, it exercises a powerful influence. It exists as an ideal form to be aspired to by mentally colonised West Indians, and it is the unknown norm by which even illiterate measure social standing.⁷

He then goes on to explain which elements constitute the linguistic scale:

At the farthest end of the linguistic scale, and living in remote areas are the unschooled speakers of a number of closely related dialects (admitting no more English or educated items) that are the twentieth century residues of what used to be called ‘Negro’ or ‘Black’ English. [...] What was the language of the majority of the Blacks became the language of a minority.

With the formal establishment of popular education in the latter half of the nineteenth century, we can trace the beginnings of a new connection on the grammatical level between the ‘upper’ reaches of Black English and the less formal levels of Standard English. [...] Once this connection was made, the long retreat of any language in the society that could be cut off from further infusions of English had begun. [...] The emergent levels of dialect can be ranged in a continuous scale between Standard English and residual or hard-core Creole or Black English.⁸

Basically, the reason why Jamaica is said to be an English-speaking country is that the (educated) language, or West Indian Standard, resembles Standard English. Kenneth Ramchand again explains this similitude quite clearly:

West Indian Standard lies nearest to Standard English on the linguistic scale in the islands. Its vocabulary is the same as that of SE but with the addition of a small but growing number of West Indianisms which have passed from the dialect into educated usage. The grammar of West Indian Standard is practically the same as that of Standard English. [...] The most obvious differences between Standard English and West Indian Standard exist on the level of actual pronunciation.⁹

⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Garte Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Op. Cit.*, p.44.

⁷ Kenneth Ramchand, *The West Indian Novel and its Background*, Kingston, Miami, Ian Randle Publishers, 2004, p. 68. Ramchand is a Professor at the University of the West Indies, Augustine, Trinidad.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p.69.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p.70.

Actually, this is what makes Jamaican seem so different from English. The pronunciation of Jamaican is quite different from that of Standard English. For instance, the very name of the country is pronounced “Jamaica” in Standard English, but “Jamieka” in Jamaican¹⁰. And the different pronunciation is valid for almost every word of Jamaican English. Edward Kamau Brathwaite links this diversity to the fact that Caribbean languages are influenced by music.

A very necessary connection to the understanding of nation language is between native musical structures and the native language. That music is, in fact, the surest threshold to the language which comes out of it.

[Nation language] is based as much on sound as it is on song. That is to say, the noise that it makes is part of the meaning, and if you ignore the noise (or what you would *think* of as noise, shall I say) then you lose part of the meaning.

In order to break down the pentameter, we discovered an ancient form which was always there, the calypso. [...] It employs dactyls. It therefore mandates the use of the tongue in a certain way, the use of sound in a certain way. It is a model that we are moving naturally towards to.¹¹

Of course, in Jamaica language is influenced not only by calypso, but also (mainly) by reggae music, blues, and Rasta drums and beats.¹² And also by other rhythms:

Nation language [...] include[s] more traditional (ancestral/oral) material [...] (shango, *anansesem*, Spiritual (Aladura) Baptist services, grounnations, yard theatres, ring games, tea-meeting speeches etc). [...] In addition to the influence of Caribbean music on Caribbean poetry, there has also been jazz.¹³

Finally, Brathwaite acknowledges what has become true not only for poetry, but also for novels and cinema, and every other art form in the Caribbean: “Nation-language has become not the exception but almost the rule.”¹⁴

Basically, what Jamaican does is to appropriate English to transform it into something else, able to serve the purposes of the island’s linguistic and social needs.

The appropriation of the language is essentially a subversive strategy, for the adaptation of the ‘Standard’ language to the demands and requirements of the place and society into which it has been appropriated amounts to a far more subtle rejection of the political power of the Standard language. In Chinua Achebe’s words this is a process by which the language is made to bear the weight and the texture of a different experience. In doing so it becomes a different language. By adapting the alien language to the exigencies of a mother grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and by giving a shape to the variations of the speaking voice, such writers and speakers construct an

¹⁰ [dʒə-ma-kə] in Standard English, [dʒə-mie-kə] in Jamaican.

¹¹ Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *Op. Cit.*, pp.16-17.

¹² I discuss Jamaican music in films in Chapter 3, and I give a brief history of Jamaican music in Appendix 2.

¹³ Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *Op. Cit.*, p.48.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p.49.

‘english’ which amounts to a very different linguistic vehicle from the received Standard colonial ‘English’.

The process of language adaptation is linguistically profound because it establishes a medium which fractures the concept of a Standard language and installs the ‘marginal’ variations of language use as the actual network of a particular language.¹⁵

What common people in Jamaica speak today is not English, and many times it is not even West Indian Standard. They speak a “dialect”, Patwa, which formed itself from English and many other languages. Only educated Jamaicans can speak West Indian Standard:

I would propose the following criteria for recognising speakers of West Indian Standard: they have been sufficiently educated to control the grammar and lexis of Standard English; they may learn to pronounce in other ways, but they retain the ability to pronounce in their natural West Indian way; above all, however, they are more or less instinctive speakers of or thinkers in a West Indian dialect or dialects. The third criterion suggests that the speaker of West Indian Standard is an educated West Indian whose social origin is in the dialect-speaking group or whose social contacts make him a dialect-speaker.¹⁶

This means that the great majority of the island’s population is not able to speak English, even though they understand it. And they do not speak the West Indian Standard either. What they employ is Patwa, and every single Jamaican understands and is able to talk in Patwa.

2.2 IMPLICATIONS IN THE USE OF JAMAICAN.

Control over language is one of the most important forms of power. This is why, during colonization, the slaves were not allowed to be in same-language groups. The inability to communicate prevented rebellions, and at the same time forced the Africans to learn the language of the master in order to understand and to be understood. This master’s language informed the experiences and the identity of every person forced to speak it.

The control over language by the imperial centre [...] remains the most potent instrument of cultural control. Language provides the terms by which reality may be constituted; it provides the names by which the world may be ‘known’. Its system of values [...] becomes the system upon which social, economic and political discourses are grounded.

[...] To name the world is to ‘understand’ it, to know it and to have control over it. [...] To name reality is therefore to exert power over it, simply because the dominant language becomes the way in which it is known.¹⁷

¹⁵ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edition, London and New York, Routledge, 2006, p.262.

¹⁶ Kenneth Ramchand, *Op. Cit.*, pp.71-72.

¹⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin eds., *Op. Cit.*, p.261.

Therefore, once colonization was over, one of the first means to retrieve an autonomous identity was a re-appropriation of the language.

The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place.¹⁸

Post colonial cinema, as a form of art speaking for now independent peoples, has to choose which kind of language it wants to articulate. If directors decide to make a film in Standard English, they will betray in some way their country, recurring to the language of power and imperialism that dominated it and that is not spoken by the people in the country. If they opt for the use of their national language, they will run the risk of not being understood outside of their country, limiting therefore the distribution or having to resort to different stratagems in order to be understood, such as, for instance, subtitles. Dominant cinema has re-proposed the old and successful pattern of colonization: not only most of the time is it imperial in its themes, it is also imposing its language to the rest of the world.

As potent symbols of collective identity, languages are the foci of deep loyalties existing at the razor's edge of national and cultural differences. [...] Languages as lived operate within hierarchies of power. Inscribed within the play of power, language becomes caught up in the cultural hierarchies typical of Eurocentrism. English, especially, has often served as the linguistic vehicle for the projection of Anglo-American power, technology, and finance. Hollywood films, for their part, betray a linguistic hubris bred of empire. Hollywood proposed to tell not only its own stories but also those of other nations, and not only to Americans but also to the other nations themselves, and always in English. [...] By ventriloquizing the world, Hollywood indirectly diminished the possibilities of linguistic self-representation for other nations. Hollywood both profited from and itself promoted the world-wide dissemination of the English language, thus contributing indirectly to the subtle erosion of the linguistic autonomy of other cultures.¹⁹

In dominant cinema,

The colonized are denied speech in a double sense, first in the idiomatic sense of not being allowed to speak, and second in the more radical sense of not being recognized as capable of speech. [...] In many First World films set in the Third World, the “world of the other” is elided, distorted, or caricatured.²⁰

¹⁸ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Op. Cit.*, p.37. The theories in this book regard literature, but they can also be adapted to cinema.

¹⁹ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Op. Cit.*, pp.191-192. It must be noted that this book was written in 1994. Since then, many things have changed both for Hollywood, that has lost its unquestioned power, and for the “new” cinemas, those not considered by the mainstream, that are gaining more and more visibility and importance.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p.192.

In order to react to such new kind of colonization, many filmmakers have decided to use their own language, to recover their own voice, and to speak for themselves without intermediaries, to tell the world how they see themselves.

Many Third World filmmakers have reacted against the hegemonic deployment of European languages in dominant cinema. Although English, for example, has become the literary *lingua franca* for postcolonials like Ben Okri, Derek Walcott, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, and Vikram Seth, and in this sense is no longer the possession of its original “owners”, it has also been met with the anti-neocolonial demand of return to one’s linguistic sources.²¹

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, in their 1994 analysis of Eurocentric cinema, clearly explain the importance of language in post colonial societies:

As a social battleground, language forms the site where political struggles are engaged both collectively and intimately. People do not enter simply into language as a master code; they participate in it as socially constituted subjects whose linguistic exchange is shaped by power relations. In the case of colonialism, linguistic reciprocity is simply out of question. [...] For the colonizer, the refusal of the colonized’s language is linked to the denial of political self-determination, while for the colonized mastery of the colonizer’s tongue testifies both to a capacity for survival and a daily drowning out of one’s voice. Colonial bilingualism entails the inhabiting of conflicting psychic and cultural realms.²²

And then they illustrate the significance of language in films:

The neocolonial situation, in which the Hollywood language becomes the model of “real” cinema, has as its linguistic corollary the view of European languages as inherently more “cinematic” than others.

The issue of linguistic self-representation does not simply entail a return to “authentic” languages but rather the orchestration of languages for emancipatory purposes.²³

And this is exactly what happens in Jamaican cinema. The use of Patwa instead of Standard English testifies the will to assert the country’s own identity, its own independence, its own authority. Films in Jamaican are a demonstration of the language’s value, and by extension that of the people of the island. And it is a mode of resistance against the cultural imperialism of the metropolitan centres in England and the United States.

However, the use of Jamaican, as momentous as it may be, is not unproblematic. As I said, if on the one hand it asserts the country’s identity and independence, on the other it prevents a good distribution. This depends also on the fact that films made by “Third World” countries are always seen as inferior by dominant cinema²⁴. But the fact that non-Jamaican audiences will have

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp.192-193.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 193.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ See Introduction, pp.4-7.

difficulties in understanding the films has a great importance. Films are distributed to make money, and if people do not go to see a film because they do not understand what the characters say, it will not make a cent. This is why directors have to face the problem of how to make the film available to everyone. Today it is quite easy, thanks to the opportunity given by DVDs to insert subtitles at one's wish. But in the past it was not so simple, and still today some choices are debatable²⁵.

The great majority of Jamaican films are shot in Patwa, and this reflects the fact that Jamaican films are independent, in every sense. The use of the local language is an act of courage, but mainly an act of faith in one's own identity, refusing the imposed language of dominant cinema and affirming the island's values. This also means, however, that most of the films discussed in this thesis are totally unknown outside of Jamaica and that critical opinions on them are consequently quite scarce if not just non-existent.

2.3 JAMAICAN IN FILMS.

The Harder They Come was not only the first Jamaican film, it was also the first to use the island's language for the majority of the characters. When I asked Trevor Rhone if he and Perry Henzell realized, in writing the script at that time, that this kind of language would have such an impact on the film, he told me that "the language in the movie was an act of absolute insanity"²⁶. But then he explained why they decided to use Patwa: "Humanity came out in an honest and real way. That is why it is all so powerful"²⁷. This was also Perry Henzell's goal, to write a purely Jamaican story. If people in Jamaica speak in Patwa, it would have been wrong to make the characters speak in English. It would not have mirrored the country. And language was one of the most important elements for the audience to identify in the story. As Keith Warner noticed:

The Harder They Come was shot uncompromisingly in Jamaican Creole, the language of Kingston's streets. 'This gave the actors tremendous self-confidence and power, by releasing energies which might otherwise have been consumed in self-consciousness about speech and accent, for the business of pure acting'. The concession to ears unfamiliar with the Creole was to use subtitles.²⁸

However, the film's characters do not speak only Jamaican. The main characters are seven: Ivan, who is the protagonist, José, Pedro, Elsa, and the Preacher, the policeman, and the music producer.

²⁵ Such as, for instance, the unavoidable insertion of subtitles in co-produced films such as *Rude Boy*.

²⁶ Trevor Rhone, in conversation with me, November 16, 2007. However, the use of Jamaican Patwa was not a novelty in Jamaican culture. It had been used for quite a long time in poetry, starting with Louise Bennett, for instance, and Trevor Rhone himself had written theatrical plays in Jamaican before being involved in the writing of *The Harder They Come*. Maybe this, and the fact that Rhone was very popular in Jamaica at that time as a writer, led Perry Henzell to ask his help for the film's script, so that the language would be at the same time apt for the stage and reflecting the people's idiom.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.80.

They can be divided into two groups, that is the people of the ghetto, and the people of the establishment. Ivan, his girlfriend Elsa, his friend Pedro and José belong to the ghetto. They are poor characters, working hard in the ganja trade just to make a living. They all speak Jamaican. On the other side, there are the people who have power, conferred on them by their social position and their money. These people are the Preacher, representing the Church, the policeman, representing the armed forces and the government, and the producer, representing the music business. They speak Standard English. They have a Jamaican accent, which was inevitable since they are all native Jamaicans, but they speak Standard English, or what Kenneth Ramchand would call West Indian Standard.

The Harder They Come set the trend; the following films followed its example, and went further in experimenting with language. The first in time was *Smile Orange*. Presenting the situation of a hotel in Montego bay, frequented by tourists, the director had to use more than one language, in order to be realistic. The customers, being generally English, North Americans and Canadians, all speak in Standard English, with their own natural accents. This will be important in the story, because the waiters have to recognize the inflections to be able to choose the clients to fool. This is why Ringo, the protagonist, tries to teach the busboy to distinguish the various intonations: imitating (and exaggerating) Americans and Canadians.

As regards the waiters, they all speak Jamaican. But they do it when they are talking to each other, since with the tourists they speak in Standard English. They do so in order to be understood by the clients, and to show off with the assistant manager, their boss.

The assistant manager uses Standard English, and he tries to mimic an American accent. He also tries to adopt an American attitude, and this is the reason why he is constantly mocked by the people working for him. The waiters parody him and his false intonation, because they know that it is not natural, that it is something pretended just to feel superior than the Patwa-speaker (and working-class) waiters, and at the same level of the customers. So what makes him feel superior is the very same thing that makes him being duped by everyone.

Some of the hotel clients, on the other hand, speak a language that retains something of the colonial terms used during slavery and colonization. They may not be fully aware of it, as is any person who has always lived in colonizer and racist countries, but some words that are considered neutral in their country preserve instead an aura of ancient domination slang²⁹. These words may seem

²⁹ For instance, instead of calling the waiters “boy”, as would have happened under colonialism, they call them “Mac” or “fellow”. If one checks for the word “Mac” in a dictionary, he/she will find more or less the same definition: the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* on-line (www.merriam-webster.com/) states that it is “used informally to address a man whose name is not know”; in *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, edited by R.W. Burchfield, Volume II·H·N, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987, p.773, it is said that it is “also a familiar form of address used to any stranger”; and in *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, On Historical Principles*, edited by Lesley Brown, Volume 1·A·M,

unbiased, but they bear a prejudice. In using them, the customers show that they still feel superior to these working people, even if they would never admit it, even if they would never believe it.

Finally, an interesting “talking” character in *Smile Orange* is that of Cyril, the busboy. He is affected by sigmatism, a pronunciation problem that causes an inability to pronounce the letter “s” as [s]. Instead, he articulates it as [θ]. For instance, when he says “Yes, sir”, he pronounces “Yeth, thir”. This creates funny situations in the kitchen, but at the same time it creates problems for him too, since Ringo tells him “You’re going to be in plenty troubles if people cannot hear what you say, you know”. And he is not only referring to his job as a waiter, but more importantly to what he needs to do with the ladies on holiday in order to get some extra money.

Because of all these different languages, *Smile Orange* can be viewed as a “comedy of accents”, where the way one person speaks defines what kind of person he/she is.

Language characterizes people’s identity in *Countryman* too. In this film, the only two personalities talking in Jamaican are the protagonist Countryman and the Obeahman. Countryman at times uses also Rasta talk³⁰, but he mainly communicates in Patwa. Every other character speaks in Standard English.

First of all, there is the army. As English is Jamaica’s official language, the army has to use English. This is true especially for the higher ranks, as common soldiers probably talk in Patwa, at least among each others. In this film, however, we are shown a Captain and a Colonel, so they both use English. Captain Benchley even affects a slight American accent. Linked to the Colonel, and representing the government, the politician who appears for a few moments obviously speaks English.

The other characters in the film are American, so they use their speech. As in *Smile Orange*, they talk in American, i.e. Standard English with a different intonation. What is interesting to note is that while Beau and Bobby have no difficulties in understanding Countryman, even though they are not used to Jamaican, Beau’s father does not grasp a single word uttered by the Ras when he meets him. The encounter takes place on the father’s boat, when Countryman wants to tell him what to do to rescue his daughter and her boyfriend. Countryman starts to tell him to go to a certain place at a

Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993, p.1654, it is defined as a noun “used as a familiar form of address to a (male) stranger. *Colloq.* (chiefly *N.Amer.*) M20”. The word “fellow” has more meanings. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* on-line gives these definitions: “4a. *obsolete*: a person of one of the lower social classes. b. *archaic*: a worthless man or boy”. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume IV·F-G, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978, p.144, offers a similar explanation: “10 †a. used as the customary title of address to a servant or other person of humble station. *Obs.* †b. One of the common people. *Obs.* c. *contemptuously*. A person of no esteem or worth”. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, p.931, gives another acceptation to the word: “9.*obsolete* a. (used as a form of address to) a servant or another person of low station. LME-L16. b. a despised person LME. *Obsolete* c. A Black. *US* M18-M19”. This latter link with coloured people is proposed again in *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume I·A-G, p.1049: “†10. d. A Negro. *US Obs*”. As it appears quite clearly, these words are but a mere replacement of older ones, which were just more explicitly racist.

³⁰ For a description of Rasta talk, see this chapter, p.44.

certain moment, but the father does not understand. In a gesture that discloses his racist and patronizing attitude, he calls the boat's captain to translate Jamaican, saying: "Larry, bring me a hap here, I can't understand what this bumbo jumbo bullshit is all about." In a single sentence, he is able to convey the old thought that a language that is not Standard English must be inferior to it, and that it is not his problem if he does not understand it; people speaking that language should learn "real" English. In this scene, the boat's captain acts as an interpreter: he knows both Standard English and Jamaican, so he can talk with Countryman and later tell Beau's father what he has to do.

In *Countryman*, the most used language is English, with some different intonations. Jamaican, though spoken by the protagonist, becomes the language of a minority. This is probably due to the fact that this film was originally thought for a foreign audience too, so the use of a Standard language would have facilitated the distribution and the understanding by a wider public.

The next Jamaican film to use "mixed languages" was *One Love* in 2005. The clash between Rastafari and the Church becomes evident thanks also to the language, as Rastas speak Patwa and the Church speaks English. The Pastor, his children and the congregation all use Standard English. However, there are exceptions. When a member of the congregation gets angry, she tries to insult a Rasta, and the language she uses is Jamaican. This demonstrates that at home these people probably talk in Patwa, and they reserve English for the Church. Anyhow, as any Jamaican is, they are perfectly bilingual, and they can choose in every moment what language they prefer to use. The use of English or of Jamaican depends on the situation, the place and the meaning they have to convey. Aaron, the Pastor's daughter's fiancé, uses English only when he talks with the Pastor. With Serena and any other person, he talks in Jamaican. The film shows that he has not always been a good Christian, and that he does not come from what are seen as "good neighbourhoods". This should partly explain the fact that he knows Jamaican so well. The Church, or some members of it, as well as many poorly learned people, associate English with education, and education cannot be afforded by poor people living in poor areas.

Every other character in the film speaks Jamaican: the music producer, his entourage, and the Rasta community. Bobo, one of the Rastas, adopts a language made of biblical overtones, typical of some Rastafari. He says, for instance, to a man protecting the producer who has just stolen his song: "You house slave, you rob I music, and come check the I with Babylonian justice? Fire 'pon you, bwai, fire! Babylonian blood and thunder!"³¹ The apocalyptic tone of the sentence is useful to give it more strength; it renders it more powerful. Bobo, moreover, is characterized by articulating very clearly every word he says, making his dialogue sound even more authoritative.

³¹ My transcription.

In *Glory to Gloriana*, there are no conflicts, and no foreign interpreters, but nonetheless some characters oddly speak in Standard English. It is strange because almost everyone uses Jamaican, except Milton Minto when he tries to seduce Gloria, but in this case it is justified exactly by the fact that he wants to appear attractive to her. His use of English is aimed at having sex with Gloria, and it succeeds in doing it. The people talking in English are Gloria and her parents when she is a young girl. The parents have a strong Jamaican accent, and many times slip in the usage of Patwa. If this could be acceptable, it does not explain why Gloria, who speaks English as a child, forgets it and uses only Patwa when she grows up. It seems to me to be a little inconsistent, as she talks in Patwa even when she gives a great party to celebrate her becoming the owner of a luxurious hotel. Unfortunately, in my opinion, this is not the only incoherence of the film, and maybe it is the most acceptable one.

The other three “multilingual” films are *Klash*, *Rude Boy*, and *Gangsta’s Paradise*, and this fact is easily explained by the fact that they are co-productions.

Klash respects the island’s language more than the other two films do. All the Jamaican characters speak Patwa, included the police. The only one talking in English is the American protagonist, who speaks his own natural language. However, considering that this is a predominantly USA film, it has a high regard for the language that is spoken by the majority of the people in Jamaica. The only failure is the American woman protagonist pretending to speak Jamaican – and not very well, for that matter.

Rude Boy and *Gangsta’s Paradise* follow the same pattern. What appears immediately different from the other films is the great amount of rude words, both in English and in Jamaican. Then, they are characterized by the Jamaicans talking in Patwa and the Americans talking in American. Which could seem quite natural at first sight. What is less understandable is the unavoidable insertion of subtitles, but only for the Jamaican characters. This is an American production, and probably the target audience was not only Jamaican, but mainly American. Consequently, the subtitles were probably introduced to facilitate the understanding of Patwa by a non-Jamaican public. But this was not the only solution available. Thanks to the opportunities given by the DVD format, the subtitles might have been left as optional, so that the viewers could have chosen if they wanted to add them or not. Quite the opposite, the way the film was distributed meant that everyone has to watch the film with the subtitles, even the Jamaican audience who is Patwa native-speaker. Moreover, sometimes the subtitles are not as accurate as they should, making some mistakes in the translation, as happens in *Rude Boy*. And sometimes they are inserted even when what the character says is very clear, not only for a Jamaican audience, but also for a non Patwa speaker. As a matter of fact, every time a Jamaican is talking, subtitles are placed in the film, because the production took it for

granted that Jamaican is unintelligible by non-Jamaicans. This is a false assumption, but a very common one. It mirrors the prejudice that society has toward Jamaicans in general, and it forces whosoever watches these films to have the subtitles incorporated in the screening.

2.3.1 SUBTITLES.

Subtitles are used to facilitate communication between different language-speakers. They are simply a translation of discourse from a language that is not the same one as the language spoken in the country viewing the film. The main function of subtitles is

The transmission of dialogue. Although subtitles – in which the translation of dialogue appears at the bottom of the screen – are common in international films shown in the United States, they are also used in American films in which there are scenes that require the characters to speak in a language other than English. For such scenes, filmmakers now prefer to have the actors use the characters' native tongue rather than simulate an accent that suggests their nationality – which was the case until about 1970.³²

However, in a postcolonial context, subtitling is never unproblematic. It could be compared to the act of glossing in a written text. First of all, subtitles and glossing causes a “distraction” from the object of attention. In a novel, the reader has to stop to check the meaning of a word in the glossary. In a film, the viewer has to lose something of the scene to read the caption at the bottom of the screen.

The problem with glossing in the cross-cultural text is that, at its worst, it may lead to a considerably stilted movement of plot as the story is forced to drag an explanatory machine behind it.³³

Moreover, subtitling has also political significance. The choice of translating a language in order to facilitate communication with a similar language means to underestimate the former and to give more value to the latter.

The choice of leaving words untranslated in post-colonial texts is a political act, because while translation is not inadmissible in itself, glossing gives the translated word, and thus the ‘receptor’ culture, the higher status.³⁴

It is true that Jamaican is not English, but nonetheless it is an English-based language. If it is true that some sentences can be difficult to understand for an English-speaking non-Jamaican audience, it does not mean that every word is incomprehensible. The choice of translating every sentence is influenced by dominant cinema, which imposes Standard American/English as the only cinematic language, and by the residues of colonization, when English was the only language accepted for

³² Bernard F. Dick, *Anatomy of Film, Fifth Edition*, Boston and New York, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005, p.33.

³³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Op. Cit.*, p.61.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p.65.

communication. It shows the prejudice that still views any language not considered Standard as inferior to those considered Standard, or in any case not able to fulfil the task of communication that every language actually does.

What Bernard Dick says about avoiding accents to identify a character's nationality is not true for *Gangsta's Paradise*. This film presents some Italian Mafiosi, who talk in Standard English but with a strong Italian (presumably Sicilian) accent. These characters add some Italian words to their conversation, especially regarding food. However, it is not very clear why these people are talking in this way. If in the story they were all Italians (that is born and raised in Italy), they would not speak in English to each other, but simply in Italian (with the insertion of subtitles for everything they said, for the English-speaking audience). On the other hand, if they are Italian-American (that is born and raised in the United States, but of Italian origins), it is not clear why they have an Italian accent and use some Italian words. Generally, only the first generation of immigrants maintains the native language and an accent when they use what for them becomes a second language. The second generation speaks perfectly its birthplace's tongue, and with the passing of generations, the language of the first immigrants gets lost. In the United States, the children of Italian forefathers generally do not know Italian, but for some words. They generally speak American, without any accent to clarify their distant origins. So there is no plausible realistic reason to allow these characters to talk in this caricatured way. They do it to make it clear to the English-speaking audience that they are Mafiosi (thus Italians). But it was already clear, because of their names and businesses, who they are meant to represent. This marks just another prejudice, another stereotype, this time about Mafia and Italy.

A last thing has to be noted about accents. While in *Rude Boy Julius*, the Jamaican protagonist, is made to talk mainly in Standard English, in *Gangsta's Paradise* the character played by Ninja Man at a certain point hides his Jamaican intonation. He is in Los Angeles to get rid of some people, and to fool a bodyguard he pretends he has an English accent. He is allowed to get in the house because he has not been identified as a Jamaican (therefore gangster), but as a respectable Englishman (therefore businessman).

There is only one Jamaican film in which all the characters speak Standard English, and this is *Children of Babylon*. Penny and Rick are both rich. She is white, he is very light-skinned. Luke is dark-skinned and Rasta, and he has a Jamaican intonation. His wife Dorcas pretends to be mute with everyone, but actually she is not. When she is alone in the house, she tries the rich ladies' clothes, and she mimics them, talking perfectly in English.

But Standard English is not the norm in Jamaican cinema. *The Harder They Come* showed the way, and some films, like *Rockers*, went even farther in experimenting. The only character speaking American here is Honeyball, while Marshall, the boss of the hotel and of the thieves, tries to acquire an American accent for his English, but most of the time keeps his Jamaican intonation. Every other character, including Sunshine, Marshall's daughter, so rich and educated, uses Patwa. However, the director did not limit the film to this. Being a praise of Rastafari in all its aspects, he decided to allow the Rasta characters to use Rasta talk.

2.3.2 RASTA TALK³⁵.

Rastafari live differently than other Jamaicans. They have a diverse lifestyle and different beliefs. They eat only natural foods, and they rebel to the evil coming from Babylon³⁶. Since English is the language imposed by colonization, and conveys the value of the empire, Rastafari rejected it since their birth. They created another language, with which they could identify, and which could be appropriated for their religion and life philosophy. It was an act of rebellion, of subversion of the colonial language.

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 the 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. [...] Once the 'I' has been liberated from its English function in this fashion, it is 'available' for use in other grammatical positions where it and its homonym 'high', can continually recall for the Rasta his/her own personhood and its value in constant association with Jah (the Rastafarian term for Godhead).³⁷

³⁵For a description of Rastafari beliefs and lifestyle, see Chapter 5, p.143-154.

³⁶For a definition of Babylon in Rasta terms, see Introduction, p.12.

³⁷Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Op. Cit.*, pp.47-48.

Rasta talk is used to counteract the values imbued in the English language. It formed itself in the early stages of the Rasta movement, when the adepts started to use distinctive signs to differentiate from the rest of the population. They started to wear locks, to use red, green and gold as representative colours, and to talk “Rasta”.

This second stage of development also included the elaboration of Rasta talk or “I-talk”, a distinctive form of speech that emerged through the brethren’s “witnessing” or “reasonings”. [...] Rasta talk has its roots in old English forms found in the Bible but may also have been drawn from an African-derived dialect, archaic in Jamaican speech. The speech was traced originally to a handful of young Dreadlocks who first came together at Paradise Street in Kingston and later established a camp at Wareika Hill.³⁸

In his comprehensive book about Rastas’ beliefs and lives, Yasus Afari gives an explanation of why Rastafari had to change their language:

Ideally, language is a sacred expression of the spirit-soul. Language evolved out of an experience, therefore the natural, creative language in which we think, speak, act and express ourselves, is our collective breath of life that conditions and dictates our social existence. Once you are part of a unique experience, you must evolve a unique language that will record, articulate, celebrate, communicate, express, preserve, influence and be influenced by that unique experience.³⁹

Rasta talk generates from Jamaican. Before it, the Rastas used Jamaican; then, they modified it to create something new.

The Jamaican experience which is intrinsically linked to the Jamaican language, created the cultural framework within which RASTAFARIANS evolved. In like manner, the Jamaican language fostered the birth, growth and development of the RASTAFARIAN lexicon or RASTA Talk, which is often referred to as the “I and I” language. Consistent with the RASTAFARIAN philosophy of one love, self, family, inity (unity), oneness and humanity, the I and I language reflects the RASTAFARIAN concept of one-in-all and all-in-one; the one-for-all and the all-for-one. The Rasta Talk integrates with and takes Patwah, the Jamaican language, to the next level.⁴⁰

Basically, Rasta talk tries to abolish the differences and to overcome the distances between people.

In essence, the concept of “I and I” incorporates The Universal (Iniversal) I and all the other I’s (all others) that revolve around it – I and I. [...]

The I & I language attempts to project true, precise and picturesque mental images in thoughts, words and deeds.⁴¹

³⁸ Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean – An Introduction from Vodou and Santeria to Obeah and Espiritismo*, New York and London, New York University Press, 2003, p.160.

³⁹ Yasus Afari, *Op. Cit.*, p.113.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p.114.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp.114-115.

Rasta talk has a precise goal:

The imaginative use of the I & I language serves to re-mould, re-shape and re-direct the perception of both the Jamaican and the English language and by the same process revolutionize and re-calibrate the mentality and psyche, within the sphere of influence of Jamaica.⁴²

More importantly, Rasta talk is useful in deconstructing the colonial mentality, in helping the people to emancipate from mental slavery:

The audio-visual harmony (and synchrony) existing in the relationship between the sight and sound, the spelling and pronunciation of words in the RASTAFARI lexicon, allows for greater precision and efficiency in language communication and perception. Simply put, the words look like (how) they sound and sound like (how) they look. [...] The prevailing psychology of the “RASTAFARIAN language” is guilty of, and responsible for, a subtle and subliminal linguistic fine-tuning that functions in tandem with a more deliberate and conscious doctoring of the English language, and the Jamaican patwah. This amounts to a dubbing in of positive ideas, values and concepts into the culture via the language, and a corresponding dubbing out of negative ideas, values and concepts. The result is that many English and Jamaican words receive new and specialized meanings. In fact, this speaks to a deliberate mandate by RASTAFARIANS, to de-construct the colonial mentality by using language and language interpretation and re-interpretation.⁴³

Apart from the use of the pronoun I for virtually every pronoun, Rasta talk operates a change in the very words. If a word has something considered negative in its spelling, this negative part is suppressed and replaced by a positive (generally opposed) prefix or suffix. For instance, the verb “appreciate” contains “hate” (appreci-hate), which is a negative value. Rasta talk transforms it into “appreci-love”. It maintains the same meaning, but has a positive vibe. “Understand” contains “under”, which is viewed as negative. This prefix is changed into its opposite, and the word becomes “overstand”. On the contrary, a word like “oppression” is seen as contradictory, because it indicates something evil but contains the prefix “up” (which becomes “op” in Jamaican pronunciation). Rasta talk transforms it into “down-pression”, showing exactly the act of putting pressure on someone to keep him/her down. There are hundreds of examples like these few ones, and they all follow the same pattern of “harmonizing” the word with its meaning.

Ideally, Rastafari try to bring unity to the world, to be able to live in a society where every person has the same rights and where justice is equal for everyone. Language performs this purpose, and tries to help people free their minds:

⁴² *Ibidem*, p.125.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, pp.125-126.

The languages of the colonialists were imposed upon the colonized people in order to control, manipulate and dominate the people's minds, thoughts, mentality, actions and their entire life. Evidently, this served to bridle the natural indigenous tongue of the people, so as to subdue them under the colonial yoke of downpression.

Obviously [...] language was and still is being used as a means of socio-political control and shackling of the minds. It is equally obvious therefore, that the RASTAFARIAN language is and will be used to uplift, liberate and free the mind of the people, by dismantling the colonial mentality that the colonial language(s) impose(s) upon it.⁴⁴

Rasta talk thus serves many purposes: to create harmony between sign and meaning, to transmit to the people the positive vibes of this life philosophy, and at the same time to show them the oppression still present in the imposed languages and to allow them to free themselves from it. A film like *Rockers*, in which the director decided to stage this kind of language, aims to promote this kind of thoughts. The only problem is that non-Rasta audiences will have great difficulties in understanding it. The subtitles are necessary, since the actors speak so quickly that even if one is acquainted with I&I talk, it will be complicated to grasp the meaning of every sentence. Nonetheless, the experiment with language was successful, since this film wanted to be a tribute to Rastafari, and it showed these people in all their aspects, included language.

The last four Jamaican films present only one language: Patwa. But they do it in different ways. Both *Dancehall Queen* and *Third World Cop* are purely Jamaican. Every character uses Patwa, with no distinction of status, colour, or wealth. The only idiom heard in these films is Jamaican. This is true also for *The Lunatic* and *Shottas*, but these two present some peculiarities.

The Lunatic portrays Aloysius, an uneducated mad man who talks with trees and animals. The very first scene shows him in a primary school, outside of a classroom, listening to a vocabulary lesson, where the teacher is trying to explain to the students the meaning of difficult English words. This is how Aloysius composes his name: he puts together the words he hears and likes most. Thus, when he introduces himself, his name becomes

Aloysius Idiomatic Gossamer Impracticable Longshoreman Technocracy Predominate Involuted
Enraptured Parliamentarian Patriarch Verdure Emulative Perihelion Dichotomy Intellectual
Chaste Iron-Curtain Linkage Colonialistic Dilapidated

Every time he hears a new word that he likes, he adds it to Aloysius, making his name longer. For instance, when he talks with a tree, and he hears the word "photosynthesis", he becomes for a few minutes, because the tree does not want him to add another name, Aloysius Photosynthesis Idiomatic Gossamer etc.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p.126.

But Aloysius is not the only character using words in unconventional ways. Inga, his German lover, screams the word “O-Isopropoxyphenyl” whenever she has an orgasm. When Aloysius asks her what it means, she gives him the not really romantic explanation that it is “cockroach poison”.

Aloysius, the trees, the animals, and Service, the butcher who will complete the *ménage à trois* with Aloysius and Inga, all speak Jamaican. English is spoken by the upper classes in general: members of the Church, members of the army, and the rich people, represented by Busha and his wife Sarah. They generally talk in English, but they have a heavy Jamaican accent, and many times they slip into Patwa expressions, especially Busha when he talks with people that he considers “inferior” to him, that is less rich, such as Aloysius. Barrister Linstrom, on the other hand, uses a perfect Standard English.

Widow Dawkins, who appears as a character only at the end of the film, is a rich lady, and she uses English too. She decides to read for Aloysius who cannot do it by himself the letters that Inga writes to him from Europe. At the same time, however, she assumes also the role of censor, since she does not read, calling them “nastiness” and “filthiness”, the parts of the letters where Inga writes about sex or uses rude words. The widow chooses what to read and what to cut.

Inga’s English is perfect, but she speaks with a natural and very strong German accent. In this way, the “w’s” [w] are pronounced as if they were “v’s” [v], and the “th” [θ] is pronounced [d], so that “What is that?” becomes “Vat is dat?” [Vat iz dæt]. The “th” [θ], on the other hand, is pronounced either [s] or [z], so that “this” [θis] becomes [zis]. Moreover, her letter “r” is harder than the English one, it is heard in the words. She never changes her accent during the film. She cannot; she is a German native-speaker. On the other hand, Aloysius’ accent changes. The more he spends time with Inga, the more he is influenced by her. He keeps his natural Jamaican intonation, but sometimes he pronounces some words as she does, without always being aware of it.

When she meets him, Inga is taking photographs of Aloysius’ “hood”, that is, as he explains, “the Jamaican name for a man’s private part”. When she hears this, Inga tells Aloysius that she wants to learn “Jamaican dialect”. However, what she learns are almost exclusively rude words. This is another characteristic of the film: a large use of bad words, the more frequently used being “pumpum”⁴⁵ and “bomboclaat”⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ The *Dictionary of Jamaican English* gives this definition of the word: “to become or to be tumid, turgid, distended. Something large and round, seeming swollen”; while the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* says that it is “the female genitals”. The word is probably of African origin, and in the common usage it indicates the female genitals. See F.G. Cassidy and R.B. LePage, *Dictionary of Jamaican English, Second Edition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, and Richard Allsopp ed., *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.

⁴⁶ The *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* gives the following definition: “bombo-clot(h) – (bombo-clate/-klaat), noun, [...]vulgar// Blood-clot(h) [...] [<bombo ‘the female pudenda’ (Jmca, Tbgo), prob of Afr origin. Cp GDEL Efik *mbumbu* adj ‘rotten, putrified, decomposed’ (i.e. evil smelling)]. Associated only with obscene lang.” The *Dictionary of Jamaican English* gives this definition: “*bumbo/bombo, bombo/* sb dial vulg, prob of multiple derivation. Cf. Partridge,

Pum-pum is the “Jamaican name for a woman’s private part”, and it becomes very important in the story. In the trio, Inga is the person in charge, and she chooses with whom to have sex. Aloysius and Service have no rights, she decides everything. When they try to change the arrangements, she replies that she is the boss, because she is the only one among them to have the pum-pum. So, the regulator of their relationship becomes the “pum-pum rule”, creating scandal in the village because they are so explicit and unashamed in living a different kind of life.

When she first hears the word “bomboclaat”, Inga asks Aloysius what it means, but he only tells her that it is “a bad word, a very bad word”, and that she should not use it. Of course, this is enough for her to learn the word immediately, and to use it in inappropriate contexts. For instance, when they arrive in a bar and a man tells her that she should not travel with Aloysius because he is mad, she replies that she is mad too, and after a while she starts to scream “bumbo”, causing the bartender to throw them both out of the bar. And during the trial, when she is asked to explain why they tried to kill Busha, she implicitly accuses her father of not loving her, and then, as if she were becoming mad, she screams again the same word to the Court, causing once again scandal in the public to the trial and her being thrown out of the law-court. It must be said that the word bomboclaat is frequently used in Jamaica, it is a common oath. It would not cause so much trouble if it were not said by a white woman, who does not really know the meaning of it. In another context, the word would not assume the importance it has in this film. It is precisely in this context that it gains importance, only in this film. In others, especially gangsters’ stories, such as *Shottas*, the same word is used many more times, but it has not the same relevance, it goes almost unnoticed. In *The Lunatic* the director wanted to give prominence to this word, he wanted to give it a meaning, not literal but metaphorical. And he achieved it by making Inga scream it in the wrong contexts.

The last film employing only Jamaican is *Shottas*. Here the only person talking in English is the corrupted Jamaican politician. Every other character, even if they are in Miami, talk in Patwa. One peculiarity can be found at the beginning of the film, when we see the protagonists when they are still kids. These two young boys use Jamaican, but one of them has an American accent. This is a bit funny, because the contrary should happen: he should speak perfect Patwa when he is young, and with a slight American accent after having spent twenty years in Miami. However, this is easily explained by the fact that the kid is the son of the director, and he was born and grown in Miami. He

‘*Bumbo*, occ. *Bombo*. The female pudend. Mid-C 18-19, West Indian; orig a negroes’ word. Grose 1st ed.’ Cf also 1889 Barrère *D. of Slang*, etc. African origin is also claimed in the earliest quot. (1774), and cf. Zulu –*bumbu*, pubic region. However, there has prob been concurrent infl of Engl *bum* and perh also Amer Sp *bombo*, both meaning the buttocks, rump.” The same dictionary then gives another definition: “sanitary towel”. See F.G. Cassidy and R.B. LePage, *Ibidem*, and R. Allsopp, *Ibidem*. Apart from the actual meaning of the word, this imprecation is very often used by Jamaicans. It has somehow lost its meaning to become just a rude word. It is probably the most used curse in Jamaica today.

knows Jamaican because of his Jamaican parents, but he has never lived in Jamaica. He has learned American, for him Jamaican is only a second language.

A few characteristics are noteworthy in this film. First of all, Mad Max seldom says a word. This in a way justifies his surname “mad”, if his behaviour would not be enough. He only says at the end of the film that what they did to Wayne is crazy. For the rest of the time, he communicates only through glances and smiles.

As in *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta's Paradise*, the subtitles are unavoidable. In this film, moreover, the United States are always identified with the word “foreign”. While it is true that in Jamaica “to go a foreign” means to go abroad, it does not only mean to go to the States. It means “to another country” in general, maybe more specifically where there are strong Jamaican communities, such as the United States, but also Canada and England. In *Shottas*, however, the United States are almost never mentioned; they are always acknowledged simply as “foreign”.

A last note regards translation. *Shottas* is one of the few, if not the only, Jamaican films that have been translated into Italian. While the overall rendering follows quite faithfully the original script, one word in translation assumes a different meaning. The protagonists, Wayne and Biggs, are both “deportees”, that is Jamaican citizens who migrated to the United States, were there put in prison, and finally sent back to the island. The Italian translation calls them “profughi”, that is “refugees”. The meaning slightly changes, as refugees are not necessarily linked to legal problems. Moreover, in Italian this word has acquired a negative connotation. So the translation alters the way the audience sees the protagonists. Yet, when one watches the film in its original language, the only tongue heard is Jamaican.

2.4 CONCLUSIONS: EVERY LANGUAGE HAS A MEANING.

When they decide to make a film, directors have to plan everything: the set, the lights, the soundtrack, the editing, etc. Language is among these decisions to be planned. In a post-colonial context, language is a choice. This is the reason why Jamaican films range from Standard English to Patwa, to both.

These opportunities were first given to writers, who have a great choice of linguistic variance where to find the most appropriate language to convey what they want to say. This is true especially in the Caribbean, where writers can adopt English, Jamaican, or various degrees of Patwa.

Since it is a continuum the writer will usually have access to a broad spectrum of the linguistic culture, and must negotiate a series of decisions concerning its adequate representation in writing.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Op. Cit.*, p.45.

The same is true for filmmakers. They can choose which language to use in order to best render what they want to communicate. This is why there is so much difference among the films.

Directors who decide to use only Jamaican see it as the only natural way to represent their country. Since language is part of the formation of an identity, every society will be identified with its own language. It is what happens everywhere: Italians make films in Italian, French in French, and so on. So Jamaicans make films in Jamaican. It could seem more complicated because the island is somehow bilingual, but Patwa is spoken by everyone, even by those people who are perfectly able to speak Standard West Indian or English. Even if the official language is English, Jamaicans use Patwa. A director who wants to represent Jamaican society will use Patwa. The choice of these directors is in some way mature, since they do not see language as a problem, they just put on the screen the language used by the great majority of the people. This is what happens for instance in *Dancehall Queen*, *Third World Cop* and *Shottas*.

On the other hand, to stage more than one language means to represent several levels of society, and to propound the problem of the language. This is not seen as something uncomplicated and easy. Many films use the difference between Standard and Patwa to provide a hierarchy. Generally, if they are not American, the characters speaking English are light skinned and rich. The same feature was used in literature:

Some of the clearer examples of switching between codes occurs in texts which directly transcribe pidgin and Creole forms. The most significant feature of their use in the literature is that they become a common mode of discourse between classes. But class in the post-colonial context is a category occasioned by more than an economic structure; it is a discourse traversed by potent racial and cultural signifiers.[...] Education, class status, and an ability to speak 'Standard English' will usually be synonymous.⁴⁸

Jamaican films reproduce this same feature. In *The Harder They Come*, for instance, the characters talking in Standard English are rich (a Preacher, a music producer and a corrupted policeman) and not coincidentally they are also light skinned. The music producer shows also some probable ancient Indian origins. On the contrary, all the people who use Patwa live in the ghetto, their skin is darker and they have to work hard to make a living.

The same pattern is followed in *Countryman* and *One Love*, where English is spoken by the army, politicians, and the people of the Church, that is people who are richer and more powerful than the average population. Sometimes rich people speak Patwa too, as does the music producer in *One Love*, but generally people who have money, and thus can afford education, try to demonstrate to be better than the rest of the country by using English instead of the island's language, seen as something unsophisticated.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, pp.74-76.

However, the characters who are proud to be Jamaican and do not aspire to become more “American” do not like this attitude. In *Smile Orange* the assistant manager, who poses as an American and pretends he has an American accent is mocked by everyone. Not only do the people working for him parody him pitilessly, they also fool him whenever they can. Ringo is specialized in this: he always manages to get some money or some other favour from him. But he is not the only one: the receptionist barely listens to him and keeps talking about her problems on the phone with a friend; the customers complain with him for every little displeasure; and even his wife cheats on him with the gardener. In this film the characters demonstrate that Jamaican is as good as anything else, and that if one is Jamaican, he/she should behave and talk as a Jamaican.

Usually, when there is more than one language spoken in a Jamaican film, what comes out in the end is that Jamaican is more valuable than the other language. It is the language spoken by the great majority of the people, and every person on the island understands it. The characters talking in Patwa are always made to overcome the difficulties, solve the situation, acquire what they have been fighting for, and so on. As in all “Patwa films”, the directors show that this is the island’s language. So that in the end, Jamaican films value Jamaican language as representative of the people, as the official language with which to identify the country.

It is slightly different in co-productions that use subtitles. Though the language used is Jamaican, it is translated for the non-Jamaican audience. These subtitles give predominance to English, and to English-speaking countries. Moreover, and it is especially true for *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta’s Paradise*, they imply a vague prejudice against Jamaicans and their language. Probably this is due to the many stereotypes that circulate abroad about Jamaica, but it is not an excuse for these films to show them once more to the wide public.

Yet this is a problem only of these two co-productions. The other Jamaican films use Jamaican without any problem, showing that it is the language of the country, and demonstrating, if necessary, that it is as valuable as any other language. Moreover, they give audiences the opportunity to hear this tongue which is so much influenced by music. The choice of using Jamaican to represent Jamaicans is the only possible one for a director who intends to create a faithful portrayal of this country and its inhabitants.

3. “PLAY I SOME MUSIC. DIS A REGGAE MUSIC”*: JAMAICAN MUSIC IN JAMAICAN FILMS.

In Jamaican films there is a strong and indissoluble relationship between film and music. There can be various explanations for this phenomenon. First of all, many, if not all, of the Jamaican directors started their careers as music video makers, and they still work in that field. Moreover, music in Jamaica is fundamental for every aspect of life. There is a long and important music tradition on the island. It is used for countless reasons, it has various genres, and it is part of everyday life.

Long before Jamaica had a recording industry, music played a vital role in the lives of its people – particularly the impoverished majority. Strong and varied traditions were maintained from one generation to the next, ensuring suitable musical accompaniments for funerals, religious occasions, work and social events of almost every kind.¹

It was impossible that filmmakers would not use it consciously in their soundtracks. In many instances, the soundtrack is chosen expressly to emphasize the story, to underline the message of the film, or to have a meaning on its own. In any case, the soundtrack is always carefully chosen, and never put in the film by chance.

Since the directors are Jamaican, and the films are Jamaican, the musical genre preferred for the soundtracks is the Jamaican music *par excellence*: reggae. It is not the only one, for example *Dancehall Queen* obviously scores dancehall music. But dancehall can be seen as a development of reggae, a kind of offspring, so that the main concept does not change. Reggae is a reflection of Jamaican society, and since the films want to be a reflection on Jamaican society, they complete one another. Moreover, many of the films are set in the ghettos, and reggae is a music born in these places, to express the ghetto people’s feelings. In more than one way, films and reggae are two faces of the same coin.

The films reflect the history of Jamaican music, in that they score soundtracks in tune with the changing of times and musical tastes². Since the first Jamaican film was issued in 1972, but was shot some years earlier, that is at the end of the 1960s, it staged the music that was popular at that time. *The Harder They Come* presents ska and rocksteady, mainly. The subsequent films, in chronological order, would score roots reggae (*Rockers* and *Countryman*), dancehall and ragga (*Klash*, *Dancehall Queen* and *Third World Cop*) but also Bobo musicians (*One Love*), and even a mix of Jamaican ragga and US hip-hop (*Shottas*, *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta’s Paradise*)³.

* Verse from the song *Roots, Rock, Reggae*, by Bob Marley and The Wailers, 1976.

¹ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *The Rough Guide to Reggae*, 3rd edition, London, Rough Guides Ltd., 2004, p.4.

² A brief history of Jamaican music is sketched in Appendix 2.

³ See the graphic at the end of Appendix 2: here I trace a line showing the chronology of Jamaican music and the trend in which the films can be inserted.

3.1 MUSIC IN FILMS.

Soundtrack is as old as cinema. The very first films used a live orchestra to comment on the films; in silent movies music was an integral part of the narration. With the advent of sound, soundtrack acquired new meanings and widened its possibilities. As Claudia Gorbman says:

Any attentive filmgoer is aware of the enormous power music holds in shaping the film experience, manipulating emotions and point of view, and guiding perceptions of characters, moods, and narrative events.⁴

In the past, especially in classic Hollywood film, the soundtrack was supposed to remain in the background, not to interfere in the story. It had to be just an accompaniment, not a part of the film. Today, things are not the same anymore, and there are two possible kinds of soundtracks.

Unobtrusiveness is no longer the rule, but rather remains as one among a number of possibilities. Brown [Royal Brown, in a 1994 essay] identifies the first development as ‘postmodern’ scoring. This is a tendency toward prominent and self-conscious use of music, such that the music seems to occupy a ‘parallel universe’ to the film’s visual narrative rather than function illustratively and subordinately in the manner of the classical score. [...] the focused deployment of music for irony and excess, using music to disturb rather than contain the hierarchies of subjectivity, high and low musical culture, and diegetic and non-diegetic narration, has resulted in a genuinely new paradigm of interaction between music and film.

The second development shattering the aesthetic of unobtrusiveness is pop scoring, the use of recorded popular songs on the non-diegetic soundtrack. [...] The stanzaic form of popular song, the presence of lyrics to ‘compete’ with the viewer’s reception of film narrative and dialogue, and the cultural weight and significance of the stars performing the songs all work directly against classical Hollywood’s conception of film music as an ‘inaudible’ accompaniment, relying on the anonymous yet familiar idioms of symphonic Romanticism, its elastic form dictated by the film’s narrative form.⁵

Jamaican directors almost invariably opt for the second kind of soundtrack: the insertion of popular local songs, that are familiar to the Jamaican audience.

To conclude her essay, Claudia Gorbman gives a very clear explanation of the role of music in films:

Film music lulls the spectator into being an untroublesome (less critical, less wary) viewing subject. Music aids the process of turning enunciation into fiction. In doing so, film music helps fend off two potential displeasures which threaten the spectator’s experience. The first is the threat of ambiguity: film music deploys its cultural codes to anchor the image in meaning. Second, film music fends off the potential displeasure of the spectator’s awareness of the technological basis of cinematic discourse – the frame, editing, and so on. [...] music’s bath of

⁴ Claudia Gorbman, *Film Music*, Chapter 5, in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson eds., *Film Studies – Critical Approaches*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.41.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p.43.

affect can smooth over discontinuities and rough spots, and mask the recognition of the apparatus through its own melodic and harmonic continuity. Film music thereby acts as a hypnotist inducing a trance: it focuses and binds the spectator into the narrative world.⁶

For a Jamaican audience, viewing a Jamaican film brings also a pleasure of recognition, since the songs inserted in the films are popular songs, that one can hear every day on the radio, so one can identify the song and appreciate its inclusion in the film.

The soundtrack in a film is not just formed by the music in the background. Every sound present in a film is part of the soundtrack: noise, dialogue, off screen narration, etc. There are various ways of introducing a sound in a film. The first great distinction that is usually made is between diegetic and non-diegetic music, that is music that is part of the story in the first case, and music that is placed in the background and is audible only by the audience in the latter.

Dal punto di vista dello spazio possiamo innanzitutto distinguere il *suono diegetico* da quello *extradiegetico*. [...] con la prima espressione possiamo intendere tutti quei suoni che provengono direttamente dalla diegesi vera e propria del film, come la voce di un personaggio che parla con qualcuno, il rumore del traffico stradale, il suono di una banda musicale che percorre una via cittadina. Al contrario il suono extradiegetico è quel tipo di sonoro che udiamo noi spettatori ma non i personaggi del film, che non si colloca nello spazio della storia narrata bensì in quello della sua narrazione.⁷

Then, another distinction is made between *on screen* sound, that is sound coming from a source visible in the frame, like a radio, or a telephone, and *off screen* sound, that is a sound coming from a source not present in what is shown. This does not mean that off screen sound must always be music: it can be people talking outside of a house, noises of glasses from another room, and so on. Finally, sound can also be divided into *actual* and *commentative*, a definition that is very close to that of on/off screen:

Sound, then, can be **actual** (or natural), in the sense of coming from a real source that we may or may not see. Sometimes there is a face to go with the voice; at other times, the voice is faceless. Thus we do not always have to see a character to be aware of his or her existence. [...]

Sound can also be **commentative**, in that it may come from a source outside the physical setting of the action. Perhaps the most familiar type of commentative sound is background music – the recurring motifs or signature themes that can identify a character [...], a place [...], a physical state [...], or an obsession.⁸

As regards music properly, it can have various functions too. It can participate in the story, or just be an element in the background.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p.45.

⁷ Gianni Rondolino e Dario Tomasi, *Manuale del Film. Linguaggio, Racconto, Analisi*, Torino, Utet Libreria, 1995, p.230.

⁸ Bernard F. Dick, *Op. Cit.*, p.36.

Si possono individuare due grandi modi attraverso cui la musica al cinema si rapporta alle immagini: quelli della *partecipazione* e della *distanza*. Nel primo caso la musica esprime la sua partecipazione all'emozione della scena, assumendone direttamente il ritmo, il tono attraverso codici universalmente riconosciuti come quelli della gioia, della tristezza, della frenesia, del sentimento, ecc. Nel secondo caso, invece, la musica manifesta una sorta di indifferenza nei confronti della situazione rappresentata dalle immagini, sviluppandosi in modo autonomo, in un suo mondo a parte.⁹

Another musical feature, that will be important in such films as *The Harder They Come* and *Third World Cop*, for instance, is the "leitmotiv".

Il *leitmotiv* è un tema melodico ricorrente che caratterizza fatti, momenti o personaggi nel corso di uno spettacolo teatrale o di un film. [...] Inizialmente associati a una situazione visiva ben determinata, questi temi potranno poi essere enunciati autonomamente e riportare così lo spettatore alla situazione che li aveva prodotti in origine. Essi, inoltre, potranno poi subire delle trasformazioni riflettendo così il modificarsi degli atteggiamenti o dei modi di essere dei personaggi a cui sono associati.¹⁰

In Jamaican films all the features exemplified so far are presented and mixed together. Moreover, there are also other characteristics, such as live music in some films, that give Jamaican films their particular flavour, and become essential in the identification of the film as Jamaican. As usual, *The Harder They Come* set the trend and deserves a special attention. The other films can be divided into four groups, very often overlapping: films in which music is the protagonist, a part of the plot; films in which some of the characters are played by singers; films in which the soundtrack has a relevant role, even if it is "unobtrusive"; and finally very few films in which the soundtrack is not important, or remains in the background unobtrusively.

3.2 THE HARDER THEY COME.

One of the features that made *The Harder They Come* into a cult film was surely its wonderful soundtrack. It is generally acknowledged that it helped reggae to be known outside of Jamaica. The soundtrack was distributed at the same time as the film, and in the same year Bob Marley started his international career, with the publication of the album *Catch A Fire* by Island Records. These two elements combined together, and gave the world its first taste of Jamaican music. Curiously enough, though Bob Marley was already popular in Jamaica when Perry Henzell chose the film's soundtrack, his music did not appear in it.

⁹ Gianni Rondolino e Dario Tomasi, *Op. Cit.*, p.255.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp.255-256.

The Harder They Come is a kind of “reggae film”: what at first established its success outside of Jamaica was the soundtrack, the fact that the audience always left the cinema with the songs in their minds. As Stuart Samuels says:

The syncopated beat and driving rhythm of reggae energizes those who see the film. It’s buoyant. It’s energetic. It’s jubilant. It’s sensual. It is raw but not frenetic, driving but not hard, repetitive but not boring, soothing but not sentimental.¹¹

The way Henzell inserted the music in *The Harder They Come* is peculiar of Jamaican films. Indeed, almost every other Jamaican director would follow this precursor’s example, and would try to create the same kind of soundtrack.

In *The Harder They Come*, music is not an addition to the film; it is an integral part of it, of its meaning and of its story.

In the film, the sound signifiers are highly developed and sophisticated in their signification of the plight of the powerless in society. The soundtrack thematizes and actually presents a complex and progressive commentary that the film’s visual language has not mastered. [...] When the lyrics of the sound signification are juxtaposed with Ivan’s struggle and the concrete circumstances of his existence, the result is irony.¹²

Far from being unobtrusive, the soundtrack is a commentary to the film: the songs match the images on the screen and the message transmitted to the audience. Again Stuart Samuels says:

The music sets the stage for the story (as with *Johnny Too Bad*), gives information about the action (as with *Many Rivers to Cross*) and at times plays counterpart to what we see on the screen (as with *Sitting in Limbo*).¹³

When he shot the film, Perry Henzell thought that Jimmy Cliff, the protagonist, would have created the soundtrack. However, when the film was completed, the singer could not or did not want to do it. To solve the problem, Henzell went to his hotel room, and found the music over a week-end, during which he thought of his favourite songs of the period. He inserted them in the soundtrack, and the magic was done: not simply a soundtrack, but an active participation of the music in the film.

Music appears through various shapes in the film: the protagonist is played by a professional singer; the story revolves around his dream to become an acclaimed musician; there are live performances by Jimmy Cliff and The Maytals inserted in the shooting. Moreover, the soundtrack music helps the story to progress and comments on what is shown on the screen. Actually, *The Harder They Come* can be included in three of the categories I chose to define soundtracks in Jamaican films: the

¹¹ Stuart Samuels, *Midnight Movies*, New York, MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1983, p.88.

¹² Gladstone L. Yearwood, *Myth and Signification in Perry Henzell’s The Harder They Come*, in Alvina Ruprecht and Cecilia Taiana eds., *The Reordering of Culture: Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada in the Hood*, Carleton University Press, 1995, pp.448-449.

¹³ Stuart Samuels, *Op. Cit.*, p.88.

protagonist is a singer; music is part of the plot; and the soundtrack has an active role in the economy of the film.

The film's soundtrack is composed only by ten songs¹⁴, of which just four are by Jimmy Cliff. They belong to the ska and rocksteady genres, with some rudeboy songs among them¹⁵: what was popular in Jamaica at that time.

The music is the people's, an integral part of the film, and cannot be watered down for international consumption. [...] Paradoxically, of course, the music did not have to be adulterated, as the international community avidly accepted this new sound, making reggae into one of the most recognizable of Jamaican contributions to the world culture.¹⁶

Throughout the film, these songs are repeated, so that in the whole film we hear them, or bits of them, 22 times. Each song is inserted in the film for a precise reason, and they all add something to the scene they match. Generally they comment on the situations presented on the screen.

The very first song we hear, in the credits sequence (that is the scene where the credits are integrated with the main action) is *You Can Get It If You Really Want*, a song that will become a kind of motto for Ivan. Actually, he arrives in Kingston, not knowing the city, hoping that he will make it as a singer. He is convinced that if you try, you do your best, things will happen to you as you want them to be. He will discover very soon, at his own expense, that it is not so, and that the city can be pitiless with the people who do not know its rules. The song's refrain says "You can get it if you really want, but you must try, try and try, try and try... You'll succeed at last". At the beginning of the story, it is a kind of song of hope. It will become a kind of secondary leitmotiv (the real leitmotiv of the film is *The Harder They Come*) because this song will reappear three times, always at crucial moments of the story. The first time we hear it, this song "provides the viewer with a sense of expectation"¹⁷. We are led to accompany Ivan in his discovery of Kingston, with all his hopes and feelings, thinking with him that if he really wants, he will succeed at last. The audience is prepared, thanks to this song, to a symbolic battle to gain a place in the world.

The second time we hear this song, it assumes an ambiguous meaning. Henzell introduces the audience to the ganja trade. First of all we are shown a marijuana field, and then Ivan and Pedro smuggling ganja. It seems that this can be a second opportunity for Ivan: with this new job, he hopes to be able to make some money, fulfil his dreams, lead a life of luxury and become famous.

¹⁴ The titles of the songs can be found in Appendix 1, pp.341-342. The technical information about the films contain the soundtracks too.

¹⁵ See Appendix 2.

¹⁶ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.80.

¹⁷ George Cragg, *Music and Politics in 'The Harder They Come'*, http://cci.wmin.ac.uk/courseareas/fashion/sem_papers_2002/research_paper/george_cragh_s_p.doc, accessed March 03, 2003.

For a sceptical audience, however, this could seem a kind of instigation to the use of ganja. One of the reasons that provoked criticism to this film in its homeland was the fact that to prissy people it seemed to glamorise crime and the use of ganja. Keith Warner notes about this attitude that

There was some uneasiness over the film's subject matter as opposed to its artistic quality. [...] social considerations at home, and concern for projection of the right image in the eyes of the international community were interfering with the work of the artist.¹⁸

What these people fail to acknowledge is the fact that marijuana, after tourism, is very likely the first source of income for the island, and that the trade gives an opportunity to survive to a great portion of the less privileged class¹⁹. So, in the end, Henzell was just depicting the reality of his country.

On the other hand, this same feature had surely an appeal to European and North American audiences, who, especially in those years, with the Flower Power movement and the discovery of new drugs to widen perceptivity, apart from loving herb very much, could regard this scene as a kind of approval of their life philosophy. However, Henzell was not trying to advertise the product. He was just depicting his society, that part of society that many people, not only in Jamaica, do not want to see.

Finally, we can hear *You Can Get It If You Really Want* for the last time when Ivan, at the apogee of his success and escape, drives a stolen white convertible on a golf course. In this situation the song becomes ironical. On one hand, Ivan has achieved what he was looking for: he tried so hard that now he is popular, his song is always on the radio, he has money. On the other hand, he achieved this "success" through crimes and murders, and it is not meant to last. Moreover, he is alone in his triumph. Ivan got what he wanted, but the price he paid for it is excessively high.



Ivan fulfil his dream: he drives a convertible on a golf course.

Though the film has almost constantly music in the background, it is not always used as a commentary. For instance, *Draw Your Brakes* and *Sweet and Dandy* are heard only once. The latter, furthermore, is inserted because we see The Maytals recording it in Hilton's studio, the first time Ivan enters in the recording studio.

¹⁸ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.77.

¹⁹ See Chapter 9, pp.314-318.



The Maytals performing in *The Harder They Come*.²⁰

It is what K.J. Donnelly calls the “performance mode”, that is “music performed realistically, with the source of the music (the instruments being played) being shown on the screen, or seemingly nearby”²¹. It happens twice in *The Harder They Come*: the first time we see The Maytals, the second we see Jimmy Cliff. The songs The Maytals sing is *Sweet and Dandy*, a cheerful and joyous ska song talking ironically about a shot-gun wedding.

Two examples of “commentary songs” are *Many Rivers to Cross* and *Sitting in Limbo*, both by Cliff. The first is heard at the beginning of the film. Ivan is alone in Kingston, he has no money and no place to live. He wants to find a job, a respectable way to survive, but no one helps him. He is somehow forced to look for food in the garbage dump, already overcrowded with people trying to survive in the same way. Then he unsuccessfully tries to steal some food, and finally he begs some money from a luxurious hotel’s customers. Finding nothing to survive on, he eventually decides to go to the Preacher’s house to ask for help. The song matches the images: we hear that there are “many rivers to cross”, and we see Ivan trying every way to survive. Moreover, the song’s lyrics help to define Ivan’s feelings, and they are a kind of summary and explanation of the scene: “it’s only my will that keeps me alive” and “I merely survive because of my will”. This is exactly what Ivan does in the film.

The same use is made of *Sitting in Limbo*. This song describes Ivan’s situation towards the end of the film. He is wounded and hiding. He is waiting for something to happen, and it will happen very soon indeed: instead of escaping to Cuba as planned, he will be killed by the police after having been accused by Elsa. Yet in this scene, waiting for the ship that is supposed to take him to Cuba, he spends a last day on the beach with Elsa, Pedro and Rupert, the most important people for him, in a kind of last goodbye. The situation is jovial and peaceful, Ivan seems almost happy. Some verses describe Ivan’s feelings, and the refrain is a sort of summary of the situation. Indeed, the song says “sitting here in limbo, but I know it won’t be long”, and then “they’re putting up resistance, but I know that my faith will lead me on”. The refrain, for its part, says “I don’t know where life will lead me, but I know where I’ve been. I can’t say what life will show me, but I know what I’ve seen. Tried

²⁰ Where not differently specified, all the images are taken from the DVDs of the films. For details, see Filmography, p.403.

²¹ K.J. Donnelly, *Pop Music in British Cinema*, London, British Film Institute, 2001, p.239.

my hand at love and friendship, but all that is passed and gone”. It is as if Ivan was drawing conclusions about his life in Kingston.



Ivan, Pedro and Rupert on the beach, for the last goodbye.

Some songs are heard twice during the film. It is the case of *Rivers of Babylon*, by The Melodians, both times inserted diegetically, playing from transistor radios in the frame. The song is a rocksteady adaptation of Psalm 137, so it has a religious meaning. Brent Dowe, leader of the Melodians, says about this song:

When Leslie Kong put “Rivers Of Babylon” out, they ban it from the radio, because I sing “Oh Fari”. And Leslie Kong protest, and it did some good. Because the song started playing again and in two weeks it get to number one. He was very good. He saw things before they happen. So that was really the first song that was recorded in a Christian sort of way over a reggae rhythm. Because after that Maxie Romeo record “Let the Power Fall For I”. And the people started to record God words on top of reggae.²²

Every time we hear the song, the scene depicts suffering and harshness. The first time the song appears Ivan is in his mother’s house. He notices that she is ill and that she lives in great poverty. Her only consolation is religion; she finds in prayers an outlet for her earthly misery. The only songs she listens to are religious ones. The second time, the song is heard by Ivan, when, after he is wounded in a shooting, he finds shelter in a hut on the beach. Pedro comes to give him medicines and comfort, and the radio plays this song.

This kind of song is typical of Rastafari, because on the one hand, they find similarities between themselves and the biblical Israelites, exiled out of their land, and because of this in perpetual suffering. Moreover, having adapted some biblical terms for the contemporary Jamaican situation, they see the (ex) colonial context as Babylon, and the promised land, Ethiopia, as Zion. So the words “by the rivers of Babylon, where we sat down, and where we wept, as we remembered Zion” are paralleled to the distress of Rastafari trapped in Jamaica, and of every person worried about his/her own future²³.

Johnny Too Bad, a rudeboy song, is heard twice too. In the Preacher’s house, Ivan works with Longah, and the workshop is provided with a radio. As soon as he settles down, Ivan starts dressing

²² Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.71.

²³ See Chapter 5, pp.143-154, for a brief explanation of Rastafari belief system.

like a rudeboy. His clothes are flashy, and he is very attentive to what he wears²⁴. Longah makes fun of him, saying that he only needs a gun to look like the Johnny of the song. The song is an ironic comment, but it comes from the director (or the narrator), addressed to the audience. At this moment of the film, Ivan is not yet a rudeboy, and when he becomes one, he will not be very successful.

The second time, *Johnny Too Bad* works as a diegetic song, aired just after *The Harder They Come* in the dancehall. Ivan dresses as a rudeboy, he will become “too bad” for society, but as a matter of fact he is not bad at all. The song, however, is also a kind of flash-forward anticipation of what will happen. Ivan will be seen as a bad man, and one day someone will want to stop him, and he will not be able to avoid the clash. As the song says “one of these days, when you hear a voice say come, where you gonna run to? You gonna run to the rock for rescue, there will be no rock”.

Another rocksteady song, *007 (Shanty Town)*, is first introduced when Detective Ray Jones is present. The song is again about rudeboys, and their activities: “dem a loot, dem a shoot, dem a wail (a shanty town)”. Since the rudeboys came from the ghettos, *Shanty Town* describes the set of these events. The words of the song can be seen as another flash-forward of what will happen: José and Ivan, the two rudeboys, will smash the establishment of the ganja trade and the police control over it: “the rudeboys are out of jail... They will bomb up the town”.

The second time, the song accompanies Ivan’s photographic shots. He is undoubtedly a rudeboy now. He is at the apogee of his career as a gangster. He is going to make fun of the police and the ganja trade. He is going to impose his rule for a period in Kingston. The song is now a kind of description of Ivan and his behaviour.

Pressure Drop, another ska song by The Maytals, is inserted four times in the film. The song has a pressing and overwhelming rhythm, used in the film for both action and cheerful scenes. The refrain (“It is you, oh yeah, it is you, you, oh yeah, it is you, oh yeah, it is you, oh yeah) brings into focus Ivan, who is present and the protagonist in all the four scenes, each time having a discussion with someone.

The first time, *Pressure Drop* accompanies Ivan and José in Kingston’s nightlife, through dancehalls, cinemas and gambling houses. The second time it is a diegetic song: the radio is playing it while Ivan and Elsa are arguing about the life they are leading in their house. The argument brings about the pressure the song speaks of.

The third time *Pressure Drop* underlines Ivan’s refusal to pay José for protection. The pressure is high because Ivan is starting his last and more dangerous rebellion. He refuses to behave in the “right” way in the ganja trade, putting himself under pressure and against more powerful people.

²⁴ See Chapter 7, pp.242-249, for an analysis of Ivan’s dress code.

Finally the song appears when Ivan is running after José in his area. The pressure is due to the fact that there is a shooting going on between the two. In a way, though, the tight rhythm of the song makes the scene appear less dramatic, it dampens the tones. The pursuit turns into something comic, not at all as dramatic as a shooting should be.



Ivan and José explore Kingston's nightlife.

The last song to be analysed is, along with *You Can Get It If You Really Want*, the most important of the film: *The Harder They Come*. Apart from being the title of the film, it is also its leitmotif. The song tells Ivan's story: he will get what he wants very quickly, but through wrong means, and it will not last. "The harder they come, the harder they fall". It also highlights Ivan's approach to life: "I'm gonna get my share now, what's mine".

The first time we hear the song, Ivan is recording it in Hilton's studio. We hear it again in the immediately following scene, when he tries to distribute the record on his own. No one wants to help him, because he does not work for Mr. Hilton, who controls the market, and whosoever does not work for Hilton works against him. Shortly after, we hear *The Harder They Come* again in the dancehall, just before Ivan decides to try to enter the ganja trade. It is the first time the song is publicly aired, and Ivan is proud that everybody seems to like his tune and dance to it.



Ivan records *The Harder They Come* in Hilton's studio.

When the song appears again, Ivan is escaping from the police. He has become popular because of his murders, and people love him because the police is not able to catch him. He has become a kind of hero. People start to ask more and more for his song to be aired. In this scene the song is both diegetic and extradiegetic: it is in the background, but we also see a deejay putting the song on and saying that people want to hear it again and again, and people listening to it from radios in the street.

The last time we hear the song is during the closing credits. The scene is very simple: we are shown a girl's bottom dancing to this music, probably in a dancehall, while the credits appear in double exposure. Here the song seems to be a kind of moral to the film, what underlines Ivan's story: "the harder they come, the harder they fall".



The Harder They Come, closing credits.

The song describes Ivan's life in Kingston. It illustrates his stubbornness, "I'll keep fighting for the things I want", but also his rebelliousness, "the oppressors are trying to keep me down, trying to drive me underground. But as sure as the sun will shine, I'm gonna get my share now, what's mine". Ivan demonstrates throughout the film that he is willing to do anything in order to obtain what he wants, and it is for this reason that he rebels against any oppression he has to stand. Unfortunately for him, Ivan gets what he wants, quite rapidly since he does not care about how he gets it, but his success is not bound to last, and the end of his dreams will arrive as rapidly as his success, and in the most ultimate way. As the song says, the harder he came, the harder he fell.

There are other diegetic songs in the film, always sacred hymns. A few times in the film we are presented religious ceremonies, where music has a basic role²⁵. These songs are sung by the whole congregation, which is really involved in it, so much so that sometimes a believer falls into a trance.

The Harder They Come's soundtrack is essential to the film. The songs are not in the background, but part of the story, and a commentary to it. They help the audience to better understand the film; they explain slightly deeper the situations and the characters' feelings or thoughts. And finally they give a touch of cheerfulness to a tragic story. The songs perfectly match the images, and they leave the audience a more vivid memory of the film.

Few following Jamaican films did not follow Henzell's example. Probably only *Smile Orange* has an ineffectual soundtrack. All the other films pay great attention to the music they use. I will use four categories to analyse the films, and many will enter in more than one group, since the soundtrack is an essential part of most of them.

²⁵ Jamaican religions are analysed in Chapter 5.

3.3 SINGERS ACTING.

The very first and obvious relationship between film and music is given by the use of singers as main actors in many pictures. Again, Perry Henzell was the first to use this feature: *The Harder They Come*'s main character is played by Jimmy Cliff, the singer who was already popular in Jamaica as such, and whose career was boosted by this film.

At the end of the 1970s, *Rockers*, a film that was meant to be a homage to reggae music and its protagonists, displayed a host of singers and musicians. Keith Warner acknowledges the social theme that underpins the story, but he also notices that music was the first goal for this production:

Social commentary is evident in the film once one knows where to look. [...] Still, one cannot escape the impression that what motivated its production was an attempt to capitalize on the emerging popularity of reggae on the international music scene. Much of the action thus seems set up simply to lead to the on-screen performance by known *artistes* such as Burning Spear, Gregory Isaacs or Jacob Miller. Beyond these, the soundtrack [...] presents a galaxy of reggae stars, including Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, Inner Circle and Third World.²⁶

The main character of this film is Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace, resident drummer of Studio One in the 1970s, of Soul Syndicate, and of many reggae hits. He plays himself, as any other musician who appears on the film does.



Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace as himself in *Rockers*.

He is not the only music star appearing during the film. There are also Jacob Miller, Burning Spear, Kiddus I, Dirty Harry, Big Youth, Dillinger, Robbie Shakespeare, and all the important reggae personalities of the period.

The other film presenting a singer in a small role, playing himself, is *Dancehall Queen*. Set in the dancehall, this film shows some singers performing on stage, as, for instance, Anthony B. But the one who acts in few scenes is Beenie Man, who had not yet become a Rastafari.



Beenie Man as himself in *Dancehall Queen*.

²⁶ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, pp.93-94.

He becomes an arbiter in the dancehall contest, when the audience decides who must be crowned as the dancehall queen. He is the one who proposes the contest, as the fight between Marcia and Olivene is becoming unmanageable, and he is the one who presents it, besides singing the song of the film, *Dancehall Queen*.

This film stages also a very young Cherine Anderson, as Tanya, Marcia's daughter. She does not sing, however, but just acts.

Third World Cop, though seeming to have nothing to do with music, actually stages some singers in secondary roles. For instance, Deportee is played by Ninjaman, while Tek 9 is played by Elephant Man, immediately recognizable with his yellow-orange hair.



Elephant Man as Tek 9 (left) and Ninjaman as Deportee (right) in *Third World Cop*.

Moreover, in the film there is a performance on stage by Lady G, who sings about bad men at a dancehall night.

Klash is another film presenting a parade of music stars. They all appear in cameo roles, performing some songs during the clash, and playing themselves. Among others, there are Shabba Ranks, Ninja Man, Papa San, Patra, Capleton and Snow. Moreover, Cedella Marley, Bob Marley's first daughter, plays the role of a police officer. And there is a cameo role of the dub poet Mutabaruka, playing himself. He is portrayed during his radio programme on Irie FM, the Jamaican radio broadcasting only reggae music.

Mutabaruka will reappear in another film, and in another cameo role, but this time not performing himself. In *One Love* various singers act. Mutabaruka, in this film, plays the role of a Rasta elder, who guides and gives advice to the protagonist and the community as a whole. He is respected because of his age and of his experience, and in fact in the story he becomes an important figure, since he solves two difficult situations, and the plot itself. He advises how to retrieve the rights for the stolen song, and he tells Kassa that if he really loves Serena, their belonging to different religions does not matter.



Mutabaruka, a Rasta elder in *One Love*.

Both the protagonists of the film are professional singers: Kassa is played by Ky-Mani Marley, and Serena is played by Cherine Anderson. Both are acknowledged and respected musicians, the former being also one of Bob Marley's sons. They are both pursuing acting careers besides that of singers. Ky-Mani Marley has appeared in US productions as well.



Ky-Mani Marley as Kassa and Cherine Anderson as Serena in *One Love*.

Ky-Mani Marley will act again in *Shottas*, a film that presents many singers as actors. Besides Marley, there is a Jamaican musician loved by the island's audience, Spragga Benz, and a Haitian singer, now living in the United States, Wyclef Jean.



Spragga Benz as Wayne and Wyclef Jean as Ritchie in *Shottas*.

Spragga Benz is a ragga singer, who started his career in the early 1990s, and who is often gossiped about because of his many relationships. Wyclef Jean formed a band in Haiti with Pras and Lauren Hill, the Fugees. They moved to New York, where they continued their careers separately. Besides his musical career, Wyclef Jean is active in humanitarian help for his mother country. Other personalities are the deejay Louie Rankin playing Teddy Bruckshot and the deejay at the Asylum club playing himself.

Finally, the other two Jamaican/USA co-productions feature singers acting. Since the films are very similar, the singers they present are the same, and in the same kind of roles. Curiously, the (gangster) roles played by singers are only those of Jamaicans. In both films, the roles of gunmen, drug dealers, and murderers are assigned to Ras Kidus, Beenie Man and Ninja Man. In this perpetuation of stereotypes²⁷, the singers can be seen as guilty as the directors. As Vernon Brooks notes:

²⁷ See Introduction, pp.2-4.

Role-playing is something that's taken seriously by the dancehall kings and movie directors dare not give parts that contradict with these musicians' real life missions or taboos. [...] the Jamaican dancehall hero is adamant about a part that could smear his image. It's highly unlikely that he would want to act the part of a homosexual, for fear of how the local audience might react to his popularity. [...] This indubitably hurts his chance when it comes to how far the Jamaican male as a potential movie great can feature in a competitive world.²⁸

Indeed, for instance, Ninja Man is a gunman in real life, and the characters he plays reinforce this image. It is likely that he accepted these roles because they strengthen the idea he wants to give of himself, that of a tough and dangerous character.



Ras Kidus (left), Ninja Man (middle) and Beenie Man (right) in *Rude Boy*.

The three singers-actors of these films are Jamaican singers. Ninja Man and Beenie Man are very popular in Jamaica. The latter is very prolific, since he creates new songs quite frequently. He has also become a Rastafari, so that if his first songs dealt with typically dancehall themes, now he tries to face new subjects, more in tune with his new belief.

There is also a cameo by Jimmy Cliff, at the beginning of the film *Rude Boy*. He plays the role of an elder, a wise man, to whom King (Beenie Man) goes to seek advice for what he wants to do for his community.

However, the use of singers is only one of the feature that links Jamaican films with Jamaican music. Other, more consistent, links are created by the music itself, and by the conscious use of it that directors made in the creation of their work.

3.4 MUSIC AS PART OF THE PLOT.

Once again, *The Harder They Come* set the trend for this peculiarity. In Henzell's film, Ivan arrives in Kingston with the dream of becoming a singer. This is why part of the film is set in the music business, with Ivan recording a song, and fighting with the music producer and the whole music system.

Other films followed this example. The first in time was *Rockers*. The story is set to motion by Horsemouth's decision to start selling records. Horsemouth wants to do it because the music industry is exploiting the musicians, especially Rastafari, since in that period Rastas were making the

²⁸ Vernon Augustus Brooks, *Tricks and Trades of the Jamaican Man*, USA, Lulu.com, 2005, pp.58-59.

greatest part of the music produced on the island. He wants the Rastas to earn something from their records. It is not really a matter of money, but of social justice. Rastafari were given a pittance for their songs, while the rich people ruling the music industry kept all the merits and the money. Horsemouth just wants to reclaim what belongs to them, he wants to stop being exploited by the music industry.

Music pervades the entire film. Not only is it played in every moment, it is also part of the plot. Besides selling records, Horsemouth finds a job as a drummer in a hotel. And the whole film revolves around music: played, heard, and used as a means of socialization.

Dancehall Queen too revolves around the world of the dancehall. However, what matters more in this film is the dance, and the whole dancehall world. Nonetheless, without music there would be no dancehall, so this film concentrates on dancehall tunes and on dancehall artists that were popular in 1997, and would become even more popular with the passing of time.

Music acquires greater importance in *Klash*. The film is set during a sound clash, that is a musical battle between competing sound systems, in order to win the audience's favour. Critics of the genre claim that these clashes end in physical violence, but Carolyn Cooper defines it as only a verbal fight, and broadens the definition of the sound clash to encompass other clashes:

The clash is not just the performance event but becomes a trenchant metaphor for the hostile interfacing of warring zones in Jamaican society [...]. The dancehall trope of the "border clash" ultimately speaks to the ideological conflicts between competing value systems in Jamaica. [...]

Despite the hard evidence of bottle, stone, and the flying bullet of the gunshot salute, the violence in the Jamaican dancehall is primarily verbal. Indeed, it is the performer's facility with words that is contested in this domain. [...] All of the DJs routinely engage in verbal confrontation, pitting wits and lyrics against each other. The metaphorical nature of much of this discourse – for example, the gun talk – is usually lost on narrow-minded critics of the genre who fail to understand the element of play in the language of the dancehall and thus take the DJs' lyrics all too literally. [...]

The concept "border clash" has resonance in defining a broad range of conflicts in Jamaican society. Contested borders are located across language barriers (English versus Jamaican) [...]

There are also sound clashes between cultural genres and their related practices (reggae versus dancehall; and both versus soca/carnival). There are contestations between social spaces ("ghetto" versus "uptown"). There are clashes of interests such as those of the "politician" and "ghetto youth". There is the competition between pigment shades ("Black woman" versus "browning" – Jamaican slang for mulatto hybridity). [...]

Border clashes occur between religious positions: for example, Rastafarian versus Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic Church. [...]

Border clashes are also evident in the host of encounters that take place between forces that can be categorized as “cultural imperialism” and those that are local and specific to Jamaican (popular) culture. [...] ²⁹

The protagonist of the film, the photographer Stoney, arrives in Jamaica to document the sound clash. The whole story revolves around it: many people want to steal the income of the event, and most of the film is set during it. Moreover, the director stages many performances taking place during the clash, with all the associated dances and fancy clothes.

The last film that inserts music as part of its plot is *One Love*. The main subject is a love story between a Rastaman and a Christian woman, and the conflicts that this relationship creates for both the communities. However, an additional theme is added, and it regards music. Kassa is a singer, leader of a band of Rasta musicians, the Freedom City, while Serena is the lead singer of the church choir, the Zion Hill Gospel. They meet because of a competition for new musical talents, where they both participate with their groups. Notwithstanding the many difficulties they have to face to be together, and accepted by both communities, in the end love triumphs, during the final performance of the competition, where, apart from Ky-Many Marley and Cherine Anderson, there are also other Jamaican musicians, such as, for instance, the Innocent Crew. Many other performances take place during the film, especially Rasta chants and Nyabinghi drumming in Kassa’s community.

3.5 SOUNDTRACK AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE FILM.

In the great majority of Jamaican films, the soundtrack is essential to the meaning of the story. The soundtrack is omnipresent, in the background, but also a useful tool for commenting on the scenes. Music acquires immeasurable relevance in the films, as it had in *The Harder They Come*.

3.5.1 ROCKERS.

As already said, this film has constantly music in the background. It becomes so important that in the DVD, the chapters are identified by the song inserted in the scene, and not by their main events. The very introduction, which sets the tone of the film, presents Nyabinghi drumming for *Satta Amassa Gana*, a Rasta song that has been versioned many times since its first release by the Abyssinians. The song deals with Rasta themes, and in particular with the promised land and the omnipotence of Jah.

‘Satta Massa Ganna’ spoke of a utopian resting-place for the black faithful and used Amharic salutations to the Almighty to drive home its Rastafarian ideals. [...]

The tune’s original issue as ‘Far Far Away’ was not particularly successful, but when the song was recut as ‘Satta Massa Ganna’ in 1971 on the group’s [the Abyssinians] Clinch label it began

²⁹ Carolyn Cooper, *Op. Cit.*, pp.35-45.

to pick up steam. It has since become one of the most-versioned songs ever recorded in Jamaica, and an all-time Rasta anthem.³⁰

From the very first scene, a precredits sequence, the audience is made aware that the whole film is a praise of Rastafari, and the whole story is told from a Rasta point of view.

All the major (Rasta) artists of the period appeared in *Rockers*, whose title indicates a particular genre of reggae music³¹. Many times, their participation was just an excuse to stage the music. This is why, for instance, there are performances by Kiddus I, with *Graduation in Zion*, in a recording studio (with, in addition, a demonstration of the physical creation of a vinyl record); Burning Spear, with *Jah No Dead*, in a powerful a cappella; Jacob Miller and the Inner Circle, with *Tenement Yard*, in the hotel where Horsemouth works with them as a drummer; and Gregory Isaacs, with *Slave Master*, performing on stage.

For the rest, music pervades the film, both as a soundtrack and as a commentary. *Satta Amassa Gana* is repeated five times throughout the film, becoming a kind of leitmotif, but it is never played by its creators, the Abyssinians. The first two scenes have it in the background: first as a Nyabinghi chant, underlying the invocation by Higher, and then as a rehearsal by some musicians in the ghetto, when Horsemouth asks for money to start his activity.

The third time the song is inserted is when Horsemouth meets, and starts to flirt with, Sunshine, the daughter of the owner of the hotel where he and the Inner Circle work.

The song is heard again after Horsemouth has been beaten, when he goes to Higher to be healed, both in the body and in the spirit. This time the song is instrumental, played together by the Rockers All Stars, that is all the musicians who participated in the film.

When he leaves Higher to get back in the city, we hear again *Satta Amasagana*, sung by the Third World. The lyrics of this song express devotion to Jah, and submission to His will. The song says: “There is a land, far far away, where there’s no night, there’s only day. Look into the Book of Life and you will see that there is a land far far away. [...] The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords sits upon His throne and He rules us all. Look into the Book of Life and you will see that He rules us all.” The last part of the song has some words sung in Amharic, as the land far away is Ethiopia, and the King of Kings is Haile Selassie, Jah’s messiah on earth – for many Jah Himself.

The music that accompanies Horsemouth’s start as a record seller is *Book of Rules*, by the Heptones. This song is about everyone’s preordained duty in the world, and the necessity to follow some rules in order to live decently and in peace, and to obtain as much as possible from one’s labour. The lyrics are simple but telling: “Common people like you and me, we’ll be builders for eternity. Each is given a bag of tools, a shapeless mass and the book of rules”.

³⁰ David Katz, *Solid Foundation. An Oral History of Reggae*, New York and London, Bloomsbury, 2003, pp.149-150.

³¹ See Appendix 2, p.389.

Just after this scene, while Horsemouth still tries to sell his records, we hear *Money Worries*, by the Maytones, again stressing the scene, and the necessity for Horsemouth to make money to pay back his debts and to live decently.

In *Rockers* all the songs try to match the scenes they are inserted in, at least in the title. When Jacob Miller proposes Horsemouth to work in the hotel with him, the song in the background is *We A Rockers*, that is “we are musicians”. When Horsemouth goes to the sound system at night, we hear *Midnight Rock*, and the song he gives the deejay to play is *Answer Me Question*. The immediately following scene depicts a police raid in the dancehall, underlined by Junior Murvin’s song *Police and Thieves*. It is in this moment that Horsemouth notices that someone stole his motorbike. The song is well fitted to the scene, since the refrain says: “Police and thieves in the street fighting the nation with their guns and ammunition”. The police is not trusted by the people, who prefer solving their problems by themselves. It is the case with Horsemouth, who does not want the police’s help to retrieve his bike, preferring instead finding it with his methods. This distrust in the police is common in Jamaica, since the army’s motto generally was “shoot first, then ask questions”. Police used to create more terror than reliance.

After realizing that someone stole his bike, Horsemouth goes to meet Burning Spear, to find comfort in his words. This is the moment of Spear’s performance: a potent song delivered a cappella, talking about the immortality of Jah. After Haile Selassie’s death, many people told the Rastafari that their god was dead. But, as a matter of fact, they replied that Jah was not dead, since God is immortal. This gave also way to some songs about this matter. Apart from this Burning Spear song, Bob Marley sang *Jah Live*, for instance.

When it was reported that Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia had met his physical death in August 1975, Marley refuted the notion with ‘Jah Live’, a song expressing eternal devotion.³²

Even though he does not have his bike anymore, Horsemouth keeps his job at the hotel, probably in Ocho Rios, on the North Coast of Jamaica. We see him playing with the Inner Circle, with a crowd of tourists listening to them. A young North American couple hears this music for the first time, and wonders what kind of music it is. He says “Hey, that’s looks calypso”, but she replies “Calypso? No... I don’t know what it is!”. It sounds a bit strange, since in 1978 reggae was popular all over the world, but probably the director chose to keep this line to show the great distance between the indigenous people and music, and the tourists who visit Jamaica and know nothing about it, except that there are beautiful beaches and hot sun.

Later in the film, when Horsemouth flirts again with Sunshine, the song in the background is *Sweet Sensation*, by the Melodians, a love song. The Rockers All Stars play some instrumentals, when it is

³² David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.235.

necessary for a scene, such as, for instance *Waiting for the Bus* and *Honeyball*: in these cases, the songs assume the title by the scene they are meant for.

Natty Cool Operator is inserted when Horsemouth talks with Dirty Harry of his plan to regain his bike and avenge the wrong. After having been beaten because of his rebellion, Horsemouth goes to the hills, to be healed. With Higher, he goes to visit his grandmother, whom he sees during a Revivalist baptism. The song the congregation sings is *The Water is Power*, with the accompaniment of only drums and percussions. This music is quite near to Nyabinghi drumming. Actually, the two Rastas watch the scene with benevolence, underlying the many similarities between the two cults:

There is also the hint [...] that this Afro-Christian sect has close affinity with the Rastafarians through their rhythmic chants and dances.³³

After this scene, Horsemouth goes back home, and talks with his wife. In the background the song is *Fade Away*, which matches perfectly with what he says about his children's education. Horsemouth says that he wants to teach his children "culture", that is Jah teachings. He says:

Me is a man who come like a messenger. Come to carry Jah works out there.

And he opposes this culture to that outside the ghetto, the culture of the people who care only for money, clothes, and appearances. That culture is not authentic for him, it has been imposed by some external agents, and it is accepted and followed because it belongs to countries that are politically and economically powerful. To this, Rastafari proposes a culture based on mutual respect, solidarity and life in community and in harmony with nature. The song by Junior Byles states exactly what Horsemouth means:

He who seeks of only vanity/and no love for humanity/shall fade away [...]he who checks for only wealth/and not for his physical health/shall fade away [...]though some believe in diamonds and pearl/and feel like they're on top of the world/they shall fade away [...]the rich is getting richer every day/and the little that the poor man got shall be taken away [...]the man who worships silver and gold/shall surely, surely, surely lose his own soul/then fade away/the one who's always acting smart/and don't carry no love in his heart/shall fade away/God is here and there and everywhere/and he knows when you play the game unfair/so people beware, or else you fade away [...].³⁴

In this case too, the song accompanies perfectly the scene in which it is inserted.

The scene that follows this one becomes quite relevant, both musically and for the overall meaning of the film. Dirty Harry and Horsemouth go to a club, a kind of discothèque. The music played in this place is US disco music, and in this case the song *Get On Up/Get On Down*, by Roundtree. The Rastas do not like this kind of music, because it is not Jamaican. This is why Dirty Harry rebels: he

³³ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.94. Jamaican religions are analysed in Chapter 5.

³⁴ Fade Away - Lyrics from Junior Byles, <http://www.ildb.info/Junior+Byles-Fade+Away,lid209592-al6093.html>, accessed December 22, 2008. The whole dialogue by Horsemouth can be found in Chapter 5, pp.158-159.

takes over the deejay cabin, and starts playing reggae. The scene is important because it stages the clash between Rasta authenticity and “uptown” hypocrisy. The people in the club dress like North Americans, they follow US fashions (for instance, the Afro hair style), and they listen to US music, showing the difference of classes (and ways of life) in Jamaica, and the cultural and economic power that the United States have over the island, and over a great part of the world. It is, as Ed Guerero defines it, a moment of resistance in the film:

The urban fable *Rockers*, more realist, improvised and episodic in style, renders the subtle complexities of underclass life and resistance in a series of vignettes where the conflict and tension of cultural difference are ever present. [...] The impact of this scene is clear as cultural confrontation and resistance are cast in the most fundamental terms: those of clashing musical ideologies as well as styles of dress and appearances. In a society where the indigenous music, reggae, is hardly played on the radio, it being subordinated to “soul”, disco or whatever Black form is popular in the U.S. and where Rastafarians are suspiciously viewed at best, this “Dread takeover” sharply delineates the “baldhead”/”dread” polarities in the struggle for influence in the nation’s symbolic order. This moment is all the more subtle and subversive when one considers that all of its participants are Black, thus marking the conflict’s class and subcultural tensions, rather than merely casting it in racial terms, as it is so commonly misread.³⁵

When Dirty Harry changes the music and starts to play reggae, he is reasserting his values, and by extension those of the Rastas and of Jamaica. Only after having been appreciated outside of the island, especially in the United States, did reggae become appreciated in Jamaica too, by “respectable” people of the upper classes. This scene is a kind of summary of the film: reggae and its performers, all Rasta, win the struggle against Babylon, and affirm their values and the goodness of their lifestyle.

What follows in the film is the recruitment of people for the retrieving of the stolen goods. Horsemouth’s talking with various musicians/friends to ask them to participate in the raid is accompanied by the song *Rockers*, by Bunny Wailer, while the actual gathering of the musicians, from various parts of Kingston, is underlined by *Stepping Razor*, by Peter Tosh. This song is carefully chosen: the Rastas were not viewed with sympathy in Jamaica. They were considered the worst part of society. But in the film they manage to obtain what they want, using no violence, and demonstrating that they are not subjugated by Babylon, and that they can overcome it when they want. So the lyrics saying “I’m a stepping razor, don’t you watch my size, I’m dangerous” are well fitted to the depiction of a group of Rastas determined to take back their stolen belongings, confronting rich and powerful people who rob the poor people of their few valuable goods.

³⁵ Ed Guerero, “Jah No Dead”: *Modes Of Resistance In Rockers And Countryman*, in Mbye Cham ed., *Op. Cit.*, pp.115-116.

The final redistribution of the stolen stuff is accompanied by the song *Natty Take Over*, by Justin Hines. It is the victory of the “natty dreads”, as Rastas were called, over the rotten system that tries to subdue and destroy them. The song associated with the closing credits is *We A Rockers*, by Jacob Miller and the Inner Circle, the logical conclusion for the celebration of reggae musicians and Rastafari faith in the film.

Rockers has a somewhat inconsistent plot, useful for the staging of music, in every moment and situation of the film. Moreover, beside being constantly present in the background and on stage, the songs of the soundtrack are inserted in a way that tries to match them with the scene they identify. In the final analysis, this film may appear a bit naïf, though having a few moments of lucid social commentary, but it constitutes a documentary on the Jamaican music scene at the end of the 1970s, and it is an enthusiastic praise of reggae and Rastafari.

3.5.2 COUNTRYMAN.

This film’s link with music is made clear since the beginning, when it appears in double exposure that the film is “dedicated to Bob Marley, whose words and music provided its inspiration”. And Bob Marley’s songs provide the greatest portion of the soundtrack. This film was produced by Chris Blackwell, the owner of Island Records, which was the Wailers’ label. Keith Warner sees no fortuity in this:

The fact that this movie is produced by Chris Blackwell of Island Records, and that it is dedicated to Island’s superstar, Bob Marley, is not insignificant. Film would help record sales. Record sales would help film.³⁶

He also recognizes the importance of reggae, not only in the films but also internationally, and he sees in this another excuse for the use of such music in Jamaican works:

Jamaican film-makers clearly decided to capitalize on the growing international popularity of reggae, which could no longer be seen as a fleeting musical fad.³⁷

Actually, this film had in mind a crossover audience, and the use of Bob Marley’s music was going to prove immediately recognizable to any kind of viewers, all over the world.

As in the previous films, the soundtrack is meant to underline the scene in which it is inserted. This is why the songs’ lyrics match the images on the screen.

As in *Rockers*, the first scene sets the tone of the whole film. The song in the background is *Natural Mystic*, which creates the atmosphere necessary to the introduction of the protagonist, a Rasta who lives in harmony with Nature and all its creatures. The lines “there’s a natural mystic, blowing through the air. If you listen carefully now, you will hear” hints at the Rasta way of life, respectful of

³⁶ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.98.

³⁷ *Ibidem.*

the environment. However, after the first lines, this song assumes an apocalyptic view of human life on earth, since it deals with Armageddon: “this could be the first trumpet, might as well be the last. Many more will have to suffer, many more will have to die.” Nonetheless, what probably interested the director were the first lines, since they accompany the appearance of Countryman, a man wearing only short pants, living thanks to his fishing, and whose only belonging is a small fishing boat, which he uses at night, to get snappers, to eat and to sell.

Apart from Marley’s songs, and a few others by other artists, sometimes the soundtrack is instrumental, made ad hoc for the film by Wally Badarou. In these cases, it remains in the background, unobtrusively, and underlines the mood of the scene: slow when the scene is calm, joyful when the scene is cheerful, frightening when the Obeah man appears, and so on.

Countryman rescues the two passengers of the plane that crashed, and he hides them to avoid their capture by the army who wants them as a scapegoat. He feeds them too. He prepares on a blazing fire for the two Americans some Jamaican dishes, such as snappers, breadfruits, avocados, pumpkins, accompanied by coconut water, and he shares with them his spliffs, creating in this way a merry atmosphere, with the three of them laughing, sharing joy and happiness. The soundtrack of this scene could only be *Pass It On*, a song that encourages a pure living, and a non egoistic life. The refrain, “be not selfish in your doings, pass it on, help your brothers in their needs, pass it on”, perfectly describes what Countryman is doing, and the values he lives his life with.

The police, in the meantime, keeps looking for the plane’s passengers. This is the reason why they establish road blocks. The song for the army’s research and the road blocks is *Rebel Music (3 o’clock, Road Block)*. This song is about the persecution of the Rastafari, and about their smoking of ganja. The lyrics are quite clear: “why can’t we roam this open country/ why can’t we be what we want to be/ [...] I’ve got to throw away/ my little herb stalk”. It also matches with the skit of the two Rastas with a spliff, stopped at a block, but who manage to cheat the police by putting it completely in their mouths and pretending they have a toothache.

The next Bob Marley song that appears in the film is *Rastaman Chant*. It is associated with the teachings of Jahman, the village elder, to the children. The fishermen’s village is a Rasta village, so that Jahman teaches following his Rasta precepts. The song, a traditional Rasta chant, is heard diegetically, from a radio that appears in the frame. The on screen radio is also a means through which the director informs the audience of how the army’s research is proceeding, and of the political situation on the island. We often hear bits of news from the radio, explaining what is happening for the elections, and the involvement of the plane’s passengers.

When the army realizes that probably someone in Countryman’s village knows about the two Americans, they organize a raid. They go there to search for information, but actually they loot and

destroy everything, and they take away, supposedly for interrogation, Jahman. In the background, the song is *Rat Race*. This song is against the establishment, defining who does not live according to humanitarian principles as belonging to the rat race. Rastafari do not want to be involved in this way of living: “political violence fill ya city/ [...] don’t involve Rasta in your say”. Again, the song describes what is happening in the scene: political, gratuitous violence against Rastas.

After the capture of Jahman, a politician goes to a meeting with the Colonel. He wants to remind him who is in charge, and to tell him that if he fails with his plan for the Americans, he will assume all the responsibilities for it, and he will die, in a fake suicide. The song in the soundtrack is another attack against “politricks”, in Rasta language: *Small Axe*. First, the chorus is quite telling: “if you are a big tree, we are the small axe, sharpened to cut you down, ready to cut you down”. Then, there is a warning to live down to earth, which is also a quotation from the Bible (Proverbs 26:27): “whosoever diggeth a pit shall fall in it”. The song can be adapted to both the characters of the scene: the politician, who is the big tree, and the Colonel, who is digging a pit in which he will fall. This song is, from beginning to end, inspired by the Bible, and this gives it an apocalyptic tone, which is thus transferred to the scene of the film.

At night, the men of the village gather around the fire, to talk and exchange ideas, in what Rastas call “reasoning”. There are two songs for this scene. First of all, there is a diegetic performance: drumming and chanting, to the notes of *Rivers of Babylon*. Then there is, in the background this time, *Wisdom – Jah Lion*, by Lee Perry, one of the few songs in this film not by Bob Marley.

At a certain point, the director shows a yacht club, where a political meeting is taking place, and where Beau’s father arrives on his boat. In the background, the big white buildings of downtown Kingston contrast with the poverty of Countryman. The song that goes together with this scene is *Sitting and Watching* by Dennis Brown.

Mosman, the infiltrate of the army in Countryman’s village, convinces some people to set an ambush to the fisherman. Thus there is a fighting scene, where Countryman shows all his ability in martial arts, and where he defeats his adversaries in a Bruce Lee style, almost as a super hero. The song in the background here is *Bam Bam*, by Toots and the Maytals. As any other song for the soundtrack, this one too is perfectly suited to the scene and the character. The lyrics are wholly adapted to what is happening on screen: “I want you to know that I am the man who fight for the right, not for the wrong. Going there, I’m going there helping the weak against the strong”. This is a description of Countryman, as in the following lyrics too: “help this man, don’t trouble no man. But if you trouble that man it will bring a bam bam”. Bam bam, the onomatopoeic sound for a fight, actually describes the fight.

When Countryman brings back Beau and Bobby to her father, they travel at night, with no light but that of the moon. Once again, Countryman manages to fool the coast guard. The song inserted in the background is *Dreadlocks in Moonlight* by Lee Perry. The song matches once again the scene.

The main plot is resolved. The last couple of scenes concludes the film with the punishment of the evil doers and the return to normality in the village. When Jahman's body is brought back, Countryman understands that the one responsible for his death is Mosman. His accusing glance is accompanied by *Time Will Tell*, and the lyrics "Jah would never give the power to a baldhead, run come crucify the dread". Even though Mosman is supposed to be a Rasta, he does not act like one. His behaviour seems one of a baldhead, of an army agent. Time will provide punishment for his crime: "think you're in heaven but you're living in hell".

The very last scene, with Mosman falling from the cliff fearing the sight of Jahman's body behind him, and the closing credits, have in the background the song *Jah Live*, a song that could be associated to the fact that for a moment Mosman believes that Jahman is alive, or resuscitating. However, the song was written in praise of Rastas' god, and in response to the claim of non Rastas that with Haile Selassie's death the Rasta god was dead³⁸. Marley faithfully replied that "Jah live", and that "is he who laugh last [...] is he who win".

As was becoming the custom in Jamaican cinematography, *Countryman's* soundtrack is an integral part of the film. Every song matches the scene in which it is inserted, and images and sound together contribute to the significance of the film.

3.5.3 THE LUNATIC.

In this film the soundtrack is not as important as in the other Jamaican films. It does not assume the same participatory role that it had in the previous works. It is mainly in the background, instrumental, useful only to create the atmosphere of the scene. It is generally unobtrusive, and it seldom interferes with the story. The soundtrack of this film does not remain in the audience's mind as something creative and constructive for the story, as happened for instance with *The Harder They Come*.

Nonetheless, the few songs present in the film are not used randomly. They create a link between the lyrics and the images. They are also ironical, as sometimes they are used humorously, to contrast with the scene, or at least to show that what is shown does not fully correspond to what is sung: for instance, some love songs are used in a context that relates very much to sex and very little to love.

The first non instrumental song that is inserted in the film is *Workey Workey*, by Clarence Edwards. It accompanies Aloysius that "goes to work". One night, at the beginning of the film, he talks with

³⁸ See also this Chapter, p.72.

the big tree about his problems. He is hungry, he has nothing to eat, and he has no money to buy food. This is why he decides that the following day he will try to raise some money to get something to eat. His “job” consists of diving in the sea and picking up shells for the tourists. The place where he lives is close to the sea, probably on the North Coast (quite likely Ocho Rios), since there are cruise ships anchored not far from the coast. One of the attractions for the tourists is a small cruise on a little boat, with a glass on the floor that allows them to see the coral reef. Aloysius’ task is to pick up some shells to give to the tourists, in return for a tip. In this case, the song tries to match the scene, but ironically, since Aloysius is working illegally, and he does not seem to take his job too seriously.

The next song introduced occurs the first time Aloysius has sex with Inga. It is ironical: Inga is in charge of the relationship, and of sex. Aloysius is always subjected to her will³⁹. In the scene, we see Inga appearing from the base of the frame, against the sky, and the music that accompanies her attempt to “dominate” Aloysius is Richard Wagner’s *The Ride of the Valkyries*.⁴⁰ It may be used because she is German, as was Wagner, but the effect is quite humorous, since it makes her appear as if she was a kind of monster, bound to control Aloysius. It also makes her appear as she is in the film: a sex addict who wants to set the rules.

The second time we see Aloysius and Inga have sex, they do it with the song *Hurricane*, by J.C. Lodge in the background. Again this song depicts Inga as a force of nature, that none can stop. She is in Jamaica because she wants to have sex, and nothing can stop her from obtaining what she wants. She entered Aloysius’ life like a hurricane: she changed all his habits, nothing will be the same again for him when she leaves the island.

We hear the song *Fire*, by Brinsley Forde, when Inga and Aloysius stop in a bar along the road. While Aloysius is in the bathroom, Inga talks with a person who wants to warn her of his madness. She does not like it, and claims that she is mad too. To prove it, she starts screaming a bad word that Aloysius had told her few minutes earlier not to use. This causes a great mess in the bar, and they are thrown out of it, as they will be from the hotel where Inga has a room.

Soon after this episode, Inga and Aloysius meet Service. There is an intense exchange of glances between him and Inga, and he always wears a pair of fancy sunglasses. Eyes are very important in their relationship, and not by chance the song that underlines their encounter is *Evil Eyes* by Donovan Francis.

³⁹ See Chapter 9, pp.296-298.

⁴⁰ This music is generally used for other purposes. Its impressive structure and the magnificence of its composition makes it more suited for dramatic scenes. One of the more notorious examples of its use in a soundtrack is Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* (1978): in this case the US army uses it as a means for psychological war when they arrive with helicopters to destroy Vietnamese villages.

After a diegetic sacred hymn during the Sunday function in the Church, there is again a profane love song by Toots Hibbert, *Beautiful Woman*. It occurs when Inga is “breezing”: as she explains to Aloysius, she is allowing her private parts to get some air. This is the reason why she passes a few days, completely naked, doing nothing but “breezing” her body, and making the two men who watch her go crazy. The song is humorous by itself and, adapted to the film’s context, it becomes even more so. The song says: “she’s such a beautiful woman, and she has so many ugly men [...] she walks like a lady, acts like a lady, don’t ask me why”, then the chorus goes “beautiful woman, beautiful woman, beautiful woman, will drive you crazy”, and finally, the last lines say “I know that when she gets warmed up, then she gets started, then she gets crazy, she’ll take off every piece of her clothes in the street”. This song is perfect for the scene. Inga has many men, she drives them crazy, and when she feels like, she takes off her clothes without caring about the people around her. No song could be more suited for this scene.

Aloysius is then asked by Busha to play in the cricket team, because he is the only person able to win the match. Indeed, when the game seems irremediably lost, Aloysius enters the competition and wins. The song that is in the background during the party for the victory is *Dancin’ Mood* by Alphonsus Cassell, a good song to underline the joyful disposition of the scene.

The last song accompanies the closing credits, and it could not be but *The Lunatic*, by Kirk Allen. It is used as a kind of summary of the story, and as a footnote to the title of the film.

Though this film does not focus on music, it nonetheless pays careful attention to it. When the director decided to insert pop songs in the story, he did it consciously, trying to find lyrics that could match the images. The overall impact of the combination of story, image and sound is one of joy and humour, as was the aim of the film.

3.5.4 *KLASH*.

Because of the context of the plot, music acquires the greatest relevance in *Klash*. Everything revolves around the music contest. However, differently from previous films, in this case the songs are not inserted with the aim of matching the images on the screen, except in few cases. The film is an excuse to stage a music show, with all the best and more popular Jamaican songs and musicians of the period. Actually, the plot is quite simple, in order to allow the performances and the soundtrack to emerge with clarity.

The opening credits sequence, with the images of the stage’s construction at the National Arena (the football stadium transformed for the occasion into a concert ground) have in the background *Oh God of my Salvation*, by Buju Banton. The song is used to check the microphones, during the rehearsal for the concert.

Then the story starts to unfold. Stoney arrives from the United States, finds the boat where he has to live, and at night he decides to have a look at the city, taking pictures and getting into trouble for this. The song in the background, unobtrusively, is *Nasty*, by the Born Jamericans.

In this film, the soundtrack remains in the background, except for the clash scenes, with the performances. So the songs are chosen neither for the meaning of their lyrics, nor because they can add something to the images presented to the audience. They are instead selected because of their rhythm, of the feeling they give to the scenes. They have the same role as the instrumental, inconspicuous soundtrack of classical films: what they need to do is just to create the atmosphere. This is the kind of pop scoring about which Claudia Grobman talked in her essay⁴¹. The songs are audible, but non-diegetic, and not part of the story. They accompany the spectator in the film's vision, and nothing else. Their only particularity is the fact that they are extremely popular songs, immediately recognizable for a Jamaican audience.

When Stoney finds the Wild Bush, where his ex girlfriend is working as a go-go dancer, the songs are diegetic, used as a base on which the girls dance. Among others, there is *No, No, No* by Dawn Penn, a song whose slow and languid rhythm is ideal for this kind of performance. Moreover, this song has a long history:

Then there was Dawn Penn, who covered a Memphis blues tune called "You Don't Love Me", retitling it "No No No" and enjoyed a sizeable hit in the process. Twenty-seven years later, leading regga producers Steelie & Cleve recut the tune with Dawn, in a speed-up version of the original, as part of a project designed as a tribute to the enduring appeal of their favourite label. It became a huge international hit, reaching the #1 slot in several national pop charts, and was even featured on the soundtrack of a Nissan car ad in the UK and Europe. The later hit offered a striking illustration of the power of Coxsone's music, which was still commercially potent nearly three decades after it was first recorded.⁴²

On Day 2 (the film temporal sequence is made explicit by intertitles referring to the sequence of the days), the first scene depicts one of Ragga's men leaving prison. Though his intentions are good, and he hopes to live out of the world of crime, Ragga immediately makes him work with him to collect some money from his extortions. The song backing this scene, trying to match the images, in one of the few occasions when it happens in this film, is *Rude Boy*, by Prince Midas with Brian and Tony Gold.

Another instance when the background song tries to match the scene occurs when Blossom goes to visit Stoney, and they spend the night together. It is *Breakfast in Bed*, by Lorna Bennett.

⁴¹ See this Chapter, p.54.

⁴² Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.70.

Soon after this, Blossom organizes for Stoney a photographic session, to show him some girls getting ready for the clash, and thus choosing their clothes. While he takes some pictures, the girls dance on the rhythm of *The More The Better*, by Mad Cobra. As it happens in many instances, the quantity prevails over the quality.

When Blossom and Stoney are again alone together, and she seduces him, there are two songs in the background. The first is *Sweetie*, by Chaka Demus & Pliers, and then *In the Mood*, by Patra. In general, the songs in this film try to match the scene when the two protagonists are together. For the rest, the songs are not linked to the images.

When Stoney talks about Blossom with Walker, the owner of the boat where Stoney lives, the song in the background is *Monday Morning Blues*, by Loose Caboose.

Day 5 is the clash day, when the performances are shown. At first, some deejays, to warm the audience up, start to put some records on. Then, the artists arrive. Many of them sing a medley of their more popular songs. For instance, Snow, a white Canadian ragga singer, who at the time created a lot of discussion because of the colour of his skin and the kind of songs he sang, comes on stage to sing three songs: *Girl, I've Been Hurt*, his major hit *Informer*, and *Rivertown*. He is followed by a couple of performances by other artists, and then by Shabba Ranks, who sings three of his hits: the much discussed *Love Punaany Bad*, a quite explicit song that sees women as objects or detached body parts⁴³, *Shine Up Your Gun*, that may be seen, as Carolyn Cooper claims⁴⁴, as a metaphor for a man's penis, or as an actual gun, and *Fat Piece* (a.k.a. *Well Done*). Shabba Ranks has been a discussed artist because his favourites themes were those of slackness and gun talk. However, Carolyn Cooper rehabilitates him, arguing that his lyrics (and by extension all the dancehall lyrics) are not against women, but rather a celebration of them:

The gender politics of the dancehall that is often dismissed by outsiders as simply misogynist can be read in a radically different way as a glorious celebration of full-bodied female sexuality, particularly the substantial structure of the Black working-class woman whose body image is rarely validated in the middle-class Jamaican media, where eurocentric norms of delicate female face and figure are privileged. The recurring references in the DJs' lyrics to fleshy female body parts and oscillatory functions do not simply signify a clear-cut devaluation

⁴³ Punnany is a Jamaican word (of Indian origin) indicating the vagina.

⁴⁴ In the book *Sound Clash – Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large*, Cooper discusses about the “lyrical guns” (chapter 5) of Jamaican deejays, which she claims to be metaphorical and not actual. For instance, at p.154, she states that the song *Gun Pon Me* is “an extended gun salute to Sabba Ranks's own verbal and sexual potency: The lyrical gun clearly assumes phallic proportions”. Even if she does not refer explicitly to *Shine Up Your Gun*, it can be assumed that the metaphor holds true for it too, since at p.24 she states that she will analyse “the construction of masculinity within discourses of violence that make the phallus and the gun synonymous”.

of female sexuality; rather, they signal the reclamation of active, adult female sexuality from the entrapping passivity of sexless Victorian virtue.⁴⁵

During the clash, the robbing takes place, followed by the killing of almost all the people participating in it, and finally by Stoney's arrest and interrogation. The last scene shows Walker, a man who has nothing to do with the clash and the stealing of its money, leaving on his boat, where Stoney and him had hidden the bag with the money. He is the only one who will have this money, and he goes away, toward the sunset, praising and thanking Jah. The song underlying these images is *Iron Lion Zion*, by Bob Marley, of which one line says "I have to run like a fugitive, to save the life I live".

The song in the background of the closing credits is *Luv 2 Luv U*, sang by the protagonist of the film, Jasmine Guy, who is an actress and not a singer.

In this film, there is a staging of the more popular Jamaican music of the mid-1990s. For this reason, few moments of the film are without soundtrack music. However, the soundtrack remains unobtrusive, in the background, as an accompaniment to the story, and not as a part of it. The lyrics are not related to the images. The film is concerned with dancehall music, not with the creation of an original relationship between the film and the soundtrack.

3.5.5 *DANCEHALL QUEEN*.

This film is a celebration of the dancehall world: songs, artists, dance, clothes. Keith Warner makes clear the relationship between film and music, and why the producers had a crossover audience in mind while doing it:

High profile producer, Carolyn Pfeiffer [...]; a director, Don Letts, born in Britain of Jamaican parents, with numerous music videos to his name [...]; a cast that showcased many dancehall giants, such as Beenie Man, alongside seasoned actors such as Paul Campbell and Carl Bradshaw; and wide international distribution and exposure.⁴⁶

The title of the film is also the title of Beenie Man's song, and the title that must be assigned to the winner of the contest between Marcia and Olivene. It becomes a kind of leitmotif, since this song is heard three times in the film. The first time is during the opening credits sequence. Beenie Man is writing it, and singing it while some people behind him are preparing a stage. Then we hear it again during the contest: Marcia has just been crowned as the dancehall queen, and Beenie Man performs it on stage with Chevelle Franklyn. And finally, as it had opened the film, it closes it too, since it

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p.86. In this chapter (2), Cooper compares Bob Marley to Shabba Ranks, to demonstrate that both sang of slackness, in keeping with their time, and that the only thing that divides them is the heroic status conferred to Marley by his international success. She also tries to show that what is commonly referred to as slackness is in fact only a praise of natural sexuality.

⁴⁶ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.108.

sounds in the background of the closing credits. *Dancehall Queen* is a song in praise of Marcia, and it tells her story too. The refrain says: “she’s a dancehall queen for life, gonna explode like dynamite. And she’s moving out of sight, now she a go mash up di place like dynamite”.

Soon after the film begins, we are presented Tanya, Marcia’s daughter, who has to defend herself from Larry, the man who is taking economic care of Marcia’s family and who wants Tanya as a reward for it. The song in the background is *1865 (96° in the Shade)*, by Third World. This song

Was a slice of Jamaican history that was a major hit abroad. ‘That is strictly about Paul Bogle, who was hanged in Jamaica for leading a revolution against the English for equal rights and justice for his people,’ says [William] Clark. ‘That was a true story, and the year for that was 1865. Paul Bogle is one of Jamaica’s national heroes, so the same way Burning Spear sings about Marcus Garvey, we sing about Paul Bogle.’⁴⁷

As in any other film, apart from *The Harder They Come* and *Rockers*, there is also an instrumental soundtrack, created for the film, and inserted unobtrusively to create the atmosphere of the scene.

Marcia and her brother, at night, work as street vendors outside of a dancehall. The first time we see it, we are also presented the kind of people going to this place, in particular the female dancers and the way they dress and act. As long as the camera remains out of the dancing room, there is the song *Tear Off Me Garment* by Beenie Man. This song, as the title shows, is a typical dancehall song, with quite explicit lyrics: the singer boasts about his many girls and his sexual prowess.

When the camera takes us inside, we can appreciate Anthony B on stage, performing *Fire Pon Rome*. This song is quite different from a characteristic dancehall song. It does not relate to sex or guns. It is meant to uplift Jamaican people, and it is a strong statement against the religious and political oppression of black people. The attack on the Pope is just an excuse to expose various injustices suffered by Jamaicans in the course of history and because of the contemporary political situation. In this song, for the Bobo Rasta singer, Rome becomes Babylon, the symbol of evil on earth.⁴⁸

After her refusal to submit to Larry’s will, Tanya goes to the beach and has fun with some friends and the boy she likes. The song for this carefree afternoon is *Unbelievable*, by the Marley Girls, a love song.

When Marcia goes to check the dancehall clothes in the shops, in order to see what she likes and what she can make on her own, the song in the background is *Nuff Gal* by Beenie Man. As many other songs by Beenie Man before becoming a Rasta, this song too deals with his many girlfriends:

⁴⁷ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.240. William Clark is a member of Third World, and he related this explanation in an interview to Katz.

⁴⁸ Carolyn Cooper, in *Sound Clash – Jamaica Dancehall Culture at Large* (chapter 1, pp.58-69), discusses extensively on this song and its implications.

the deejay boasts about all the girls that want him, about the fact that these girls would do anything for him, and that he needs to be in perfect health in order to satisfy them all.

Back in the dancehall, and while Marcia is exercising in the dance movements, we hear the song *Shot Mek You Wiggle* by Junior Demus, another dancehall tune, as almost all the songs present in the rest of the film. Actually, the first time that Marcia goes to dance, the song is *Little and Cute* by Frisco Kid, when she is back to her everyday life and to her dance rehearsal, the song is *Soap Opera* by Prezident Brown, and when she goes back to the dancehall the song is *Joy Ride* by Wayne Wonder & Baby Cham.

When Marcia goes to Larry's club, the song on which the go-go dancers do their show is *Gal Dem A Ride Me Nature* by Bounty Killer, the title of which is quite telling about the subject of the lyrics.

The third time Marcia goes to dance, there are a couple of performances on stage: Beenie Man with *Tear Off Mi Garment* and Lady Saw, the most influential Jamaican female deejay, with *Serious Allegations*. Carolyn Cooper estimates greatly Lady Saw, describing her as follows:

The flamboyantly exhibitionist DJ Lady Saw epitomizes the sexual liberation of many African Jamaican working-class women from airy-fairy Judaeo-Christian definitions of appropriate female behavior. In a decisive act of feminist emancipation, Lady Saw cut loose from the burdens of moral guardianship. She embodies the erotic. But one's viewer's erotica is another's pornography. So Lady Saw is usually censured for being far too loose – or “slack,” in the Jamaican vernacular. Or worse, she is dismissed as a mere victim of patriarchy, robbed of all agency.⁴⁹

The concluding contest night sees five different songs on which Marcia and Olivene dance. These songs are typically dancehall tunes, with hard rhythm and lyrics.

As happened in *Klash*, in *Dancehall Queen* too the soundtrack is mostly unobtrusive. The music is always present, a fundamental element of the dancehall context, but it does not create a relationship with the story. In the film, we can hear some of the most important dancehall artists, and the various themes they face in their songs. But these tunes are not used in combination with the images. The soundtrack remains in the background, adding the dancehall flavour to the film.

3.5.6 *THIRD WORLD COP*.

Third World Cop is slightly different from the films analysed so far, in that its soundtrack is composed by Sly & Robbie, which means that it is mainly instrumental. In fact, the credits sequence features their tune *Zen Concrete*; and another of their songs, *Drilling for Oil* will be heard when Capone, after having returned to Kingston, is surveying the place where he has to work. Some of the

⁴⁹ Carolyn Cooper, *Op. Cit.*, p.99. In chapter three of her book, Cooper discusses extensively on Lady Saw, her lyrics and her character.

music created for the film is instrumental, made ad hoc to build the atmosphere of the scenes, or instrumental versions of popular songs, introduced for the same reason.

Nonetheless, one song characterizes the whole film, becoming a leitmotif, and Capone's motto. It is *We Run Tings* by Red Dragon. It is heard three times, and Capone uses its refrain to explain his point of view. He keeps saying to his colleague that "we run tings, tings nah run we". Capone wants to be in charge of every situation, he does not allow the events to make decisions for him. This is why his job as a policeman is effective in the fight to crime, but his methods are not always respectful of the law.

The first time this song appears is when Capone goes back to Dungle. He is working, and he is looking for some people involved in the stealing of some charity food barrels, who can help him to understand what is happening, and who is responsible for it. As his methods are debatable but successful, he "runs tings": he immediately finds the information he is looking for.

The song reappears when the film is drawing to a conclusion. Capone knows who is ruling the weapons trade, and who is involved in it. He is only trying to find a way to prove their guilt. This is why he dresses up as a woman, and why he goes to One Hand's bar in order to know what will happen next. This is how he discovers that Not Nice, his colleague, is involved in the illegal business. When he overhears where two of the people working for One Hand are living, he takes a bicycle and goes to their house. For once, he only wants to interrogate them, but Not Nice, knowing that they can tell him what they know, and because of the dislike Jamaicans have for "informers", arrives at the same time and kills them both. The song underlines the fact that, in order to "run tings", Capone is willing to do anything, even to dress as a woman in a country that has a notorious problem with everything that is not perceived as straight heterosexuality. In fact, when Not Nice sees him dressed in women's clothes, he calls him "batty boy", which is the offensive Jamaican name for homosexuals.

The last time this song is inserted in the film is at the end, during the very last scene, a close up of Capone leaving after the killing of Ratty, and the closing credits. It is the logical conclusion, a kind of summary of Capone's way of life, the only way through which he has been able to solve the case. Other songs are present in the film. One of the first, when Capone returns to Kingston after some years of service in Port Antonio, is *Police and Thieves*, the same Junior Murvin song as in *Rockers*, this time sung by Luciano. It sets the tone of the story, since the plot revolves around the typical theme of police and bad men.

Another song that matches the scene it is inserted in is *Call the Police*, by the Marley Brothers. It occurs when Capone is looking after people in the Dungle. The song sounds a bit ironical, since in the ghetto, people hardly call the police. The song matches with the arrival of Capone, and

underlines the difference between the lyrics and the images. It is true that someone shouts “police!”, but this is done only in order to warn the ghetto dwellers that may be doing something against the law, like smoking ganja, and not because they need help. The police is not always viewed with sympathy in the ghettos, and not only in Kingston.

After having met Ratty, Capone goes with him to a dancehall. Here he meets another friend he had in Kingston before his departure, Rita. He spends some time with her, while in the background, on stage, Lady G is performing her *Man A Bad Man*, and Buccaneer his *Bad Man Story*. Almost all the songs in this film deal with themes concerning bad men and tough characters. They are inserted in a story that deals with these same themes too.

The songs are ragga songs. The soundtrack features also Beenie Man and the Innocent Crew. They are useful to keep the pace with the rhythm of the story, to create the atmosphere for the various scenes. Their subject matters are linked to those presented in the film, making it possible to fuse images and sound in the creation of a unique message.

3.5.7 SHOTTAS.

In *Shottas*, the soundtrack has again an active relationship with the story. The songs inserted in the background try to match the images on the screen, as a commentary or an addition to what is shown. The credits sequence, that shows us a wide shot of Waterhouse, one of the so-called Kingston’s ghettos, is accompanied by *Welcome to Jamrock* by Damian “Junior Gong” Marley. Jamrock is another name with which Jamaicans call their country, seeing it as a rock. And the song explains what happens in Jamaica: “poor people a dead at random”, and “out in the street, they call it murder”. The song talks about Jamaican problems, such as the uncontrolled use of firearms, kids not receiving a proper education because of the illusion of an easy life of crime, the sometimes gratuitous violence of the police, and the fact that this situation affects only Jamaicans, and not the tourists who stay on the island in luxurious and isolated resorts, with no contacts with the real life of the country. It prepares the audience for what will happen in the film: “people a dead at random”, in a world of guns and drug dealing.

The film starts showing some kids playing at police and thieves. One of them, Biggs, takes care to kill not only the police, but also the informer. This innocent game actually illustrates what will be Biggs’ and Wayne’s life: they will always be the bad men. While they are playing, a car arrives, and the passenger breaks in a house to kill someone. This murder is what motivates Biggs to take seriously the hypothesis of a criminal life. The song in the background is *Far East* by Barry Brown. As in the other films, sometimes there is instrumental music, used unobtrusively to build the atmosphere of the scenes. However, when Biggs and Wayne talk about the reason why Biggs’

mother sent him back to Jamaica, the soundtrack features *Trial and Crosses* by Nitty Gritty. The consideration that Biggs makes is bitter, and at the same time quite telling. He says that he went to the United States with his mother, but then she sent him back, because he is bad. If one considers Biggs' age, this thought is bitter, because he already knows that his mother does not want him. On the other hand, the fact that his mother believes him to be bad, so young, means that in a sense he is really doomed to lead the kind of life he will lead, he will have no problem in killing in cold blood, extorting, and dealing in drugs.

At a very tender age, Biggs and Wayne make their first robbery. Menacing him with a gun, they steal the money of the man who owns the truck with the drinks. They start with violence very early, showing how life in the ghetto is supposed to be. Not by chance, the song in the background is *In The Ghetto* by Little John.

In the next scene, twenty years have passed. Now we are presented Biggs who returns to Jamaica from the United States as a deportee. He has spent his life of crime in Miami, and was in the end sent to prison. From there he was sent back "a yard", and he is shown to the audience as he arrives at the Kingston's Norman Manley airport. The song accompanying him is *Coming In From The Cold*, by Bob Marley & The Wailers. The lyrics are quite telling about Biggs' situation: "why do you look so sad and forsaken/ when one door is closed don't you know another is open". Actually this is what happened to both Wayne and Biggs: the Miami door closed, but the Jamaican one is wide opened.

Wayne and Mad Max are waiting for Biggs outside the airport. Their return home has in the background the Bounty Killer's song *Dead This Time*. This scene gives an opportunity to the director to show the opulence in which these people live: big houses in Beverly Hills, which is acknowledged as the "better", and for sure the wealthiest, part of Kingston; luxurious cars, jewels and riches everywhere.

In Wayne's house, he and Biggs talk about what can be done in Jamaica: Biggs does not believe that he will be able to have as much money as he had in Miami, and Wayne explains to him how his extortion business is making him rich and feared (or respected, depending on the point of view). The title of the song in the background is again quite telling: *Bad Long Time*, by Hawk Eye. These people have been bad for a very long time, so much that now it is impossible for them to even think about living a different kind of life.

One night, the three indivisible Biggs, Wayne and Max go to a club, the Asylum in Kingston. The song played is *Backshot*, by Spragga Benz and Lady Saw. This song is also in some way the one that characterizes the film: in the menu for the extras of the DVD, the song used as a soundtrack is this one.

The following day, Max is on the road with Blacka, Wayne's younger brother. The police arrives, and starts a shoot-out in which Blacka gets killed. The soundtrack in this case is given by *Catch a Fire* by Damian "Junior Gong" Marley, a song also known as *Slave Driver*. This is another song of protest against police and government, who are not working for poor people, but are only exploiting them, behaving as the slave drivers did in the age of slavery. The refrain opens for the possibility of a change: "slave driver, your table has turned/ catch a fire, you're gonna get burned". Both the lyrics and the images make the police appear as guilty and violent for no good reason.

After Blacka's murdering, a war explodes between Wayne and the policeman who killed him. This causes more killings, and the politician who is a "friend" of Wayne, but who is double crossing both him and the police, asks him to meet, in order to find a solution to the problem. However, Wayne will understand what he is doing, and the politician will pay with his life. In the background, the song is *Gun Man Tune* by Pan Head, a song that accompanies perfectly the gunmen at work.

Gangsta Story by Big Yard All Stars accompanies the inseparable three men back to Miami, and naturally to the business they had left when sent to prison: extortions, drug dealings, murdering, and all the activities a gangster is supposed to pursue to make money.

When Biggs goes to see Brukshot, to tell him that he is back and he wants back the control of the business in his area, the soundtrack features *It A Ring* by Tonto Irie. It accompanies a series of killings of people who do not want to obey Biggs and Wayne, and the full recovery of the business control by the freshly returned Jamaicans.

A moment of showing off the riches that Biggs and Wayne are accumulating through their businesses occurs when Biggs goes to meet his girlfriend. The song in the background is *Fire* by Ky-Mani Marley. The woman is taken to a mall, where she buys clothes and accessories for thousands of dollars, while the men go to a jewellery to buy a couple of watches, amounting to 67.000\$. At the same time, Wayne takes the opportunity to have sex with the jewellery's shop assistant, impressed by their money and gangsterism.

The clothes Biggs' girlfriend bought were for the night's party, where they arrive on a small plane. This dancehall too is useful to show off the riches of the gangsters: jewels, accessories, clothes, cars and bikes. Women are all scantily and flashily dressed, as suited for a dancehall. The songs used to liven up the night are *Would A Let You Go* by Junior Cat and *Bandelero* by Pinchers.

When Biggs and Wayne go back to "work", they follow a small vehicle to steal the cocaine contained in it. The song that accompanies this job is *Call The Police* by John Wayne. It has an ironical meaning, since someone should really call the police, as they are doing something illegal. But on the contrary, no one arrives, and they steal the drug from other dealers without being disturbed.

The attempts to steal Bruckshot's money does not stop here: Biggs and Wayne try to steal directly from his car, driven by his girlfriend. At the same time, Dangle, the man who informed them both of the cocaine and of the money in the girl's car, is killed. The soundtrack features the song *Quench The Fire* by Nicky Seizure. It is meant to be an advice to Biggs and Wayne: they should stop for a while, as they are pushing Bruckshot too far, and he will take revenge very soon.

A moment of tranquillity in this fast pace film comes when Biggs is at home with his girlfriend, and they have sex in the shower. It is probably in this moment that he realizes that he really loves her, and that it would be better to take a break and go somewhere else for a while. The love song accompanying the love scene is *I Believe* by Ky-Mani Marley.

Towards the end of the film, there is the most important shout-out of the story, when Bruckshot's gunmen break in Biggs' house and kill Wayne and his girlfriend, seriously wounding Max. Biggs kills all the gunmen, and takes Max to the hospital, promising to Wayne that he will revenge his death. The song in the background is *Rain* by Ky-Enie. In this case, the song is in contrast with the scene. Probably it was inserted to lessen the violence of the images. The song is sung a cappella, and it sounds very sweet. It deals with death in the ghettos. But it is sung in a manner that sharply contrasts with brutality. The song is not, as others, a praise of bad men. It is a lament for the too many deaths that occur in the ghetto, and the necessity to stop them. The lyrics say: "I really wish it would rain, then maybe it would wash away my pain". This pain is caused by the inability to teach people to respect each other: "I teach them love, still they fight". Then the lyrics describe what happens: "people dying, children crying, and they have nowhere to run. In the city, it's a shame and pity [...] I heard the mother scream, and I saw a young man fail, there goes another victim to the gun [...] Cause it's a bloodshed, down in the ghetto, it's a bloodshed everywhere I go. But all the tears we cry won't ease the sorrow. We'll just have to hope and wish and pray for a better tomorrow". The lyrics match with the images: a bloodshed, more victims to guns. However, the melodious voice of Ky-Enie, and the harmonious air of the song contrast with the images. The insertion of this song at this point of the film is quite powerful and evocative.

Biggs brings Max to the hospital, and then goes to Bruckshot's house to take everything he has and to kill him. In the background, the song is *Discipline Child* by Inner Circle. The film concludes with Biggs going away, on a boat, leaving Miami and all his remembrances behind him.

The closing credits are accompanied by two songs. First, there is *Revelation Time*, by Nicky Seizure. Then *The March* by Ky-Mani Marley. The latter is a bitter song, that is well suited to Biggs' character in the film. It is about the possibility of going to war, in one's own neighbourhood, to defend one's property and right to live as wished.

In *Shottas* the soundtrack is used to create a strong relationship between music and images. As in many other Jamaican films, songs are complementary to the scenes, they explain them, or contrast them, or else are just an embellishment. Nonetheless, they become essential to the film. Without this soundtrack, or with a different one, the story would be received in a totally different way.

3.5.8 ONE LOVE.

One Love is another film in which the soundtrack is constantly present. Sometimes, however, there are just bits of songs, or instrumental versions of them.

This film, more than any other, has a leitmotif song. This is presented seven times, in various versions and various shapes: there is an acoustic version, a dancehall version, an instrumental version, a higher pitch version, and so on. The song is *One By One*, sung mainly by the protagonists, Kassa and Serena.

The first time we hear the refrain of the song is at the beginning of the film. Kassa has dived in the sea. When he comes back to the surface, Nature inspires him this song, allowing him at the same time to hear Serena's voice singing it. He will call it "a vision", since Rastafari are keen on visions and dreams. He immediately writes it down, and rehearses it with his group, the Freedom City. This is the second time we hear the song, sung by Kassa and Claudette, the band's vocalist. However, Kassa is not happy with the way she sings it, because she does not feel the vibe of the words. The song is a Rasta invocation of righteousness and respect, underlining the need to cooperate to make the world a better place: "what I am to do today, so I can leave this world tomorrow? Knowing I've done all that I could to heal the wounds, and lift all the sorrows/ well let your righteousness be your guiding light, and let love keep you warm right through the night/ maybe one by one, we could see that something can be done. With a little piece from everyone, we could make a stand, we could heal this land/ Jah is my inspiration, my dedication, my motivation, way to heal the nation. Rasta music is my only occupation, so to Babylon I have no obligation. Check the situation, political manipulation, will the youth of the land have an education? So prone to tribulation, we burn segregation, and revelation will bring our redemption [...]".

The next time the song is presented is in the recording studio. Both the Freedom City and the Zion Hill Gospel, Serena's church choir, are participating to a music contest that would allow them to win 20.000 US dollars and a recording contract. It is the first time Kassa and Serena meet: she is singing, and Kassa is struck by her, since he has heard her in his vision. After her performance, Kassa's band perform *One By One*.

When Kassa manages to convince Serena to meet him, to show her his song, she is accompanied by her younger brother. In the park, he plays the song for her, acoustically, with the sole accompaniment of his guitar.

In the meantime, Kassa and his band refuse the contract that Selector G, producer and promoter of the contest, offers them, which would mean for the band to lose all the rights on their song. Claudette, who does not agree with this choice, and who is eager for fame and fortune, no matter the price, sells on her own the song to Selector G. He makes her sing it in a dancehall version: the lyrics remain the same, but the rhythm and the base change, so that the song sounds very different, and its original message is lost in the electronic beat. This will cause the first confrontation between Selector G and Kassa and his band.

The next time we hear the song, the situation is completely different. Serena goes to Kassa's community to see him. They spend some time together, always accompanied by her brother, in the majestic beauty of the landscape where the Rastas have established a community. They talk, get to know each other better, exchange thoughts about life and music. In the background, there is an instrumental version of *One By One*, a tonality higher than the "regular" song.

The last time *One By One* is performed, it occurs during the final competition. Kassa does not want to be with Serena anymore, because she does not trust him. Yet, he is still in love with her, and this is the reason why he is not able to sing the song. It seems that they will miserably fail, as he is not able to concentrate while the band has started to play. At the last moment, Serena appears, and starts to sing with him. We are not shown who wins the contest, but at the end of the song Kassa proposes Serena to marry him, with the approval of her father, concluding the film with a happy ending.

One By One is the film's song, it characterizes it. Moreover, it also characterizes the protagonists' love story, since it links them from the beginning to the end of the film. It is also the only song that Kassa and Serena sing together. It represents the triumph of Rastafari love over narrow-minded bigotry.

This Angel is heard four times in the film. It is Serena's song, the one that Zion Hill Gospel presents for the contest. It is a typically religious song, saying "may this angel watch over me". It is presented three times in the church, and once in the recording studio. The first time we hear it is in the church, during a rehearsal, when her father tells her "let's win [...] for Jesus". Then, in the following scene, she is singing it in the recording studio, just before meeting Kassa.

Back at home, she rehearses it at the piano, trying to sing it as Kassa suggested to her outside the recording studio. When Aaron comes to talk with her about the wedding, he does not pay attention to what she is saying, or to the changes she is trying to make to the song. He dismisses her very quickly.

The last time Serena rehearses the song in the church occurs just before the final competition. She has deluded Kassa, she does not love Aaron, whom she is supposed to marry. Her life seems on a wrong path. This very moment the police arrives to arrest Aaron, guilty of having asked his friend to beat Kassa and the rest of his band, and of having used corrupted officers to put cocaine in Kassa's house, so as to make him appear as a dealer to Serena. Aaron appears for what he really is, and Kassa will arrive at the right moment to solve the situation. It is probably in this moment that the pastor changes his mind on Kassa, who however goes away immediately, after having proved his innocence to Serena and having left her.

In this film there are three musical genres, related to three distinct groups of people. The producer, Selector G, is associated with dancehall. Not only him, but also everything related to him: his club, his collaborators, and all the bad things that happen in the film, such as the beating of the Rastas ordered by his assistant, are underlined by hard dancehall music.

The Church is linked to gospels. All the songs sung by the choir are, obviously, religious hymns, or in any case songs that are suitable for a church, talking about "milk and honey in the sky", as one of Kassa's group says.

The Rastas play Rasta music, reggae. They refuse dancehall, because it would distort the message they want to promote.

The music of Rastafarians spreads their message of peace, love, and black dignity; it also fights Babylon, and is a most effective bearer of "praise and thanks to Jah".⁵⁰

In the Rasta community on the hills, there are also Nyabinghi drumming and traditional chants, all dealing with Rasta themes. For instance, we hear in the background the song *Hill and Gully Rider*, which is a traditional Jamaican song:

Most Jamaicans know "Hill an' Gully Rider" as a work song. It, however, started life as a rather athletic game played by men and boys in western Maroon towns. Considering the terrain of the country in which they live, it is quite conceivable for them to have invented a game in which the players' movements simulate the jagged outlines of the hills.⁵¹

Apart from the two songs analysed so far, there are many others in *One Love*. With this title, which is a Rasta greeting, it would have been impossible that Bob Marley's song by the same title would not be introduced. Actually, it is the very first song of the soundtrack. It accompanies the credits sequence, with a running shot that takes the audience from the sea to the land, on the hills where Kassa lives, and then from there to Kassa himself, on a cliff, who is going to dive in the sea.

⁵⁰ Olive Lewin, *Rock It Come Over. The Folk Music Of Jamaica*, Kingston, University of the West Indies Press, 2000, p.208.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p.82.

When Kassa, after having met Serena, decides to go to her church, the song in the background is *Solid as a Rock*, by Sizzla. This song, by a Bobo Ashanti⁵², talks about purity of the heart: the man is uncontaminated, he knows that he is acting properly, not doing harm, so nothing that happens around him, or against him, can touch him. The refrain is very explicit: “I’m solid as a rock, they just can’t stop me now. Even when they set their traps, they just can’t stop me now. People will say this and that, they just can’t stop me now. Even when they set up road blocks, they just can’t stop me now.” The song describes Kassa. He is as solid as a rock, too. He knows that, going to Serena’s church, he will have problems. He knows that he will not be accepted, and that people will try to stop him. But he does not care. He is solid in his faith. He knows that he is doing nothing wrong. Nothing can stop him, his mind and his heart are pure.

The first time Serena goes to Kassa’s place, they walk on the beach, and then up in the hills, to his community. The song that describes the landscape and the feeling that is growing between them is *Natural Mystic* by Wayne Marshall. The song is obviously based on Bob Marley’s *Natural Mystic*, but apart from the first line, it is different, and independent. It has lost its apocalyptic tone, to become a song of hope, and of universal love: “there’s a natural mystic, blowing on the world, reaching every man, woman and boy and girl, natural mystic, blowing through the trees from the Africas to the West Indies. Natural mystic striking in the land, making everybody know a man is just a man, natural mystic coming from above bringing unity and just love”. Love in this case is the one between Serena and Kassa, unity is the one between Rastas and Christians.

In order to go to Kassa, Serena has tricked Aaron, letting him believe that she is on a bus, while she has taken a taxi. Aaron, to see what she is doing, follows the bus, driving for a long time and arriving in town. In his car, the song the radio plays is *Respect Your Wife*, by Cecile. It is something that Aaron should learn to do, since he is going to marry Serena, but he does not trust her, and he does not respect her.

While Aaron is following the bus, Serena is with Kassa in his community. Someone is playing the drums, and singing *Rastaman Chant*, a traditional song made popular all over the world by Bob Marley. The song is about the prophecy of the falling of Babylon.

Claudette, who wants to be famous, and senses that Serena is going to take her place as a singer for *One By One*, decides to sell it to Selector G. She thus goes to his office, accompanied by the song *I’m Still In Love With You*, by Sean Paul and Sasha. This song has been given new popularity by the great success of Sean Paul, but it is an old track that has been versioned many times. At the beginning, this was a classical love song, by Alton Ellis (1967). Sean Paul changed the lyrics and

⁵² See Chapter 5, pp.178-180, for a description of this branch of Rastafari.

made its meaning change. In his version, it is a song that talks about a man who does not want any commitment to women, and tells it clearly to the woman who is probably in love with him.

Because of the problems caused by Kassa and his band's refusal to sell the song to Selector G, they are not admitted to the contest. The Zion Hill Gospel is. Serena goes to see Kassa, to tell him that she is sorry that they have not been accepted. The song in the background is *Geenie*, by Shaggy, featuring Brian and Tony Gold. It is a love song, of a man who is deeply in love with his woman, as is Kassa with Serena.

When the Rasta band is beaten, the soundtrack features hard dancehall, which will reappear when the producer believes he has become deaf. And finally, when Aaron is taking Serena home, and he argues with her, almost becoming violent, his radio is again playing dancehall. On the other side, in the Rasta community there is only Nyabinghi drumming.

In Selector G's club, where scantily dressed dancers try to seduce customers (among whom there is, in a cameo role, Trevor Rhone, the writer of the film), or at least to make them buy drinks, the song played by the deejay is, again, *Respect Your Wife*. Among the dancers there is Claudette, who has been used only to get the rights for the song, and now as a common *entraineuse*.

Kassa rescues Serena, when Aaron is becoming violent with her. Serena goes away with him. The feeling that there is between them is clear, and the song in the background underlines it: it is *Feel Love*, by Cherine Anderson.

During the final competition there are some performances, among the others by the Innocent Crew, before Kassa and his band can access the stage, to sing their song, backed by the whole Zion Hill Gospel choir. This is the end of the film: it closes with the promise of marriage of Kassa and Serena. The closing credits have two songs in the soundtrack: the first is once again *Geenie*, and the second is *No Letting Go*, by Wayne Wonder. Both songs are love songs, which logically conclude this love story and its happy ending.

In this film, music and images are indissoluble, in many ways. The plot revolves around a music contest, the leading roles are given to singers, and the soundtrack is omnipresent. Moreover, the musical genres presented make of this film a purely Jamaican story.

3.6 UNIMPORTANT SOUNDTRACKS.

It seldom happens that a Jamaican film does not rely heavily on an important soundtrack. Nonetheless, sometimes it happens. Only three films have an irrelevant soundtrack, and two co-productions with the States. These films are *Smile Orange*, *Children of Babylon*, *Glory to Gloriana*, and then *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta's Paradise*.

When I asked Trevor Rhone why he did not use a reggae soundtrack for his film *Smile Orange*, he told me that it was not his choice. The film relies on a blues-jazz soundtrack, which is not particularly good. He also told me that if it had been based on reggae music, it would have sold a lot more.⁵³ After having seen the film, it is hard to disagree with him. Keith Warner says, about the soundtrack, that

The film score is not typically Jamaican, in that it is not reggae-dominated. There are traditional ‘welcome to Jamaica’ songs performed without much gusto [...]. Ringo’s exploits are often accompanied by a female chorus.⁵⁴

The precredits sequence is accompanied by an instrumental soundtrack. Generally all the soundtrack is instrumental, on a kind of reggae base, but it is not very present. Contrary to some films that have constantly music in the background, *Smile Orange*’s background is for the most silent; dialogues are delivered without musical accompaniment.

When the tourists arrive at the hotel, a small band plays *Welcome to Jamaica*, and in the restaurant a woman plays the guitar while the guests are dining.

The only peculiarity of this film’s soundtrack is the song that characterizes Ringo, the protagonist. This song, sung by a woman, describes Ringo’s approach to life, and its refrain, which says “Ringo Smith is his name, survival is his game”, summarizes in a few words the character.

Children of Babylon’s soundtrack is peculiar. There are some songs, which match the scenes they are inserted in, but the songs are composed by Harold Butler, for the lyrics written by Lennie Little-White, the director. The main song of the film, which is inserted more than once throughout the story, has the same title of the film, and is meant to be a comment on the plot.

In *Glory to Gloriana* the soundtrack is unobtrusive and always in the background. The director is the same as in *Children of Babylon*, which may explain why both have the same kind of soundtrack. The songs are generally unimportant, and mainly instrumental. However, there is a leitmotif. The song has the same title as the film, and it appears various times and in various versions. Moreover, it opens and closes the film, accompanying both the opening and the closing credits. This song tells the (true) story of Gloriana, a woman who was born in the poor countryside and who managed, thanks to her hard labour, to own a hotel in Montego Bay.

Apart from *Glory to Gloriana*, the other songs try to match the scenes in which they are inserted. For instance, when Gloria meets Milton, the song in the background is Alton Ellis’ *Girl, I’ve Got A Date*. When she leaves Mr. Sinclair, her departure is accompanied by *Lord Give Me Strength* by Luciano. When Gloria and Milton dance, after having bought the bar, the song played by the radio is *Tempted To Touch* by Beres Hammond. Finally, there is also a Kumina song, when Mother Jonas

⁵³ Trevor Rhone, in conversation with me, November 16, 2007.

⁵⁴ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.90.

tries to cure Milton of his illness⁵⁵. However, the songs are inserted just because of the mood they can suggest for the scenes; they are not a comment on them.

The last two films here analysed are very similar in everything, included the soundtrack. In both films, the music is taken from Jamaican and American singers, deejays and rappers. They both mix gangsta rap, a certain genre of hip hop that reflects the violent lifestyles of some (American) inner-city youths, and the lyrics of which tend to present homophobia, violence, profanity, promiscuity, misogyny, rape, street gangs, drive-by shootings, vandalism, thievery, crime, drug dealing, alcohol abuse, substance abuse and materialism⁵⁶, and ragga. Some themes and features are common to both genres.

Rude Boy proposes a combination of Jamaicans like Buju Banton and Americans like Snoop Dog. However, the soundtrack is unobtrusive, always in the background, useful only to create the atmosphere of the scenes. Hard-core hip-hop and ragga underline the violence of the story, and keep the pace with the rhythm of the film.

There are only two peculiarities in this film. The first concerns a small performance by Julius, the protagonist, who sings once in a dancehall. He wants to become famous, “the next Bob Marley”. In order to do this, he should go to the United States, and this is the reason why he accepts to work as a mule: it will grant him a sure access to the country, since the people he works for have (illegal) connections that can guarantee to him a safe passage there. This wish to become a singer links the Jamaican world with music, as if Jamaica was characterized only by drugs and music.

The second particularity occurs when Julius and his girlfriend go to a Caribbean restaurant. This is the only time, in this film, when there is “Caribbean” music in the background. The people that go to this place do it in order to feel some Caribbean “flavour”, and music is integral for this. So, they recur to what is generally considered as Jamaican *par excellence*: reggae music.

To conclude with this film, a curiosity: the character played by Ninjaman is called Gargon. Ninjaman is not the only nickname of this singer. He is also known as The Original Front Tooth, Gold Tooth, Gun Pon Tooth, Don Gorgon. In this way, his stage name and his character’s name come to coincide.

Gangsta’s Paradise’s soundtrack is mixed too: the greatest portion of it is made by gangsta rap, while the rest is ragga. The film has only a vague link with Jamaica, and ragga is heard only when Jamaica is concerned. This is why the soundtrack features mainly hard-core hip-hop.

The credits sequence features the song *You’re a Gangster*, which, besides describing the characters, will also become the film’s main theme. The song reappears sometimes throughout the story. However, much as the rest of the soundtrack is, it is always extradiegetic, in the background and

⁵⁵ See Chapter 5, pp.140-143, for a description of this scene and of the Kumina religion.

⁵⁶Gangsta Rap, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gangsta_rap, accessed January 11, 2009.

unobtrusive. It is inserted for the audience, to create the mood of the film, and not to comment on it. Moreover, the soundtrack is generally instrumental.

The closing credits feature the song *Is It Worthy*, which deals with the uselessness of drug abuse and of the senseless killings, as a kind of morale to the film.

In this work too there are a couple of peculiarities. At the beginning, when two Mafioso meet to discuss business, they talk about the “Family”, and the music in the background opens imitating *The Godfather*’s soundtrack, as an explicit quotation from the more famous (and out of comparison) film. Then, towards the end of the film, there is a small performance. In Los Angeles, there is a group of Rastas who is rehearsing a song, *Rocky Road*. This group represents the link between the Rastas in the United States and the drug dealing establishment in Jamaica.

The different kind of soundtrack of these two films can be linked to the fact that they are co-productions, and so they were imagined by directors used to classical film scores. As regards the Jamaican films with an unimportant soundtrack, they can be considered exceptions, even if the few songs they use try to have a close link with the images they are meant to underline.

3.7 CONCLUSION: MUSIC HAS SOMETHING TO SAY.

When Perry Henzell made *The Harder They Come*, he probably did not expect that its soundtrack would have such a success. That kind of music, at that time, was popular only in Jamaica. The fact that the film was issued simultaneously with Bob Marley’s first international album, and that reggae became a favourite genre with all kinds of audiences, granted its triumph all over the world.

When the other directors saw the importance that music had in Henzell’s film, they decided to imitate his example. This allowed the music, so important in Jamaican life, to assume a great relevance in the realization of films.

Moreover, it was impossible that music would not become a special element in filmmaking, since it has always been a part of Jamaica’s life, brought from Africa on the first slave ships. Music was used in every moment of life, and for every occasion. In Jamaica, though it was not always tolerated, the practice continued, and it is felt in the same way today too. Music is the only way to express various kinds of feelings, and for many years it meant survival for a large section of society. This is one of the reasons why Jamaica keeps being linked to music: it was and still is a vital part of the people’s life.

The films made on the island reflect the importance of music in Jamaican life, and they use all the techniques that the means offer to stage the music in pace with the changing times. Generally, the soundtrack is a postmodern and pop scoring. In a brief synthesis:

- *The Harder They Come* presents ska and rocksteady. There is a singer acting, the music is part of the plot, and the soundtrack is important for the meaning of the story. The music is both diegetic, in the recording studio and the dancehall, for instance, and extradiegetic, when it remains in the background, heard by the audience only. It is played both on screen, as for example sometimes we see a radio in the frame, and off screen. It is both actual, coming from a real source (for instance, the band playing in the studio), and commentative (many times we do not see the source of the music). The soundtrack is participating, as a comment on the scenes it underlines. A leitmotiv characterizes the protagonist and his experience. Finally, the soundtrack is never unobtrusive; on the contrary, it is meant to be heard.
- *Smile Orange* has a generally extradiegetic soundtrack, except for the small performance of a welcome by a group of singers and the woman with a guitar in the dining room. This is the reason why it is also both on and off screen, and actual and commentative. However, it remains distant, it does not participate to the film's emotion, and it is totally unobtrusive.
- *Rockers* has singers acting, music as part of the plot, and the soundtrack is fundamental. It stages roots reggae. The music is both diegetic and extradiegetic, both on and off screen, actual and commentative. It is always participating. There is no leitmotiv in the strictest sense, but a song is repeated many times. The soundtrack is never unobtrusive; on the contrary it becomes the story.
- *Countryman* has an important soundtrack too, that scores roots reggae. It is mostly extradiegetic, and generally commentative, except for a few times when it is on screen and actual. The music is participating. It is not meant to be unobtrusive, as it comments and underlines the scenes.
- *Children of Babylon* scores reggae music. The soundtrack is extradiegetic, off screen, commentative, distant and unobtrusive.
- In general *The Lunatic* scores reggae, but it includes also pop songs and classical music. The soundtrack is extradiegetic and unobtrusive, off screen and commentative. Apart for a few instances where it is participating, it remains distant.
- *Klash* scores dancehall. Music is part of the plot, and it has an important role. The soundtrack is both diegetic (during the performances and in the club) and extradiegetic. The sound is both on and off screen, both actual and commentative, and both participating and distant. It is generally unobtrusive, except for the performances.
- *Dancehall Queen* scores dancehall. The soundtrack is fundamental, there are singers acting, and music is part of the plot. The soundtrack is both diegetic and extradiegetic, on and off screen, actual and commentative. It is generally distant but not unobtrusive.

- *Third World Cop* scores dancehall. Some singers act, and the soundtrack is important. It is both diegetic and extradiegetic, on and off screen, actual and commentative. It remains distant and unobtrusive, but with a leitmotiv.
- *Shottas* stages dancehall, singers acting and an important soundtrack, which is generally extradiegetic, off screen and commentative, participating but unobtrusive.
- *Rude Boy* scores dancehall and gangsta rap. It is extradiegetic apart from Julius' performance. Consequently, the music is also off screen and commentative, distant and unobtrusive. Some singers act, and music is a very small part of the plot.
- *Gangsta's Paradise* scores dancehall and gangsta rap. It has singers acting, and a leitmotiv. The soundtrack is extradiegetic, off screen, commentative, unobtrusive and distant.
- *One Love* scores reggae, dancehall and gospel music. There are singers acting, an important soundtrack and music is part of the plot. The soundtrack is both diegetic (during the performances) and extradiegetic. As a consequence, it is both on and off screen, actual and commentative. It is participating and not unobtrusive. There is a leitmotiv.
- *Glory to Gloriana* scores reggae. There is only one diegetic performance, thus on screen and actual. For the rest, the soundtrack is extradiegetic, off screen, commentative, distant and unobtrusive.

4. REPRESENTATIONS OF DANCE AND DANCEHALL CULTURE.

When the British, in the 1960s, saw how Jamaican immigrants in England danced to reggae, they were astonished and shocked. Their quite explicit pelvic movements offended British sense of “decency”, and became associated with the supposed insatiable sexuality of Jamaicans. To this day, the stigma of being too overtly sexual, and of being a bad example for the youth has remained attached to Jamaican dance, both at home and abroad.

Dance, being so closely associated with music, has in Jamaica the same importance as music, and is therefore used in various contexts and for various reasons. As happened for music, the African base of dance was syncretized with European movements in the New World.

4.1 AFRICAN RETENTIONS AND THE ROLE OF DANCEHALL FROM THE AGE OF SLAVERY TO THESE DAYS.

When they arrived in Jamaica, the slaves realised that they had few means of resisting oppression. Deprived of every right, brutalised and with no possibility of communicating verbally through the various ethnic groups¹, they had to resort to the few things that were allowed (though controlled) to them: religion, music and dance. This is the reason why dance became a mode of resistance for the slaves, to be used against the oppressive system that tried to annihilate them.

Blacks have used religion and music to fight all forms of oppression. Because African cultures are permeated with religious forces, blacks have never lost sight of the potency of religion in protests. Also, because music and dance are integral parts of African life, blacks have effectively used them to vent their rage. It is not surprising, therefore, that religion, music and dance have enabled black people to survive five hundred years of white culture of violence and economic exploitation.²

The reason why slave masters allowed slaves to dance on the plantations (though only on specific occasions, and under their control) was that they did not realise the powerful means it could be:

When slave owners and officials in the Americas outlawed certain types of drumming and verbal expressions, blacks used dance and body movements as alternative means of communication.³

Dance acquired more and more importance in the Jamaican context, specifically because it was fraught with possibilities of expressing feelings that had to be otherwise concealed.

As a communication device, dance uses different types of gestures, body movements, body decorations, and even masks. Dance could serve as a form of record keeping. [...] Dance is

¹ See Chapter 2, p.30.

² Don C. Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation – Religions and Music of Resistance in Africa and the Diaspora*, Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea, Africa World Press, Inc, 2007, p.2.

³ *Ibidem*, pp.9-10.

therefore a text, a form of cultural inscription that one can learn to imprint with one's body. Choreography simply means to write with the body. [...] One's body belongs to oneself, the language by which the body expresses itself does not have to be anyone else's language. And it is the exercise of the imagination that has proven to be the best guarantee for survival, from the days of slavery to the post-colonial period.

Dance and music serve certain political functions; they are used as vehicles for conveying political protests, for preserving identity, for relieving the weight of oppression, for combating colonial expression, and for sheer surviving in the face of European colonial violence.⁴

As such, dance became a fundamental means of expression, a function that remains up to this day. It is still one of the most important features in religious ceremonies. Almost every syncretic religion in the Caribbean uses music and dance as a way to summon the spirits, and sometimes to go into a trance. Jamaica is no exception to this rule.⁵ Moreover, it remains true that in contemporary Jamaica dance is a tool for expressing social and political protests, and above all identity, especially, as some critics argue⁶, of women.

After slavery, dance remained important in Jamaica. It was also a means of dividing society into classes: people of different colours and different wealth went to different social dances⁷. There was no mixing of groups. Again, this is still true today: the so-called "uptown" people do not like, and, more important, do not attend the "downtown" dancehalls⁸. Uptown people prefer to go to clubs, while downtown people attend dancehalls⁹. However, some uptown youths crossed the borders, and

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp.11-12.

⁵ I analyse religion in Chapter 5. A deeper understanding of how dance inspires trances and the contact with ancestral spirits can be found, for instance, in Don C. Ohadike, *Ibidem*, and Olive Lewin, *Op. Cit.*. An analysis of folk dances, among which there are also religious dances, can be found as well in Hilary S. Carty, *Folk Dances of Jamaica: An Insight*, Cecil Court, London, Dance Books Ltd., 1988.

⁶ For instance, Carolyn Cooper is a strong advocate of the importance of dancehalls.

⁷ For a more detailed survey of the changing of dancehalls from slavery to the 21st century, see Norman C. Stolzoff, *Wake the Town and Tell the People. Dancehall Culture in Jamaica*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2000, chapters 2 to 4.

⁸ Norman C. Stolzoff, in *Op. Cit.*, p.231, explains quite clearly what is meant by uptown and downtown people: "On the one hand, uptown is the gloss for the suburban part of Kingston where the lighter-skinned middle and upper classes live. [...] The uptown areas of Kingston are not homogeneous in terms of race or class. [...] Nevertheless, uptown is associated with such symbols as the ruling establishment, the government, official nationalism, Euro-American cosmopolitanism, mainstream Christian morality, a belief in education and hard work, respect for the older generations, and a disdain for black lower-class culture. Typically, uptown moralizes against dancehall, although not participating in it directly.

Downtown, on the other hand, is a geographical metaphor for the inner-city slum areas and poor rural districts where the darker-skinned lower classes live. Downtown is associated with the downpressed masses, [...] black nationalism, Afro-Jamaican culture, Rastafari, the informal economy, criminality, gangsterism, respect for the younger generations, and a disdain for uptown culture and political leadership. Typically, downtown participates in dancehall and uses it as a medium of economic sustenance, cultural expression, and social protest."

⁹ The term dancehall defines both a kind of music and a place where people meet to dance. The *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (*Op. Cit.*, p.187) gives this definition of "dancehall": "n. (Jmca) A type of *reggae* music marked by electronically produced bass rhythms, but without the message-carrying lyrics characteristic of *reggae*; it is heavily influenced by pop-music themes but maintains the popularity of the *reggae* beat in dance-halls, hence the name. □ The

nowadays it is quite common to see young people from all over the city in dancehalls, which are nonetheless still regarded as dangerous and lascivious places.

Dancehalls started to appear with the sound systems in the 1950s¹⁰, and since then the two go together, sometimes becoming synonymous. Dancehall was, and still is, a space where young people could relax, distract themselves from life's hardships, and also assert their own values. Dancehall has always had an influence, and an important place, in Jamaicans' lives. Norman Stolzoff sees it as a space of active cultural production:

Dancehall is not merely a sphere of passive consumerism. It is a field of active cultural production, a means by which black lower-class youth articulate and project a distinct identity in local, national, and global contexts; through dancehall, ghetto youth also attempt to deal with the endemic problems of poverty, racism, and violence.¹¹

Though asserting that it would be wrong to assume that dancehall, because of its concern with appearances, is a "merely superficial cultural style", Stolzoff nonetheless remarks that it is mainly this aspect that attracts participants and bolsters criticism by non-participants:

Perhaps the human body is where the most significant symbols and practices of dancehall circulates, however. Through fashion, speech, and techniques of the body, ghetto youth mark their participation in dancehall and assert their control over the public space they occupy. Styles of clothing, haircuts, and jewelry worn to dancehall sessions have now become daily garb. These fashion statements are a source of ongoing controversy, and they have come to signify a subordinate and oppositional position within Jamaica's race-class hierarchy.¹²

Many times, dancehall becomes the only way for ghetto youths to express themselves, and to have some kind of power that is otherwise denied them.

The sound systems continue to be a unique medium for communication, social interaction, education, moral leadership, political action, and economic activity, especially for blacks from poor backgrounds, who – as a social bloc – tend to be systematically excluded from positions of power in the nation's print and electronic media, government bureaucracy, corporate hierarchy, and religious establishment.¹³

As such, dancehall culture becomes important and influential in Jamaican society. Even those people who do not accept and criticize it are aware of its authority and of its function as a safety valve for ghetto youths' anger. Dancehall has become, in time, a space where lower classes have asserted their values, and have opposed them to those of upper classes. It has also become a place where to create social and political roles.

term is now much used in the ECar." In this thesis, except where differently stated, I use the term dancehall to refer to the place where people meet and dance, no matter the kind of music played.

¹⁰ See Appendix 2, pp.376-377.

¹¹ Norman C. Stolzoff, *Op. Cit.*, p.1.

¹² *Ibidem*, p.2.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p.4.

Dancehall [...] has functioned as a space where the symbolic distinctions and the social divisions of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and political affiliation in Jamaican society are made, reinforced, undone. In this sense, it is both an emblem of black identity and solidarity and a marker of social difference. [...] For the lighter-skinned middle and upper classes, glossed as *uptown* people, opposition to dancehall has galvanized their sense of cultural superiority – hence their right to govern – because they think it demonstrates black lower-class cultural inferiority and lack of morality. [...] For the black lower-classes, glossed as *downtown*, dancehall is a symbol of pride in the ghetto, in black identity, and of African culture. For downtown people, especially the youth, the dancehall provides a medium through which the masses are able to ideologically challenge the hegemony of the ruling classes and state apparatuses. Dancehall is thus a marker of a charged cultural border between people of different races and class levels.

Yet even in the black lower class, dancehall is not unanimously supported. Wide differences exist between groups based on religious practice, age, cultural orientation, etc.¹⁴

For ghetto people, dancehall generally represents an alternative space, that allows them a certain degree of freedom, and continuity with their past:

Dancehall is a way to deal with the racism, poverty, and exploitation of living in an oppressive postcolonial society. The dancehall remains a key cultural matrix and social institution because it has retained these functions over time. The dancehall is therefore part of [...] the propensity of African diasporic cultures to constantly reinvent their traditions through cultural performance to meet the exigencies of the present day while retaining continuity with earlier forms.

As an alternative economy, dancehall is a means of survival, and as an alternative space, it is a refuge. [...] It is also the center of the ghetto youth's lifeworld – a place for enjoyment, cultural expression and creativity, and spiritual renewal. [...] The dancehall is a communication center, a relay station, a site where black lower-class culture attains its deepest expression.¹⁵

It is easy to understand why dancehall has become so important for Jamaicans, even though not all participants are aware of its historical and social reasons. It is also easy to understand why lower classes are so fond of it, while upper classes are so denigrating and afraid of the same phenomenon. However, the criticism generally concentrates on the lyrics of the songs and the way female dancers get dressed to participate to a dancehall night.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p.6.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

Since dancehall is so central in Jamaican life, it was impossible for it not to surface in the films, that try to represent Jamaican society in all its facets. And in fact, dance appears in almost every film, sometimes gaining also a prominent role.¹⁶

4.2 FILMIC REPRESENTATION OF DANCES.

Because of its story, the first Jamaican film could not avoid the introduction of a dancehall. In *The Harder They Come* many kinds of dances are presented. First of all, we are shown a dance in the church. This dance is not structured. The movements are brought forth by the inspiration of the gospel and the preachers' words. It is the kind of dance that allows people to go into a trance; actually some believers are carried away by the music and the holy words. In this case, the dance is not useful to summon the spirits, since the faith is not African derived¹⁷. This is an Evangelical church, a Christian one. However, the power of music and dance is so great that it can transport the devotees to another dimension¹⁸.

Later in the film, there appears the dancehall scene. It is the first time Ivan has his song broadcast, and this scene highlights another important feature that links music and dance. Generally, music comes from downtown¹⁹, and dancehalls are a downtown phenomenon too. Through the dancehall, the ghetto proves to be the major place both of production and of consumption of Jamaican music.



A late 1960s dancehall in *The Harder They Come*.

¹⁶ In this chapter I focus only on dancehall, and dance as practiced by ordinary people, because it is this kind of dance that is represented in the films. Yet it must be noticed that dance in Jamaica is performed for religious reasons, and also professionally, by renowned and acclaimed ballet groups. Rex Nettleford, for instance, has extensively written on and choreographed the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica.

¹⁷ Yet, arguably, it is a syncretic church. It was imported from the US, and reflects in its form of worship the syncretism of African and Western cultural/religious forms.

¹⁸ It would be interesting to analyse music and dance in the Church scene, but it would go beyond the purpose of this thesis. My aim is not to analyse the role of the church, music and/or dance in Jamaican society, but to see how these are represented in the films. Yet music and dance in the church are important, and these scenes are significant to *The Harder They Come*. As Rachel Moseley-Wood told me, commenting the draft of this chapter in August 2009, “the church and its music counterpoint the more modern music that Ivan enjoys and sings (note that Preacher is derisive of this music and calls it devil worship or something similar). The music of the church supposedly draws our attention to the differences between it and the consumerism/materialistic/worldliness of secular music. But in the church scene where the congregation is overcome by the Spirit, there is a fusing of the spiritual and the sensual; sexuality and sensuality seem to replace the spiritual”.

¹⁹ See Appendix 2. Innovations in Jamaican music are generally created by artists coming from the “ghettoes”.

The dancehall Ivan attends is a typical one: it is in a “lawn”, in the open air, the décor is almost non-existent, apart for a few lights, the music is played at a deafening volume, and there are food and refreshment vendors. Many people, especially males, are there alone, or in groups, and there are a few couples. Everybody is dancing. The movements regard especially the legs, that allow the body to go up and down, and the shoulders, in order to go from right to left. Thomas Osha Pinnock describes this kind of dance as follows:

By the time Jamaica declared independence from Great Britain on August 6, 1962, the people of the dance yards had disconnected from an imported idea about partner social dancing [...]. They instead exhilarated in the solo tasks of replacing Chubby Checker’s twist with the ska. The torso was angled forward with arms swinging to the up-tempo riffs from people like Toots and the Maytals. And when the dance yards tired of the persistent upbeat, Alton Ellis led the way in cooling down the pressure by ushering in the era of rocksteady.

The prevailing attitude in the dance yards was to defy the climatic heat by appearing ultra cool at all times. [...] The rocksteady balladeers reflected this attitude by slowing down the dance beat to a pendulimic, minimalistic rock of the body.²⁰

This is not the only Jamaican dance characteristic that Henzell’s film presents. There is also another surprising feature, for a non-Jamaican audience, that will return in other films too. People (generally males) dance in record shops. These shops sold the newest music, and music lovers who could not afford the records, but wanted to hear the music, went to the shops and spent some time there, dancing to the beats of the gigantic loudspeakers.

Finally, the last instance of dance in this film occurs in the closing credits, with a girl dancing to *The Harder They Come*²¹. This image emphasises the pelvic movements that so much scandalized the rest of the world. However, this dance is quite contained. When a couple was dancing, the movement was, and still is, much more explicit. Rex Nettleford affirmed that the pelvic movement should not be regarded as the only characteristic of Jamaican dance, saying that

There are those (particularly people from the temperate climes) who regard the hip-sway and the pelvic roll as the truly representative movement patterns of this part of the world. This is a narrow view of the Jamaican and Caribbean countryside. [...] The dance in this part of the world goes far beyond this and is capable of greater range of expression.²²

However, thirty years later, he also conceded that the pelvic movement has ancient connections. He also traced the other characteristic movements of Jamaican dances:

²⁰ Thomas Osha Pinnock, “*Rasta and Reggae*”, in Susanna Sloat ed., *Caribbean Dance from Abakuà to Zouk. How Movement Shapes Identity*, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 2002, pp.101-102.

²¹ For a description of this scene, see also chapter 3, p.64.

²² Rex Nettleford, “*The Dance as an Art Form – Its Place in the West Indies*”, in *Caribbean Quarterly*, 114, vol. 1&2, 1968, p.130.

Caribbean dances [...] emphasize the body's centre as if to celebrate life itself. These dances seem to recall a period when procreation and childbearing guaranteed men and women a sense of place and purpose. Building strength in the legs and feet is critical: strong feet and toes are needed for earth-centered movements, and sinewy calves will be resistant to the strains of marching and shuffling. Strong knees are requisite for attitudes of obeisance to the gods during ritual ceremonies, and strong thighs support a torso rippling horizontally while possessed of a particular spirit. The flexed foot is useful as symbol not only of hoe and pickaxe, but also of resolution, strength, and earthiness. The arms, like other parts of the body, must be able to describe the curve of mountains, the flow of rivers, and the ebb and flow of oceans [...]. Movement in the Caribbean is outward and open.²³

The film *Smile Orange* has only one instance of dance, when tourists and waiters go to a club one night. However, this place seems a place for tourists and not for local people. It is not a dancehall, and the music is not specifically Jamaican. As for the dance, it is not specifically Caribbean: the pelvic movement, or the provocative motions, that foreigners associate with Jamaicans, are not present. People are just dancing, as they would do in the United States or in Europe. The only "Jamaican" characteristic of this club are the female dancers, of whom only the buttocks are shown: the attention is paid to their movements, to the fact that they are scantily dressed, and to the fact that because of their dancing they are sweating very much. Probably, being in a tourists' club, these girls and the way they dance should suggest to the (male) tourists the idea of a sexual act. It would not be surprising, since Jamaica has been for a long time an island affected by sexual tourism.²⁴

In *Rockers* the classic Jamaican dancehall reappears. In this film, however, various kinds of dance are presented: religious, for tourists, in shops, in dancehalls and in clubs.

The first instance of dance occurs in a record shop. As in *The Harder They Come*, some men are listening to music in the shop, and some of them are also dancing, because the music leads them to movement.

Then, a couple of times, there are dancehalls. The dances are organized in the yards, where people live (for instance, we can see some clothes hung to dry). Thus, they are in the open air, overcrowded, and the volume of the music is very high. It must be noticed that dancehalls do not need to always be organized. In the yards, it is enough that someone plays some music to make all the neighbourhood go out and dance. And music is generally played for every occasion, even just for the love of music, or to meet people in the street.²⁵

²³ Rex Nettleford, "Jamaican Dance Theatre. Celebrating the Caribbean Heritage", in Susanna Sloat ed., *Op. Cit.*, pp.88-89.

²⁴ This subject is discussed in Chapter 9.

²⁵ I analyse the importance of the streets and the yard culture in Chapter 6.



A late 1970s dancehall in *Rockers*.

The dancehall is a place where the attendants can show off their new clothes, which are usually also flashy, especially for men during the rude boy period.²⁶ In *Rockers* the music played is reggae²⁷, so the dance follows this kind of music. Thomas Osha Pinnock describes reggae dance as such:

Then Bob Marley symbolized the transition to reggae, where the rhythmic beat slowed to a “one drop” [...] allowing the dance posture to reconnect to the ancestors and the idea of regeneration through pelvic interlock on the dance floor. This dance was popularly called “rent-a-tile” – because of the six-inch square space of tile that two people occupied while slow “grin’ing” to the music.²⁸

In fact, the couple dancing to reggae make movements that are contained but also reminding of the possibilities fraught in the pelvic movement, or, as foreigners would see it, more “sexually explicit”. Actually, still today outsiders view reggae dance as a sexual invitation, as this paragraph from an American traveller clearly states:

Your body dances when you listen to ‘Get Up, Stand Up For Your Rights’, a deeply political song. You dance in a sexual way, shoulders and hips rolling and thrusting to the round fat bass line that is melodic and sweet and sensual. It’s good music to make love to.²⁹

Though conceding that the music has a social and political meaning, nonetheless it is the sensuality of the dance that attracts this foreign tourist.

In the hotel where Horsemouth works with the Inner Circle, the tourists dance to reggae music, but they do not know it, and they do not know how to dance to it³⁰. So the way they dance is the “tourist” way, the same way they would dance in their home countries to any kind of music.

Later on in the film, we are shown a Revival baptism³¹. Dance is a fundamental way to experience syncretic religions in the Caribbean. As happened in *The Harder They Come*’s church, in this case

²⁶ Rude boy music is described in Appendix 2, p.382. Fashion and clothes are analysed in Chapter 7.

²⁷ See Chapter 3, where I analyse music. Specifically, this film’s music is described at pp.70-75.

²⁸ Thomas Osha Pinnock, *Op. Cit.*, p.102.

²⁹ Stephen Foehr, *Waking Up in Jamaica*, London, Sanctuary Publishing Limited, 2002, p.119. I inserted this quotation to underline the fact that it is sensuality that attracts foreign audiences to this kind of music. However, it is surprising that this person finds this very political song as good for sex. He may find the lyrics sexual, but this is certainly a reading that goes against the text. This song is only political and, in this case, sex has nothing to do with it. It was certainly not in Bob Marley’s intention to evoke sexuality/sensuality with this song.

³⁰ See Chapter 3, p.72.

too people are carried away by the music and the inspiration given by the holy words. The dance we are shown here is not “violent”, that is the movements are quite contained. In other religions, for instance Kumina in Jamaica or Vodun in Haiti, when a believer is possessed by a god or an ancestral spirit, the moves can be more violent, almost out of the control of the possessed, hence the need for the community to take care that these people do not hurt themselves. However, in this case too, a woman “goes into myal”³², and other women prevent her from falling. Revival dance is accompanied by drums and brings people to a trance state.

The last instance of dance in *Rockers* occurs in a scene that has a great relevance for the whole film, that is the takeover in the discothèque.³³ The club is organized according to an American model. It is in a closed space, with tables and chairs for people to sit, have a drink and watch other customers dance. It is not a dancehall at all. Everything here follows an American model: the fashion, the (Afro) hairstyle, and the way of dancing that abandons the pelvic movement and adopts the African American style. In the club, the “uptown snobbery” of the customers, who feel superior to ghetto dwellers because they go to a club and not to dancehalls, is enhanced also because of this imitation of North American habits: they think that trying to look “American” is better than looking “downtown Jamaican”. It must be noticed that when the music changes from disco to reggae, the way people dance changes too, following the Jamaican style.

Third World Cop, though being a film that has nothing to do with music and dance, stages nonetheless a dancehall night. It has a precise function: it is a peace dance to mark and celebrate a period of amity between two formerly hostile areas; but it also provides cover for the carrying out of criminal activity. This is further proof that this practice is very common in Jamaica, that it is part of everyday life for the people. In fact, if a director aims to represent “reality”, he cannot escape the depiction of dancehall.

The dancehall depicted in this film is a typical one: overcrowded, in an enclosed space but in the open air, with quite explicit dances both by performers and by attendants, especially those who are there with partners. As in any other instance, the dancehall becomes a way to show off new clothes and wigs and abundant jewellery. For instance, Rita is very proud of her dress, that comes directly from Panama for the occasion. This scene also highlights a characteristic that is vital for the good development of the party, that is the DJ’s salute to some “important” participants to the dancehall. In order, the selector greets Ratty, who is the promoter of the event, the Don Wonie, and finally the girls, who, alongside with the music, will be the main attraction of the night. This habit is common in dancehalls, as Stolzoff explains:

³¹ Religions are analysed in Chapter 5.

³² Olive Lewin, *Op. Cit.*, p.191.

³³ See Chapter 3, pp.73-74.

The selector's role as a master of ceremonies becomes critical to the sound system performance. Good speechmaking means knowing who is in the dance so that he can send greetings or big-ups to important people and groups, such as the dons, posses, and modeling crews, as well as "all nice and decent youth" (i.e., the crowd as a whole).³⁴

Another dance scene in *Third World Cop* shows a different kind of dance, that will recur in many other films. In this case, the don Wonie is choosing, in his bar, a go-go dancer. We are thus shown three different women dancing around a pole.

This film has another curiosity, regarding the dancehall world. During the credits sequence, we are shown various objects that identify Capone³⁵. Among these is a condom box, advertised by the most popular dancehall queen of the 1990s, Carlene Smith. Because of her reputation as a dancehall protagonist, this woman gained popularity in all the spheres of Jamaican life, rising above the stigma attached to dancehall in general, yet remaining in a stereotyped role. As Norman Stolzoff explains:

While Carlene is a *browning* (a lighter-skinned person of mixed African and European ancestry), a racial category usually associated with uptown, middle-class social standing, she is seen as a representative of downtown culture because of her social background and her involvement in dancehall. However, Carlene, unlike Lady Saw, has enjoyed wider social acceptance while still not being able to avoid becoming a target for attacks for her public display of sexuality. For example, Carlene is a leading figure in advertising promotions; she represents a number of commercial products in local print and television commercials, such as "Slam" condoms. She has appeared in Jamaica's most popular evening soap opera, "Royal Palm Estates" [...]. Carlene has also been involved in promoting the Jamaican Carnival, an event established by and for the middle class, and she is rumoured to have dated some of the society's richest men.

[...] While Carlene challenges many of the societal norms associated with public nudity and the open display of female eroticism, she upholds the cultural pattern that celebrates the objectification of female beauty, the sexualised female body with no voice of her own. Though she is an energetic performer known for her sexually suggestive dance moves, Carlene is essentially a tantalizing object for the male gaze.³⁶



Slam condoms advertised by dancehall diva Carlene Smith.

³⁴ Norman C. Stolzoff, *Op. Cit.*, p.203. For a definition of "don", see Introduction, p.16. A modeling crew is a group of women dancers, also known as "dancehall divas".

³⁵ The protagonists' characterization through objects and clothes are analysed in Chapter 7.

³⁶ Norman C. Stolzoff, *Op. Cit.*, pp.242-243.

Carlene appears as herself, dancing at the clash, in the film *Klash*, and she and the dancehall world surrounding her have also become the inspiration for the film *Dancehall Queen*, where modeling crews are at the centre of the plot.³⁷



Carlene Smith, the “dancehall queen”, performing as herself in *Klash*.

Like *Third World Cop*, *Shottas* has nothing to do with dance. Nonetheless, in this film too there are two instances of it. The first one occurs in Kingston. The protagonists go to “Asylum”, an uptown club which is quite popular. It is a “dancehall for upper classes”. In fact, the music played in this club is the same as the one played in dancehalls. However, this is not a dancehall: it is in a building, and it is frequented mainly by people belonging to middle and upper classes. Even though the mechanisms at work here are the same as those in the dancehalls, the dance is more contained. This is the kind of club that allows rich people to listen to the same music downtown people listen to, without having to go downtown. This is a disco, that offers the possibility for uptown people to feel safe and better than the rest of the population (as happened in *Rockers*³⁸), while at the same time experiencing the same kind of music played in a downtown dancehall. The dance in this club is quite different from that in a dancehall: for instance, women are not sexually provocative, and clothes are less flashy³⁹. The difference between clubs and dancehalls has not changed throughout the years.

The second time, the characters of *Shottas* go to a dancehall in Miami. This time it is a dancehall: overcrowded, in the open air, an occasion to show off clothes, jewellery, means of transport, and wealth in general. Even though this dancehall is set in Miami, it is likely that it is a “Jamaican” event, since the music and the participants are Jamaican, and everything happens as if it was in downtown Kingston: the pelvic movements are more and more explicit, women wear the so-called “bare-as-you-dare” outfits, and men allow only their faces and hands to be seen, covering the rest of their bodies.⁴⁰

³⁷ Though shot before *Third World Cop*, *Dancehall Queen* and *Klash* will be analysed later in this chapter, at p.116 and p.117, since their involvement with the dancehall world deserves a longer discussion.

³⁸ See this chapter, p.109.

³⁹ The dance movements and clothes of dancehall will be discussed in greater details in the analysis of *Dancehall Queen* and *Klash*, in this chapter at p.116 and following.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

Rude Boy presents only once a dancehall scene, before moving the action to the United States, when Julius presents his song. However, this dancehall is very quiet. It seems an event set for the upper classes: in fact, it happens around a swimming pool, which is not easily available downtown. It looks more like a private American party than a real dancehall, and maybe this is the reason why people do not exhibit themselves in acrobatic dances and women do not wear flashy clothes.

Gangsta's Paradise and *One Love* have only a few images of go-go dancers. In the first film, this happens in a scene set in Jamaica. In the second case, the dancers work in Selector G's club. They are scantily dressed, and they dance alone or for the men who request it.

Glory to Gloriana presents various instances of dance, even though none of these regards dancehall. Dance frames the story: it begins and ends with the inaugural party for Gloria's hotel, around the swimming pool. All people invited belong to middle and upper classes, and the age varies from very young to quite mature. The dance is more a movement that follows the rhythm of the music than "real" dance, that is organized, choreographed and/or a performance.

Then, the first time Milton dates Gloria, he takes her to a bar where there are go-go dancers, teasing her to imitate them. And throughout the film, Milton and Gloria dance together. This happens for instance after the opening day of their bar in Montego Bay: the movements they make are the prelude to the sexual intercourse that will be engendered by the dance.

Toward the end, this film presents also a Kumina dance, made by a Kumina Queen who tries to cure Milton from his illness.⁴¹ This has nothing to do with dancehall, since this kind of dance has a religious meaning, and the movements made are studied from generation to generation to summon the ancestral spirits to seek help in daily matters. It is not a dance meant for entertainment.

4.3 CONTEMPORARY DANCEHALL CULTURE.

With the advent of dancehall music, in the mid-1980s, the dancehall itself underwent a drastic change. It was not just a place for dancing and listening to music anymore, but a place of exhibition. Dancehall had always been a space where to show new clothes, and generally also flashy clothes, besides a space where to dance, as Stolzoff states:

If audience members wanted to be more than spectators, they had to be able to dance well, especially if they wanted to be popular with the opposite sex. Dancehall, after all, was a space for teenagers and young adults to socialize, and to be socialized, with members of the opposite sex away from the watchful eyes of parents. [...]

How young men or women dressed when going to a dancehall session was as important as how they could dance. Showing off new clothes was a sure way to attract attention. However,

⁴¹ See Chapter 5, pp.140-143.

as long as participants were neat, with an emphasis on being clean, they were appropriately dressed for the occasion, even if they lacked new clothes.⁴²

However, if this was true in the early 1960s, things changed with the passing of time. In the mid-1980s, dancehall became obsessed with fashion, especially women's, that tended to leave no room for the imagination. This kind of look was dubbed "bare-as-you-dare", since the dancehall divas wore outfits that barely covered their intimate parts. The new fashion followed the shift in music: the more the songs talked about slackness⁴³, the more women uncovered themselves.

Because the crowd was now at the center of the sound system performance, displays of dancing and fashion became the object of the crowd's attention rather than the DJs with the microphone. [...] Many female dancehall fans stopped wearing the modest "rootsy" styles dictated by the Rastafari-inspired gender codes and started donning flashy, revealing outfits, especially when they attended dances in the urban environs of Kingston. [...] These dancehall "divas", as they came to be called, pushed even further by designing and wearing "X-rated, bare-as-you-dare" costumes to dances. These women joined up with other women to form modeling posses that modeled or competed in an informal way with similarly organized groups.⁴⁴



Women at the sound clash in *Klash*.

Stolzoff goes on analysing in more details the fashion of both women and men in dancehall. Even though he refers to the 1980s, the fashion has not changed since then. Maybe the style has evolved in keeping the pace with the changing times, but women still wear provocative and "bare-as-you-dare" outfits, while men keep being almost totally covered:

The celebration of fashion and the erotic display of the female body became important to the dancehall event. The body was now a site of increasing degrees of adornment. These "donnettes" demonstrated their physical and financial "ass-ets" by wearing clothes labeled

⁴² Norman C. Stolzoff, *Op. Cit.*, pp.56-57.

⁴³ *Slack* is so defined by the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (*Op. Cit.*, p.513): "1. [of persons] Slovenly, irresponsible, sloppy- [...] 2. [By extension] [IF] Indecent, unprincipled, immoral.", and by the *Dictionary of Jamaican English*: "1. A slovenly person. [...] 2. A woman of loose morals." *Slackness* is defined as such: "1. Sloppiness, incompetence, irresponsible behaviour [...] 2. [IF] Vulgarity, indecent behaviour." It has come to indicate sexually explicit lyrics, behaviours, dance movements, and so on.

⁴⁴ Norman C. Stolzoff, *Op. Cit.*, pp.109-110. I analyse how characters are defined by their clothes in Chapter 7. Here I concentrate only on dancehall fashion, which is important in order to understand the dancehall culture as a whole.

“batty riders” [...]. “Puny printers” (pants that showed the outlines of a woman’s genitalia), wigs of all colors, mesh tops, large jewelry (gold bangles, tings, earrings, nose rings), and elaborate hairdos all became part of the new fashion ensemble. Men’s dancehall fashions changed as well, shifting from the hippie and African-inspired garb of the roots era to flashy suits, abundant jewelry, and hairdos made popular by American rappers. Unlike the women, however, male dancehall fans and performers continued to cover their bodies in long, draping outfits that hid rather than revealed their shape.⁴⁵



Women with revealing outfits going to the dancehall in *Dancehall Queen*.

Following the fashion and the new songs’ themes, the dance style changed as well. It became more overtly provocative, alluding to sex:

Styles of dancing also changed. In dancehall there had always been a form of erotic dancing known as “bubbling”, which consists of tight pelvic circling. However, these new dances focused on the erotic element to a new degree. And the dancehall models borrowed freely from go-go dancing and other forms of dance that emphasized sexuality.⁴⁶



Dancers during the clash performance in *Klash*.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p.110. Batty riders are very short pants that consent to a great portion of the buttocks to be revealed (batty, in fact, indicates buttocks). “Puny printers” is not clear, probably “puny” is meant by the author to be a synonym for “pum pum” or “punany”. It is also unclear what “tings” is meant to indicate. At the time of writing (2009), men’s fashion has also changed. Their clothes too are now tighter and more revealing, and they have started to adopt practices once considered feminine – earrings, straightening of hair, shaved eyebrows, etc. I thank Dr. Rachel Moseley-Wood for this piece of information.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.



Dancers in the dancehall, in *Dancehall Queen*.

Precisely for this reason, many critics of the phenomenon have concluded that dancehall had become a place focused on the ephemeral, which incited promiscuous sex and the consumption of drugs (since many times the male participants were members, at various degrees, of the international cocaine trade). And sometimes it is, indeed. But this same reason has been for other critics a demonstration of the power of dancehall. Such critics, as Carolyn Cooper (who has extensively written on the subject), see dancehall as a sexually liberating space. As she clearly states:

The dancehall constitutes a discrete, if evidently not discreet, culture; it is a dedicated space for the flamboyant performing of sexuality.⁴⁷

Dancehall thus becomes a place where women can express their inner self, their real sexuality, not confined to stereotypes, and where they become agents of their life, and socially powerful, through sexuality. As she says, again:

The representation of woman in dancehall culture as powerful sexual agents is an affirmation of the capacity of the female body to generate submissive respect, however much male devotees may “mask” this respect in the apparently abusive catalog of glorified female body parts.⁴⁸

The celebration of the female body happens in the dancehall because this is a space where sexuality can be freed from social conventions, and consequently women too are free:

In Jamaican popular culture, sexuality, like language, is a domain in which a political struggle for the control of social space is articulated. The body of woman, in particular, is the site of an ongoing struggle over high culture and low, respectability and riot, propriety and vulgarity. Woman embodies the slackness/culture dialectic in Jamaican popular culture.⁴⁹

In Cooper’s view, dancehall is a liberating space both because it allows women to assume roles that in ordinary life are denied them, and because their sexuality can be expressed out of the rigid codes of the “decent” morality.

Jamaican dancehall culture celebrates the dance as a mode of theatrical self-disclosure in which the body speaks eloquently of its capacity to endure and transcend material

⁴⁷ Carolyn Cooper, *Op. Cit.*, p.3.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p.173.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p.82.

deprivation. Furthermore, the politics of the dancehall is decidedly gendered: it is the body of the woman that is invested with absolute authority as men pay homage to the female principle.

[...] Jamaican dancehall culture at home and in the diaspora is best understood as a potentially liberating space in which working-class women and their more timid middle-class sisters assert the freedom to play out eroticized roles that may not ordinarily be available to them in the rigid social conventions of the everyday. The dancehall, thus conceived, is an erogenous zone in which the celebration of female sexuality and fertility is ritualized. [...] The joyous display of the female body in the dance is misperceived as a pornographic devaluation of woman.⁵⁰

She concludes her analysis of the female body's display linking this practice to ancient West African traditions:

The celebration of the female body that is ritualized in the supposedly "secular" sphere of the dance may also be read as a sign of the continuity of West African traditions of embodied spirituality in the diaspora.⁵¹

Because of this ongoing debate on the dancehall culture, the phenomenon has acquired a dimension that goes beyond the mere sphere of the dance or the fashion. Dancehall has become part of everyday life in Jamaica, and as such it is represented in *Klash* and *Dancehall Queen*.

4.4 *KLASH*

The first instance of dance in *Klash* occurs at the Wild Bush, where Stoney meets Blossom. This is a club for men, where go-go dancers strip off their few clothes and move to provoke men. Their dances are explicitly erotic, alluding to sex.

Then, Stoney assists at a small dancehall session, in a shop where women are choosing their clothes for the clash. We have just a glimpse of what will happen during the performance.

Finally, dance occurs during the dancehall clash. The director does not focus on participants, but only on professional dancers and performers. This is the reason why the dance we see takes place only on stage. Among the people who are assisting to the event, we can realize that women and men are there to show off new clothes, jewelry, and flashy outfits in general. There appears also a characteristic that reflect what happened in the dancehalls in that period. At a certain point during the performance, some people arrive on big motorbikes, among them there is also a DJ. As Stolzoff explains:

It became a goal to make one's grand entrance at a dance on a Ninja-style motorcycle or in a Mercedes Benz. Much of this culture of profiling was a result of the profits that gangs were

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, pp.16-17.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p.21.

making from their participation in the burgeoning cocaine trade. Many gangsters sought to demonstrate their wealth and power in the community – not to mention laundering their illegal earnings – in and through the medium of dancehall culture. Many female modeling poses allied with the male drug crews.⁵²

What must be noticed is that the so-called slackness does not belong to male DJs only. Female DJs, Lady Saw being the most popular among them, appropriated the themes and the vulgarity of their male counterparts, while at the same time wearing the same clothes and dancing in the same way as the dancehall divas.



A female DJ during the clash performance, in *Klash*.

Also, the male (and the few female) DJs use the dancers to enhance their performances, underline what they sing, and show the female body parts or the sexual positions they are talking about. In this film, it is the case of Shabba Ranks, who interacts with the women on stage in very obvious ways.



Shabba Ranks with some dancers on stage in *Klash*.

This film stages the essence of the 1980s dancehall: the clash becomes an event where male (and female) deejays sing about slackness and boast themselves of their supposed sexual performances, and very scantily dressed women dance in a way that supports and clarify the deejays' lyrics.

4.5 DANCEHALL QUEEN.

The film *Dancehall Queen* is totally immersed in the dancehall world of the 1990s. Marcia works outside the dancehall as a vendor, and then she becomes one of the protagonists of the dance itself. The whole dancehall culture assumes great significance in Marcia's story. It is the factor that allows

⁵² Norman C. Stolzoff, *Op. Cit.*, p.111.

her to become independent, without having to rely on a man's wealth to survive, and thus without having to be controlled by him. In Carolyn Cooper's words, it is also the place that allows her to appropriate her own body, and the way she is perceived by others:

In *Dancehall Queen* and *Babymother*, the film medium becomes a site of transformation in which the spectacularly dressed bodies of women in the dancehall assume extraordinary proportions once projected onto the screen. In both films [...] the styling of the body – the hair, makeup, clothes, and body language that are assumed – enhances the illusion of a fairy-tale metamorphosis of the mundane self into eroticized sex object. The fantastic un/dress code of the dancehall [...] is the visualization of a distinctive cultural style that allows women the liberty to demonstrate the seductive appeal of the imaginary – and their own bodies.⁵³

In this perspective, Marcia indulges in the “pleasure of disguise”, in doing what is not expected from her and what, according to “decent” morality, is not suited for a mother:

This dancehall affirmation of the pleasures of the body, which is often misunderstood as a devaluation of female sexuality, also can be theorized as an act of self-conscious female assertion of control over the representation of her person. Woman as sexual being claims the right to sexual pleasure as an essential sign of her identity. Both fleshy women and their more sinewy sisters are equally entitled to display themselves in the public sphere as queens of revelry. Exhibitionism conceals ordinary imperfections. In the dancehall world of make-believe, old roles can be contested and new identities assumed. Indeed, the elaborate styling of both hair and clothes is a permissive expression of the pleasures of disguise.⁵⁴

The first time we get in touch with the dancehall world in this film is at the beginning, when we accompany Marcia and her brother to sell food and drinks outside of a dance. We are only shown some women arriving, among whom there is Olivene, the dancehall queen, who drives a fancy car and has a host of fans waiting for her.



Olivene arrives at the dancehall.

One day Marcia sees Olivene in the street, in daylight, and she realizes that, when not dressed for the dancehall, she looks ordinary. This is the reason why she starts to think that she could do it too. It

⁵³ Carolyn Cooper, *Op. Cit.*, p.125. *Babymother* is a Black British film, made in 1998 by Julian Henriques. It also deals with the dancehall culture, but in Britain. In this chapter of her book (4), Cooper discusses both *Dancehall Queen* and *Babymother*.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, pp.125-127.

would be a way to earn some money, since Larry's donations are not sure anymore. From the story, we are made to understand that Larry has given money to Marcia to send her daughters to school. Now that Tanya, the oldest daughter, is a young woman, Larry will keep giving the money only if she accepts sex with him. At first, Marcia forces Tanya to do it, but then she realizes that it is wrong to sell her daughter, and thus she tries to find another way to earn money. About Marcia's decision to sell Tanya, Cooper says:

The woman is complicit in the sexual exploitation of her daughter. [...] It is her concern for her family's economic well-being that precipitates the decision to sacrifice the daughter. [...] Since there is a juvenile suitor in the offing and Tanya seems likely to become sexually active, Marcia figures that her daughter might as well get a maximum economic return on the sexual transaction.⁵⁵

The second time we are shown a dancehall occurs when Marcia observes the dancers. She is trying to learn the dances, and then she practices at home. She does it secretly, since common morality would blame her for wanting to become a dancehall diva: her motherhood would require her to take care of her children, and not to exhibit in a place of "depravation".

In *Dancehall Queen* [...] the eroticization of motherhood is the ultimate manifestation of the abandonment of traditional definitions of woman as desexualized caregiver. [...] Motherhood is a condition that conceals the erotic potential of the woman. The sexuality of the older woman that is usually disguised by her role as mother is released in the taking on of the persona of dancehall queen.⁵⁶

The movement she sees in the dancehall are extremely explicit, as usual. Marcia immediately understands that if she wants some visibility she needs to do the same moves and appeal to the male audience, especially.



Dancers and their movements in *Dancehall Queen*.

After her decision to participate to the dancehall, Marcia needs to find the appropriate clothes. This is why she first goes to some specialised shops, and then she designs her own clothes and goes to a woman who can sew them for her.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p.141.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p.140.



Dancehall clothes in a specialised shop, in *Dancehall Queen*.

Marcia has made up her mind: she will be a dancehall diva. The reason why she decides to do it, according to Cooper, is the money she can earn, and the fact that she believes no one will recognize her:

Marcia is not inspired to assume the dazzling disguise of Dancehall Queen in order to seduce Larry and divert him from her daughter. Nor is it the promise of sex/romance that tempts her, though she does come to enjoy her newly discovered power to arrest Larry’s attention that had been so single-mindedly focused on Tanya. It is the prize money, which guarantees a measure of economic independence, however temporary, that motivates Marcia. Furthermore, she is inspired to succeed in her bid for the crown of Dancehall Queen by her recognition of the power of costume to enable the transformation.⁵⁷

The first time she actively participates in the dancehall, Marcia is unrecognisable, or at least so it seems from the images. Even though it is quite obvious that this is Marcia, nobody else seems to recognize her, not even Larry. When he sees her in the dressmaker’s shop, he is caught by her dancehall persona, and he does not realise that that woman is Marcia. On the contrary, he wants to date her, because she is a “sexy bitch”, as he calls her. Of course, Marcia makes the best out of this situation, allowing Larry to buy her presents that would otherwise be denied her.



Marcia’s first time in the dancehall.

In the dancehall, Marcia becomes the “Mystery Lady”. No one knows her, but everybody is attracted by her. Among these people, there is also a photographer, who focuses his attention on her. This is the man who will accompany her throughout her dance adventure. This brings into focus two kinds of gaze: the gaze of the camera, and the gaze of the man. Marcia offers herself quite willingly to the

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p.127.

gaze of both, as is common in the dancehall culture. She accepts being “objectified”, because it is one of the conventions of the dance: women behave as (sexual) objects, albeit retaining the power to control their final sexuality. This gaze also entails some benefits for Marcia, as Cooper makes clear:

The camera’s eye redefines Marcia as a worthy subject of attention, bedecked in all her borrowed glory. She unashamedly revels in the male gaze. No feminist anxieties of “objectification” disturb her.

In Marcia’s case, desire – both hers and that of the videographer – rehumanizes her, putting her at center stage. And even after she is stripped of her disguise, she remains attractive to her videographer. The persona of dancehall queen thus generates residual benefits for Marcia, who now transfers to her “real” life the embodied power that her fantasy had bestowed.⁵⁸

While she slowly becomes a dancehall diva, Marcia keeps living her traditional life. She keeps working as a street vendor, taking care of her daughters, and practicing new dance moves to perform on shows. She also carries on her “relationship” with Larry, letting him believe that it will go beyond the platonic level, while she only wants to prove that he is guilty of his friend’s murder. For this reason, she accepts to go out with him, in his club. Here she will find the truth about Larry, who in the meantime talks with her about the go-go dancers working in his club.



Go-go dancers in Larry’s club.

Carolyn Cooper sees these dancers, and the way they dance, as very different from the dancehall performances:

In the film *Dancehall Queen*, a pointed contrast is established between Larry’s phallogentric sex shop, where working women glide up and down a rigid pole, and the much more fluid space of the dancehall, where “loose” women enjoy the pleasures of uninhibited display.⁵⁹

However, if the reasons why they do it are undeniably different, the differences between the two groups of dancers are not so obvious, neither in the way they dance nor in the way they dress. Both kinds of dancers wear minimal dresses, and both aim to titillate a male audience. There may not be the pole in the dancehall, but the dancers can use a man to make their moves even more explicit. Probably, it is only the context of performance that transform the meaning of the dance.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp.128-129.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p.103.



Dance moves in dancehalls.

In the meantime, Marcia also keeps her role as a diva. She keeps participating to dancehall sessions, always wearing new dresses and attracting the attention of other participants. She also gets the attention of Olivene, who starts to feel threatened by Marcia and jealous of the attention shifting from her to the newcomer. This is the reason that will bring to the contest proposed by Beenie Man: in order for the girls to stop arguing, the audience will decide who is the best dancehall queen, looking at them dancing on stage.



Marcia (above) and Olivene (below) as they appear in the dancehall.

A special piece of the dancehall outfit deserves attention: wigs. Generally Olivene wears a black, long wig, but she is an exception. Women in the dancehall tend to wear big, brightly coloured wigs. Carolyn Cooper analyses this phenomenon, arguing that it has an important meaning, that goes far beyond the mere sphere of the dance:

Hairpieces do for some women what dreadlocks and the even more fashionable “sisterlocks” do for others. Although length and volume of store-bought hair are valorized, height is also crucial [...] Dancehall hairstyles are engineered and require sophisticated technical skills for their construction. [...] As they flash their Rapunzel tresses, these dancehall divas appropriating the border-crossing potential of disguise simultaneously reinscribe and subvert

the racial ideology that devalues the “natural” beauty of African Jamaican women and undermines their self-esteem.⁶⁰

She then links the search for elaborate fashions in dancehall to the asserting of a kind of beauty that is, and must be, different from the Western one, imposed all over the world through television and magazines:

For many African diasporan women, the politics of beauty is complicated by racism. [...] Many African women in the diaspora are judged by standards of beauty based on non-African phenotypes. Faced with these marks of erasure, many African diasporan women have had to settle for being sexy instead of beautiful. [...]

[...] Some Jamaican women experiment on themselves to construct the *mampi*-size body that is so highly valorized in the culture: large breasts, thighs and bottoms. The dancehall thus constitutes a paradoxical social space in which the “natural” as a marker of identity is both contested and re-instituted and sexuality, especially that of the large-bodied woman, is celebrated with abandon.⁶¹

The last part of the film concentrates on the contest between Marcia and Olivene, where flashy clothes and erotic dance movements abound. After having won the competition, Marcia talks with Olivene. She gives her the trophy, because she is the real dancehall queen: she has always participated, she is widely recognized as such, and the dancehall is her world. But she refuses to give her the money prize, saying “today for me, tomorrow for you”. This was Marcia’s ultimate goal: earning something from the dancehall. Once she has it, she can retire from this world, retrieve her life as a street vendor, and her identity as the woman she really is, retaining the positive aspects of this experience.

The glittering strobe-light world of the dance is an idealized space in which fantastic identities are possible. Once out of costume, the glamorous fairy-tale princess/hard-core Dancehall Queen often loses her appeal. [...] When Marcia herself eventually does win the crown of Dancehall Queen, it is essential that she resumes her costume as street vendor to reclaim her own sense of identity. But she thoroughly enjoys the fairy-tale fantasy of hypersexuality that the stage properties of the dancehall engender. Indeed, the persona of “dancehall queen” permits Marcia to savor the sensuality that had been repressed in the drudgery of her everyday existence.⁶²

In the end, the disguise is abandoned. Everybody recognizes and celebrates Marcia, who has won not only the money, but also a new sense of herself and of her possibilities. Her victory is not only monetary; it is also an assessment of the most downtrodden part of the population, through a

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p.131.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p.134 and pp.139-140.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p.128.

medium, the dancehall, that is at the centre of controversy, but nonetheless, or maybe just because of this, attracts the attention of the society as a whole.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Since the birth of Jamaican society, dance has played a vital role in shaping the identities of the population. With the advent of the dancehall, this phenomenon has become a space of perennial contending: uptown people see it as the moral degradation of the island, downtown people see it as the only cultural place of the country. Whatever the opinion, it is undeniable that dancehall is an important part of Jamaican life:

Dancehall is not simply Jamaica's most popular form of entertainment and cultural expression; it is also an important institution that generates, mediates, and reproduces the social order – that is, the hierarchical divisions of race, class, gender, and sexuality running through Jamaican society. Dancehall has thus played a primary role in the formation of a distinct lower-class culture for more than two centuries.⁶³

It is undeniable as well that dancehall has been responsible for a new exposure of sexuality, especially since the 1980s. While some critics advocate that it is the reason why female participants appreciate it, since it has allowed them to fully appropriate their sexuality, it is also true that not all women going to dancehall appreciate its slackness:

Most women [...] who are regular participants in dancehall culture don't like the misogynist tone of most slackness lyrics. And little, if any, supporting evidence suggests that slackness is responsible for helping women to gain their autonomy or sexual equality. What slackness does is put female sexuality on display, and this does grant women a measure of power to use their sexuality for symbolic prestige and economic advance.⁶⁴

However it may be seen, what dancehall provides is a space for downtown culture to be created and experienced, and above all a place where frustrations about social conditions can be released. From a conservative point of view, in this way it becomes a useful tool to prevent rebellion and civil wars. Since dancehall permeates Jamaican life, both in discussions about it and in practical experience, it was impossible that it would not appear in Jamaican films. These works most of the time try to represent Jamaica as it is, and dancehall is one of the most acknowledged features of Jamaican culture. Moreover, some directors had shot (dancehall) music videos before films⁶⁵. All these elements combined to bring dancehall into focus and to insert it in almost all Jamaican films.

⁶³ Norman C. Stolzoff, *Op. Cit.*, p.227.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p.267 (note 15).

⁶⁵ This is the reason why some dance scenes are sometimes shot as if they were part of a music video, for instance in *Klash* and *Dancehall Queen*. See Chapter 9, p.307.

5. “GUIDANCE, SISTER, I LIVE THROUGH GUIDANCE”^{*}:
REPRESENTATION OF JAMAICAN RELIGIONS AND RASTAFARI IN
FILMS¹.

Jamaica is a deeply religious island. One of the things that are acknowledged about the country, and that are very obvious if one walks in the streets (especially in Kingston) and looks around, is that there are innumerable churches. The Christians represent the 65% of the population², divided among the most popular sects: Church of God, Seventh-Day Adventist, Baptist, Pentecostal, and Anglican. It must be acknowledged, however, that many people claim affiliation to a Christian denomination in order to avoid stigmatisation from society, but then adhere to an Afro-Christian religion. It is thus difficult to quantify exactly the adherence to any kind of Church. The reason for this ambiguity is given by the fact that for a long time (and, arguably, still today) Christianity was a way for social mobility, while Afro-Christian (or syncretic) religions were deemed superstitious and backward, and with them their affiliated too.

Membership within the recognized Christian denominations became a prerequisite for any kind of social mobility. This type of coercion not only created severe difficulties for the minor Christian, quasi-Christian and non-Christian denominations, but also encouraged the deceptive but justifiable practice of maintaining nominal membership in the recognized churches for business and formal purposes, and active membership in the unrecognised churches for spiritual and social purposes.³

There are other religions too, brought by the various immigrants: a small community of Jews (ca. 200), whose forefathers started to arrive in the early 15th century from Spain and Portugal; a consistent community of Muslims (ca. 5000); and then the Bahá'í Faith, Local Spiritual Assemblies, Buddhism and Hinduism. Then, there is also Rastafari, a visible and ever growing community, and other (not officially recognised but widely practiced) Afro-Christian churches attended by a great number of believers. In the latter, beliefs brought from Africa have been syncretized with Christian values, giving birth to new religions (for instance, Kumina).

Since religion, in any of its forms, is so important in the island's life, it naturally appears in films that aim to represent the island as it is. However, there is a distinction to be made. Religion, as Christian or Afro-Christian, is present only in a few films, while Rastafari, or a Rasta character, is present in almost every film. Thus, I will divide this chapter into three parts. In the first one, I will

^{*} Countryman explains thus his life philosophy to Beau, in *Countryman*.

¹ I would like to thank Prof. Patrick Hylton for his helpful comments and suggestions during the revision of this chapter.

² According to the Wikipedia article on Jamaica, <http://www.wikipdia.org/wiki/Jamaica>, accessed March 04, 2009.

³ Patrick Hylton, *The Role of Religion in Caribbean History: From Amerindian Shamanism to Rastafarianism*, Washington D.C., Billpops Publications, 2002, p.119. This book is particularly useful to understand how deeply religion affects the lives of Jamaicans.

analyse how various religions are represented: Evangelism in *The Harder They Come*, Revival in *Rockers* and Kumina in *Glory to Gloriana*. I will include here also Obeah in *Countryman*, even if, as we shall see, it is not a religion. It is nonetheless a belief system which many Jamaicans practice, and as such I include it in “religions”. In the second part, I will examine Rastafari: how it is represented in every film, and what this depiction implies for a general understanding of the Rastafari movement. I will then devote the last part of the chapter to a particular analysis of *One Love*, since in this film religion is one of the main themes faced, along with music⁴: the love story between Kassa and Serena is opposed because of the different religions of the two lovers, while Selector G is always accompanied by an Obeahman. In addition, I will discuss and briefly explain every religion, with an indication in footnotes of useful books that approach this subject as their main one.

5.1 CHRISTIAN AND AFRICAN RELIGIONS.

In the first part of this chapter, I will analyse how “traditional” and (African) imported religions, and Obeah, are represented in some of the Jamaican films.

5.1.1. *THE HARDER THEY COME*: EVANGELISM.

The general trendsetter in Jamaican films, *The Harder They Come* faced the theme of religion. Not only did Henzell present an Evangelical congregation during its celebrations, he also used the Preacher as a symbol of corruption, one of the three forces against which Ivan fights (the others are the music business represented by the producer and the police and the government represented by Detective Ray Jones). As Gladstone Yearwood notes in an interesting essay on *The Harder They Come*, and which Patrick Hylton confirms, Ivan and the Preacher fight mainly because of their different social backgrounds, Elsa being just the “excuse” to verbalize their antagonism:

So long as Ivan remains within the strictures of his prescribed social position, a certain equilibrium is maintained. Dominant political and economic relations are reaffirmed. [...] Preacher is a signifier for authority, he is a possessive figure, the keeper of the moral and legal order and the controller of sex. Ivan’s quest for sexual and political freedom is met by Preacher’s wrath. [...] Whereas Preacher has bought what Ivan describes as pie-in-the-sky religion, characterized by orgiastic services, heart-rending sermons and rhythmic music, Ivan’s religion is the expression of his freedom and the search for social justice.⁵

Ivan meets the Preacher as his last resort to survive in Kingston. He has tried to find a decent job, but no one is willing to help him and give him a chance. The Preacher that his mother told him

⁴ See Chapter 3, pp.91-95.

⁵ Gladstone L. Yearwood, *Op. Cit.*, pp.449-450.

about is his last opportunity. The Preacher offers him a shelter, and in return Ivan works for him in the church yard atelier.



The Preacher.

Being an Evangelical pastor, the preacher is just called “Preacher”, without any personal name. This is customary of Evangelism, in which “the regular minister of a church is called a *preacher* in a way that other groups would typically use the term *pastor*”⁶. Evangelism is a Christian sect, quite spread in North America, and from there arrived in Jamaica. According to an online encyclopedia, Evangelism is

A Protestant Christian movement which began in Great Britain in the 1730s. Most adherents consider its key characteristics to be: a belief in the need for personal conversion (or “being born again”); some expression of the gospel in effort; a high regard for Biblical authority; and an emphasis on the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁷

The Evangelical church is constantly growing, especially in the United States and in Africa, and is considered as a fundamentalist sect, though some groups are less conservative than others. Yet, Evangelism can be divided into right and left. This does not mean that the partition reflects political positions: actually, the right wing is only more utterly conservative than the left, but they both, for instance, oppose same-sex marriage and polyamory, and above all abortion.⁸ This can be reflected in the way the Preacher behaves in *The Harder They Come*: he is totally close-minded and against anything that can be a sign of the current and changing times.

The Preacher represents the first institution against which Ivan fights. He leads a congregation, and he lives in the church compound. He also accommodates some people who need help in his yard: Elsa, Longah, other girls, and Ivan. Elsa lost her parents when she was young. They were probably members of the Preacher’s church: after they died, he took care of her. We are not told what happened to the other people in the yard, but it is likely that they share the same kind of difficult

⁶ Evangelism – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelism>, accessed March 06, 2009.

⁷ Evangelicalism – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicalism>, accessed March 08, 2009.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

stories, and that they sought refuge in the church to try to live a decent life. This is also what drives Ivan there: being unable to take care of himself, he asks for help from the Preacher of his mother's congregation. Unfortunately for him, this preacher is not as good a Christian as he claims. His motto seems to be "do what I preach, not what I do". Actually, the Preacher has taken care of Elsa since she was a child, and now that she is mature, he plans to marry her. This is the reason why he gets mad when he discovers that she has fallen in love with Ivan: he shouts at her, treating her as a prostitute, and he starts misbehaving with Ivan. From the good-hearted and polite man he seemed at the beginning, he becomes quite rude and angry. He tries to use his influence on Elsa and his power over Ivan to separate them, because of his jealousy. When he shouts at Elsa, he acts as if he were possessed, in a kind of trance. He has taught Elsa to live according to Christian values, and among these is the avoidance of premarital sex and the respect for the preacher. But Elsa falls in love, not with him, and she decides to have sex with Ivan without being married to him. This is what drives the Preacher mad: not just the fact that she had sex, but that she had it with another man, whom he thinks is not his social equal.

From this moment the Preacher makes Ivan's life difficult: first, he gives the bicycle that Ivan has repaired with his money to Longah, and then he forbids Ivan to rehearse his song in the church, because he does not tolerate that kind of music being played there. The Preacher sees Ivan as dangerous for his congregation, because he can corrupt the people living in the yard with things from the external world. Ivan does neither accept nor follow his rules: he plays ska and rocksteady in the yard, he reads comics and he has posters with naked women in the yard's car wreck that has become his refuge (a kind of refuge in the refuge). The Preacher's intolerance is probably not totally ascribable to his jealousy, but rather to his fundamentalist disposition. It is used as a way to mark a clear difference and a strong opposition between the two men.

Actually, the Preacher's yard is isolated from the external world. The big zinc fence is a separation not only from the physical world, but also from what this world could bring with it and that could destroy the small happy village that he has tried to build, symbolised by the sign on the gate saying "Don't piss or urine at this gate. People are living here. Thank you".

In the yard, which is very messy, with bits and pieces everywhere, plenty of cast-offs, clothes hung out to dry and the workshop where Ivan and Longah work, there are the dormitories, the lavatory and the church. The church is very simple, typical of Protestantism. There are only some pews and the pulpit; on the walls there are some graffiti with biblical quotations, a big "welcome" and a drawing of heavenly peace; and a space near the pulpit for the chorus.



Interior of the Preacher's church: a sign that incites to baptism and the chorus near the pulpit.

The Preacher appears mostly in the first part of the film, until he throws away Ivan and Elsa from his yard because of what they have done. However, he reappears at the end of the film, when Elsa seeks his help to tell the police where Ivan hides, and thus stop the pressure on the ganja traders. In a way, he takes revenge on Ivan for having “stolen” Elsa from him.

The Preacher reveals his affiliation with the United States when he says, during a sermon, that the believers will not be able to collect their copy of the songs for the rally, because the master has not yet come back from America.

As regards the way religion itself is represented, it shows many similarities with Afro-Christian churches, even though this is a Christian sect that would consider the latter as merely superstitious. In fact, as every syncretic religion, Evangelism too is formed from elements of two or more religions. The resemblance is due to the way people react to sermons, prayers, and Bible readings. The Preachers, even more so the second one that appears, a guest of the film's character, are quite emphatic when they read or preach, and the congregation is carried away by their words, the music, and the religious fervour that accompanies them. As Patrick Hylton remarks:

This is what is called the Africanization of Christianity, where the Church itself remains Christian, but most of its ceremonies and rituals are decidedly African.⁹



The second preacher and the congregation.

⁹ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

Many times, the enthusiasm is so great that some members of the church faint, seeming to fall into a trance. Actually, the common descriptions of trances portray those “possessed” in a way very similar to what happens to the people in this film: dance in a frenzied state, and then a “loss” of consciousness. In this moment, in Afro-Christian religions the possession would take place. In this case, people are just filled with the goodness of the holy words.



Congregation in ecstasy during the sermon.

The similarity between this expression of Christianity and the religions of African derivation is quite obvious, and it is the reason why the two could syncretize during and after slavery, giving birth to new religions that show aspects of both.

In the context of this film, religion is portrayed in a manner that recalls Marx’s depiction of “the people’s opium”. Actually, the believers are devoted to the church almost fanatically; they react to faith with great enthusiasm; and they forget their daily (and quite pressing) problems through prayers and activities. This is something that divides Ivan from the Preacher, and later from Elsa too. He tells her that she is waiting for “milk and honey in the sky”, and he does not believe in it. His belief is that there is nothing in the sky for people like them, who had never had anything. This is why he wants his share of the pie here and now. He is not the kind of person who will live a life of deprivation hoping for heaven and a happy afterlife. He is one who will make the most of what he can grab during his earthly life and make it as comfortable as possible. Perry Henzell did not depict mainstream Christianity in a positive way: in the film it is corrupt, selfish and unhelpful. It is opposed by Rastafari, that becomes in *The Harder They Come* the only good form of spirituality.¹⁰

As Patrick Hylton notes:

Christianity in Caribbean history has manifested corruption, selfishness and collusion with the oppressive state machinery. Rastafari, a Christian denomination, in many ways reflect Christianity during its infancy.¹¹

¹⁰ See this chapter, pp.154-156.

¹¹ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009. I personally doubt that any Rastafari would ever acknowledge to belong to a Christian denomination, given their distrust of anything “Christian”, yet Hylton’s claim is quite right, as we shall see later. Hylton’s book (*Op. Cit.*) is instructive in its reflection on how Christianity allied with the nations which invaded the Caribbean in order to acquire material (and not spiritual) gain.

In this sense, because Rastafari has not (yet?) been corrupted by the lust for power, it represents religion in its pure form. However, as we shall see, Rastafari too is facing changes in its practices.

5.1.2. *ROCKERS*: REVIVAL.

Rockers is almost totally concentrated on Rastafari. There is only one instance of a different religion, and it happens toward the end of the film. Horsemouth is going back to Kingston after having been healed by Higher, and on the way they stop to meet Horsemouth's grandmother. She is attending a Revival baptism, in the river, and the two Rastas stop to watch benevolently the celebration, waiting for it to finish before talking to the lady.

Revival is an Afro-Christian religion born in Jamaica in the late nineteenth century¹². It is generally divided into two groups: Zion and Pukkumina (also spelt as Pukumina; it is also sometimes called Pocomania, but this is a derogative term of Spanish origin: poco = a little and mania = madness. Its practitioners were thus characterized as mad, and the religion devalued). They derived from the same source,

Where they differed was in the precise amounts and the aspects of these influences assimilated. The Zionist religion is strong in Christian customs and practices, while Pocomania goes more deeply into African religious rites.¹³

Hilary Carty points to three main factors in the creation of Revival, which are acknowledged by other scholars too: the Baptist Movement, the "Great Revival", and Myalism. Baptism's beliefs were quite similar to the African creeds of the first slaves brought to Jamaica, and thus were easily adapted to the new context.

Firstly, dreams and visions as prerequisites for conversion to the faith were in keeping with the African belief that spirits could communicate with them. Also, the practice of submerging the body in water as a means of cleansing it of sin was also common to both Baptist and African ideology [...]. Thirdly, the Baptists preached the notion of spirit possession, stating that the human body could be taken over by external forces. The Baptists also believed in the practice of anointing the sick for healing purposes.¹⁴

The notion of spirit possession can be noted also in *The Harder They Come* and *One Love*, even if the sects shown in these films are totally Christian.¹⁵

¹² A more complete analysis of Revival, and in general of all the Afro-Christian or syncretic religions of Jamaica, including those analysed in this chapter, can be found in Patrick Hylton, *Op. Cit.*, Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Op. Cit.*, Olive Lewin, *Op. Cit.*, and Hilary S. Carty, *Op. Cit.*. I will just give a brief and general description of the religions, since a deeper analysis would require a thesis on its own: in Jamaica there are many more "folk" religions than those presented in the films.

¹³ Hilary S. Carty, *Ibidem*, p.66. As I have stated, the term Pocomania is derogative, it would be more correct to use the term Pukkumina. I will leave the term "pocomania" in quotations, but it must be kept in mind that it is a wrong term.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ See this Chapter, p.130 and pp.173-174.

The second influence, the “Great Revival”, arrived in Jamaica in 1860, after having swept across Europe and the United States. In this religious movement

Religion became the focal point of life, with people attending church services morning and evening, constantly showing repentance for their sins. The Zionist religion is directly linked with the early stages of the Great Revival in 1860 when the surge was still predominantly Christian-orientated. By 1861 in Jamaica, the Great Revival had assimilated many African modes and Pocomania is said to have been derived at this stage of the phenomenon.¹⁶

The last influence is Myalism, or simply Myal, a religion that developed in Jamaica in the slave communities in the 18th century. Myalism was a syncretized religion from the time of its formation. It was at first outlawed by the slave masters, as any other African religion was. When it was allowed to be practiced freely, it was merely further syncretized. It is easy to understand why Myal was feared by the slave masters:

Myal is distinctly African in content and context and one of the oldest artefacts of African religion, involving the powers of magic transmitted to the practitioner through spirit possession.¹⁷

Myal was practiced in secret during slavery. Generally, scholars distinguish between Myal and Obeah, simplistically, saying that Obeah was practiced for evil purposes (involving black magic), while Myal was practiced for good purposes, becoming the only antidote to Obeah’s spells. What they fail to acknowledge is that there is no connection between the two practices. Myal is a religion, while Obeah is sorcery. They have been mixed together by non-Jamaican scholars, but in reality have nothing in common.

Myal has charismatic leaders leading groups of adherents, and it contemplates the possibility of achieving possession (which Maroon, Kumina and Revival religions call “going into myal”) through music and dance.

A syncretized religion which blends together elements from African and Christian religions, Revivalism presents characteristics that are peculiar to it. As in any other syncretism in Jamaica, be it in music, dance, religion or anything else, it has adapted some Christian features to the African beliefs:

In its blend of Christian and West African concepts, Revival has included in its spiritual experiences, singing, dancing, instrumental and body percussion accompaniment, healing, divination and spirit possession as integral to rituals.¹⁸

Though still practiced in Jamaica, especially in the rural parishes (as any other African-related religion), Revival has, nonetheless, attracted some criticism by contemporary Jamaicans who see it

¹⁶ Hilary S. Carty, *Op. Cit.*, p.67.

¹⁷ *Ibidem.*

¹⁸ Olive Lewin, *Op. Cit.*, p.191.

(and any other African-related religion) as somehow backward and not keeping pace with the times.

Or, as Patrick Hylton puts it:

Because of the class and racial cleavage in the society; and the fact that Europeans and European-related institutions and beliefs are highly valued and Africans and African-derived phenomena are of little value, many African Jamaicans, in general, have a negative attitude to all things African, including themselves.¹⁹

Olive Lewin, on her part, links the criticism of Revivalism to the growth of Non-Conformist Christian denominations:

With the growth of American-prompted Pentecostal and Evangelical groups in Jamaica, disapproval of Revivalism has been increasing. Speaking in tongues is acceptable, but spirit possession and blood sacrifices are seen as evil.²⁰

In *Rockers* the scene showing the Revival baptism is quite short, but, nonetheless, significant. It points to the many similarities that can be found between Revivalism and Rastafari²¹.

There is also the hint, through Horsemouth's grandmother and her participation in a Revivalist baptism, that this Afro-Christian sect has close affinity with the Rastafarians through their rhythmic chants and dances. While Horsemouth and his spiritual leader Hiram the Healer look admiringly upon the rituals, one can only surmise that members of the more mainstream Christian denominations would view with disfavour this 'connection between old-time religion and reggae'.²²



Revival dancing at the Baptism.

¹⁹ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

²⁰ Olive Lewin, *Op. Cit.*, p.196. Speaking in tongues happens when one is in the ecstasy of the religious experience and is accepted and practiced by (Christian) Pentecostals too.

²¹ Barry Chevannes, in *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*, Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1994, describes quite clearly how Rastafari comes from a Revival environment, and for this reason many of its practices are similar to those of Revival. Actually, he links the birth of Rastafari to the peasant communities of Jamaica, and to their religious practices, chief among which is Revival.

²² Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.94. Warner's quotation is taken from Kenneth Bilby's contribution to the first edition (1995) of *Caribbean Currents*, by Peter Manuel (the edition quoted in this thesis is the expanded and revised one, 2006). The connection between Rastafari and Revival is due to much more than music and dancing, as it clearly appears in Chevannes, *Op. Cit.*.

Moreover, when the grandmother wonders why Horsemouth has been beaten, she tells him that he should behave more Christianly. This is the brief exchange between them about this subject:

Grandma: “Leroy, you’re going the other way.”

Horsemouth: “No man, two way to this, Jah Rastafari or war. I-man choose Rastafari.”

Grandma: “Bwoy, me a tell you have to live the Christian way, you know?”

Horsemouth: “But you see, I’m still Revival, you see dat.”²³

He thus accepts the fact that Rastafari and Revival share many characteristics, and that probably many Rastas were Revival before becoming Rastas²⁴.

As regards the filmic representation of Revivalism, the director appeared to be quite sympathetic toward this religion. He shows the Baptism in the river, a joyous celebration honoured by singing and dancing, and by possession (or trance) experienced by some believers.



Baptism and a woman into myal: a Revival ceremony in *Rockers*.

In this depiction, there is nothing to be ashamed of or to be disapproving. It is just a religion, shown in its communal and congregational facet. It assumes the same relevance as other, more established Christian sects. Baptism acquires the status of the main ritual, or at least one of the more important ones, and for this reason it is celebrated by the whole community. The link with African ancestors’ beliefs is given by the baptism in a river: in West Africa rivers are thought to be inhabited by benevolent spirits. This is underlined by the song, *Water is Power*, that accompanies the ritual and the trance/possession phenomenon.

This is the only instance when a religion other than Rastafari appears in *Rockers*, but it is viewed with the same sympathy as Rastafari. It is depicted with understanding and joy, and the Rastas have many things in common with Revivalists.

²³ My transcription. I tried to render the Jamaican tone of the discourse, but there is no official grammar or orthography of Jamaican Patois. Every time I transcribe from the films, I will try to render Jamaican Patois.

²⁴ This is true, according to Chevannes, *Op. Cit.*, especially of the early Rastas in the 1930s, who had to create the movement from the experiences they had at the time. Still today, many Rastafari grow up in other (Christian) religions before converting. Prof. Hylton, commenting on the draft of this chapter in August 2009, also said that “a large number of the early pioneers of Rastafari were followers of Alexander Bedward, a powerful revivalist who preceded Marcus Garvey, a “prophet” of Rastafari.”

5.1.3. *COUNTRYMAN*: OBEAH.

Dickie Jobson, in *Countryman*, decided to present, aside from Rastafari, the most occult and feared practice of Jamaica: Obeah. This practice was brought to the island by the Africans, and it is still practiced in secret, because it is still legally proscribed. And, contrary to what many scholars state, it is not a religion.

Obeah comes from the Akan (Fanti-Ashanti) word “obayi”, which means sorcery. Obeah has no temple or shrine. It has no cosmology or deity. It has no congregation of followers. It only has believers.²⁵

Today, Obeah is seen as useful mainly for two reasons: to cast spells, and to heal.

Obeah – a set of hybrid or creolized beliefs dependent on ritual invocation, fetishes, and charms – incorporates two very distinct categories of practice. [...] the casting of spells for various purposes, both good and evil [...] African-derived healing practices based on the application of knowledge of herbal and animal medicinal properties. Obeah, thus conceived, is not a religion so much as a system of beliefs rooted in Creole notions of spirituality, which acknowledges the existence and power of the supernatural world and incorporates into its practices witchcraft, sorcery, magic, spells, and healing.²⁶

Patrick Hylton, however, uncovers the more “trivial” use made of Obeah:

Obeah serves other functions than casting spells and healing. Obeah is also used to undo spells cast by other obeah practitioners. The Obeah man also assists those in need of romantic reciprocity; women who desire to have children; those who are desirous of a favourable outcome in a court of law; those who are seeking a visa to the United Kingdom, the United States or Canada; and those who are taking exams or have other challenges to overcome or desire a change of fortune.²⁷

Obeah was brought to Jamaica by the Ashanti slaves, a population exploited mostly by British planters, since as early as the 17th century. Obeah, as any other religious and non-religious practices, was quickly outlawed by the British planters. However, contrary to what many believe (maybe also the planters who knew and understood nothing about the practices of their slaves), Obeah did not lead the Africans to rebellion. It is confused with Myalism because many scholars have grouped them together, but they are very different practices. The Obeahman was and remains individualistic. It was the Myalman to be community-oriented. He was the leader of revolts, not the Obeahman. It was the *okomfo*, Priest of Ashanti, who evolved into the Myalman²⁸.

²⁵ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

²⁶ Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Op. Cit.*, p.131. All my information about this religion has been taken from this book and from the comments by Prof. Hylton.

²⁷ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

²⁸ All the section regarding Obeah has been particularly revised and corrected by Prof. Hylton, August 2009.

Obeah is an individual practice. There is no community of deities manifesting themselves to humans through possession or helping their relatives because of their offerings and worshipping. There is no fixed liturgy or rituals. Patrick Hylton clearly explains why it cannot be considered a religion:

Religion is a set of beliefs about spirits or deities and their nature; about the universe, its origin and human relationship to it; about good and evil; it includes a set of practices of worship; rituals and ceremonies to ward off evil and misfortune and to obtain beneficence; it includes a belief in the afterlife; a system of reward and punishment; and a system of seeking security, solace and support in the face of a supposed supernatural.

It is my contention that any attempt to associate Obeah with these basic criteria of religion will be at best a contrivance. While the “Obayifo” (the Ashanti term for the Obeahman) is said to have a relationship with “Sasabonsan” (Ashanti name for the Devil), he has no relationship with deities, ancestors or any of the benign spirits associated with African religions.²⁹

In our present time, generally, believers go to seek the advice of an Obeahman to solve a problem in their life, or to make a change. The Obeahman thus prescribes the remedy, that can range from baths, massages and healing prescriptions to pouches and bottles made of various substances (fetishes). However, Obeahmen are mostly sought for their ability as herbalists or bush doctors, who can treat many different illnesses. Today, Obeahmen can use a variety of sources for their healing practices:

The modern practitioner’s consultation room includes a broad variety of substances for the preparation of these remedies, although nowadays there is a preponderance of commercially produced items [...]. A broad variety of substances aid in contemporary Obeah consultation. [...] In the practice of modern “literary Obeah” – which incorporates religious or mystical texts as an aid in advising or divination – a number of books on religion, astrology, the occult, and mysticism are used, particularly the Bible; *The Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses* [...]; James Dillet Freeman’s *Prayer, the Master Key*; Lewis de Claremont’s *Seven Steps to Power* [...]; and *Black Guard*, the newspaper of the African Descendants Provisional Government, a black militant organization from San Francisco.³⁰

However, Obeah also has a close relationship with the Spirit world, even if the spirits invoked are evil ones³¹. Without the spirits, and the ability to control them, the Obeahmen would not be able to have their power, and people would not be so afraid and/or willing to seek their help in their daily problems.

Central to the practice of Obeah is the relationship between humans and spirits. [...] Spirits in Obeah manifest themselves primarily as ghosts – sperrids, spirits, or duppies – that can be

²⁹ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

³⁰ Margarite Fernandez Olmo and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Op. Cit.*, pp.137-138.

³¹ As already seen, Obeah has no relationship with the Supreme Being, lesser deities or ancestors, thus the spirits it calls upon must be evil. In fact, Obeah is mostly used to cast evil spells on someone.

“called” or summoned as helpers in the processes of revealing mysteries, affording protection, or inflicting harm. [...]

Linked to the notion of manipulating the spirits is the Obeah practitioner’s reputed ability to control an individual through his shadow [...]. The practice of “catching shadows” involves capturing a dying person’s last breath in a bottle or jar. [...]

The world of the spirits includes belief in the sudden apparition of a variety of animal figures in the night sky. [...]³²

In *Countryman*, we are shown a glimpse of this mystical and obscure world in the figure of Sadu Baba, the Obeahman who helps Captain Benchley to understand the situation of the plane crash. Ed Guerero synthetically summarizes the importance of the Obeahman in the film:

In *Countryman* the inscription of the “wise” and the “old” achieves esoteric depths that, for the most part, evade the full appreciation of the Western spectator/consumer as the African “Loa” or god that rules death, erotica, and the underworld appears at two moments in the film, as a sedimented fragment regurgitated from the undercurrent of older beliefs still resistant to the homogenizing effects of consumer culture and tourism on the island’s cultural life. In a striking, allegorical moment, that feels vaguely awkward to modern consumer sensibilities, the Loa ruling the function of death, fitting his classic, New World, African description, appears at the edge of a church graveyard at midday. He is an extremely black, old man, dressed in the formal hat and dress shirt of an undertaker and wearing dark glasses to shield his eyes from the glaring light of the world of the living. [...] In this sense, then, in the cinematic rendering of the culture’s deepest, occult, and folkloric content in combination with its allegorical struggle of Rasta good against technological evil, of utopia against bureaucracy, that *Countryman*, in spite of its narrative concessions to “crossover” marketing, succeeds as a resistance text.³³

As pointed out by Guerero, Sadu Baba appears twice in the film. The first time, he appears in a cemetery, doing harm. The second time, Benchley goes to his house to ask for his help. What is a bit striking is that the way he is represented, in the mind of the average audience, makes him appear as a kind of Vodun priest. The target market for this film was a crossover audience: the aim was to reach the American audience, especially. And the average American audience (or European, or in general non Caribbean) knows very little, or nothing at all, about Obeah. What they know is what they see about Vodun in horror movies. This leads to great misunderstandings, both about Obeah and about Vodun, which is an organized religion, and not an evil way to use witchcraft to hurt people. Thus, the average audience could well mistake Obeah for another name of Vodun, or what they think

³² Margarine Fernandez Olmo and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Op. Cit.*, p.141. This quotation is inaccurate, according to Prof. Hylton. As he commented on the draft of this thesis, August 2009, “the practice of catching shadows involved living persons. In fact the Myalman was often used to retrieve shadows”.

³³ Ed Guerero, *Op. Cit.*, pp.114-115.

Vodun is. Thus Sadu Baba is represented as a Jamaican version of Baron Samedi, the Haitian Loa of the dead. This is a bit strange, because generally an Obeahman does not wear any sign that could lead to public recognition of his/her practice.



Sadu Baba, at the cemetery and at his house.

The first time he appears, Sadu Baba is so powerful that he can hurt, only with his thoughts and without a cause, a woman who is visiting the graveyard. This is the reason why people are scared of him. He also shows a preference for gambling and card games, at which he naturally always wins.

The second time he appears is the most interesting one, since it is in this scene that we are shown the Obeah practice. The consultation for Benchley occurs at night, a custom that can be due to the secrecy and the illegal character of the practice. Sadu Baba's house is on the top of a steep hill, reached with many difficulties, and guarded by several dogs and other animals. The room is adjacent to the house, and is full of objects that can be used in the practice of magic or of healing. Cassandra Perrone, in a paper dealing with Obeah and folk healing in Jamaica, describes such a room. In this case, she does not deal directly with *Countryman* (though she does elsewhere in the paper), but the description she gives of the "temple" room of an Obeahman can be well fitted to this room in the film:

Looking around the small room there are jars filled with herbs, oils, animal bits, hair, and teeth. Dim light and flickering candles give the room a trancelike aura. He sits behind the table that's cluttered with feathers, eggs, and vials of blood. In a turban with a mirror fixed upon it and glasses darker than his skin hiding his mischievous eyes, his *bacra* or bag hangs around his neck. His cane is held firmly with his knurled hand as if loosing the cane would take away his powers. Peering down upon the scene, his animal spirit knows his plans and keeps it to himself. [...] Since you were able to provide a lucrative offer, the Obeah man hands you a pouch of animal hair and teeth along with some oil. [...] If the directions are not followed there will be deathly consequences, but if followed correctly the criminal will be revealed. [...]

[...] Those who do visit go at night so as not to get caught using these illegal services. [...] There are several items that are typically involved with the Obeah practice such as eggs, animals, herbs, oils, and personal duppies.³⁴

³⁴ Cassandra Perrone, *The Power and Influence of the Obeah Man and Folk Healing in Jamaican Culture*, <http://debate.uvm.edu/dreadlibrary/perrone02.htm>, accessed March 06, 2009. The term *bacra* should be spelled *bankra*.



Sadu Baba in his consultation room, and offering a sacrifice to his animal spirit.

All the things mentioned by Perrone are actually present in this scene of *Countryman*. The payment for the service – offer – is to be given before it starts. Then, Sadu Baba prepares a fetish for Benchley, telling him to always keep it with him: “lose it, and you lose your life”. He also goes outside to take a chicken to sacrifice. He cuts the animal’s head, pours the blood in a glass, and then offers the dead body to his animal spirit, an eagle. This eagle will help Sadu Baba, and consequently Benchley, to find where Beau and Bobby are hidden. Perrone again stresses the importance of the animals in Obeah:

Animals are just as and even more important to the Obeah man than plants. Animals are more likely to carry the spirit or duppy. [...] Obeah men tend to use animal spirits as well as other duppy forms to carry out their deeds. Usually he has a few that are his personal assistants to whom he pays in rum or other items like food. A great example of animal spirit is that of the Obeah man in *Country Man*. Both the Obeah man and countryman have animal spirits, but the evil spirit eventually kills the good. Animals, like plants, are another connection to nature.³⁵

After the offer, Sadu Baba drinks the chicken blood, and gives it to drink to Benchley too. He does it reluctantly, but it seems that the magic practice works, since they are finally able to discover Beau and Bobby’s hiding place.

The last time Obeah is mentioned in the film occurs toward the end. Colonel Sinclair discovers that Benchley has used Obeah, and that he keeps Sadu Baba’s fetish with him. He scorns the captain, saying that it is just foolishness, and that they should not believe in these things. He thus tries to take the fetish away from Benchley, ordering his assistant to beat him. Once he has it, he destroys it. Then, he goes out of the door, and on the stairs he gets killed by the gunmen of the political party to which he is affiliated.

The whole theme of Obeah is faced ambiguously in this film. On the one hand, there is disdain and the attempt to portray it as backward and superstitious. On the other hand, it is portrayed with some

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

sympathy, and with the intention to show that, in the end, it can work. For instance, the consultation, “folkloric” as it may seem, turns out to be the only means by which the army can find the Americans. And when the colonel breaks the fetish, he dies. He would have died anyway, since the agreement with the politician was clear on this matter: if he did not find Bobby in a few days, he would have paid with his life, taking all the blame for the fake attempted disruption of the election, thus leaving the party with no role in the unclear (and illegal) situation. However, his death comes to coincide with the prophecy of Sadu Baba: the breaking of the fetish.

Probably, when the director made the film, he wanted to show an aspect of Jamaica that is never acknowledged. He thus leaves the final judgement to the viewer. Those who want to believe in the supernatural will think that everything is due to Obeah; those who are skeptical will believe that Obeah is just an irrational practice that has no consequence on daily life.

The only thing that is sure is that in Jamaica, still today, Obeah is practiced, and that many people believe in its effects, even those who do not practice it. Obeah is well known, and generally those who do not believe in it stay away from it. “It is best not to mingle with things you do not understand. It can harm you” is generally what is warned about Obeah. As Patrick Hylton observes:

Obeah has survived and will survive as long as people remain covetous, greedy, revengeful, believe in the occult, generally superstitious (and this applies across the board because a significant number of the Obeahman’s clients are Christians) and desirous of swaying events through supernatural intervention.³⁶

The same holds true all over the world, since everywhere people believe that magicians or fortune tellers can change their destiny. As long as someone will trust “supernatural” powers, others will find ways and names to take advantage of them and their credulity.

5.1.4. *GLORY TO GLORIANA*: KUMINA.

The most recent Jamaican film, *Glory to Gloriana*, briefly presents a Kumina ceremony. The film does not deal with religion. This ceremony is just a way to appease Milton’s mother’s anger.

Kumina is perhaps the most truly African of all the Jamaican religions, in that it has more African elements than most of the other religions derived from Myalism. It originated when African people (mainly Congos and Angolas) arrived in Jamaica after the Abolition of slavery, as freemen who could avoid the prohibitions imposed on Africans during slavery. They came as indentured labourers in 1860 (slavery was abolished in 1834 for house slaves and in 1838 for field slaves).

³⁶ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

Their arrival helped to strengthen the African elements in Myalism. Kumina is one of the syncretic offsprings of Myalism. Myalism's Supreme Being "Nyame" is the Supreme Being of Kumina and so are many of its ceremonies and rituals.³⁷

The link between Kumina and its African origins can be found in language: actually, Kumina uses some African words, referred to by the practitioners as "the African language", that "has been identified as mainly Kongolese with some Kimbundu."³⁸

In order to belong to the Bongo Nation, one must have the blood of Congolese ancestors. This is also the reason why one must know the African language: it is necessary in order to communicate with the ancestors. This is not to say that the Bongo Nation speaks Kikongo. This would be impossible, because of their integration in Jamaican society and the cessation of their ties with their motherland. Naturally, the passage of time and human interactions had effects on the people and their religion. As Hylton explains:

It is impossible for the Congos and Angolas to come to Jamaica, work on the plantation with creolised Africans, and, removed as it were, from their shrines, hillsides, mountains, lakes or rivers, the local myths and the established meeting places, which are of great significance to their cosmology, as Roger Bastide indicates, and still retain intact their religion. Kumina is a syncretic religion, with Kongo and Myal having the most predominant elements.³⁹

However, it is correct to say that the Bongo Nation remembers a few words of Kikongo, and this is what is called the "African language".

Unless the blood of Kongolese ancestors flows in the veins it is impossible to be of the Kumina world, the Bongo nation. At ceremonies, instructions and advice may be directed at the whole gathering or confined to the Bongo nation, in which case there may be just enough African words used to exclude non-Kumina people.

[...]

Kumina devotees know their family histories [...]. Since the primary aim of Kumina is to contact ancestral spirits and gods, it stands to reason that the past to present continuum must be maintained. [...] Lines of communication to the spirit world must also use the language of the ancestors.⁴⁰

Kumina leaders are generally called Queens, but there can be Kings too. Some groups may also have a Kumina Mother and some a master of ceremonies. They all have a specific role during ceremonies and rituals.

³⁷ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

³⁸ Olive Lewin, *Op. Cit.*, p.245. This book has a special chapter dedicated to Kumina and Miss Imogene Kennedy, a Kumina Queen well known by Lewin. The information about this religion is derived mainly from this source and from Patrick Hylton's book and comments. Hylton asserts that the language is Kikongo, and not Kongolese.

³⁹ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

⁴⁰ Olive Lewin, *Op. Cit.*, p.218 and p.220.

Kumina practitioners firmly believe in the world of the spirits, especially those of their ancestors. Because of this, death is celebrated as the moment of reunion with one's ancestors, and as a final release from the difficulties of life as well. This is why the tombing (the building of the tomb one year after the funeral) is a joyous occasion. Yet, not all the dead deserve ancestorship:

Death does not automatically confer ancestorship on the deceased. The dead person must have revered and honoured his/her ancestors and lived a good life, i.e., in accordance with acceptable communal and religious standards. He/she must not have died tragically, and must have received a proper burial. If these criteria are not met, he/she will be relegated to aimless wanderings on the fringes of the spiritual realm. He/she will become a "duppy", who frighten people.⁴¹

The beliefs of Kumina focus on the fact that there is continuity between this world and the next:

To Kumina believers, the invisible world of spirit is real. The world that we see is but a reflection of that world and everything that happens in it is the manifestation (effect) of the invisible and real world of spirit (cause).

Divine harmony must be maintained or, when necessary, re-established at and between all levels of life. Kumina devotees state clearly that there are no barriers between the unseen world, human beings and the world of nature, excepting those put up by human ignorance and error. The life-force flows freely from the supreme God, "King Zambi", through every person, animal, plant and element. When there is no interference, health and harmony result.

It is firmly believed that after death, ancestors continue to be interested in human affairs. [...]

The prime aims of Kumina members are to keep in constant touch with ancestral and other spirits and gods: to appease and honour them continually, and when there is special need, entertain them in ceremonies and rituals arranged to request guidance and advice.

Kumina ceremonies serve various purposes. These include healing, thanksgiving for restoration of harmony or blessings bestowed, rituals relating to death, including memorials for the dead and for tombing, and celebrations such as weddings and anniversaries. They may be held in an open yard [...] or a permanent structure.⁴²

Kumina ceremonies are held by the whole community. Singing and dancing are fundamental, especially in order to be possessed. Colours identify the reason why the ceremony is held, and which spirits are summoned. The instruments favoured to induce trances are drums, especially made (and blessed) by Kumina practitioners, the only people allowed to touch and play them. Everything in a Kumina ceremony recalls the African memory of the participants.

⁴¹ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

⁴² Olive Lewin, *Op. Cit.*, p.224.

In *Glory to Gloriana* the Kumina ceremony takes place to heal Milton, who has a bronchitis. Gloria wants to take him to the hospital, but Milton's mother, who does not like Gloria and is convinced that she has cast a spell on him, opposes the decision, asking for a natural way of curing him.

Thus, Mother Jonas enters the scene, to hold a healing ritual. She prepares the room with candles and other mediums to summon the ancestors and ask their help on Milton's behalf. It is not clear what is used, but it can be "white rum [...]; sugar; cream-soda; [...] water [...]; coconut [...]; and blood from a goat or fowl"⁴³. Rum is especially used in rituals, of every syncretic religion, to call the ancestors. It is also used to appease them, or to bless the drums and the spirits. Since the room is too small for a whole community to be packed in, and above all for the drums to be played and the dancing to take place, Mother Jonas has a recorded tape with the songs for the ritual.



Milton's room prepared for the ritual and Mother Jonas trying to heal Milton.

She performs a dance, she sings the songs and she uses the African language. However, she is not able to cure Milton. She understands that his sickness can be treated only by professional doctors, and she wisely advises Milton's mother to "take him to the hospital and follow the doctors' orders"⁴⁴. The director seems, in this case, skeptical about the powers of Kumina. He shows that it is a practice in which many people (especially in the rural parishes) believe, and that many of them prefer to draw on a religion like this rather than go to the hospital. It is also true that oftentimes doctors (and hospitals) in these parishes are not as easily available as in Kingston. Nevertheless, the director also shows that this practice cannot cure serious illnesses, and it is therefore advisable to go to professional doctors and structures to be treated appropriately.

5.2 RASTAFARI.

To give a "truthful" and unequivocal definition of Rastafari is very difficult, if not impossible. There are as many definitions of what it means to be a Rasta as there are Rastas around the world. Some

⁴³ Hilary S. Carty, *Op. Cit.*, p.21.

⁴⁴ My English transcription of Mother Jonas' Jamaican words.

people think of it as a religion, for some it is just a movement, for others a millenarian religion, and for others still it is just a way of life, as every religion is.

Rastafari is a Christian denomination, albeit unorthodox. In its infancy it reflected millenarian tendencies. For a long time its very existence was inseparable from the anti-colonial movement. It is all of the things mentioned as well as being a three-dimensional entity: the religious, political and cultural.⁴⁵

Whatever form one wishes to assign to Rastafari, there are nonetheless some common characteristics that are specific and belong only and specifically to it.

Rastafari was born in 1930 (after the coronation of Ras Tafari) in Jamaica, in the parish of St. Thomas.⁴⁶ The violence of the police against the Movement obliged it to move to Portland, which was just as violent, and then to Kingston. Here they concentrated in the more depressed areas of the city, such as Dungle and Back O' Wall.

The Rastafari Movement arose during the height of the Great Depression (1929-1933) when famine and misery stalked the land. It arose when the pro-colonialist and anti-African orientation of the Christian Churches had produced widespread disenchantment with Christianity among the predominantly African population. Finally, it arose when the colonial government and its religious and secular allies were deeply engaged in the process of victimizing the symbol of African pride, respect and dignity – Marcus Mosiah Garvey.⁴⁷

The people who adhered to Rastafari came from the lower strata of society, and were blacks (hence the original thrust for the death of white oppressors⁴⁸) who had nothing and were despised by what would be later identified as Babylon. They were dispossessed, and could not believe anymore in what was preached by white people who had first enslaved them, and then kept them in a condition that very much resembled slavery.

Rastafarianism was a response to economic, political and spiritual oppression and it developed among the most disadvantaged section of the working class. What is noteworthy is

⁴⁵ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

⁴⁶ There are many books tracing Rastafari history, organizations, characteristics and the like. Among the others, Barry Chevannes, *Op. Cit.*, traces the origins and development of the movement in the context of Jamaican society; Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer and Adrian Anthony McFarlane eds., *Chanting Down Babylon. The Rastafari Reader*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1998, analyses the Rasta movement under various aspects and points of view; Yasus Afari, *Op. Cit.*, being himself a Rasta, explains what Rasta means today, and what it entails in daily life; and Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance*, Trenton, New Jersey, Africa World Press, Inc., 1987, traces the history and the customs of Rastafari from its beginning to the present, with the migration to the United States, England, and Canada, especially. Moreover, Patrick Hylton's book (*Op. Cit.*) has a whole chapter devoted to Rastafari and its importance in Jamaican life. In this chapter I have quoted mainly Yasus Afari, but there are many different groups of Rastas, with different views. Yet, in the writing of this thesis, it was difficult to find other "serious" material written on this subject by a Rasta, and Afari's book seems quite objective and comprehensive, hence the choice to quote only from this author.

⁴⁷ Patrick Hylton, *Op. Cit.*, p.286.

⁴⁸ "Death to all white oppressors" was the slogan of the resistance movement in Uganda, Nyabinghi, which was adopted by the Ethiopian resistance movement against their Italian conquerors. Rastas changed the slogan to "death to all white and black oppressors" in reference to colonialism in Jamaica.

that a number of persons had conducted independent investigations and had individually concluded that Haile Selassie was indeed Almighty God. [...] These men were largely poor, unemployed persons who had been greatly inspired by Garvey's teachings.⁴⁹

Rastafari took its vital lymph from the movements of Black pride and consciousness, such as Ethiopianism and Pan-Africanism, and from the words of Marcus Garvey and from the Bible. Marcus Garvey has been elevated to the rank of prophet by Rastafari, because many of his utterances were seen as predictions and gave the movement its ideological backbone.



Marcus Garvey, http://encarta.msn.com/media_461545194/marcus_garvey.html

Marcus Garvey was born in Jamaica in 1887. He was educated, black and came from the working class. These are characteristics that are lowly valued in the society, and he was not accepted in his home country. Thus he travelled a lot, along with other migrant workers, in England, the United States and South America. He founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the Black Starline ship, the newspaper *Negro World* and other activities that tried to unite and instil a sense of pride in the Africans of the diaspora, to give them self-esteem, and to exhort them to take action in furtherance of controlling their own destiny. He conveyed his message to the masses through cultural, political, religious, and any other means at his disposal. He established four main points, or themes, that he wanted to teach to Blacks:

His first theme was Africa for the Africans at home and abroad. [...] Garvey linked the dignity and equality of blacks to their ability to claim a land they could call their own, one in which they could be their own master. His message, therefore, called for the decolonization of Africa, that is, freedom from political and military control, as well as freedom from institutional, such as religious, control. [...]

Garvey's second theme was the theme of unity [among Africans]. [...]

Self-reliance, the third theme, was a quality Garvey impressed upon his followers. [...] For blacks, education was not a guarantee of a job, but educated blacks who found themselves

⁴⁹ Patrick Hylton, *Op. Cit.*, pp.286-287.

unemployed should seek a livelihood in opening up schools, and through these schools perform a service to their fellow black brothers and sisters. [...]

Garvey's fourth teaching [...] was his words on deportment in the presence of whites.⁵⁰

Only Garvey's words survived him, since everything he created died with the passing of time and through interferences.

Garvey's projects were compromised not by time, but by sabotage. The Black Starline proved to be unseaworthy and Garvey himself was relentlessly harassed by the US Administrations, which subsequently accused, arrested and sentenced him for "fraud". After serving his sentence, he was deported to Jamaica, where he was also persecuted. His wife, Amy Jacques Garvey, has memorialised his sayings and philosophy in a number of books.⁵¹

However, his words could live especially thanks to the appropriation by Rastafari. Yet, Garvey did not appreciate Rastas, and did not want to be associated with them. Actually, Garvey's target was middle class and educated people. Instead, Rastafari were lower class, and most often than not very poorly educated. Nonetheless, Rastafari appropriated his teachings, and elevated him to the level of prophet. What struck their attention were two "prophecies". Marcus Garvey told Blacks to look to Africa, to find their god. They should worship a black god, made in their own image, and look at him through their own lenses, liberating thus themselves from the white lenses imposed upon them during slavery. Moreover, he said that they should look to Ethiopia, for the coronation of the king of Blacks: "Look to Africa where a king would be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near"⁵².

Along with Garvey, and following his advice, the early Rastas started to read the Bible from a new perspective, giving it a new interpretation. This new reading had many consequences. First of all, it convinced the Rastas that white people had always hidden the truth from them, telling them only the story they saw fitted to keep them enslaved and ignorant. Then, the Bible gave the Rastas a new language, and an identification with the Israelites:

At the base of what they preached, though differing at times and from group to group, was that Black people are the original and true Israelites. So where they are outside of Africa represents Babylon where they were dispersed by the evil King Nebuchadnezzar who rent asunder Ethiopia (Africa) scattering its inhabitants over the world (Lost Tribes of Israel) who would only return to Zion (Ethiopia/Africa) when (Repatriation) David's Root (Sellassie) emerged and was able to open the Book (Rev. 5:5). Sellassie then was God and Ethiopia/Africa heaven or Zion.⁵³

⁵⁰ Barry Chevannes, *Op. Cit.*, pp.95-98.

⁵¹ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009.

⁵² Marcus Garvey, UNIA conference, 1929, Jamaica.

⁵³ Jah Ahkell, *Op. Cit.*, p.9. Obviously, the evil king represents the European countries who promoted and benefited from slavery.

Finally, the Rastas found in the Bible, especially in the Book of Revelation, many proofs that the Black Messiah would come, and that he would be powerful and would unite Black people under his protective guidance. Among the Biblical evidence for this Messiah are:

- Rev. 5:5 And one of the elders saith unto me, weep not. Behold the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David hath prevailed to open the book and loose the seven seals thereof.
- Rev. 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written King of Kings, Lord of Lords.
- Rev. 22:16 I am the Root and the offspring of David and the bright and morning star.
- Ps. 87:4 Behold Philista and Tyre with Ethiopia this man was born there.
- Rev. 17:14 They shall make war with the lamb and the lamb shall overcome them for he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

Other verses generally used in support of the Emperor's divinity are Ezekiel 30, First Epistle to Timothy by St. Paul, Revelation 17, 19, 22, Psalm 9, 18, 68, 76, and Isaiah 9.⁵⁴

Strong with the Biblical proof and Marcus Garvey's words, the Rastas saw in the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia the fulfilment of the prophecy. They saw in HIM (His Imperial Majesty) the black Messiah, the emissary of Jah, The Most High, on earth.



Ras Tafari Makonnen was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia on November 2nd, 1930, and he took the name of Haile Selassie I (Power of the Trinity), King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah. He claimed a direct lineage to King David:

The Emperor's official ancestry is traced to the meeting of David's son King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba which produced a son and is recorded in the Bible over 3,000 years ago, making him the 225th descendant of that meeting and 323rd King since.⁵⁶

This was just what was needed by Rastafari to claim the Emperor as the Messiah, the Black King, the Black God they were waiting for.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p.8.

⁵⁵ Three images of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, respectively found, from left to right, in <http://flickr.com/photos/9303098@N02/2687032618/>, <http://www.rastaites.com/images/HIM/jah.jpg>, www.negrophilia.com/jm/files/images/HIMHaileSelassie.jpg, accessed March 13, 2009.

⁵⁶ Jah Ahkell, *Op. Cit.*, pp.7-8.

Since the birth of the movement, Rastas were persecuted for their beliefs, and they kept being persecuted until the 1970s. A new reason for harassment was the trend of growing locks, that appeared in the 1940s. Before this period, Rastafari used to wear only beards, to distinguish themselves from the rest of the population. Then, Rastas decided to take the Nazarene vow, thus stopping to cut, comb and trim their hair, using as an inspiration some biblical quotations, and the pictures of African warriors (Ugandans, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Kenyan, Masai and so on)⁵⁷.

- Numbers 6:5 All the days of the vow of his separation there shall be no razor come upon his head until the days be fulfilled in which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy and shall the locks of the hair of his head grow.
- Leviticus 19:27 Ye shall not round the corner of your heads, neither shall thou mar the corners of thy beard.
- Song of Solomon 5:11 His head is as the most fine gold. His locks are bushy and black as a raven.

The locks are a living functional symbol and covenant of our devotion to The Most High, RASTAFARI. They are the Roots that anchor us in the Cosmic Mind, Intelligence and Consciousness of The Most High, as well as, the Antennae that connects us to the spiritual existence.⁵⁸

Reasons for harassment were many. Rastafari, claiming allegiance to an Ethiopian king and not to the king of England, and seeing themselves as exiles in Jamaica, were a threat, or so they were as viewed by the colonial government, to the status quo of society. Moreover, one of the reasons that caused frictions between Rastas and the police was the use of marijuana, the sacred weed they claimed for worship. Ganja (it is known by many names, among which herb, wisdom weed and the healing of the nation) was, and still is, illegal. However, Rastafari found evidence in the Bible that it was made for the use of men, and to be used in the worshipping of The Most High.

- Genesis 1:12 And the earth brought forth grass and herb yielding seed after this kind, and tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after this kind: and God saw that it was good.
- Psalm 104:14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle and herb, for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth.

The herb of all herbs [...] is really considered as a sacrament and is utilized as such, in meditation, medicine, food and worship.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Patrick Hylton attributes the growing of locks also to the leader the early pioneers followed. Joseph Nathaniel Hibbert believed that the hair should be allowed to grow but should also be combed. For this reason his sect became known as the *Combsomes*, while the followers of Leonard Percival Howell became known as *Dreadlocksomes*, for whom hair should be allowed to grow freely. See Patrick Hylton, *Op. Cit.*, pp.291-294.

⁵⁸ Yasus Afari, *Op. Cit.*, p.103.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, pp.89-90.

Every excuse was good to mistreat Rastas. Police brutality toward this group was common, scorn by middle and upper classes was normal. Imprisonment was caused by simply smoking a spliff, cutting of locks was ordinary practice, as were beatings and insults.

In the early beginnings, family, friends and society utterly rejected the RASTAFARIAN, who was wrongfully labelled as the dreadful and notorious “black heart man” and wrongfully perceived as a lunatic or common criminal, by the paranoid state, citizenry and by extension the security forces, chief of which was the police. [...] The RASTAFARIANS were literally forced and driven into the extreme fringes – trenches and gullies – of the social establishment. The urban RASTAFARIANS dwelled in the ghettos, such as Wareika Hills and the aptly named “Back-o-Wall” [...]. The rural RASES resided in the mountainous jungles and hills of deep rural parishes, all across Jamaica.

The very early RASTAFARIANS were relentlessly stigmatized and victimized by the average working class, as well as the middle and upper class Jamaicans. The Black Heart Man was considered to be the scum of the earth. Hence, they were classified as no class citizens or vagabonds, in their own land. [...] People feared them and children were warned not to be seen near them.⁶⁰

With the passing of time, the situation for the Rastafari bettered, but it was not until the 1970s, with the advent of reggae music and the international success of Bob Marley and other Rasta singers, that the perception of Rastafari changed. The organization of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, oriented toward middle and upper classes Rastas, helped too in the rehabilitation of the Rastas in the eyes of Jamaican society⁶¹. Today, Rastas are many, always increasing, and they are not seen as outcasts anymore. They hold positions in every sector and at every level of society, public employments as well as autonomous jobs. The religion is ever-growing, and attracts new followers, also from other colours and cultures. However, sometimes episodes of intolerance still happen. The stigma attached to them in Jamaica is not as strong as before, but it is still there.

There are various organizations of Rastas, and various ways to live Rastafari. Yet, some elements are common to all. As already mentioned, Haile Selassie I as the Messiah, and the belief in The Most High is the basic principle of Rastafari⁶². Ganja as a means of worship is also widely used.

There is no liturgy in Rastafari. Rather, Rases gather to “reason”, as another way of worship:

Consistent with the saying, “pray without ceasing”, the reasoning and meditation are constants within Rastafari. This constant reasoning and meditation serves to maintain the

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, pp.190-191.

⁶¹ However, Patrick Hylton, in *Op. Cit.*, pp.317-320, argues that the appropriation of the faith by middle and upper classes has also changed it, lessening the initial struggle against injustice and re-proposing class divisions among the various members, but also giving it more self-consciousness and acceptance.

⁶² It must be said that there are Rastas who do not believe this. Generally, however, Haile Selassie is worshipped along with the Most High, if not *as* the Most High.

focus, sustain and energize the links within the network that connects the RASTAFARIANS, one to the other, and to The Most High, JAH RASTAFARI.⁶³

Among the Rasta celebrations, one assumes a particular importance: the Nyabinghi groundation (also spelled groundation).

The Niah Binghi groundation is an event in which a bonfire is lit and the Niah Binghi patriots, elders and warriors direct ISES in chanting, reasoning, prayers and meditations. The chanting and ISES take place in the form of poems, songs, psalms, utterances of His Imperial Majesty and testimonies. This is always accompanied by an almost non-stop Niah Binghi drumming. [...] This groundation serves to rejuvenate and keep the focus of the movement and the Niah Binghi Order of RASTAFARI.⁶⁴

There are also recognizable features that characterize Rastafari, such as the locks mentioned above. First of all, a Rasta will usually wear the symbolic colours of the movement: on clothes, jewelry, head coverings, bags, flags, and so on.

Black represents nothing (that which was before the beginning) and everything; the totality of all that is, was, and is to be. [...] Black is naturally mystic. [...] Black also represents strength and endurance, it represents Africa and the power to overcome hardship, struggles and even extinction. [...]

Red represents the blood of Africans the foundation of all humanity. The life resides within the blood, so the blood represents life. [...] Red also represents fire and the fierceness, judgement and wrath of The Almighty, against evil and evildoers.

Gold [...] represents enlightenment and the Sun as the source of energy. It also represents the wealth of Africa and the purity of light and life.

Green represents the land and vegetation of Africa and by extension the earth. It also symbolizes prosperity, youth, growth and renewal.⁶⁵



The Rasta flag, with the Lion of Judah, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rastafari_movement

Along with the colours, the Rasta symbol *par excellence* is the lion. Besides being an emblem of male strength, it is also the insignia of Haile Selassie:

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p.89.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p.88. In Rasta talk, Ises is the word for praises.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, pp.96-97.

The Lion represents The King of Kings, The Conquering Lion of Judah, The Conquering Conqueror, RASTAFARI, His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I – The Power and Seal of Authority.⁶⁶

Another symbol of Rastafari is the drum, and what it stands for:

The Drum represents the heart beat (and voice) of the people. It is the first known man-made musical instrument. It communicates and vibrates messages of hope, liberation, and redemption. It is used to give (pra)ISES to The Most High and to uplift our spirits so as to give hope and comfort to our people. The drum is also a weapon used to confound and confuse the enemies.

[...] The bonfire, the drums and the Divine chants give the RASTAFARIANS energy and universal power to conquer the forces of evil. These musical instruments and chants are employed in reggae music towards the same end.⁶⁷

There are many other Rasta symbols and characteristics, but here I will quote only another one, probably the most important as regards its implication for the philosophy: Africa.

The map of Africa which is basically perceived as the human head, because of its similar shape and features, represents the unity and homeland of Black people and the authentic homeland of RASTAFARI.

RASTAFARIANS accept Africa as the origin and cradle of humanity, generally and Black people, specifically and therefore, actively aspire for repatriation to Africa, the Mother-Father land.⁶⁸

Because of the teachings of Marcus Garvey and Rastafari leaders, Rastas look to Africa as the ancestral home where they will repatriate, after their forced exile in Jamaica. Hence their demand for reparation and repatriation. Rastas are at the forefront in the struggle to obtain apologies and compensation for hundreds of years of slavery, with all the devastating consequences it had and still have on the psyche of Black people. However, the countries that benefited from it are not responding favourably to these demands. Rastas see repatriation and reparation as a way to heal the wounds of human servitude and colonialism. The outrages their forefathers were forced to suffer, however, can never be made right. Whereas some groups of Rastas see repatriation as an actual moving to Africa (for instance, the Bobo Ashanti), with all the difficulties it would pose, others see it as an ideal repatriation:

Africa is mine. I go there every day. The trip to Africa is a trip home. You don't have to actually take up your bed and refrigerator and ship back furniture and cars. It's not about that.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 99.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, pp.103-104. For a description of the use of drums, of reggae, and of Rasta chants in Jamaican music, see Appendix 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p.99.

We are children of the universe. We live anywhere at any time, but our hearts and our work are designed for the freedom of Africa.⁶⁹

Who should bear the cost of travel to Africa is central to repatriation too, and it is a question that few are willing to face.

Following Marcus Garvey's words, the Rastas see Africa as an ideal place. This was useful to spread a sense of Black pride among the people, a consciousness that Africa was not savage and backward as the white colonialists and slave masters had taught them. To have Africa at the centre of the belief means to have a new sense of identity, a new sense of belonging: it undermines what slavery had tried to do; it fully rehumanizes, in an unpredictable way, what was seen by the plantation system only as a commodity. Moreover, this Black pride fights everyday against racism and classism, in the vision that all humans are created as equals, and should have equal rights and dignity.

A way that identifies Rastafari and their disposition of mind is the Rasta talk⁷⁰ and the Ital food. Generally, Rastafari are vegetarians. Some (very few) may eat meat sometimes, and others eat fish, but they all avoid pork. Again, they found in the Bible a conduct for their diet.

The RASTAFARIAN thinks that we ought to live, eat and think in a nature-friendly and wholistic way that is in harmony with the ecological balance that promotes life, health, collective growth, development and survival. [...]

RASTAFARIANS generally adhere to a strict vege-fruitarian livet/diet which is in natural harmony with the ecological balance and the overall (w)holistic view of life and creation.⁷¹

They try to avoid salt as well, preferring other natural spices. They are careful with the kind of fish they eat, shunning for instance shellfishes. Many do not eat dairy products, or processed food. There is also a general averting of food with preservatives added.

Rastafari is spreading around the world its philosophy of "One Love", which is what appeals to so many people, starting from the 1960s up to today.

It proposes and promotes reconciliation of mankind based on an Afrocentric notion of unity by discursive rationality, the power of the reasoning or the palaver. 'Words, Sounds, and Power' are therefore seen as the main means or weapon to overcome historical and contemporary forms of injustice, structural inequality, and unilateral (mis)use of (military and economic) power.⁷²

Yet, despite the common features of the Movement, the lack of a document or a clear organization for all members means that Rastas are relatively free to act as they best believe. They share the same values, but then act individually:

⁶⁹ Stephen Foehr, *Op. Cit.*, p.31. This is taken from an interview by Foehr to Bunny Rugs, lead singer for Third World.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 2, p.44.

⁷¹ Yasus Afari, *Op. Cit.*, pp.142-143. However, not every Rasta follow the same dietary rules.

⁷² Werner Zips ed., *Rastafari: A Universal Philosophy in the Third Millennium*, Kingston, Jamaica, Ian Randle Publishers, 2006, p.132.

There is still no central document embodying the philosophy, principles, ceremonies and rituals of Rastafarianism and, as a consequence, each group or individual provides its, his or her own interpretation. Some Rastafarians believe that Haile Selassie is God's chosen representative; most regard him as Almighty God without reservation. Some regard Ethiopia as Zion, the land of their vine and fig tree; others regard the entire continent of Africa as the land of their vine and fig tree. Virtually all Rastafarians smoke ganja and treat it with sacrosanctity; but some also consider ganja an important source of wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Some seek formal education for their children; others regard it as brainwash. Some believe in formal marriages and in the burial of the dead; others believe in "natural" marriages and in the literal interpretation of the biblical saying: "Let the dead bury the dead and those who go down in silence".

Some Rastafarians believe that meat, especially pork, is unwholesome for the body; others, while rejecting pork, eat other kinds of meat. Some Rastafarians drink wine, beer, ale and stout; others condemn all alcoholic beverages as "Devil's soup". Some believe that Rastafarians should not participate in the country's politics; others believe that they should struggle against all iniquities and improve their condition even while living in Babylon. Some believe that Rastafarianism is the religion of the African people; others are of the opinion that it belongs to all people. Indeed some of the prevailing beliefs and practices of many Rastafarians are so radically different from those of the early Movement that they most surely would have been condemned to "fire and blood" and "lightening and thunder" by the founders.⁷³

Ideally, Rastafari philosophy is based on an equalitarian foundation. They claim to fight for justice for all, regardless of skin colour, social class, or religious belief. Rastas want equal rights for all, as the only way to reach world peace. Only when all people, men and women, from all cultures, colours, religions, sexual orientations, and so on, will find equal rights, respect and justice, will peace be possible and attainable. This is the idyllic goal that Rastafari is pursuing. Yet, because Rastas are first of all people, living in a world where the supreme goal is money and power, or merely finding a way to survive day by day, they do not always put into practice what they preach. Rastas, like Christians, follow the models they had in childhood. Therefore, even if the purpose of this religion, like that of any other religion, is peace, love and harmony, it is not difficult to find among Rastas violence, abuse or other social illnesses which belong to the person, and not to the religion. For instance, Rastas embrace patriarchy, the very cornerstone of the Bible. Thus, they do not see women any differently than other patriarchal religions. It is useful to keep in mind that a

⁷³ Patrick Hylton, *Op. Cit.*, pp.323-324.

person sometimes can behave very differently from what his/her religion prescribes⁷⁴, without lessening or altering for this the goodness of the religion itself.

Rastafari has gained more and more prominence in Jamaican society. Thus, it was obvious that some Rasta characters would appear in the films, that want to depict it. Moreover, because of the peaceful nature of the movement, generally the Rastas in films have a positive role, sometimes becoming the “good” characters of the stories. The trendsetter, of course, was *The Harder They Come*.

5.2.1. *THE HARDER THEY COME*.

The Harder They Come is universally acknowledged to be the first film to have staged a Rasta on screen: Pedro, played by Ras Daniel Hartman.



Ras Daniel Hartman as Pedro, the first Rasta character on screen.

Pedro, as many other Rastas in that period, is a ganja trader. This is due not only to the fact that he is a Rasta, but also because in the 1960s, because of the society’s reticence toward them, few jobs were available for them. Thus, the ganja trade, at the fringes of society and immersed in illegality, was a means of survival for many people, Rastas and non-Rastas.

Pedro appears midway through the film, when Ivan enters the trade too. He is assigned to him by José, who wants him to teach Ivan the job and tell him how things work in the business. His dominant image is that of a father, which is quite strange in the Jamaican context. Actually, for historical and sociological reasons, men in Jamaica tend to avoid their responsibilities as fathers. During slavery, men were used as workers and as a means to generate new slaves. The creation of families was not allowed, or not tolerated, on the plantations, thus men were separated from their offspring⁷⁵. This trend has continued after slavery, with women working and taking care of the children, while men are generally unemployed or working in unofficial businesses. This is true for

⁷⁴ When I asked Maria Carla Gullotta about the character of the “peaceful Rasta”, she told me a telling example, in an e-mail to me, dated October 18, 2009: “E’ solo un mito che va sfatato. Avere le trecce vuol dire poco. Il padre di Tarrus Riley, cantante famoso anche lui e rastone da anni, ha massacrato di botte la moglie e sono finiti in tv. Lei tutta blu e lui strafottente. Non si può generalizzare.”

⁷⁵ See Chapter 8 for a description of the kind of masculinity promoted in Jamaican films, and some historical reasons for their (debatable) behaviour.

Rastas and non-Rastas. Things have only started to change in recent times, with the fatherless children born in the 1970s, who started to take more care of their offspring. Children today still grow up without their fathers, in large families grouping siblings of different fathers and different mothers, but at least they know who their fathers are, and these try to pay attention to them at their best⁷⁶.

Thus Pedro, always worried for his son, always taking care of him, does something that did not always happen in those years in Jamaica⁷⁷. This different image of him, combined with his being a Rastafari, contributes to the overall positive impression of the character that the audience receive from the film, making him the best one in the story.

Pedro is a good person, a good friend for Ivan, and in some ways his counterpart. As Kevin Aylmer says:

The film's benign Rasta presence is Pedro. [...] Pedro is a Rasta who lives simply, upright, eats fresh foods with no salt or preservatives, eschews violence, reads the Scripture, and besides daily praising Jah Rastafari, tends to his family. Unfortunately, he fails as a role model for Ivan, serving as a convenient, virtuous counterpoint to the corrupt, self-serving, self-destructive, and narcissistic self-idolatry of Ivan. Another glimpse of the Rastafarian community reveals Ras Pedro and the brethren smoking the "chillum" pipe.⁷⁸

Pedro takes care of Ivan as much as he can, trying to tell him how to behave, what to do and what not to do. He tries to protect him. When Ivan is alone and wounded, Pedro is the only person remaining with him, suggesting the escape to Cuba as a way of salvation. Pedro is even willing to be beaten, not to tell the police where Ivan is hiding. He puts his life at risk to save Ivan. Pedro has a deep understanding of what is happening around him. He talks little, but gives good advice when needed. He is wise and reflective. Everything is given to him by being a Rastafari. His religion and the ideas supporting it give him the way to interpret the society he lives in, and the strength to live in it and fight to make it better. It is not difficult to discern in the way Pedro is represented Perry Henzell's sympathy toward him, and by extension toward Rastafari in general. Thus, Pedro becomes the best character in the film: the embodiment of righteousness, justice, respect, and the philosophy of "One Love". Pedro becomes an almost heroic figure, maybe somehow idealized.

As I said, *The Harder They Come* is recognized to be the first film to show a Rasta, referring to Pedro, who is quite identifiable thanks to the locks. However, he is not the only Rasta in the film. Indeed, Jimmy Cliff was a recent convert, as it is clear from the beard and the hair, short but

⁷⁶ Patrick Hylton, commenting on the draft of this chapter in August 2009, reminded me that "many fathers are also absent because of immigration to foreign lands, especially Britain, Canada and the United States

⁷⁷ Patrick Hylton, commenting on the draft of this chapter in August 2009, told me that "the irresponsible fathers who are absent in their children's lives are at best a sizeable minority. Most men in Jamaica – middle-class, working-class, farmers – take care of their children."

⁷⁸ Kevin J. Aylmer, *Towering Babble And Glimpses Of Zion: Recent Depictions Of Rastafari In Cinema*, in N.S. Murrell, W.D. Spencer and A.A. McFarlane eds., *Op. Cit.*, p.288.

uncombed. The time passed in the faith is generally guessed by the length of the locks: the longer the hair, the longer a Rasta. Cliff reached success as a Rasta, though later he converted again to Islam. Then, Carl Bradshaw, who played José, is a Rasta. He has always been a Rasta, as can be clear from the beard he had in *The Harder They Come*. His hair is also semi-long locks, hidden if necessary for his roles by hats or special tightening⁷⁹. It is curious that Bradshaw has seldom played the role of a Rastaman. Yet, for his being a Rasta, every film he participates in features a Rasta man. I will not analyse the roles he played as Rasta characters. It suffices to keep in mind that in *The Lunatic*, *Dancehall Queen* and *Third World Cop*, the actor Carl Bradshaw is a Rasta, but the characters played by him are not.

5.2.2. ROCKERS.

Rockers is the crudest [film of the Rastafari trilogy], and for this reason the one that some observers feel most closely captures the essence of the true Rastafarian lifestyle, anchored as it is in the desire for a pre-technology simplicity. There are times when the camera work resembles amateur home video shoots, and much of the acting is lost in an unscripted babel of Rastaspeak that is not always fully captured by the subtitles.⁸⁰

Rockers is the truly Rastafari film. It was shot in the Rastafari communities in Trench Town, the characters are all Rastas, the language is Rasta talk, the point of view is that of Rastafari.

The overwhelming presence of Rastafari starts from the very beginning, when, in the prologue, Higher utters an invocation imbued with the “One Love” philosophy:

Greetings and love, to one and all. So in I presence I-preme, coverage of I heights. Love for everyone everywhere. So it is known that the cooperation of all colours and people voice the decision of I heights, and shall free everyone, liberate fully everywhere. So by so doing, now, everyone just cooperate with the love of I heights to survive. Knowing that [in] this world war [is] explosive, the ways of the One solve the problem in the heights of I coverage in full. So it is Irie. Loveful heights.⁸¹



Higher and the Nyabinghi drumming that accompanies him during the invocation.

⁷⁹ Carl Bradshaw told me about his Rasta faith and the way he “hides” it if necessary in a conversation with me, December 04, 2007.

⁸⁰ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, pp.91-92.

⁸¹ My transcription, with the help of the subtitles.

The whole film is a constant show of things Rastafari. Apart from the language, the chalice appears in many scenes, invocations of Selassie I are regularly made, and the characters live following strictly the Rasta values. When Horsemouth buys his bike, he immediately goes to Jah Wise's shop, to have it painted and made Rasta. He wants a (presumably Rasta) flag and a Lion of Judah depicted on it.



The Lion of Judah painted on Horsemouth's bike.

There is a precise moment in the film when Horsemouth explains clearly his life philosophy. He does it looking directly in the camera, thus talking directly to the spectator, talking to his conscience. In that moment, he is saying what Rasta means, to an audience that probably knows very little about it. He has just been mistreated by Sunshine's father, who does not want him around his daughter. When they are both gone, he says:

If it not for the likkle daughter deh, I-man a mash up the baldhead bredda deh. Jah know [...] I and I don't deal with violence, I and I is peaceful Rastaman. I don't steal, cheat, deceit. I-man serve Selassie I continually. No matter what the weak heart say, I and I know that I and I is like a tree plant by a river of water, and not even the dog that piss against the wall of Babylon shall escape this judgement. For I and I know what, I and I know that all of the youth shall witness the day that Babylon shall fall.⁸²



Horsemouth looks in the camera and talks to the audience.

As regards this scene, Keith Warner comments thus:

The point of view of the entire film is Rastafarian, with the result that there is an anti-establishment tone – anti-Babylon in Rastaspeak – that forces the viewer to sympathise with

⁸² My transcription, with the help of the subtitles.

the underdog. Horsemouth [...] uses the occasion to look directly into the camera, shake his locks, beat his chest, and proudly proclaim victory for himself and his brethren, strong in the love of Selassie I. [...] It is all part of the quest for social justice.⁸³

The shaking of the locks, far from being a nonsense gesture, has a deep meaning for a Rasta: it is a source of force:

Shaking the locks, or tossing them back and forth over the head [...] is thought to release spiritual energy to bring about the destruction of Babylon. The locks are a psychic antenna, a mystical link to what the Rastas call *earthforce*, which connects Rastas with their God and his power.⁸⁴

Later in the film, when Horsemouth goes to Higher to be healed after the beating, the elder underlines the importance to live purely, in every moment:

The Ital scene is coverage. One need the Ital in everything to survive.⁸⁵

Then the two partake with wishes of I-tection (protection) and divine guidance. In addition, Horsemouth goes back to town with a bag full of healing herbs. Higher, in Ed Guerero's view, assumes a relevant role in the film, symbolizing folk culture and an alternative cultural system:

Further signifying reverence for a lost or mythical past that is in part recovered in the devotional practices and resistance culture of the Rastafarian present and Jamaican folk life in general, both films [*Rockers* and *Countryman*] deploy the narrative convention of a "wise old man" who guides the protagonist. In *Rockers* [it is] Hiram the Healer. Leroy also seeks spiritual reassurance from Winston "Burning Spear" Rodney. [...] Significantly, all of these sages play themselves, bearing their real names in the storyworlds, thus signifying the extent to which indigenous, folk life and alternative cultural systems penetrate Jamaican society and are consequently recognized in these films.⁸⁶

The last instance of Horsemouth communicating his life philosophy occurs almost at the end of the film. This time he is talking with his wife, and the subject is the education of their children. She is worried because she is not sure they will have enough money to survive. He reassures her, saying that Jah will take care of them, and that he wants to teach his children "culture".

Jah will always provide fi everyone, man. I'll show that, you know. You see all my youth dem? Is just culture me a teach dem. [...] I no care what all the weak heart say out there. Me a teach my youth dem culture. For I see some people out there, all them deal with is vanity. [...] Pure vanity. Clothes, food, house, money. It's all them care about, you know. But I see me? Me is a man who come like, seh me, a messenger. Come fi carry Jah works out there. Me a show you that as my daughter. Come fi carry through Jah works. So, you see me? Me no

⁸³ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.92.

⁸⁴ Stephen Foehr, *Op. Cit.*, p.191.

⁸⁵ My transcription.

⁸⁶ Ed Guerero, *Op. Cit.*, pp.113-114.

have to worry about them things [...]. Me will look after my youth, make sure them have culture. You see me a deal with? I-man no one no rob him from that.⁸⁷

This film is not just about showing Rastafari. It is about showing Rastafari as a kind of right path to follow. The hint is that of an ideal society: if we were all Rastas like those in the film, the world would be a good place to live in, with no injustice, no hatred, equal rights for all, and love among the people. Rastafari, and Horsemouth in particular, becomes the alternative to the Western way of life. As Ed Guerero says:

The heroes of *Rockers* and *Countryman* are, until provoked to self-defence, non-violent Rastas and are exemplary exponents of a pacifist community system of values nuanced in a broader landscape of underdevelopment, poverty, and its inevitable expressions of violence.⁸⁸

The main theme of the film is a quest for social justice, that Horsemouth seeks for himself and his Rasta brethren. In the end, he manages to achieve it, following his principles, and never bowing to Babylon.

Social justice is achieved not so much by confrontation and struggle with corrupt institutions and bureaucracies as by submission to Jah's will, which is always equalizing and redemptive. *Rockers* sets this tone of devotional ritual, submission, and collective reasoning immediately as the film opens. [...] But even the manner in which *Rockers* articulates the "Robin Hood" motif in the film's resolution [...] evokes Rastafarian values. For Leroy and his associates prefer to remain anonymous benefactors, deferring all credit to Jah's mysterious workings.⁸⁹

Thus, the film is totally imbued with Rastafari philosophy: it is practiced, valued, explained, and it becomes an example for all those viewers who are looking for a more "peaceful" and "loving" way of life.

5.2.3. CHILDREN OF BABYLON.

The second film of what Warner calls the Rastafari trilogy, *Children of Babylon* presents Luke, one of the three protagonists, as a newly converted Rasta. Event though

The director was seeking to cause viewers to think seriously about situations in the society. Babylon would have to begin to come to terms with the Rastafarians.⁹⁰

The film was not exclusively about Rastafari:

Jamaica's ambivalence *vis-à-vis* the Rastafarians and their beliefs is again highlighted in Lennie Little-White's first feature film, *Children of Babylon*, though the film is not exclusively about Rastafarian lifestyle.⁹¹

⁸⁷ My transcription. For an analysis of this scene, see also Chapter 3, p.73.

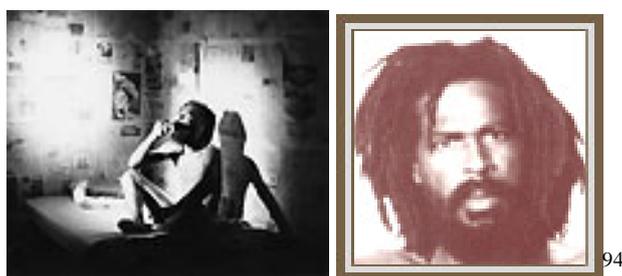
⁸⁸ Ed Guerero, *Op. Cit.*, p.110. Guerero, in his paper, often analyses *Rockers* and *Countryman* together, as two versions of the same topic.

⁸⁹ Ed Guerero, *Op. Cit.*, pp.112-113.

⁹⁰ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, pp.94-95.

Luke is a dark-skinned Jamaican, who works as a gardener and a factotum in Rick's rural greathouse, speaks English with a heavy Jamaican accent, and is married to Dorcas, the dumb waitress of the house. Because of his recent conversion, he often behaves in ways that are not proper of Rastafari. He is lord and master over his wife: she does what he wants her to; she has to satisfy him in his every wish, even if he never thinks about her; she cooks, washes and sews his clothes; she wears what he tells her to; and so on. When he sees her trying on herself the clothes of the white ladies, he mistreats her, telling her that she is only mimicking the whites, instead of being proud of what she is and the colour she has⁹².

When Luke starts the relationship with Penny (who is white), Dorcas commits suicide. Luke never tries to think about what his infidelity could cause to his wife, and he never tries to hide it. He thinks that it is normal for him: he is the man, he can do what he wants to, and have as many women as he wishes. Dorcas, who cannot stand it, wears a red dress, and hangs herself on a tree not far from the house⁹³. From that moment, in Luke's mind, Penny is supposed to take her place. She goes to live with him, abandoning the great house for the small and unfurnished apartment where Luke stays. She has also to take on herself all of Dorcas' duties: cook, wash, sew Luke's clothes, prepare things for him, etc. She also has to change her way of dressing, opting for Luke's choice of big robes covering her whole body and tams covering her hair. Finally, she has to stand all of Luke's rules. He becomes authoritarian and violent, forcing her to become what he thinks his woman should be. When he discovers that she is taking the contraceptive pill, he gets mad, and throws it away, because she is "killing my seed". If she wants to be with him, she has to accept the fact that a Rasta (this Rasta in particular) does not tolerate birth control. His control over Penny lasts until the moment when he rapes and beats her. This is too much for her, and she decides to leave him and go back to her parents' house in Kingston.



The depiction of the Rasta character in this film is quite different from that of *Rockers* or *Countryman*. Indeed, Luke becomes a negative character.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p.94.

⁹² See Chapter 7, p.253. Dorcas' character is analysed in more details in Chapter 9, p.294 and p.304.

⁹³ See Chapter 7, pp.252-254 for Penny's and Dorcas' looks.

⁹⁴ Bob Andy as Luke in *Children of Babylon*: in his room (left), taken from <http://www.bobandy.com/>, accessed March 15, 2009, and as he was in the film, taken from http://www.mediamix-palm.com/children_b.htm, accessed March 16, 2009.

Little-White's depiction of the Rastaman is crude, however. Luke's association with Rastafarianism is not expressed through the philosophy of peace and love normally associated with the movement, but rather through his assertion of male dominance.⁹⁵

At the beginning of the film, Luke is a "normal" Rasta. He is kind and helpful, lives naturally, and likes his job very much because it allows him to live close to nature. He begins to change when he starts his relationship with Penny. Actually, the film shows the difference in the affairs between him and Dorcas and him and Penny. With Penny, at the beginning, he is nice and brilliant. He changes only when she becomes his "official" companion. What matters for Luke is to assert his dominance over the women surrounding him. Many have seen this face of Luke as a depiction of the "bad" side of Rastafari. Yet his behaviour has nothing to do with the religion he belongs to⁹⁶. "Rastas, like other Christians, are products of the society and they reflect its contradictions"⁹⁷.

5.2.4. COUNTRYMAN.

As the last film of the Rastafari trilogy, *Countryman* too is imbued with Rasta philosophy and characters. The protagonist is a Rasta, who lives in a Rasta fishermen village, just out of Kingston. As happened in *Rockers*, this film too highlights the good aspects of this philosophy.

The overall pro-Rasta tone does at times leave the impression that, in the best of all possible worlds, this would be the way to go, though there is no evidence that the Rasta lifestyle would solve all problems. There is abundant hope, however, fuelled by Marley's songs on the soundtrack.⁹⁸



The Rasta fishermen village where *Countryman* lives.

⁹⁵ Rachel Moseley-Wood, *Looking at Women: Representations of Women in Selected Examples of Popular Culture in the Caribbean*, a Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English of the University of the West Indies, Department of Literatures in English, Faculty of Arts and Education, Mona Campus, Kingston, 2002, not published.

⁹⁶ See this Chapter, p.153.

⁹⁷ Comment by Prof. Hylton on the draft of this chapter, August 2009. A Rastaman told me, viewing this film, that Luke is not a Rasta, because a "real" Rasta would never hurt his woman. Yet, as I have outlined before, Rastas are humans, and they all have different views and behaviours. This difference of judgement makes clear that Rastas are just a reflection of the environment they live in.

⁹⁸ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.98. For the analysis of the soundtrack, see Chapter 3, pp.75-78.

The Rastafari philosophy is mostly presented in the first part of the film, through Countryman and Jahman, the village elder. In Kevin Aylmer's view, Countryman becomes the essence of Rastafari, and his village becomes a kind of Jamaican Garden of Eden:

Attuned to the sun, the moon and stars, the birds (and one owl in particular), the character of Countryman is the embodiment of Rasta's interconnectedness with the seamless fabric of life, a lifestyle that confers on a select few glimpses of Zion. This is the Edenic, life-supporting habitat that Ivan left in *The Harder They Come*. Here it is both refuge and preserve. Not a Dreadlock but a survivalist with jerhi curls, paddling his canoe by the fixity of moonlight, Countryman implicitly praises Jah, Head Creator and Preserver, with every action.⁹⁹

The very first glimpse of Rastafari way of thinking occurs with Jahman's teachings. He is talking about death, and why those who behave rightly should not fear it. Somehow, his view of death is different from that of the Western world, but it is in tune with his religion:

Death is a force of nature, Jah, just like lightening. The righteous face it every day and pass it by. But those with evil in their hearts fear it. That is why there is no need to slay the wicked. Just leave them to face death and they will perish.¹⁰⁰

Countryman arrives when he is finishing his explanation, and Jahman emphasises the fact that his knowledge comes from The Most High:

Countryman: "Hail Jah, what you teaching the youth dem, today?"

Jahman: "Not my teachings, Jah, but those of the Higher Force."¹⁰¹

According to Ed Guerero, Jahman represents in *Countryman* what Higher represents in *Rockers*:

In *Countryman*, the village elder "Jahman" teaches the children and articulates the central, guiding axiom of the film: that only the wicked need fear death.¹⁰²



Jahman, the sage, wise elder in *Countryman*.

⁹⁹ Kevin J. Aylmer, *Op. Cit.*, pp.292-293.

¹⁰⁰ My transcription.

¹⁰¹ My transcription.

¹⁰² Ed Guerero, *Op. Cit.*, pp.113-114. For the whole quotation, see this Chapter, note 86, p.158.

Later on, Countryman, after having fed Beau and Bobby, reassures them, telling them that they are in a safe place, “well protected”. Actually, the elements protect the location, and also a white owl, Countryman’s animal spirit, that will be killed by the Obeahman’s eagle.¹⁰³



The white owl: animal spirit and protector of the hiding place.

Bobby and Beau are quite worried because they are afraid that the army will soon find them. When he arrives, Countryman starts to recite Psalm 27:2, which Bobby finishes: “When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell”. Beau finds it useless and stupid, but Countryman tells her “Is true, sister!”. She replies “How can you be so sure?”. Thus arrives the central moment of the film, as regards the Rastafari philosophy. Countryman explains his life style, what it means to him to be a Rasta:

Guidance, sister, I live through guidance. You see me? I’m a fisherman, that’s my job. I’m a poor man. I live naked, just as you always see me. I have no shirt, no pants, no shoes. I give me body to the climate of this island. I just living I life. I love the cow, and the goat, and the fish, and all them things deh. Just like how I love me life. I never molest a man. I keep me hand clean, and me heart pure. And I living through guidance. You see? Nothing can harm me. [...] I’m a stronger force. The wind, the sea, even the earth defend I.¹⁰⁴

As soon as he finishes his utterance, telling a skeptical Beau that if you know nature, you can do what you want with it, Countryman creates a lightening. This underlines his interconnectedness with nature that Warner discusses. He becomes a symbol of the rural world that shaped him:

Countryman, as the name implies, draws upon the rural setting of underdevelopment where, seemingly, most material needs are met by an easy subsistence level interaction with nature. And while they are brutally treated by the army, *Countryman*’s rural folk achieve social justice by mystical means and magical interventions. Furthermore, the heroes of these films are configured by their respective environments. [...] Countryman [...] negotiates a traditional, rural world sketched in with interjections of magic realism and moments alluding to the Jamaican variant of African ecstasy religion, “Obeah”.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ See this Chapter, note 35, p.139.

¹⁰⁴ My transcription.

¹⁰⁵ Ed Guerero, *Op. Cit.*, p.109. The quotation refers to Countryman and Horsemouth (*Rockers*). Aylmer’s discussion about Countryman’s interconnectedness with nature can be found in this chapter at p.162, quotation 99. As already seen, the statement about Obeah is inaccurate, in that Obeah is not a religion.



Countryman.

In the Rasta village, we are shown a reasoning, at night, with all the inhabitants singing and praising Jah Rastafari every time the fire cracks, since it is seen as a symbol of The Most High's power and will. Moreover, there is the ceremony of the chalice, passing to all the participants. And here Countryman discovers that Mosman's heart is not pure. This is the first glimpse of Countryman's powers.

Indeed, the film seeks to demonstrate that being a Rasta, at least in Countryman's case, entails some kind of superpowers. For instance, he hypnotizes Beau's father only through his glance; he defeats many men trying to beat him; he controls the elements, creating lightening when he discovers the owl killed by the eagle.

Many critics have defined Countryman in various ways, but all recognize his powers and his goodness due mainly to his being a Rasta. Keith Warner describes him as such:

Countryman the hero is played by a Rasta-like mystic fisherman. [...] He is a curious blend of bucolic James Bond, Indiana Jones and Bruce Lee. [He embodies the] concept of the noble savage. Paul Gilroy sees this as an inversion of the Robinson Crusoe myth. [...] He is at ease with the obeah – though one can just imagine the international audience calling it vodun – that unnerves or angers many of the other characters. In a recurring *leitmotif*, he is shown running to get to his destinations, returning in this manner to the most primal of ways of moving around quickly. He is, all told, a Rasta superman, non-violent until pushed to the absolute limit, perfectly in harmony with nature, and effectively showing Jamaica and the rest of the world that there is untold inner and physical strength to be gained from the Rasta lifestyle.¹⁰⁶

If Warner has not a totally positive opinion of Countryman, Aylmer has, and he lingers on various aspects of this character. First, he sets him in his environment, and in the plot:

Countryman [...] is a humble figure, making a subsistence living along the mangrove-studded shoreline of the Hellshire Swamps, near modern civilization yet apart. [...] In a series of short

¹⁰⁶ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.97.

takes and brief, humorous monologues, the forces of good [...] are quickly drawn into a political quagmire. Babylonian connivance is embodied in several characters.¹⁰⁷

Then, he shortly describes the character, framing him in Rastafari:

Countryman, meanwhile, is a blur in a fragmentary landscape, evoking the loneliness – and mission – of the long-distance runner. [...] Countryman displays kick-boxing and martial arts prowess rivalling that of the late Bruce Lee. With characteristic humbleness, he intones [...] Rasta sentiments.¹⁰⁸

Finally, he relates him to Ivan in *The Harder They Come*, gives a further description of the character, and also analyses Jahman as a powerful example of Rastaman.

The character Countryman, in word and deed, consistently reinforces both Thelwell's and Cliff's depictions of Rasta. For Thelwell, Countryman displays a consciousness sensitive to the ecological interdependence of humans and nature. But the character also dramatizes Jimmy Cliff's perspective of Rasta as a way of life – positive, spiritual, and attuned to an ancestral sensibility in the eternal conflict between good and evil. Instead of rudeboys, two powerful Rasta presences dominate this exquisitely atmospheric saga.

One is Countryman, an adept fisherman, naturalist, cook, healer, and forager, festooned with shark's teeth and given to aphorisms and one-liners. Climatologist, clairvoyant and meteorologist rolled into one, his holistic, machete-wielding, self-reliant lifestyle is punctuated with a terse commentary of preindustrial vintage. His self-sufficiency in the kitchen is revealed early in the film as this fisherman becomes the galloping gourmet, whipping driftwood fire. Moreover, he is skilled enough in the healing arts to set a broken leg.

The second formidable Rastaman is called Jah Man, a saintly teacher of children [...] patiently instructing and leading by example.¹⁰⁹

Along with *Rockers*, the film *Countryman* is the one that mostly represents the best side of Rastafari philosophy. Both protagonists, Horsemouth and Countryman, embody the Rasta philosophy. They are good, live their lives in the most righteous possible way, praise Jah and teach the One Love attitude. These two films are those that represent Rastafari in the most positive way. However, in order to idealize this religion, they avoid representing the movement's contradictions and flaws. Indeed, like in other religions, there is nothing that is entirely good or bad. The directors took a stance, and decided to idealize and romanticize Rastafari, showing only the positive aspects of the religion.

¹⁰⁷ Kevin J. Aylmer, *Op. Cit.*, p.292.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem.*

5.2.5. *KLASH*.

Klash is a film that has nothing to do with religion. However, there are a couple of instances that point to Rastafari. There are two Rasta, or pseudo-Rasta characters: Ragga and Walker. The real Rasta is Walker, the man who owns the boat on which Stoney lives. He eats fish, lives doing no harm, and respects every person. Probably because of this, in the end he is the only character benefiting from the stolen money. Stoney hides it in the boat, but then gets caught by the police. Walker goes away with the boat and the money. While leaving Kingston's harbour, he utters an invocation to Jah that has blessed him: it starts saying "Jah Rastafari lives, Selassie I the First, father of the fatherless and judge of widows", then goes on glorifying The Most High, and finally concludes with the words "Ever living, ever faithful, ever sure", thus claiming his eternal faith in Rastafari. Walker is a classic Rasta, a positive character. In this film too, he represents the only constructive person. Every character has done something wrong during the story, but him. This is why he can escape with the money without being disturbed.



Walker, played by Carl Bradshaw.

On the contrary, the character called Ragga, the don of the area, has the appearance of a Rasta, but he is not good at all. He is one of those criminals who took up the symbolism of Rastafari, but not the religious values of it. As Barry Chevannes makes clear:

In Jamaica of the 1970s [...] it was recognized that the youths, including criminals, had taken over the symbols of Rastafari but not the religion.

From the mid-1960s through to the 1970s in Jamaica, Rastafari captured the minds of the urban youth [...]. All the main Rasta symbols – colors, language, food ways, and, for those independent of parents, hair – became sources of identity for the youth. To reach these youths, one had to enter Rastafari discourse.¹¹⁰

Ragga is one of these people, as was Mosman in *Countryman*. He has the appearance of a Rasta, and only that. He shares none of the values that informs Rastafari, and he is not even interested in it. He

¹¹⁰ Barry Chevannes, *Op. Cit.*, p.263.

uses the Rasta appearance only because it had become fashionable. It gave a sense of identity to Jamaican ghetto people.



Ragga: the appearance of a Rasta, but not the values.

The scene introducing him and Mr. Lee is quite telling in this regard. They meet to talk about business, and Mr. Lee offers something to drink.

Mr. Lee: “Have a drink. Soda? Juice? You Rastafarian...”

Ragga: “Who tell you I was a Rasta? White rum.”

When Mr. Lee sees Ragga, he assumes that he is a Rasta, because of the hair and the beard. Therefore, he offers him soft drinks, since ideally Rastas are not supposed to drink alcohol¹¹¹. But Ragga refuses, denying his being a Rasta and asking for rum. He immediately makes clear that he is not a Rasta. This is why he has no problem in extorting, killing and robbing, should religion prevent a person from doing wrong.

Criminals assuming the identity of Rastas will become a problem for the image of Rastafari, especially outside of Jamaica, as will be clear from the analysis of films such as *Rude Boy*. Many people will tend to think that all Rastas are criminals, and will not want to be associated with this religion, which preaches all but violence and disrespect.

5.2.6. *THIRD WORLD COP*.

Chris Browne’s film has nothing to do with religion nor with Rastafari. But it is useful to demonstrate how young people in Jamaica have appropriated the language and the style of Rastafari even though they do not live according to its values.

The closest the film comes to the subject of religion is during the recovering of the firearms. Indeed, to pass the police control, the arms are hidden in charity barrels containing food destined to various downtown churches.

¹¹¹ “Ideally”, because there is no formal proscription. As Patrick Hylton said, commenting on the draft of this chapter in August 2009: “Some Rastas drink alcohol and they are no less Rastafarian than those who don’t. Some Rastas eat meat and fish and they are no less Rastafarian than those who are strict vegetarians.”

Likewise, there are many youths playing in this film. They all have special hairdos, some reminding of Rasta locks, and they talk in a language that resembles Rasta talk¹¹². But they are not Rastas. They adopt the style, but not the values, nor the religion. They are also petty criminals, robbing, killing and inciting the kids to buy and use guns. This is very contradictory to what Rastafari teaches.

5.2.7. *RUDE BOY AND GANGSTA'S PARADISE.*

These films can be analysed together, since they present the same kind of Rasta characters: Jamaican criminals migrated to the United States, and Rasta criminals in Jamaica. In these films, the Rastas are bad characters: they live in illegality, they are drug dealers and killers. They have the Rasta appearance, but not the values. Probably this is due to the fact that these are American co-productions, and they reflect the common opinion on Rastas in the United States. Jamaican migrants there are numerous. As Barry Chevannes explains:

Since the 1970s the United States has been absorbing the overwhelming majority of the 20,000 Jamaicans migrating annually. [...] The main host cities are those on the eastern seaboard (from Boston to Miami), Houston, and the cities of California. There the pride that Rastafari enjoyed in Jamaica for their proverbial nonviolence, integrity, and honesty was overshadowed by the media perception of them as being associated with crime.¹¹³

Actually, both films are set partly in Kingston, and partly in Los Angeles, the main Californian city. Chevannes, again, clearly explains what prompted the migrating movement from Jamaica:

Starting in the 1960s, the political system in Kingston's inner-city areas became paramilitarized, as gangs of youths were recruited and armed with guns to capture or to defend political strongholds or both. By the mid-1970s, political violence had escalated to a level unprecedented in the history of the country. [...] During this period many of these youths began to take up residence in the United States, some to escape reprisals, others to arrange for the smuggling of arms back to Jamaica. In the aftermath of the "war" they were joined by many of the vanquished youths who fled the mopping-up operations carried out by the Jamaican security forces. The victors too were not long in following, as the economic recession in Jamaica emptied the pork barrel and pushed many of them into the international cocaine trade. [...] They took with them not only the fearlessness of seasoned gunmen and a high level of organization but also the main trappings of Rasta symbols that were all part of the youth culture up to the beginning of the 1980s – the dreadlocks, Rasta colors, I-talk, and

¹¹² Hairdos and clothes are analysed in Chapter 7, while Rasta talk is analysed in Chapter 2, p.44.

¹¹³ Barry Chevannes, *Op. Cit.*, p.263. Note 110, p.166 in this Chapter explains how Rastafari symbols, but not values, were appropriated by Jamaican youth, the same youth that would subsequently migrate to the States.

the hatred of Babylon. What they could not take, because they did not have them, were Rastafari religious values.¹¹⁴

When this new generation arrived in the United States, it mainly worked in illegality. These young people started the same business they had in Jamaica: killings, drug dealings, extortions, and so on. They appeared to the American public as threatening, bringing with them only violence and corruption of minds. This added to the opinion that Rastafari, as they appeared, were criminals of the worst kind.

It was as drug addicts, unfortunately, that the Rastafari were first introduced to the American law enforcement establishment and through it to the print and electronic media. [...] Thus by the time Jamaican posses, cited by some as the most vicious organizations ever seen in the American criminal world, began to control the drug trade in the northeastern United States, Rastafari was already confirmed in the minds of many as a new and dangerous sect. [...] Added to this criminal image was the “strange” appearance of the dreadlocks. Americans, who had for centuries been used to Africans cropping their hair short and who had just got over the threat of cultural independence represented in the “Afro” and “bush” hairstyles, were now confronted with yet another hair statement by blacks: a symbolically aggressive profusion of kinks. Dreadlocks were not only strange (even to African Americans); they were intimidating as well.¹¹⁵

The association between Rastafari and criminality was almost immediate. Very few, in the United States, tried to discern between real Rastafari and common criminals; very few knew what Rastafari was about; and very few knew that young people could have the appearance of Rastas but not their values¹¹⁶. The police, naturally, did nothing to better the situation. For instance, the New York Police Department wrote a report warning the agents against Rastafari, and it was followed by similar reports by Police Departments in other cities.

The report [by the New York City Police Department] isolated Rastafari as the ideological underpinning of criminality among the Jamaican immigrants, altogether missing the distinction between ideas originating in Rastafari and ideas originating in the youth subculture.¹¹⁷

This happened because the United States did not know Rastafari religion/philosophy. Only with the passing of time, and the acquaintance with Rastas, did some people start to understand that there was a difference between the Rastas in Jamaica and the “Rastas” abroad.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp.263-264. For a brief overview of the difficult Jamaica socio-political situation in the 1970s and 1980s, see Appendix 2.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp.265-266.

¹¹⁶ Naturally, there were people in the United States who investigated and knew the difference.

¹¹⁷ Barry Chevannes, *Op. Cit.*, p.266.

As the years wore on, however, verbal association of Rastafari with criminality declined in frequency, though the pictorial association remained.¹¹⁸

All the films that have criminal characters with the Rasta appearance reiterate this graphic stereotype. It happens not only in *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta's Paradise*, but also in films such as *Marked for Death*¹¹⁹, which, moreover, inserts elements of stereotyped Vodun in a Jamaican context, thus demonstrating to be unaware of both Jamaican and Haitian culture.

Therefore, all the Rasta characters in *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta's Paradise* are criminals: they are occupied in international trafficking of (presumably) cocaine, and in killing members of rival gangs or members of their own gang who disobey their orders or the hierarchy. In both films, there is a slight difference between the Rastas in Jamaica and those in the States¹²⁰: those in America are unrepentant criminals, while the dons in Jamaica (played in both films by Beenie Man) try to pursue a “humanitarian” goal through illegal ways.

In *Rude Boy*, Crown wants to “get rid of the bad seeds”, because there is too much violence in the ghettos, in Kingston’s streets. He realizes that the youth cannot survive in this environment, and he wants to change the way things are done. There is no hint that he wants to stop his illegal businesses; he just wants to eliminate the people who are causing too much violence.

In *Gangsta's Paradise*, King wants to make his country a better place. This is his program:

I and I have a plan. I will capitalize on the tourism, buy up all of the beach front land, build hotels, resorts, plazas, villas, so that the youth dem can get more employment, turn back the money within the island. [...] I am the King of Jamaica. The youth dem need more employment, man, the youth dem need more schools, you a see? More pharmacies fi di ghetto people dem, you a see?¹²¹

In order to put into action his plan, King needs to get rid, once again, of the bad seeds, who are causing violence, ruining the young people, or interfering with his design. Shotta is one of these bad seeds, and this is the reason why he does not want him to come back to Jamaica. In this film, however, there is the hint of the change: at a certain point, one of King’s couriers tells the dealers that the one they are preparing will be the last shipment, because from that moment on they would try to make good things happen for the youth.

In this film, there is also a mention of the real intentions of Rastafari, an attempt to explain that Rastas are not all criminals. Toward the end, Shotta goes to speak with a Rastaman, a member of a band playing reggae¹²². This Ras is the connection between the organization in Jamaica and in Los

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p.268.

¹¹⁹ See Introduction, p.3.

¹²⁰ For a picture of the Rasta protagonists of the films, see Chapter 3, p.68: Ras Kidus and Beenie Man.

¹²¹ My transcription.

¹²² See also Chapter 3, p.98.

Angeles: he knows both Shotta and King. And he tells Shotta that King does not want him back in Jamaica. He tells Shotta:

When I and I come to this country first, our mission was to spread the word of God all across the land. Rastafari is not about senseless killings. Rastafari is about peace and upliftment, and tranquillity. All things are of Jah Rastafari. I think you lose your soul, we can't help you, dread. You better go find it.¹²³

At least, in the end, there is a glimpse of the true meaning of what Rastafari means. However, it remains ambiguous, since this band is a connection between two criminal worlds, and there is nothing religious in this.

These two films, very similar, show the real perception of the United States audience toward Rastafari. It does not matter that the people who have the Rasta appearance actually have no Rasta religious values. Rastafari is perceived as violent and criminal, and thus it is represented in these films.

5.2.8. *SHOTTAS*.

Shottas, as regards Rastafari, is very similar to *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta's Paradise*. It was co-produced with the United States, and thus it shares the same depiction of Rastafari. However, it is also slightly different from them. The secondary characters with the Rasta appearance, though not being numerous (the great majority of the criminals are baldhead Jamaicans), are the same kind of gunmen as in the other films. The difference lies in the depiction of the protagonists, Wayne and Biggs.

They are both Rastas, but they never talk about religion. Presumably, they adopted the symbols of Rastafari without the moral values. Still, they have values. What emerges from the story is that the friendship between Wayne and Biggs is the most important value in their life; it is more important than money, women or power. Their friendship started when they were kids, enduring the hardships of the ghetto. They grew up together, became criminals together, shared the glory together. Their relationship is stronger, and more important, than all the difficulties that life presents. This is the reason why, when Wayne gets killed, Biggs decides to take revenge. He does it not because he has lost his hegemony on the criminal world, not because his girlfriend has been killed in the shoot-out, but because his friend, the only secure harbour in his life has been killed. For him, this friendship represents the good side of his life, the pure feelings.

Biggs demonstrates in various instances to be the more sensitive of the characters, no doubt influenced by his being a Rasta (it would also be interesting to know how Ky-Mani Marley's being a

¹²³ My transcription.

“true” Rasta in real life influenced his character in the film). First of all, he uses a gun only if he is forced to. Then, when he realizes that Wayne’s little brother has become a shotta too, he tells him that they have created monsters. Back in Miami, he tells Wayne and Mad Max that he would like to stop, to change his life. They have enough money to live a life of luxury. He would like to go to Los Angeles with his girlfriend and step out of criminality.

Biggs represents a different kind of Rasta criminal. He is no doubt a criminal, but he demonstrates having a conscience too. He is thoughtful and positive. He demonstrates to the (foreign) audience that Rastafari is more than mere criminals, though not completely dismissing the (American) stereotype.

5.3. ONE LOVE: PENTECOSTALISM, RASTAFARI AND OBEAH.

*You will not find a Christian girl having a relationship
with a Rastafarian. It’s almost taboo in this country.*
Winston Bell

*It’s almost unheard of that a Christian girl, unless she converts
to Rastafarianism, would pursue some kind of a
relationship with a Rastafarian. Not in Jamaica, not in 2002.*
Cherine Anderson¹²⁴

These two statements set the tone of the film *One Love*, which revolves around the impediment of a love story because of religious differences, as a kind of “mystic” *Romeo and Juliet*. It also points to the Rasta philosophy that tries to find a balance in everything, and to be receptive to all kinds of people.

This film presents two different religions: Rastafari and Pentecostalism. Then, there is also Obeah¹²⁵.

5.3.1. PENTECOSTALISM¹²⁶.

Pentecostalism takes its name from the Christian event that commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the followers of Jesus Christ (Book of Acts, 2). For this reason,

Pentecostalism is a renewalist religious movement within Christianity that places special emphasis on the direct personal experience of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit¹²⁷.

¹²⁴ These statements were made by two of the protagonists of the film, in the documentary *Rasta vs. the Church*, contained in the DVD of the film. See Filmography, p.403.

¹²⁵ The explanation of Rastafari can be found in this Chapter, at p.143, while the explanation of Obeah can be found in this Chapter at p.135.

¹²⁶ All the information about this religion has been taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecostalism>, accessed March 06, 2009.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*.

As Evangelism, Pentecostalism too interprets the Bible literally, and sees it as the only Book having authority in matters of faith, thus encouraging believers to live according to what the Bible says, since it cannot err. Therefore, as regards salvation,

Pentecostals believe that in order to receive salvation and enter Heaven one must accept the teachings of Jesus Christ as described in the Bible. This includes being born again or being regenerated and is the fundamental requirement of Pentecostalism. Most Pentecostals also believe that salvation is a gift received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and cannot be earned through good deeds alone (e.g. penance).¹²⁸

Pentecostals believe that all spiritual gifts described in the Bible are at work in the Church. Among these gifts is the “speaking in tongues”, but there are others as well.

While speaking in tongues frequently receives emphasis in Pentecostalism, most Pentecostals also acknowledge other supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. Most acknowledge that not all Christians receive all of these gifts. A frequently cited list includes *works of wisdom* (the ability to provide supernatural guidance in decisions), *words of knowledge* (impartation of factual information from the Spirit), *faith*, *healing*, *miracle-working*, *prophecy* (the pronouncement of a message from God, not necessarily involving knowledge of the future), *distinguishing of spirits* (the ability to tell if evil spirits are at work), *tongues*, and *interpretation of tongues* (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).¹²⁹

Among these, the gift of speaking in tongues, which involves the actual utterance of words in an unknown (to the speaker) language, and the translation by someone who understands it, is said to originate from the Holy Spirit, as it did with the Apostles during Pentecost. People who receive the gift, during a function, are possessed in a way that is similar to most Afro-Christian religions, though, as usual, Pentecostals would see the latter as mere superstition.

One of the various gifts will be shown in the film *One Love*: namely, that of “words of knowledge”.

One Love presents various facets of religion, both in and out of the film. Beside Pentecostalism, Rastafari, and Obeah, there is also the introduction of another expression of Rastafari, Bobo Ashanti. Moreover, one of the protagonists of the film, Winston Bell, who plays Selector G, is a real pastor, of the Time Out for Jesus Ministries Church. Finally, the songs sung in the film reflect the religious beliefs of the characters: gospel for Serena, Rasta reggae for Kassa, and so on¹³⁰. Thus, religion is intricately interwoven in the plot of this film.

One Love begins with a Rasta vision, and then it opens on the Pastor’s preaching. The Pastor is Serena’s father, and he is preparing the congregation for the “words of knowledge”, or “prophecy”

¹²⁸ *Ibidem.*

¹²⁹ *Ibidem.*

¹³⁰ For an analysis of the film’s soundtrack, see Chapter 3, pp.91-95.

of one of the believers. He says: “Jesus, whatever your message is, use your servant, Jesus. Speak to us, Jesus. Speak!”¹³¹



Winston Stona as Pastor Johnson.

After his words, a woman is “possessed” by the Holy Spirit, or Jesus, or God, and she accuses two young people of having fornicated before coming to church, without being married. She says, mixing strange verses to her words:

God says... Paul Thomas, Camille Jones, you have sinned. You come off the bed of fornication, and come in to the presence of God? Confess!

All the congregation then starts screaming at them, urging them to confess, and despising them for their sin. This can be interpreted as “words of knowledge”, since it is a communication of factual information from the Spirit, but also as “prophecy”, since it is also a pronouncement of a message from God. Anyway, it could also be just a gossip, but the way the woman speaks recalls the way people are possessed in Afro-Caribbean religions.



Woman possessed by Jesus, pointing to the sinners.

Throughout the film, there are hints at the way Rastas are treated by the rest of the population, and the close-mindedness of some sects of Christianity. There are also hints at the total and constant way of living according to the Gospel by Pentecostals. For instance, when Serena is trying the Zion Gospel’s song, and is having some difficulties, the Pastor tells her “Let’s win these 20,000 US dollars for Jesus. Trust me, child, the Holy Ghost will teach you to do all things”.

The first incident between the Rastas and the Pentecostals occurs in the recording studio. The Zion Gospel, who entered the studio before the Freedom City even if they arrived later, is taking too much time, and the Rastas are becoming impatient. They enter the studio too, to tell them to hurry. The

¹³¹ All the quotations from the film are my transcriptions.

Pastor does not pay attention to them, he does not even listen to Kassa speaking to him. He totally ignores them, causing Bobo to tell him “the man rude! You have fi learn manners!”.

On the road from the studio to the village, the Rastas are on a bus, and the only unoccupied place is the one near Kassa. A woman, who gets on the bus at a successive stop, prefers to stand, with all the difficulties it entails, rather than to sit near a Rasta.

Shortly after, we are taken inside Selector G’s house, and we are introduced to his personal counsellor, an Obeahman. This man is up to date, using a computer, and doing his duties without hiding anywhere and from anyone. He appears at first as a kind of clairvoyant, since he foretells what is happening before it actually happens. He says to Selector G:

Pickin’ up some bad vibes... [...] Awful forces at work... Trying to mash up your business.
[...] Good news is on the way...

At this moment, the man with the tapes for the competition appears, and they start to choose the songs. The Obeahman helps in the choice, pointing to those which can be a success. When they pick up the song sung by Kassa’s group, the Obeahman does a kind of “benediction” on the tape, after Scarface tells him “Come, man, work your magic ‘pon it”. The rite is quite simple: the Obeahman pours an uncoloured liquid over the tape, and then in Selector G’s hands, then they breathe on the tape and the hands, and they liberate it in the air. The scene is rendered less dramatic by Selector G, who smells his hands and says to the Obeahman “What dis you using, man? It stink!”.



The Obeahman.

Later on, Kassa goes to Serena’s compound. This place is called Zion Hill. This is not strange *per se*. What is somewhat ironic is the fact that the Bobo Ashanti community, the branch of Rastafari that the Pastor so despises, is set in Bull Bay, and they have called their compound Zion Hill. Thus, the name of the Bobo community has been appropriated by a Pentecostal church in this film.

When Kassa arrives on the Hill, he waits for Serena outside of the church. She goes to talk to him, and all the people who are there look at them and start talking about them, criticizing Serena for keeping in touch with such a kind of person.

Afterwards, we are presented with the Rastafari lifestyle. The Rastas are at the bar, with Selector G who is trying to convince them to “work” with him. He drinks rum and coke, Claudette drinks a Red Stripe beer, but the two more deeply Rasta, Kassa and Bobo, refuse alcohol. Kassa drinks nothing at

all, while Bobo asks for a juice. This reflects the Rastafari way of life, that refuses alcohol and opts for natural drinks and food.

When Kassa and Serena are in the park, and he tries to make her sing his song, she refuses, and they start to talk about religion and the different lifestyle that their different religions impose on them. While waiting for Kassa, who is a bit late, Aaron tells Serena that he “must have had too much ganja last night”, linking the fact of being a Rasta with the smoking of ganja.

Kassa tells Serena about the vision he had of her, and how he heard her sing in it. She links the visions with religion:

Serena: “You think the Lord is trying to say something to you through me?”

Kassa: “Could be the other way around”

However, at this stage, Serena is still too imbued with Pentecostalism and its prejudices against Rastas to accept it. She thinks that she has the only true religion, and that there can be no other truth. She does not believe that the Lord could be speaking to her through Kassa. She persists in not wanting to sing the song, because her religion does not allow her to do so. And then she explains the austere rules of her church:

As a Pastor’s daughter? I have to set an example. Church life is very strict. We’re only allowed to sing Gospel. [...] I can’t even have friends outside of the Church. Daddy thinks they’ll contaminate me.

The fear of contamination is very present in Jamaican churches. There are booklets, for instance, available in libraries, that explain how to behave to be a good Christian girl, especially. The rules included in these books warn against friendships outside of the Church, friendships with members of the opposite sex, the attendance of places of ill-fame (for example dancehalls), and so on, and they advise church attending, prayers, abstinence of every kind, and the like. The kind of life described in these pamphlets is very similar to the kind of life Serena lives in this film.

This scene concludes with Kassa asking Serena her phone number, but she replies:

Serena: “I’m not allowed calls by non Christians. Come to church on Sunday, we’ll talk after”.

Kassa: “Hoping to convert me?”

Serena: “The only way you could hear me sing! Right?”

Kassa: “Give thanks”.

And she concludes, with Aaron in the car, that “Rastas are hard to convert”. Her meetings with Kassa are still religion-based. She still thinks that she can convert him, even if she feels attracted to him, maybe also because of his being a Rasta, and thus “forbidden” to her.

When the Pastor comes to know about Serena’s encounter with Kassa, he alludes to it in his next sermon.

My brothers and sisters, as Christians, you're children of the most powerful King in the universe. And that makes you royal. Cut above the others. So I want to see you stand tall. Want to see you walk tall. Hold yourself in royalty. Now, royalty do not mix with the commoners. And with royalty comes responsibility. You do not go outside of your faith. Remember Samson? How they make him a slave? Tucked out his eyes? Because he did not keep his faith. He went outside of his faith. Avoid the devil! Speak of the Devil?

At this moment Kassa opens the door of the church, and is indicated by the Pastor as the Devil. The Pastor continues his sermon, now directly referring and talking to Kassa.

Coming here to corrupt my daughter, with your flattery and your deception? You are not welcome here. Get out. Get out!

Serena is quite embarrassed by this accusation, and Kassa goes away without saying a word. Serena goes to Kassa's village, a paradisiacal place immersed in the lush vegetation, to apologise, and here we are shown the Rasta side of intolerance.



The Eden-like Rasta village.

First of all, one of the players makes jokes to Kassa, thinking that he wants to start a relationship with Serena. Knowing that Non-Conformist Christian customs are different from Rasta's, he asks him "You have the engagement ring? No sex before marriage, you know, Rasta?". Then, instead of playing Kassa's song to make Serena sing it, they mimic a Christian hymn, causing Serena to leave the house. Bobo tells Kassa "Separate yourself from wickedness". But Kassa replies "Show I the wickedness inna di girl!".

Bobo bears the name of his religious affiliation, the Bobo Ashanti, and he represents the most intransigent branch of Rastafari. His intolerance of the Pentecostal girl comes from his faith and its severe rules. It is a clash of fundamentalisms: Bobo and Pentecostal.



Bobo, a typical Bobo Rasta.

5.3.2. BOBO ASHANTI.

The Bobo Ashanti (it can also be found with other specifications, or simply as Bobo) represent one of the Houses of Rastafari. They are different from the other Rastas, both in physical appearance and in behaviour. They live together in a commune, separating themselves from the unclean world.

Outwardly, their separation from the rest of the Dreadlocks is marked by the wearing of tightly wrapped turbans, sometimes long, flowing black or white robes, and attractively handmade sandals. Even their form of greeting is different from that of other Dreadlocks.

[...] All the aggressiveness characteristic of the Dreadlocks is alien to the Bobo, who go out of their way to cultivate excellent relations with their surrounding community.¹³²

The community lives on a hill in Bull Bay, not far away from Kingston. It was founded by Prince Emmanuel Edwards, called Dada by the Bobo, and who would later be called King Edwards.

Prince Emmanuel emerged as a Rastafari leader during the 1950s by spearheading an islandwide convention of the brethren at Ackee Walk where his camp was first set up. [...] Following the convention, Prince's followers became more sectarian. They began to attribute divinity to him and separated themselves from other Rastafarians by wearing the turbans and the robes.¹³³

As regards the organization of the community, it is quite simple, and reflects the hierarchy of the Bobo:

The compound is organized simply: at the head is Prince Emmanuel, or Jesus himself, and beneath him his followers. Generally speaking, all male Bobo are either "prophets" or "priests." The function of the prophets is to reason, the function of the priests to "move around the altar," that is, to conduct the services. Apart from these rules are the other social functions that keep the camp going: a guard at the gate to ensure the ritual purity of all visitors who enter, the keeper of the stores, the cooks, the manager of the delco plant, and the comptroller whose main task is to purchase supplies. Finally come the women and the children whose places are subordinate to those of the men.¹³⁴

The children grow up together, looked after by the whole community, and women are considered inferior to men. Bobo are obsessed with "cleanliness", and women are considered unclean and impure. This is the reason why they are not allowed to cook for the Bobo men, and they have to hide in a "sick house" for various days of the month.

The place of all females is below that of all males, regardless of age. [...] In the commune all females must cover their legs and arms. Women are confined to looking after the children and performing other household chores such as cleaning and washing. [...]

¹³² Barry Chevannes, *Op. Cit.*, pp.171-172. Information about the Bobo can be found in various books. Here, I gathered it only from Chevannes' book.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, p.173.

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, p.174.

Women give deference to men. [...]

A woman may serve guests, but may never serve Bobo males. [...] Among the Bobo it is the men who cook and the men who serve. The women may eat sitting on a bench outside the kitchen or take the meal back to their private quarters. Of course if they so wish they may cook for themselves after their days of purification from the menstrual flow are over.

[...]

If a Bobo is faithful to his marital union, his sexual activities are limited to twelve days out of a twenty-eight day cycle. The other sixteen days, his wife must remain hidden from the view of all men. This is where the “sick house” comes in. [...] During this time, other women acting as nurses administer to her needs and take care of her domestic chores. [...] ¹³⁵

Apart from their view of women as evil and potentially contaminating, the relationship of the Bobo with the outside world is excellent. They invite non-Bobo to the commune, to make them understand how they live. They go around the city selling brooms made by them, but also gungo peas (a legume similar to beans) and calaloo (a vegetable similar to spinach) grown on the Hill. In general, what is appealing about the Bobo faith is the purity they search in their way of life, in an otherwise chaotic city and lifestyle.

The most important difference from the other Rastas lies in the Bobo belief system. For them, King Emmanuel is part of a Holy Trinity, manifestation of Jah on earth.

According to Prince Emmanuel, the Holy Trinity comprises the three spirits: Prophet, Priest, and King. The King, of course, is Selassie. The Prophet is Garvey, and the Priest is Prince Emmanuel himself. ¹³⁶

Like other Rastas, the Bobo asserts black supremacy, also finding biblical and historical proofs that the black man is genetically superior to the white (or any other colour) man.

In the commune, the Bobo pray three times a day, at sunrise, noon, and sunset. Every evening a service is held, in the open yard, in which Haile Selassie Jah Rastafari is praised, the Bible is read, and songs are sung. Finally, twice each week and on the first Saturday of every month the Bobo fast. This means that during these days, the Bobo do neither eat nor drink, and from noon to six o'clock a special service is held in the temple.

To many the Bobo seem to have retreated from the world of the profane to live a life without the constrictions found in Kingston. To many others, their lifestyle seems too severe. To still others, who identify Bobo with the incendiary lyrics of the Bobo deejays/singers such as Anthony B or

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp.176-177. Chevannes wrote this book in 1994. Werner Zips (*Op. Cit.*, p.163), in 2006, states that now the period of “uncleanliness” for a woman has been extended to 21 days. Of course, it must be said that the subordination of women among the Bobo is in keeping with that of other sects and religions.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, p.179.

Sizzla, they seem too violent in claiming fire to burn down Babylon¹³⁷, even if generally Bobo have no problems with the police, because of their non violent preaching. The reaction to Bobo is mixed, as happened with the other Rastas: some are attracted to them, others are afraid of them.

Bobo, in *One Love*, does not live in a Bobo community. He lives with other Rastas, but in the village where Dreadlocked Rastas live. He pursues his purity in food and drink, and he does not seem to have a girlfriend. He lives for his music, and stands for his rights. He is intolerant toward mainstream Christianity, but the pastor does nothing to be accepted. However, Bobo is also able to discern if his judgement is unjust, and to change his mind.

In the Rasta village, after Serena has gone away, Kassa reasons with an elder, to seek his advice and to try to understand what he has to do with her. The elder explains to him that love is the only thing that matters. Religion is a problem that can be solved easily, if the love is real.

Kassa: "I keep hearing her voice. Is like a magnet, elder, holding me."

Elder: "Use to be a last chance to live and love again, you know."

Kassa: "Yeah, but with a Christian?"

Elder: "You know, I know a Rastaman, once. Him had similar feelings for a woman. You know, it was in the days when them used to cut off Rasta locks. She finds solace in the Church. Him hold fast to Rasta, no compromise. And him got take up with this demon Rasta woman. Woman make him life living hell. You know, I wouldn't like to see that happen to you."

Kassa: "So what happen to him?"

Elder: "Living in regrets. You know, there's two road to travel, the rough and the smooth. Better you take the rough road, 'cause that is where the sweetness is."

The Pastor, on the other hand, is not of the same opinion. When he discovers that Serena has cancelled the marriage with Aaron, he thinks that Satan has taken possession of his daughter. He finds her at the cemetery, on her mother's tomb, and there he tries to "exorcise" her.

You don't see what's happening. Satan has weaved his wing to your heart, and is using you to destroy my credibility, to destroy the church. It's thirty years I've taken to build this church. The minister that your mother helped me build. She must be turning in her grave. [...] Oh Lord God in Heaven, as you rebuked Satan, you cast him out of your heavenly kingdom, remove him from my daughter's soul. Child, listen to me. There is no faith worse than hell fire. Do you understand me? Do you want to burn in hell? Do you want to be tormented by hell fire? Forever damned?

¹³⁷ Bobo singers and deejays are explored in Appendix 2, pp.401-402. However, their claims to "burn" Babylon are more metaphorical than real: fire has a purifying power, but only metaphorically.

In his stubbornness and blindness, he does not understand that his daughter is in love with Kassa. He thinks that he will lose credibility, and for this reason he terrorizes her with her possibility of burning in Hell for eternity. He shows his close-mindedness again later that day, while having dinner with the family. Aaron and Serena exchange opinions about Rastas, and the beating of Kassa and his group that had happened a few hours before.

Hartley: “You told them about Rastas getting beat up?”

Pastor: “Yes.”

Serena: “But you didn’t tell me that nobody tried to help them.”

Aaron: “It might have been drug related. Rastas are into drug. It’s quite logical...”

Serena: “What? That every injustice against Rastas is drug related? It makes no sense, Aaron. And even if it was drug related, we’re peace makers. Our brothers keep up, no matter what...”

Here the Pastor interrupts her, changing the subject of conversation. He does not want to hear about Rastas. He thinks that they are the worst people in the world, that they should not be allowed to exist, and so he resents his daughter who defends them. He does not listen to her, and he stops her when she approaches the matter, also because she is saying the right things. If they were truly religious, they would stand against injustices, no matter the religion of the victims of the injustice.

Serena, feeling guilty for the way they are treating the Rastas, goes to the village and offers her help to retrieve the rights for the stolen song. At first, Bobo does not agree with it. He does not want a Christian to unite with Rastas, no matter if the cause is right. He says “Christian woman mix up inna Rasta business? No, Rasta, it not right!”. Then, he sees that Joshua, Neville and the Elder accept her, because she would be a “great empress” (title attributed to women by Rastas, as well as “princess”). Thus, he understands that maybe his judgement is wrong, and he changes his mind, accepting Serena, because achieving social justice is more important than voicing personal dislike.

In Selector G’s office, there is the main scene concerning Obeah. Serena gives Kassa the contract she finds in Selector G’s safe, and then she puts an egg over a table, sure that it would scare him. The egg is a potent symbol in Obeah:

The egg is considered the embodiment of Obeah. Even Christians tremble at the sight of an egg that seems as though it might have been sent for him. Some say that if a child steals eggs then he or she will be a thief for life and that dreams of eggs mean luck and perhaps even money. Eggs of evil birds such as the egg of Gi’-me-me-bit, the Cuban nighthawk, if broken cause trouble. The Obeah man alone can use this egg to put Obeah on another, for he alone knows how to break it so as to bring out sores all over the other’s body. [...] An egg might be an item that the Obeah man holds in his *bacra*.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Cassandra Perrone, *Op. Cit.*.



The egg examined by the Obeahman.

After the presentation of the competition, Selector G and the Obeahman go to his office. Here Selector G sees the egg, and gets really scared. He thinks that someone has cast a spell upon him. The Obeahman tells him not to worry, and observes the egg. At that moment, Kassa enters into the office. Pointing to a hearse parked outside of the building, he says to Selector G:

Man outside is the High Priest of Mystical Order of Revelation. Can read your mind. Reach into your safe and remove documents.

As a proof, he shows him the document that Serena had previously taken away from the safe. He makes his requests to Selector G, who willingly complies, scared to death of what is happening. When he goes to get the money, the Obeahman tells Kassa:

Rasta dealing with the Mystical? You going get it [the money], but you can't keep it. Dis a spiritual battle.

The question he asks makes sense, since Rastas do not believe in, and therefore do not deal with, Obeah or any practice that is related to magic. They consider it as superstitious and backward (thus aligning themselves, in this respect, with the Christian sects), since the only true God for them is Jah Rastafari, and He has nothing to do with magic, spells, spirits and so on.

Then, the Obeahman sets this confrontation on a spiritual level, pitting himself against the Rasta in that kind of battle. The spiritual battle would make more sense between two Obeahmen, or between an Obeahman and a Myalman. However, in this case, since the Rasta has presented himself as a man who knows how to deal with Obeah, he becomes an adversary for the Obeahman.

Kassa, on the other hand, does not follow him on this subject, and he concludes his visit to Selector G putting his conditions to leave him alone:

If anything happen to any member of my family, or if don't come to it any way, you will lose your hearing, stone death. And remember, that is your one talent, mister music man, the ears.

Selector G is very afraid, and swears that nothing will happen.

The following day, Serena goes to the Rasta village to talk with Kassa about what is happening between them. They are falling in love, and it is clear to both, but Serena cannot leave aside her religion to fully live this love. She is willing to refuse it in order not to go against her father's teachings. When Kassa kisses her, and tries to do more, she withdraws, remindful of the way she

would be publicly ashamed if someone discovered she had sex with Kassa, a man who does not belong to the same religion, and with whom she is not married.

Kassa: "Princess, it's alright."

Serena: "No, we'd have to be married."

Kassa: "I love you, Serena, and I want us to be together."

Serena: "Just get baptized, please?"

Kassa: "Be Rasta!."

Serena: "I can't."

Kassa: "Free up your mind. Follow your heart."

Serena: "Just accept Jesus."

Kassa: "I can't."

Serena: "I love you."

Kassa: "So, then, burn fear!"

Serena: "No, no, burn love."

Immediately, police gets into the house and claims to have found some drugs hidden in the house. Both Kassa and Serena are sent to prison, where she asks him if the cocaine is his. He reacts harshly, telling her "Princess, like you wasn't listening, like you wasn't learning! Rastas don't deal in drugs." But she replies "Cocaine and ganja is all the same thing." Thus, she demonstrates that prejudices are hard to die. In her mind (and that of many others) Rastas have always been associated with drugs¹³⁹. Even if she has come to know Kassa, and seen the kind of person he is, she nonetheless has no problem in condemning him on the base of her preconceived ideas. This is hard to understand for Kassa, who decides that he cannot stay with a woman who does not trust him.

The imprisonment of Kassa, orchestrated by Scarface, Selector G's right hand, and of which he boasts with him, puts the producer as responsible for it. Thus, he has, without knowing it, broken the promise made to Kassa, that nothing would have happened to him. Blindly believing in Obeah, and fearing the consequences of this act, Selector G forces Scarface to go to the police and confess everything: the cocaine was put by someone paid by him, upon request by Aaron, who wanted to discredit Kassa in Serena's eyes. On the road, Selector G sees a hearse, and thinks that Kassa's prophecy is taking place.

¹³⁹ Commenting on the draft of this chapter in August 2009, Prof. Hylton said: "Rastas acknowledge their usage of ganja as a sacred herb. Kassa was apparently framed but it is not prejudicial to associate Rasta with ganja." I think it is prejudicial because I consider, with most Rastas, marijuana as very different from heavy drugs like cocaine. When I use the term "drug", I mean heavy drugs, not ganja.



The “fulfilment of a prophecy”.

Selector G also believes that he is losing his hearing, as promised by Kassa, even though nothing seems to happen to the people around him, nor in the film itself. All will finish the moment Kassa is liberated from prison.

In the meantime, the Pastor has taken away Serena from the prison, and he has taken her back to the church, where the congregants try to purify her. They all gather around her, leading her toward the altar, screaming “Praise Jesus”, and believing that their prayers will heal her, and make her return on the right path. She willingly accepts the ceremony, since she has lost faith in Kassa, and she thinks that her father, and all the members of the church, are right, and know what is best for her.



“Healing” ceremony for Serena.

However, Aaron’s arrest makes all her certainties vacillate. It demonstrates that the appearance cannot be trusted, and that people belonging to other religions can be good people too. It is a harsh lesson for her, but even more so for her father, who now understands that he has failed. The Pastor understands that his judgement has not been right, that he should trust other people, no matter their religious affiliation, and above all that his daughter, if he wants her to be happy, should marry someone she really loves. He goes on his wife’s tomb, and draws a bitter conclusion of his position:

As I lost you, I’m losing them. God has taught me a terrible lesson. He’s exposed me as a man not worthy of leading the flock.

He thinks that he is not worthy anymore to be a pastor, but his recognition of his error, and the subsequent benediction of Kassa and Serena’s marriage will save him, and redeem him in the eyes of his daughter and of the Rastas.

The film concludes with a happy ending. Serena sings with Kassa, and the Zion Gospel backs the Freedom City. Harmony reigns, and Kassa asks Serena to marry him, under the benevolent glance of

the Pastor, giving her an engagement ring. He loves her, and in order to be with her, he is willing to compromise. He will marry her, and respect her beliefs. On his part, the Pastor agrees to the wedding, thus compromising too.



Kassa asks Serena to marry him, offering an engagement ring.

The morale of the film is that compromises allow people to live together in harmony. Respect of religions is fundamental: if people are able to communicate, and do not remain on their positions without accepting anything else than what they believe is the truth, sharing and happiness are possible. In the end, in this film, everybody is happy because everybody has sacrificed something to be enriched by the other: Kassa will wait until the wedding to have sex with Serena; the Pastor will accept a Rasta as his son-in-law; Bobo will accept a Christian woman as part of his group; and Serena will keep her values while at the same time learn those of her Rasta husband.

5.4. CONCLUSION: RELIGION IS A WAY OF LIFE, RASTAFARI IS A HOPE FOR LIFE.

Religion is a very important part of Jamaican life. As such, the Jamaican films could not avoid its representation. However, in the island several religions coexist, and the films could choose which one to represent.

Two Christian churches are presented: Evangelism in *The Harder They Come* and Pentecostalism in *One Love*. They bear different denominations, but show many similarities in functions, beliefs and prejudices. Some films focus on Afro-Caribbean religions, that are little known outside of the island but gather many believers in Jamaica, especially among the lower strata of society. This is why Revival is represented benevolently in *Rockers*, Kumina is presented, in a quite neutral way, in *Glory to Gloriana*, and Obeah shows its presence in *Countryman* and *One Love*. Obeah is always viewed in an ambiguous way. No judgements are passed on it, and plausible explanations are possible both for those who believe in it and for those who do not. For instance, in *One Love*, Selector G says that he is really losing his hearing, but no one acknowledges it: everything is working fine. Thus, for those who believe in Obeah, the magic is working; for the skeptics, it is easily explained as self-persuasion on the part of the producer. No logical justification is given for Obeah, so as to let the audience build its own opinion.

On the other hand, another religion/philosophy/lifestyle is presented in almost every film, becoming one of the defining characteristics of Jamaica: Rastafari. Even if, in Jamaican/USA co-productions, Rasta characters are depicted as criminals, in purely Jamaican films they become the “salvation” of society. With Rastafari are associated moral values and solidarity, and they are often shown as a way for the future, a hope for a change, a betterment of society. Thus, in *The Harder They Come*, Ras Pedro becomes the only positive and immaculate character. In *Rockers* the Rasta community fights for social justice with the force of “One Love”, and Countryman, in the homonymous film, is a hero that puts his life at risk only because it is the right thing to do, without requiring anything for what he does. In *One Love*, Kassa is a pure-hearted character, who wins his battle just showing the kind of person he is, and for this he is accepted and loved. In *Shottas*, Biggs has high moral values, even if he is a criminal. He may appear ambiguous, but he is the only gangster who thinks about the people surrounding him. The only “bad” Rasta is Luke, in *Children of Babylon*, but he is the exception. For the rest, Rastafari is projected as a positive religion, a real way forward.

Even if Rastas represent a minority of Jamaican population¹⁴⁰, it is nonetheless a visible minority. And they still belong, for the most part, to the lower strata of society. The reason why a Rasta character appears in almost every film reflects a trend in Jamaican cinema, which depicts this very social class. Since the films are targeted to a working class, and seek to please Jamaican popular taste, they value what could be considered the “popular culture” of the island, among which is Rastafari. As it is becoming clear in the analysis of various aspects of Jamaican films, they depict the country’s popular culture, be it in music, dance or religion. These same features are generally ignored by the academy and high culture. For this reason, films must be valued because they present aspects of the island’s life which would be otherwise dismissed as “popular”, “unsophisticated” and “backward”. Rastafari and Afro-Christian religions in Jamaica demonstrate that even if they are “popular”, they are nonetheless important and shaping the identity of many Jamaican people.

¹⁴⁰ Even though an exact quantification of its members, or of members of other religions, is difficult to obtain. Indeed, as seen in the introduction of this chapter, many people claim allegiance to Christian denominations for acceptance in society, but adhere to other African-based religions in private.

6. KINGSTON AND THE JAMAICAN COUNTRYSIDE: THE SETTINGS AND LOCATIONS OF JAMAICAN FILMS.

The great majority of the Jamaican films are set in Kingston, the capital city of the island. The choice of a setting, or of a location, is important in establishing the tone of a film, and the fact that most directors chose to shoot their films in the city has a meaning for the stories they tell.

In many films, especially those dealing with violence, the setting is restricted to the ghettos, where life conditions are hard and gangs often rule the various areas. In some films, the setting is even more confined to the yard. This is significant, since it reflects the importance of this institution in the island's society. In fact, Jamaicans abroad, especially in the United States, are called "Yardies", and when they go back home, both physically, in Jamaica, and figuratively, from a foreign country back to Jamaica, they say that they go "back a yard". These linguistic expressions point to the significance of this tradition for the greatest part of the inhabitants, for whom "yard" has become synonymous with "home".

Only a few Jamaican films are set in the "countryside", that is in other parts of the island, more or less far from the capital: *Countryman* is set in a fishermen's village in Hellshire, near Portmore and very close to Kingston, *Smile Orange* in a Montego Bay hotel, *The Lunatic* near Ocho Rios and *One Love* in the countryside north of Kingston. As regards *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta's Paradise*, the Jamaican sections of the films are shot in Kingston, while the US sections take place in Los Angeles. *Shottas* is shot partly in Kingston and partly in Miami.



¹ The map of Jamaica was found on <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jm-map.png>, accessed April 18, 2009.

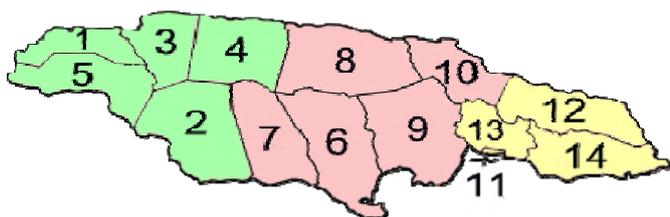
6.1 JAMAICA AND KINGSTON.

Jamaica is the third biggest island in the Greater Antilles, situated in the Caribbean archipelago. It is smaller only than Cuba, at its north, and the island that comprises Haiti and the Dominican Republic (formerly known as Hispaniola), at its east. It is 234 kilometres in length and as much as 80 kilometres in width with an area of approximatively 11 100 km².

It is also the third most populous anglophone country in North America, after the United States and Canada. A former British colony, Jamaica was granted independence on August 6th, 1962. However, though it is formally a Parliamentary Democracy, it still also is a Constitutional Monarchy, under the rule of the United Kingdom and with Elizabeth II as the monarch. As such, it is also part of the Commonwealth.

The first inhabitants of the land were the Tainos (also called Arawaks), who gave the island its name, *Xaymaca*, meaning “Land of Wood and Water” or “Land of Springs”². However, the arrival of Christopher Columbus and the subsequent enslavement of the native population provoked the almost complete annihilation of the Tainos. When England took possession of the island, in 1655, its capitalistic thrust and its need to exploit the land mainly for sugar, and later bananas, gave way to the sistematic exploitation of slavery, and the consequent transplantation of millions of Africans brought through the Middle Passage to work on the plantations of the Caribbean and the United States. After the abolition of slavery, several Indians, Syrians, Lebanese and Chinese were brought to the island as indentured labourers to substitute the freed African slaves who, all too remindful of slavery, refused to keep working on the plantations under very little changed conditions. Hence the diversification of the ethnic composition of Jamaica: the overwhelming majority of the population, estimated in July 2008 at 2,804,332³, has African origins, a minority has Asian or Middle Eastern origins, and a very small percentage is of European descent.

Jamaica is divided into 14 parishes, which are grouped into three historic counties that have no administrative relevance:



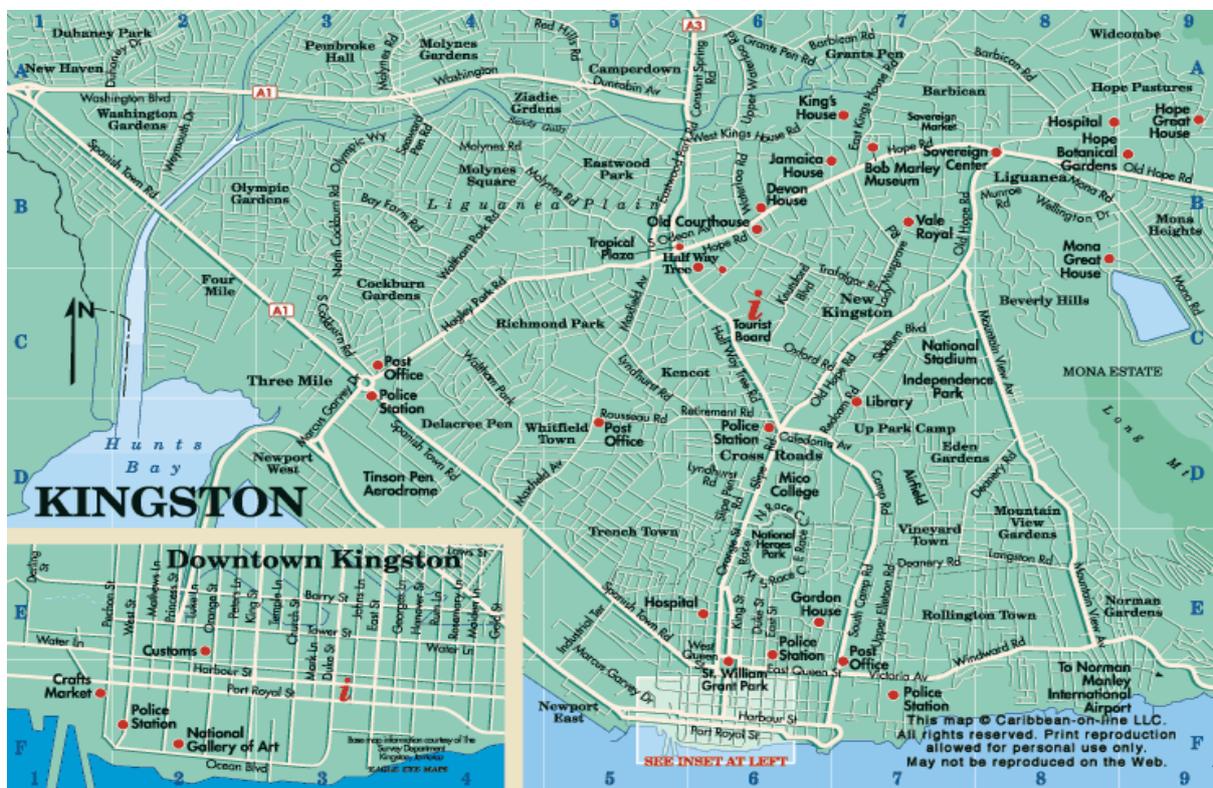
The Cornwall County (in green) is made of the parishes of Hanover (1), Saint Elizabeth (2), Saint James (3), Trelawny (4) and Westmoreland (5). The Middlesex County (in red) is formed by Clarendon (6), Manchester (7), Saint Ann (8), Saint Catherine (9) and Saint Mary (10). The last

² The general information about Jamaica was found on <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaica>, accessed April 18, 2009.

³ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaica>, accessed April 18, 2009.

one, the Surrey County (in yellow), is composed by Kingston (11), Portland (12), Saint Andrew (13) and Saint Thomas (14).⁴ However, Kingston and Saint Andrew are always grouped together, as a Corporation.

The capital city, and the most important one, is Kingston⁵. It is located on the southeastern coast of the island country. The city proper is bounded by Six Miles to the west, Stony Hill to the north, Papine to the northeast and Harbour View to the east. Communities in rural St. Andrew such as Gordon Town, Mavis Bank, Lawrence Tavern, Mt. Airy and Bull Bay would not be described as being in Kingston. Two parts make up the central area of Kingston: the historic but troubled Downtown, and New Kingston⁶. New Kingston is generally acknowledged as uptown, and it hosts the wealthier portion of the population. Kingston is 480 km², with a total population of 651,880, divided into 96,052 in Kingston proper, and 555,828 in the parish of Saint Andrew.



Kingston is not only the most important Jamaican city, it is also a reflection of the island's difficult past. Actually, its organization mirrors the divisions of Jamaican society.

More than half a million people populate Kingston of different ranging from African, Asian, European, and Middle Eastern roots. The city's tremendous growth during the 20th century

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ An interesting book about Kingston is the one by David Howard, *Kingston: A Cultural and Literary History*, Oxford, Signal Books and Jamaica, Ian Randle Publishers, 2005. Here the author gives a detailed description of the city and of its history, and also of its surroundings.

⁶ The general information about Kingston was found on [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingston, Jamaica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingston,_Jamaica), accessed April 19, 2009.

⁷ A map of the city of Kingston, <http://www.caribbean-on-line.com/islands/jm/images/kingston-map.gif>, accessed April 18, 2009.

has produced severe overcrowding, persistent unemployment, and violent crime. Poverty has devastated Jamaica's black majority and nowhere is this more apparent than in the ghettos of Kingston. European colonialism set up a society of racial stratification and current residents of Kingston have to deal with historic tensions between the city's black and brown residents.⁸

The difficult life conditions in Kingston, and the fact that it has become (in)famous as the “murder capital of the world” have much to do with its history, with slavery, and with the racial separation perpetuated by the British on the island. All that has happened in Jamaica since the creation of Kingston in 1692 has appeared there first, and the traces of these events are still visible today.

Kingston of today is a direct result of the organized racial and cultural segregation that began more than 300 years ago, when Jamaica was a British colony. Many of the social and political changes that have swept Jamaica since 1692 have occurred first in Kingston, often in reaction to organized political protests. The history of Kingston itself represents the legacy of slavery and the efforts by black and brown Jamaicans to find freedom and equality in a nation haunted by what's left of colonialism.⁹

After slavery, Kingston became the place where most Jamaicans from the countryside wanted to be. It was thought of as a place fraught with opportunities: new jobs, new possibilities, flowing money, and so on. Unfortunately, the city was unable to fulfil all the wishes, and it created the conditions of unemployment, overcrowding and violence mentioned by Weaderhorn. Nonetheless, many people still view Kingston as the place where everything is possible (a cinematic example is that of Ivan, in *The Harder They Come*, who leaves the countryside to try to make it in the capital). Thus, they keep moving to the capital, overcrowding more and more the “ghettos”, the places where lodgings are more easily affordable for the lower strata of society, but which, just because of the vicinity and density of the inhabitants, become more and more dangerous, in that many people there have nothing to do, and more importantly nothing to lose. They thus often become involved in violent politics or in the cocaine trade, form gangs that fight one another, and spread the violence which has become such an impressive feature of the city of Kingston in its negative publicity outside of the island. However, this denigrating campaign against Kingston fails to see the qualities of the city, and above all the qualities of the people who live in it, who are not all gangsters. Kingston is just another modern metropolis, which offers to its inhabitants and its visitors all the pros and cons that whichever metropolis in the world offers.

Kingston has an overwhelming importance in the life of Jamaicans and of Jamaica itself. As the films mean to be a reflection of Jamaican life, the directors of the island have naturally elected

⁸ Andrew Weaderhorn, *A Look Into Kingston*, <http://debate.uvm.edu/dreadlibrary/weaderhorn02.htm>, accessed March 06, 2009.

⁹ *Ibidem*. Weaderhorn traces a brief history of the city of Kingston, which can be however found on nearly every history book about Jamaica.

Kingston as their major location, with their striking commitment to a “realism” that depicts the city in all its contradictory facets. In contrast, those directors that chose to shoot their films in the countryside decided to do so probably to avoid the representation of the most difficult parts of the city, and to depict an idyllic portrayal of the countryside, thus calling on a frequent dichotomy that sees the city as evil and corrupted and the countryside as good and pure.

6.2 *THE HARDER THEY COME.*

In Henzell’s project, *The Harder They Come* was meant to represent a purely Jamaican experience. This was thought to designate the “real” Jamaican culture, the one practised by the “common” people, day by day, and not the one, maybe more sophisticated, but seen as less authentic and as an imitation of foreign mores, of the upper classes. Thus, to find this “pure” Jamaica, Henzell chose to shoot his film in the so-called ghettos, especially in the ghetto of Trench Town.

Located mainly in the busy streets of West Kingston, the film also captures downtown’s exasperated tensions and choreographs them on the big screen, tracing the city’s sounds and senses in a local narrative of good, bad and ugly.¹⁰

In those years, Trench Town represented the core of Jamaican creativity, since most of the Rastafari lived there, and among them were the best musicians of the island, those who would be acclaimed all over the world for the creation of ska, rocksteady and reggae¹¹. This was exactly the kind of vibe that Henzell wanted to capture in his film. A journalist pointed to the remarkable way in which Henzell depicted Trench Town, in an article that appeared soon after the release of the film:

The film is beautifully crafted with lovely colour, that brings out the sordid beauty that all slums tend to possess in the artist’s eye and to which the developers of building schemes are so wilfully blind in their reconstruction plans. [...] The cinematography of both urban and rural Jamaica is both fine and real. There is a beauty here that the tourist never sees, but that breaks the heart of the born or adopted Jamaican.¹²

In *The Harder They Come*, Ivan is a country boy who arrives in Kingston hoping to better his life. He sees the big city as the place where dreams can come true, fraught with opportunities and possibilities. In the very first scene, we are presented Ivan arriving on a bus, from the countryside to Kingston. The countryside is not shown, but rather evoked through a shot that illustrates the Jamaican coast, with the sea and the vegetation, that finishes with a close up of the bus, riding to Kingston. This first shot seems fit for a film advertising Jamaica as a natural paradise. However, this impression will last only for this scene. The rest of the film will be very distanced from the clichés.

¹⁰ David Howard, *Op. Cit.*, p.214.

¹¹ For a history of Jamaican music, see Appendix 2.

¹² Unknown author, *Jamaican Film – A Creditable Effort*, in *The Sunday Gleaner*, March 19, 1972, p.4.

Before the arrival, we are also presented with various shots of the smaller cities where the bus passes, to gather more passengers along the way and reach the capital.



A view of the Jamaican coast.

Finally, at the end of the journey, the bus reaches Kingston, which appears to Ivan as very different from the countryside. It is chaotic, overcrowded, with innumerable hustlers and people who just want to deprive Ivan of his few properties. He is lost, does not know what to do or where to go. He does not know how to behave in the city, a fact exemplified by his ignorance of the function of the traffic lights. This is the reason why he is not able to defend himself, and gets robbed almost as soon as he gets off the bus.



A chaotic Kingston welcomes Ivan.

The place Ivan is looking for is Trench Town, where his mother lives. Even if Jamaica is never mentioned in the film¹³, the city is recognizably Kingston, and the “ghetto” in question is Trench Town: the mother lives in Milk Lane, which is (or at least was in those years) situated in that part of the town. Henzell introduces us to this popular part of Kingston with a shot from above.



An aerial view of Trench Town.

Ivan manages to find his mother, who lives in a very small house. This is one of the few interiors present in the films. The house consists of one single room, which comprises the bed and the kitchen. The furniture is essential, and the whole house reflects the mother’s life conditions. She works hard, but she earns very little, and the money is barely enough for her to survive.

¹³ See Introduction, p.18, note 62 for an explanation of the reason why Henzell could not mention Jamaica.



Ivan's mother's house.

Outside of his mother's house, in the yard, Ivan meets José, with whom he goes to the Rialto cinema, and then (presumably) downtown, to see what happens in the city at night. Having no place to stay, Ivan sleeps at a bus stop, and the next day he tries to find a job. His search is a way for Henzell to show various parts of the city. In fact, Ivan starts downtown, and then ends up uptown, looking at how other people survive and trying to understand how to do it himself.



Two areas explored by Ivan: the market and the dumping ground.



From downtown to uptown: different areas in Kingston.

A clear gap between downtown and uptown indicates the difference of wealth between the two parts of the city. Moreover, the distance between these two worlds is further supported by a technical device which makes clear that no communication is possible between them:

The repeated shots of Ivan positioned as the outsider pushes the narrative along a structure of social relations based on a system of social signification equivalent to the paradigm of powerful-powerless. The film utilizes windows, fences, natural barriers and other boundaries or demarcations to forcefully construct this visual motif. As the outsider, Ivan (the country boy) is unskilled and suffers constant rejection.¹⁴

¹⁴ Gladstone L. Yearwood, *Op. Cit.*, p.448.

While downtown is made of wooden or zinc houses, with concrete everywhere and with dirt all over the streets, uptown is green, with a lot of vegetation and cultivated gardens. Here the houses are made of concrete and coloured, but above all they are individual buildings, at some distance from each other. A clear opposition is made, for instance, between Ivan’s mother’s house and the house where Ivan begs. The latter is a rich house, with many rooms, luxurious furniture, all the possible comforts, and people working for the owners of the house. We are only allowed to see the outer space of the house, the veranda, but this already points to the difference from downtown houses. In Trench Town, for instance, people would not even think about a veranda, since they had one single room where to live, often in many people, and with many children. Yet, uptown people are isolated in their houses, they do not have the “yard culture” which is so common (and inevitable) in downtown areas such as Trench Town, as shown in *The Harder They Come*. On the other hand, the people living uptown probably were neither aware of nor wanted to know about downtown life conditions.



An uptown house: the lady is reading in the veranda.

Without means to survive, Ivan decides to go to the Preacher suggested by his mother. The only interior scenes shown here are those in the church¹⁵, but mainly the story unfolds in the yard of the church. The yard is very messy, full of objects (for instance, there is a car wreck) and of dirt. In it, there is also the shop where Ivan works with Longah.



The Preacher’s yard and the shop (last picture on the left).

From what appears in the film, the yard is composed by the church, the dormitory (where men and women are obviously separated), the shop, and the bathroom, that is outside and in common for all the yard dwellers.

The yard is fundamental in Jamaican life. It has always been present, since slavery times, and it is important still today. There is a whole culture developing from this institution, that the renowned

¹⁵ To find a description of the church and the yard, and some pictures of the church, see Chapter 5, pp.128-129.

sociologist Erna Brodber has analysed in a 1975 essay¹⁶. However, the yard has had this special meaning in Kingston only, since the rest of the English-speaking world does not attribute any particular importance to this term. In Jamaica, there are two kinds of yards: the tenant yards and the government yards.

During slavery, when yards became an institution, they were used as a kind of dormitory for the slaves, on which the slave owners had to pay taxes:

The Negro Yard during the period 1745-1826 was a conspicuous feature of the Kingston tax rolls. [...] Some large slave proprietors must have housed their slaves in these yards. [...] Yard must have become for black and white Jamaicans, a place in which non-white enslaved people lived. [...] For the enslaved Jamaican, it would have meant “where our kind find respite from enforced labour and are exclusively exposed to each other’s company”.¹⁷

The structure of the yard, which has changed very little since the mid-18th century, was stipulated by the law:

A law of 1770 stipulated that where there were four huts on the same piece of land, they had to be enclosed by a wall at least seven feet high and which provided one means of entry only.¹⁸

Since its beginnings, the yard has been seen as a place where to sleep, mostly. People arriving from the country, even for a few nights (for instance people selling their goods in the markets), took shelter in the yards. Still today, though somehow changed, the function of the yard as a transitory space remains.

The notion of yard as a dwelling place has stayed. Its social and structural properties have been modified but the functions which it serves remain: it is still a kind of residential arrangement for low income Kingstonians.¹⁹

What emerges from Brodber’s essay is that the yard is seen as a first step toward social mobility. People live in yards because it is affordable, but they plan to move upward, both geographically and socially. The goal of yard dwellers is that of a single detached house uptown, made of concrete, with no yard, where to live and offer what they see as a “better” way of life to their children. Somewhat paradoxically, their greatest hope is to achieve it through their children’s education and consequent secure and better paid jobs.

¹⁶ Erna Brodber, *A Study of Yards in the City of Kingston*, Working Paper n°9, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, 1975. All the technical information about the yard is gathered from this essay, which obviously contains many more details. However, if one visits Jamaica, the importance of the yard culture will be immediately clear. Even if Brodber writes in 1975, thus giving exact notions of yards in the years of the first Jamaican films located there such as *The Harder They Come* and *Rockers*, very little seems to have changed to the present.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p.5.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p.6.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.9.

The greatest number of yards is located in South West Kingston, the place which has been associated with the “ghettoes”. However, tenant yards and government yards had different locations:

Government yards are concentrated in the South West of Kingston and in August Town in the East. This is due to Central Government’s efforts between 1936 and 1951. The convergence of poor folk into enclaves, their creation of a style of life felt by officialdom to be hazardous and the hurricane disasters of 1944 and 1951 attracted Central Government’s interest to this part of Kingston.

[...]

Tenant yards enjoy a wider scatter throughout the City of Kingston than government yards. Their largest concentration is in the Constant Spring area. [...] The practice in Kingston of renting and sub-renting houses or of two or more families sharing a house, is by no means confined to the poor, however. [...] Where a shared house becomes a yard is where the residents become involved in a high degree of interaction within the yard space. The practice of renting a room in a house or a yard from a private individual seems to be an older and more widespread one than renting from government.²⁰

The structure of tenant and government yards is different, but generally very similar from one yard to the other. The main difference between the two is that in tenant yards, the rent is paid to a private landlord, while in government yards the rent is paid to the government, that however seems not to be exacting it as strictly as a physical landlord. What characterized a yard in the 1970s was the sharing of common space. The houses in a yard shared facilities such as the bathroom or the kitchen. This allowed for a high degree of interaction among the dwellers, which gave birth to the “yard culture” I mentioned earlier. In the tenant yard, a household generally consisted of one room.

The siting of the rooms in the tenant yard vary in one important sense with the presence or absence of the landlord’s household in the yard. Where he resides here, he usually occupies the front house – a house equipped with all the modern amenities. His tenants live in the lanes (footpaths) behind his house and the entrance to their section is by a side gate. In the area behind the landlord’s house, you will find several clusters of tenant buildings separated by zinc fences. The cluster of houses between the zinc fences represents a yard: there might be several yards behind a landlord’s house. This layout of the yard approximates that of the city houses during the period of slavery here in Jamaica.²¹

If the landlord does not live in the yard, instead of a house there should be a commercial building at the entrance of the yard. If he lives there, the facilities are situated just behind his house, so that the further one lives from the entrance of the yard, the less he/she has access to the bathroom and

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p.17 and p.19. It must be kept in mind that Brodber wrote in 1975. Quite likely today every house has its own facilities, even if the houses keep sharing some communal space.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p.20.

kitchen. To avoid the sharing of the kitchen, many houses have fireplaces inside or just at the entrance of their houses, while they use zinc tubs to wash clothes, dishes and children.

Generally, at the time of Brodber's essay, the dwellers in tenant yards saw it as a place for poor people, always overcrowded, dilapidated, and where the rent was quite expensive.

On the other side, people saw government yards as a place where the rent was cheap, since located in low income areas, and this was the reason why people preferred to live there rather than in tenant yards, and usually dwelt there for a longer period of time. Here the structure was made of a long building, divided in various households made of rooms of the same size and design. Several families lived in one building, which could consist of one or more storeys.

The number of buildings to landscape is greater here. These may even be high rise apartments. The lavatory ratio is less – there might even be a toilet and kitchen per household. [...] Here the kitchen are used.²²

It seems that there was a kind of hierarchy in the yards. The tenant yard was the first place where people coming from the rural areas of Jamaica found a refuge in Kingston. But it was also the place from where dwellers moved out more easily. On the contrary, people living in government yards were generally Kingston-born, and they spent more time there before moving to another place.

People, it seems, are not likely to spend all their lives in any one yard. Where they are rural people, they are likely to begin their residential cycle in a tenant yard. Only after years of living in Kingston, do they graduate to government yards.²³

The reason why the creation of yards entailed also the creation of a “culture” was the fact that the sharing of facilities such as kitchen and lavatories necessarily involved a certain degree of promiscuity among the yard dwellers. This happened more easily in tenant yards, the structure of which allowed for more daily contacts between the inhabitants.

The sharing of such key amenities as lavatory and standpipe necessitates interaction which does not arise in one-family dwelling houses. [...] Government yards tenants did not seem enthused about the interpersonal aspects of Yard life.²⁴

Thus, tenant yards presented more vividly the typical aspects of communication necessary to form a culture that could be found only there, for those particular characteristics of the dwelling itself.

Nearly a half of the people in Tenant Yards admitted to making use of the human aspects of the yard life. They got together to talk about children, about the sanitation problem, to ‘throw partner’ and just talk. [...] Living in the Tenant Yard had entertainment value too; men played dominoes and musical instruments together. It provided companionship for some

²² *Ibidem*, pp.22-23.

²³ *Ibidem*, p.26.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p.27-28.

women [...]. Altogether, the responses of Tenant Yard dwellers and especially the women, seemed more appreciative of the interpersonal aspects of Yard life.²⁵

In tenant yards, women (who spent most of their time at home, unlike men) could find relief from their house duties, and also help each other if they needed it. The yard dwellers, together, looked after the children, and if necessary, helped those who were in need.

Nevertheless, it was possible, even within the yards, to maintain a certain degree of privacy. It was more difficult in tenant yards, where the proximity of the dwellers and the crowding of the rooms made it almost impossible to have a “private” life, but it was a goal in government yards.

Residents in government yards meet as if by contract to perform certain actions necessary to their individual being, such as cleaning the yard, but there are distinct efforts to keep the household group isolated. [...] There is no patterned activity, no sharing of dishes [...] Children were charged not to speak to each other and activities such as music-playing are family and household affairs rather than yard efforts.²⁶

In the government yards, there was a strong sense of rivalry. The main goal was to gain upward mobility, and thus every move was made to achieve it. Children, especially, were seen as a means to reach upper levels of society. In government yards,

Families gained status through: the education of their children; the acquisition of such items as TV's and Dinette Sets; father's political friends; children's acquisition of Government jobs; children's membership in established churches. [...] Here the women saw themselves in steady common-law unions.²⁷

Probably the reason why government yards' dwellers were more keen on privacy was that they saw the much desired mobility within reach, much more than those living in tenant yards. The rent in government yards was low (and not always collected). The money saved could buy consumers' goods owned by the middle-class. Moreover, the government took charge of the maintenance of the facilities, thus the women could save their energy for other goals. Once a woman found a man, willing to take care of her and her children, she could concentrate her every effort on ascending social mobility.

The family is now crystallizing; mother's children, fathers' children (less often) and the children of the couple are now the residential unit [...]. It will now be pooling all its resources to acquire the trappings which it associates with the respectable, the nuclear family. Upward social mobility of the family is important and the achievements of children key to this. [...] All resources, human, social and economic are needed to establish this unit as the

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p.28.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p.32-33.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p.33.

nuclear, upwardly mobile family. The Government Yard is a collection of families rather than a community.²⁸

A yard was a society in miniature. All that happened in the society at large happened in the yards too. Thus, social relations that occurred in society took place in the yard as well. The kind of families that could be found in the yards depended on the degree of mobility achieved by the household. As in Jamaican society at large, the yards were the territory of women. Houses were generally rented to women, and women took care of the house and the children. At the beginning of their life in a yard, and while still young, women could have many partners, answering to the pleasure/convenience principle. However, the more she aged, the more she looked for one only partner who could provide for her and the children, and the more she tried to find a steady job for herself. In fact, it was believed that upward mobility was more easily achieved with a family unit comprising a woman, a man, and the various children of the two.

In the yard, everything was decided by the women, who spent almost all of their time there. The men were generally out at work, and when they came back “a yard” they just wanted to eat and rest. Nonetheless, men were granted a certain level of deference by the women, who depended on them for the money necessary for the house, the children and the social mobility.

Given the responsibility of children in the mobility of the family, their upbringing had a fundamental importance. However, the freedom granted to children differed according to the different kind of household they grew in.

In all yards, the movement of children is carefully watched. In the communal yard, however, any adult may watch or upbraid an offending child. [...] Children can be left under the watchful eye of any of the older tenants while mother is at work.

Pre-school children have the run of the yard and may congregate to play. Pubescent and adolescent boys are permitted to hang around the gates and yards kicking balls and eating ‘cane’. Their female counterparts, however, must help their mothers and not be seen in groups [...]. The whole community gives support to the muzzling of girls 13 to 18 years old. [...] A girl here it seems must have the potential for mating but must not be seen to do so. [...]

The mixed yard is more positive in its criteria for transition from childhood to adulthood. Parents are very worried about their children’s, particularly their daughter’s, leaving school without passing examinations. [...] A certificate is a pass to the adult world of the labour market which is itself graded in terms of ‘domestic’ and ‘office work’. [...]

Though it is felt here as in the communal yards that congregating girls spoil one another, parents felt that children should be given sex education from the age of 12. [...] This type of

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.34-35.

Tenant yard has clearer and more indices of adulthood than the other... joining the labour force, passing examinations and being in a steady observable male-female relationship.

In the Family yards too, girls are watched. Here, though, boys are watched too. Interaction between children of different households is disallowed or severely controlled.

There is a great deal of pressure placed on the children to achieve scholastically here. [...] Parents were unanimous in the faith that children should stay with them 'as children' until they were 21 years old. It is at this age that they become adults. Slight modifications could be made. [...] Children here are being geared to move their families into a higher social stratum.

The company they keep is very important to this.²⁹

Thus, children were fundamental for the social mobility parents sought. Though they were encouraged to have relationships (a woman without children was, and to some extent still is, considered evil or asocial, and a man must have many women to demonstrate his virility), they had to do so without consequence, that is girls should not get pregnant. Education was seen as the only means out of the yard life, toward a middle-class social stratum. Moreover, children who achieved middle-class status should help their families follow them. Though yard life allowed a culture of solidarity and human interaction that would be impossible to find in uptown neighbourhoods, where every house is isolated from the other, yard dwellers willingly abandoned it in order to move to wealthier neighbourhoods, which would allow them to show off their new status.

With all its pros and cons, the yard is very important in Jamaican life. As such it is represented in Jamaican films. In *The Harder They Come*, the Preacher's life is shown only in the yard, and Elsa will always be depicted as the woman of the yard, first in the Preacher's and then in her own yard. Indeed, the last section of the film, which starts when Ivan decides to enter the ganja trade, will all be set in downtown Kingston, and he will find a house in a yard there.

While still living in the Preacher's yard, Ivan records his song in the recording studio, which is very simple, reflecting the studios of the 1970s, which used few tracks. However, the studio is overcrowded, with musicians, singers, and simple spectators. When he goes out of the studio, Ivan rides his bike in Kingston's streets, which he does also when he tries to sell his record without the help of Mr. Hilton. Finally, Ivan enters the ganja trade, in order to make a living. He finds a house, downtown, for him and Elsa. Pedro also lives in the same yard. The house is small, made of one room only. It is overcrowded with objects, especially clothes and accessories. But at least it is Ivan's house. In it Henzell shot another of the few interiors of the film.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p.36-40.



Ivan's house (left) and yard (right).

At night, he goes to the dancehall³⁰. Now that Henzell has introduced the theme of marijuana, he shows us what happens in this domain: the cultivators, the dealers, the people from other countries that come to purchase it, and so on. Generally the fields are on the hills outside of Kingston, though very close to it, so that it is difficult for the police to find them (once admitted that the police do want to spot them).



A ganja field, destroyed by the army.

Following Ivan as a dealer, the director shows us some glimpses of Trench Town. This is the place where the dealers meet, where Ivan kills some cops when he is at Pinky's house, and where the majority of people buy herb. This is also José's area, where he has lived since birth, and which he controls now for Detective Jones. When Ivan confronts José, it happens in Trench Town, recognizable exactly for the trenches that run through it.



Some views of Trench Town at the end of the 1960s, when Ivan confronts José in his area.

When Ivan becomes a fugitive, he is first sought by the police in Kingston. While they are looking after him, he leads the kind of life he has always dreamed of. He goes to the luxurious hotel where there are only rich (and white) tourists, he goes to a photographer to have some pictures made of him as a rude boy³¹, and he never tries to hide since he is sure that the population is protecting him.

³⁰ For a picture of the dancehall, and an analysis of the phenomenon in Jamaican culture, see Chapter 4, p.105.

³¹ See Chapter 7, p.248.



The hotel where Ivan goes when he becomes famous.

Then, he seeks refuge outside of Kingston, in a bushy area, hidden by rocks and steep hills. It is here that he is wounded during a shoot out with the police.



Ivan's hiding place.

While he is waiting for the boat which supposedly will bring him to Cuba, Ivan moves to the beach, where he will meet his death.

In the meantime, we are shown Detective Jones' house. Once again, it is compared (or maybe confronted) with the downtown houses. Jones lives uptown, in a single concrete house surrounded by a garden, with the shade of fruit trees on which he has hanged a hammock. His house is made of more than one room, and it denotes the wealthier status enjoyed by Jones, very different from the one of the people who work for him, especially those in the ganja trade.

Even if Henzell did not focus on the sets and locations of his film, he illustrated through glimpses of houses the class division of his country.



Detective Jones's house, distanced from the ghetto.

The last location of the film reminds in some ways of the first one: it is the advertising image of Jamaica for tourists. We are on a beach, a beautiful Caribbean beach, with palms and sun, the kind of beach tourists long to see. However, in the film this is the location of a bloody act: the murdering of Ivan. As happens throughout the film, if the director shows a "postcard" view of Jamaica, he immediately links it with something that reminds us that Jamaica is not that, for the island's population. There is much more in Jamaica than beaches and sun. As Kevin Aylmer observed:

Panoramic shots of West Kingston as “Paradise Lost” reveal a side of Jamaica unfamiliar to many tourists.³²



Ivan's death place.

The Harder They Come is a film shot almost entirely in exterior locations, especially in the streets, where the greatest part of Jamaican men's life happen. There are very few interior scenes, and they regard the church and some houses. Moreover, the action takes place in downtown Kingston, the part of the city which is viewed by those who do not live there as the den of all evils. Through Henzell's depiction of it, the audience discovers that Trench Town not only offers solidarity to its inhabitants, but life there is also joyful, though hard.

6.3. SMILE ORANGE.

Smile Orange is very different, in its setting, from *The Harder They Come*. First of all, it is not set in Kingston but in Montego Bay. Then, this is an “interior film”, which takes place almost entirely in a hotel. We are thus shown various hotel spaces, but nothing of the city surrounding it. As Keith Warner observed:

The film shows very little of the island, with the majority of the location shots showing a typical tourist hotel.³³

The beginning of the film shows Ringo who leaves his house in the countryside in order to go to his hotel job. Then the director follows his journey through a country road that leads to Montego Bay, which allows him to show some glimpses of the Jamaican countryside.



Ringo's house (first left) and the Jamaican countryside.

³² Kevin Aylmer, *Op. Cit.*, p.287.

³³ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.89.

After his journey, he arrives at the Mojo Beach Hotel, whose Assistant Manager is an overanxious man so preoccupied with the well functioning of his hotel that he does not realize that the people working for him make fun of him and that his wife cheats on him with the gardener.

We are shown three rooms related to the Assistant Manager: his garden, his bedroom, and his office. Most of his time is spent in his office. The house is the domain of his wife, and of the gardener.



The Assistant Manager's office, bedroom and garden.

As in *The Harder They Come*, the few glimpses of the house show us the difference between the people who have money and those who do not. Rich people can afford big and comfortable houses, while the houses of the poorer people are small and have the bare necessities.

In the Mojo Beach Hotel, we are shown the kitchen, in which the action mainly unfolds, the restaurant, the front desk, the swimming pool and the private beach. As Trevor Rhone himself describes the hotel in the setting of the play, this is a "third-rate establishment"³⁴. Moreover, the name itself of the hotel is significant:

Rhone did signal in its name [...] the sort of establishment he was about to take part. In Jamaica, if you say somebody comes from Mocho, a one-time deep rural district far from the sea, it means from 'the sticks' or 'Timbuktoo'.³⁵

Thus, the setting reflects this definition of the hotel. The rooms are poorly furnished, the kitchen is dilapidated as is the restaurant, with the exception of posters with naked women in the former, and the front desk has only some flowers and tourist advertisings of the island.



The hotel, the front desk and the restaurant (above), and three views of the kitchen (below).

³⁴ Trevor Rhone, *Op. Cit.*, p.92.

³⁵ Norman Rae, *Trevor Rhone*, p.242, in Bruce King ed., *West Indian Literature. Second Edition*, London and Basingstoke, Macmillan Education Ltd., 1995. Of course, Mocho and Mojo are homophones.



The only exterior shots in *Smile Orange* are taken along the swimming pool, comprised in the hotel area, and on the beach in front of the hotel. Here, the hotel organizes games for the tourists who do not want to be sun tanning all day long, and the waiters have sex with the female tourists.



The swimming pool and the beach.

Smile Orange is a film that is mostly shot in interior settings, and in the kitchen mainly. It is very far from Kingston and the atmosphere Henzell created in *The Harder They Come*, as the theme faced in this film is also very different from Henzell's.

6.4. *ROCKERS*.

With *Rockers*, we are brought again to Trench Town, the musicians' neighbourhood. This film, as regards the setting, is very similar to *The Harder They Come*: it is a "city film", which entirely develops in Kingston. Moreover, the city is somehow restricted to Trench Town, and to its streets and yards.

Trench Town, east of Jones Town and just north of May Pen cemetery, developed as a fledging low-income settlement during the 1920s. The area was set aside to house returned troops from the Second World War and was later registered as one of the four main squatter camps in the city by the Central Housing Authority in 1951. Following the hurricane of that year, the camps gave way to a housing scheme to cater more formally for the city's growing population. [...]

Trench Town was once the site of valuable real estate, housing middle-class families on a former sugar plantation owned by the Lindos [...]. Some argue that the neighbourhood derived its name from a large trench that ran through the former squatter camps. Others remembered Mr. Trench as a builder of the housing project who became the new settlement's namesake. One- and two-storey concrete units were constructed during the 1950s and 1960s,

now forming the shells for most of today's homes. Central courtyards with communal access to water and cooking facilities mark the typical Trench Town yard.

[...]

the urban renewal of the 1950s and 1960s not only built a new cityscape, but also provided rich grounds for political patronage. By swearing allegiance to local politicians, or being forcefully co-opted by their street-soldiering party loyalists, whole neighbourhoods exploited the largesse of the main political interests [...]. Direct political power play, trading material favours and providing "bodyguards" with firearms, lay at the base of decaying urban democracy. In this manner, downtown neighbourhoods became hotspots of political allegiance, marshalled by local powerbrokers.³⁶

In *Rockers*, there are few interiors, and generally women are confined in the houses, taking care of the children and the "husbands". What differs in this film from the previous ones (and also from many of the later ones) is the fact that the director paid attention to the setting. Many times the camera has descriptive movements, which allow the audience to see the various settings and locations. Ed Guerero noted that

Rockers is set in the Trenchtown ghetto of Kingston, and its narrative emphasizes its inhabitants' sharp material struggle for survival and social justice. [...] The heroes of these films are configured by their environments. [...] Leroy is grounded in a condensed, funky urban ghetto rendered in a low-budget Third World realism that, at least in look, follows the edict of Espinoza's "imperfect cinema".³⁷

The pre-credit sequence takes place in the hills over Kingston. We are in Higher's house, which is rudimentary. The walls are made of bamboo, and the roof is made of leaves. We see it in more details when Horsemouth goes there to be healed. The bed is made of the same material as the walls. The only objects are utensils made of natural materials (for instance, calabash dishes).



Higher's house: exterior and interior.

In this house occurs the Rastas' gathering, where they sing, praise Jah and smoke the chillum pipe. Probably this setting is useful to demonstrate the Rastas' interconnectedness with nature, their respect for it, and their natural way of life.

³⁶ David Howard, *Op. Cit.*, pp.125-126 and p.128.

³⁷ Ed Guerero, *Op. Cit.*, p.109. His reference is to the 1983 manifesto *For An Imperfect Cinema* by the Cuban director Julio Garcia Espinoza.

The film proper begins with Horsemouth walking and introducing the audience to his neighbourhood. He is totally at ease in Trench Town: it is clear that this is his environment, that he is part of that society. He knows everyone in the yards, he is fully immersed in that culture.



A few images of some yards in Trench Town.

An image in the film shows Trench Town from above, as did Henzell, in his first shot of that area in *The Harder They Come*. The images are very similar, and they show that after almost ten years, very little had changed for Trench Town, at least “architecturally”.



An aerial view of Trench Town.³⁸

Horsemouth is going home, to see his wife and children. His house is similar to Ivan’s mother’s. It consists of one only room, where he has the bedroom and a small kitchen. The family comprises two adults and three kids. The room is small and dilapidated, but there are many objects that make it appear overcrowded.



Horsemouth’s house and the entrance of his yard.

In this room, the director shot the almost only interiors of the film. In it, we find a bed, a sofa, a table, a fridge and a chest of drawers with a mirror. However, the walls are covered with innumerable photographs, pictures and posters.

When he leaves his house, Horsemouth walks on the road, from yard to yard, as he will do during the greatest part of the film. He reaches a recording studio, which has evolved since the time of Ivan’s recording of *The Harder They Come*. However, it is still unmistakably a 1970s studio.

³⁸ Compare this picture with the similar one in this Chapter, p.192.



Recording studio.

When Horsemouth decides to sell records, he does so out of Kingston: not in the countryside, but just outside the boundaries of the city. This allows the director to show the streets leading out of town, and the Jamaican record shops of the period.



Streets out of Kingston and record shops.

When he returns to Kingston, the director shows him in the streets of the capital city. This allows us to notice that very little, again, has changed since Perry Henzell's film. Kingston remains the same. It is very similar even today, though of course in pace with the times. The places are the same, the chaos is similar, but the cars and the people have changed.



Kingston.

Almost all the plot develops in the streets. When the director moves away from there, it is to follow Horsemouth in his job at the hotel. The hotel is in Ocho Rios, one of the places tourists prefer in Jamaica, and which was made especially for them. In fact, all the guests are foreigners.



Hotel: exterior and interior.

An interesting setting is the discothèque, where one of the most significant scenes of the film takes place.³⁹ This uptown disco looks very different from downtown dancehalls. The setting is important in that it clarifies further the difference between the Rastas and uptown people.



Three moments in the uptown disco.

In this film, as in the others, the director used the houses to show the difference among people. Not only the houses of the wealthier are obviously bigger and more luxurious than those of the ghetto, but in the same ghetto there are different kinds of houses too. So, if Sunshine's house is very big, with expensive furniture and all the possible comforts of the period, the house of one of Horsemouth's colleagues, who lives in Trench Town, has the same characteristics too. This may mean that it is the first house of the yard, maybe he is the owner of the yard, or that this musician is richer than the others and shows his wealth through his house.



From left to right: a rich downtown house, Sunshine's house, and two images of Honiball's house.

As in *The Harder They Come*, and in many other later Jamaican films, houses and belongings are confronted in order to show the differences that make one's status and social class. However, in *Rockers*, the setting is almost constantly in the streets, in exterior locations, so that the class struggle happens on other levels too. The houses are useful as another social commentary.

³⁹ See Chapter 3, pp.73-74 and Chapter 4, p.109.

6.5. *CHILDREN OF BABYLON*⁴⁰.

Lennie Little-White did not want to show the “poor” side of Jamaica, when he made his film *Children of Babylon*. This is the reason why he paid much attention to the photography. This is also the first Jamaican film to show the countryside, far from Kingston and the tourist sites.

The beginning of the film presents two of the protagonists, Penny and Rick, going away from Kingston. He is a painter, and he is going away to find inspiration and paint. Penny, on the other hand, is doing an anthropology PhD at the University of the West Indies, and she is going to the countryside to interview rural women, who do not have access to education and the sophistication of the upper classes, about their mating habits. They meet along the way, and Rick invites Penny in the mansion where he is going, which is owned by a New York woman who patronizes Rick’s art.

The mansion is very big, with many acres of land surrounding it. It also has some dependencies, with, among the rest, Luke and Dorcas’ apartment, the horses’ stable, and a place for the things useful to keep the mansion in good order. Once again, the houses contrast each other. The mansion where Rick lives is a former colonial house. The way people live there also reflects their difference from those living in smaller apartments: in fact, Rick and Penny, and later in the film the owner of the house too, seem to be more free, especially in sexual matters. On the contrary, Luke, who is not rich and lives in a small apartment which has the bare necessities, is very traditional, both as regards the place of the man in the world and as regards his and Dorcas’ sexuality. This could be explained by the fact that those living in the mansion are either foreigners or exposed to “high” culture, while those living in the dependencies are less sophisticated and thus more faithful to traditional views of the world and human relationships⁴¹. Much of the action takes place in these interiors, especially in Rick’s house. We are shown many different rooms, since the residence is very big. Among the rest, we are introduced to various bedrooms, the dining room, the kitchen, and the room where Rick works and keeps his paintings.

In the film there are some exterior scenes too, which take place mostly in the lush countryside. The director lingers on the beach, the woods, and the mansion’s park. The latter is so big that Penny can ride a horse for hours without leaving it. Then, Penny’s interviews are made to rural women, in the deep countryside. However, in this case, we see nothing of the panorama, since while she is questioning, the camera remains focused on Penny. The director shows neither the interviewed women nor the countryside where the dialogues take place.

This film wanted to show a “good” side of Jamaica: lush vegetation, beaches, great houses, modern people, all that foreigners who have never seen Jamaica imagine is on the island. Even if there is also

⁴⁰ Since the film is not available in DVD, and I could not find any picture regarding the settings on the web, I will not be able to insert any image regarding this particular film.

⁴¹ See Chapter 9, pp.292-295.

a “bad” character, in the end he is left alone, he is not given the opportunity to mature, to want to change his way of life for his love for Penny. He is depicted as a loser, and thus abandoned to his fate by the more “evolved” characters. On the contrary, at the end of the film, Penny returns to her parents’ house, another mansion, but this time in the rich neighbourhoods in Kingston. The Jamaica that is advertised here is the one that can appeal to foreign tourists, and the people rewarded in the film are those who can afford a high status and a high life quality, at least in terms of material goods.

6.6. COUNTRYMAN.

Countryman is defined by its director as a “bush movie”, which is quite an exact description of the setting of the film. Countryman lives in a fishermen’s village in Hellshire, a beach in Portmore, quite close to Kingston yet apart from it. The environment is bucolic: we are shown almost nothing of the city, and when we are, the film means to contrast its evil with the peace of the beach, which we are constantly presented, along with the Caribbean sea.

This film was meant to reach a crossover audience, thus many photographs are quite stereotypical, in the sense that they present what is generally expected by a foreign audience: beaches, beautiful sunsets, lush vegetation, and so on. As Guerero noticed:

[The film] opens with a scene that reveals much about the film’s target market and the latent imagination of its projected consumer audience. [...] bucolic environment [...] exotic feast of tropical delights [...] *Countryman* was made for export to a broad “crossover” audience in the vast media saturated markets of the U.S. and Europe. For in this opening vignette, the spectator/consumer is positioned to enjoy the stereotypical pleasures of an island paradise offered up by a friendly native *Other* who asks for no greater reward for his services than the acceptance and satisfaction registered on his guests’ face.⁴²



Some stereotypical views of Jamaica as a paradise.

Countryman is very close to nature, lives thanks to his fishing, and is able to command over nature because of his good temperament⁴³. The plane with Beau and Bobby crashes in Hellshire’s swamps at night, when Countryman is fishing. He rescues the two Americans, and he hides them in a

⁴² Ed Guerero, *Op. Cit.*, pp.106-107.

⁴³ See Chapter 5, pp.161-165.

naturally protected place. This place is inaccessible from the outside, secluded by rocks and trees, and the owl takes care of it. As Countryman says to Bobby:

Countryman: "This place is well protected. No one will find you here."

Bobby: "Protected? By who?"

Countryman (laughing): "Elements, brother, elements!"

Indeed, Beau is seen by Sadu Baba's eagle only when she leaves her hiding place. Until they both remain in it, they are safe, and Countryman provides for them.



Hiding place.

To find Beau and Bobby, the army organizes temporary headquarters close to the swamps. However, as to characterize the colonel and the captain's temperament, the place where they put the tents is muddy, and it is very difficult to walk on it. Indeed, the colonel dirties his boots because he steps in the mire.



Headquarters in the mud.

To contrast the army, the fishermen's village is depicted as clean, happy, and a place where everyone helps each other. The village is totally self-sufficient, it has very few comforts, and the inhabitants are solely Rastas. We are never shown the interiors of houses, but we see them from the outside. They are made of wood, and they contain the bare necessities.



Two images of the Rasta village, and a house in the village⁴⁴.

To show the difference between Countryman and the rest of society, he is several times contrasted to the wealth of other characters, and of the city of Kingston itself. Against the big white buildings of downtown Kingston and the luxurious foreigners' yachts, Countryman's little boat looks even

⁴⁴ Another picture of the Rasta village can be seen in Chapter 5, p.161.

smaller, and contrasted to the yacht clubs' way of life, the fisherman's simplicity seems even more belonging to other times and spaces.



Countryman opposed to wealth, and the *Beau Marie*, Beau's father's boat (right).

The film is mainly made of exteriors; there are very few interiors. When it happens, this is in the prison where Jahman has been brought by the police, in the boat owned by Beau's father, in a bar where Benchley meets Mosman, in Sadu Baba's house⁴⁵ and finally in the colonel's house. This setting is very interesting, since it shows how rich a corrupted politician can become.

The colonel's house is very big, presumably on Kingston's hills. It is surrounded by a vast portion of land, on which he has also made a polo field. He has horses and people working for him, taking care of the house. The entrance is guarded by armed soldiers. We are shown some rooms inside of the house, among which his office, where he confronts his allied politician.



The colonel's house: exterior, entrance and office.

Through his house, the colonel is showing off his wealth and his power. Of course, he has earned so much money because he is corrupted, and at the service of politics, but nonetheless he takes pride in his position. For the same reason, he thinks of himself as invulnerable and omnipotent, and only at the end of the film will he be reminded that he is not, and that no one is indispensable, especially for unscrupulous politicians.

At a certain point in the film, when Jahman is sent to prison, Countryman runs all the way from Hellshire to Kingston, too see him. This run allows the director to show some more views of the road he travels.



Countryman running from Hellshire to Kingston.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 5, pp.137-140.

With these locations, we are in a seemingly rural Jamaica: Countryman crosses the swamps, sugar cane fields, disused railroads, and finally reaches downtown Kingston. These scenes, however, were not meant to show the island, but to show that Countryman has only his feet as a means of transport, and yet, despite modernity, these are as useful as any other means.

Countryman is a film that concentrates on exterior locations, and stays as far from Kingston as possible. The crossover audience the director had in mind made him use some stereotypical photography, but nonetheless the film manages to render Countryman's life and place quite vividly, and to deliver a message about corruption and surplus in wealth.

6.7. *THE LUNATIC*.

It can be argued that *The Lunatic* revolves around having or not a house, a belonging that characterizes the difference between madness and sanity. In fact, people without a house are seen as "vagabonds", asocial, and thus potentially subversive and dangerous. All the rich and "decent" people have a house, while Aloysius has none. Inga is quite peculiar in this film, since she is far from her home (Germany), where she does not want to be because she does not feel loved and accepted by her father. At the beginning, she stays in a hotel, but when she is thrown out of it, she goes with Aloysius in the bushes, and she later makes him and Service build a house for them. At the end, this theme of the house is presented again, since Aloysius will be free only if someone keeps him in his/her house, to look after him. If this condition is not met, Aloysius will be sent to the Bellevue Asylum in Kingston.

With *The Lunatic*, the setting is again in the countryside. The place is Bamboo village, near Ocho Rios (here the Dunn River's Falls are a tourist attraction, on the north coast of Jamaica: we are actually shown some cruise ships close to the shore) but at the same time it is distanced from the tourists' flow of the coastal sites. As Warner notes, the setting was not the main preoccupation of the film:

The Caribbean seen in *The Lunatic* is basically rural. [...] In an ironic turnaround, the stereotyping is of the foreigner: the autocratic German, the sexually liberated feminist, the over-exuberant anthropologist.⁴⁶

However, there are some stereotypical images of the island, even if the majority of the film is set in "bushes" that could be found in other countries as well. For instance, the credit sequence shows a sunset that could well be found in a foreign film made in Jamaica, and some pictures of the "bushes" are quite idyllic for an audience which does not live there. They are meant to accompany Inga, who ultimately is a tourist, in her discovery of the island.

⁴⁶ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, pp.103-104.



Some stereotypical views of Jamaica as a paradise.

At the beginning of the film, we see Aloysius outside of a school, learning with the students new polysyllabic words. Then, after he has been thrown out by the schoolmaster, the director shows us his dwelling place, where he lives in the company of the bushes and a big tree, his best friend.



The school (left), Aloysius' dwelling place, and his friend, the tree (right).

Aloysius, however, walks through all the countryside, and sometimes earns some small money to buy some food by collecting shells for the tourists. His extreme poverty is several times contrasted to the wealth of Busha, the “boss” of the village, probably the richest man in the neighbourhood. While Aloysius has nothing, Busha and his wife have a big house, on a hill, thus distanced from the rest of the village, which has many rooms and expensive furniture, paintings of the ancestors and many objects that denote their social status.



Busha's house: exterior and two interiors.

Busha does not have a great opinion of Aloysius, which he only sees as a madman of no value. However, Busha too has a madness, in his own way: he wants a monumental tomb. He does not want to be buried in the village cemetery, because animals have access to it, and they often defecate

on the tombs. Thus, he wants to build a small house to be buried in, so that animals will not be able to enter and reach his tomb. His wife is quite contrary to this idea, and she tells him that if he dies before her, she will lay him to rest in the cemetery, where all their families are buried.



The village cemetery (left) and a glimpse of the burial house Busha would like to have, but without the black angel. Busha and his wife have different views about belonging to their land. For him, the animals are disrespecting the dead. For her, this is not important. What matters is that they have to be buried in the place where they come from, with a direct contact to the land that has fed and grown them. The burial house would also denote Busha's wealth, continuing after his death to distinguish him from the rest of the population, who is forced by its economic status to be buried in the traditional way. In the meantime, Inga is visiting the country with Aloysius, and the audience with them. When they are thrown out of the hotel, they both go to Aloysius' dwelling place. Soon after they meet Service, and Inga decides that they need a house. Thus, the men build a small house with bamboo sticks, they paint it, and that becomes their home. It is very simple and very poor, but it is the first time that Aloysius has a house, and it is the first time he has a family. In fact, he is in love with Inga, and for him this is more than an adventure: it is a new life.



The house.

After the wounding of Busha, the set is taken to the tribunal, where Barrister Linstrom assists Aloysius *pro bono*, since it allows him to “take revenge” on Busha, who had disrespected the black angel posed on the top of his family's burial house.

In the end, Widow Dawkins accepts to take care of Aloysius, avoiding his reclusion in an asylum. Thus, at the end of the story, Aloysius acquires all that is required to be accepted in society: he has a comfortable house, new clothes, and a job with the widow, who also teaches him “good manners”. He becomes “respectable” too, as all the other people in the village.



Widow Dawkins' house.

The Lunatic is a “country movie”, in the sense that the film is totally set in the countryside. Moreover, it is all set in exterior locations. There are very few interior scenes, and not a single image of a city.

6.8. *KLASH*.

Even if *Klash* is a film made by Americans, with an American crew, nonetheless it is set in the city of Kingston. Since there is a criminal/violent story, it could not be set in the countryside, and since the film capitalizes on the dancehall music scene, it could not be set but in the Jamaican capital city. As happened with previous films, *Klash* too was made with an international audience in mind. Thus, some pictures of Jamaica as a paradise island were necessary, to make it “recognizable” to a foreign audience which expects only this kind of scenery in a film made in Jamaica. This is the reason why there are some idyllic descriptions of Jamaica, and glamorous shots of Kingston.



Jamaica and Kingston.

The film is circular, it begins and ends in the same place: a cell in a Kingston’s prison, where Stoney is interrogated on the facts of the concert night. This provides the frame for the story, which properly begins with a movement of the camera that makes clear that the action will take place not in the “Jamaica for tourists”, but in the ghettos. After an image of a sunrise in “Jamaica”, we see an image of Kingston, and then of the National Arena, where the concert will take place, and then we are taken inside the National Arena, to see how the technicians are preparing the set for the event.

The scene that follows shows Stoney’s arrival at the port, where he finds the boat that will be his house. The rich tourists’ port, with luxurious boats, is contrasted with the second-hand dock where Walker’s old and derelict boat, the Sun Catcher, is.



The port and two images of the Sun Catcher.

At night, Stoney goes to see the city, giving the audience a glimpse of the night life in Kingston. However, his goal is to reach the Wild Bush, where Blossom is working. This place is on the beach, between Kingston and Port Royal, the two places where the story unfolds. In fact, the port is in Port Royal, as are Ragga's headquarters. Actually, even if this film is meant to be set in Kingston's ghettos, actually the set was mainly in Port Royal, which is quite close to Kingston, on a small peninsula in the Bay of the city. The scenery is similar to that of Kingston, and for a foreign crew maybe it was safer to shoot in Port Royal than in Kingston.



Two images of Port Royal.

Day 2 begins in the Kingston General Penitentiary, from which one of Ragga's men is released. This is the same penitentiary where Stoney is interrogated. It is set in Rae Town, a neighbourhood in downtown Kingston. From here, the two men go to the ghetto, to set things and reassert Ragga's power and status.



Kingston General Penitentiary.

The rest of the day is spent on Stoney's boat, on Kingston's streets with Blossom, in Ragga's headquarters, and at night in a restaurant on the beach. Then, Blossom takes Stoney to her house, in her bedroom, from which the following morning Mr. Chen throws him away.



Blossom's house.

During Day 3, we follow Blossom at Caymanas Park, Kingston's hippodrome, where she accompanies the man who will hold the clash.

Day 4 concentrates in the National Arena, which is getting ready for the clash: security checks, safety of the offices, and so on. At night, we are brought again on Stoney's boat.

Day 5 is the clash day, thus the action mainly takes place in the National Arena. Here we are shown the performances and the stealing of the money.



The National Arena.

After the concert, people gather at the Wild Bush, where they set their fights: Ragga, Chen and the Arena's manager. Blossom takes away the money, and she meets Stoney on the beach. They hide the money on the Sun Catcher, and then find themselves in the burning sugar cane fields, where the last killings take place.

The closing credits show, after Stoney in jail to be interrogated, Walker who goes away with the money praising Jah⁴⁷.

Klash is a "city film". It takes place exclusively in the city, and is shot almost entirely in exteriors. There are very few interiors, and generally they are in a bedroom where the two protagonists have sex. Though the film is meant to represent Kingston, the set is in Port Royal (in many shots, Kingston is recognizable in the background), which comes to stand for a generic "ghetto" in which a violent action must happen. The main link with Kingston is given through the dancehall music.

6.9. DANCEHALL QUEEN.

This is another film set in Kingston but, because of a particularity, it is different from the others. In fact, the protagonist is a woman, thus associated with the house (even if Marcia enters the dancehall scene), and therefore there are many interior locations. Indeed, it can be argued that this is a film of interiors, with a few exterior scenes in downtown Kingston, where Marcia works as a street vendor. On the contrary, there are many interiors of houses, shops and dancehalls⁴⁸.

The credits sequence begins alternating scenes showing the building of a stage and Beenie Man singing with Marcia pushing her handcart to her working place. This allows the director to show some views of Kingston's streets, contrasting the Pegasus Hotel, for instance, with Marcia's

⁴⁷ See Chapter 5, p.166.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 4, pp.117-123.

pushcart. At the end of the sequence, Marcia arrives where she works, at the Cross Road market, in downtown Kingston. The road she has to travel seems quite long, and it is rendered even more difficult because she is pushing her stall and she has to walk all the way.



Two images of Marcia's working place.

The scene moves immediately to Larry's apartment, in another part of Kingston, uptown. Here he shows Tanya Kingston's skyline and some beautiful houses that are discernible in Beverly Hills, the wealthier part of the city. Larry's apartment is big, well furnished, and denotes his wealth, contrasting it with Marcia's poverty, and her need for his help in order to provide for her daughters.



Larry's apartment in uptown Kingston.

In this apartment, Larry will claim Tanya's virginity and the right to have sex with her as if she were his property. (But he will also demonstrate his real temperament when he will take Marcia, dressed as a dancehall diva, to his club.)

Many scenes are shot in Marcia's house, situated in an unnamed downtown neighbourhood (though probably Trench Town). We are made to understand that it is considered a dangerous place to live through the words of the taxi driver that takes Marcia home after a dancehall session. He tells her "Me no like coming dem place after dark, you know?" He highlights the fact that the so-called "ghettoes" are dangerous and have to be avoided if possible, especially for taxi drivers who are known to work with some money on them and thus become favoured targets of violent acts.



From left to right: Marcia's house, yard, interior, bedroom.

When Tanya takes her boyfriend Trevor home, the fact that they live in the ghetto is once again brought to the fore. Mother and daughter have a brief exchange that explains how people generally

feel about that place, and that, luckily, there are people who look beyond the place where a person lives to make their opinion of others.

Tanya: “You know, Mama, we really understand each other.”

Marcia: “I hope him will still understand you now dat him see where you live.”

Tanya: “Things like that don’t worry Trevor, Mama.”

Marcia: “Honey, I’m really glad for you, you know, really glad for you.”

Most of the film takes place in this house, or in the dancehall. There are few other locations, among which is Miss Garden’s shop, where Larry falls for the “sexy bitch” not recognizing her as Marcia. Actually their brief and platonic relationship takes place only in this shop, before Larry shows how he really is in his go-go club and discovers Marcia’s real identity during the dancehall contest.

The only “country” location is shown when Marcia takes her brother, Junior, back to their parents’ home. Junior has gone insane, it seems, and Marcia thinks that going back to the country can help him get back to his senses. Thus, the whole family has a trip to the elders’ house, in an unnamed place in the Jamaican countryside.



Marcia and Junior’s parents’ house in the countryside.

The only image that can remind the way in which Jamaica is depicted in foreign films made on the island occurs when the directors show the relationship between Tanya and Trevor. They are on the beach, having fun with other people of their age. This image, coupled with the adolescents’ joy, wants to contrast it with the perverse and egoistic lust of Larry for Tanya. She is young, her heart is pure, and she idealizes love. It is therefore normal that she wants to be with Trevor, and not with an old man that she has always considered as an uncle.



Tanya and Trevor on the beach.

This beach is probably the Hellshire beach, close to the place where Countryman lives⁴⁹. This is one of the few beaches with free access for everyone, one of the few beaches where Jamaicans can go, without having to pay the entrance fee in a resort. Probably this is due to the fact that this beach is in Kingston, out of the typical tourists’ paradise beaches. In fact, Kingston is not considered a tourist

⁴⁹ See this chapter, pp.211-214.

attraction: generally the few tourists who visit Kingston go to the Bob Marley Museum, and a few other attractions, and then immediately back to their resorts on the north coast.

Thus, the Jamaican films shot in Kingston show a side of the island that is generally unknown outside of it. *Dancehall Queen*, however, though set in the capital city, does not focus on the city itself, but on the dancehall. Thus Marcia, being a woman with a family, spends most of her spare time in the house, taking care of her children and her brother.

6.10. *THIRD WORLD COP*.

Chris Browne's film is set in Kingston, and more precisely in the Dungle. This film shows quite a lot of the city, as it is mainly shot in exterior locations. The few interiors are the police offices, some houses, and the bar owned by the don of the area.

The film starts in Port Antonio, on the east coast of Jamaica, where Capone is working. From his house, never shown entirely but only through details, we are taken to the Police Station, where his Superintendent tells him that he has been sent back to Kingston, where he could be more useful. In fact, as she tells him, his methods are effective, but not always legal. In Kingston, where criminality is proliferating, his brutality can be better exploited to fight gangsters and dons.

In Kingston, the first place Capone goes to is the Police Station, situated in the Ministry of National Security and Justice, to talk with his new Superintendent and understand the job this man wants to give him. He is sent to the Dungle, his birth and childhood place. He is also given an office, which he divides with other cops and with his colleague Floyd.

As soon as he can go, Capone goes to see the city, immediately engaging in a shootout with some petty gangsters, in an abandoned palace. Here he discovers that all the traffics take place in the Dungle.

The Dungle was a former rubbish tip, where the poorest of Kingston lived and scraped over other people's refuse to find daily rations. Novels about the ghetto tend to emphasize not only the harsh realities, but also the communal aspects of shared poverty.⁵⁰

He thus decides to go and have a look at the place, finding at the same time his old church and his old friends. The director grabs the occasion to let his audience see the Dungle, one of Kingston's infamous downtown ghettos. However, even if at first sight it seems that the place offers only violence, it becomes obvious that it is not so. Indeed, there is violence, and the whole area is in the hands of the don. But there is also solidarity and joy, as is apparent in the way Capone's old friends greet him, and how they treat him even if they know that he is a cop. The place, in the end, does not seem as frightful as it is thought of.

⁵⁰ David Howard, *Op. Cit.*, p.120. The films tend to emphasize the same aspects as the novels.



Some images of the Dungle.

The place where Capone first meets his old friends is a football field, and later he goes with Ratty on the dock, to catch some fish. In this film too, there is a scene in a dancehall, organized by Ratty and Wonie, the don⁵¹. On this occasion, Rita tells Capone how much the neighbourhood has changed since Wonie and Ratty rule the area. While before them people could not stay on the streets, and gunshots were usual, now they can hold dancehalls anywhere, and it is safe to walk on the streets, for anyone. Moreover it seems that the man responsible for this change is Ratty, who is trying to support the talents of the area, be it in the music or in the sports fields.

Many scenes are shot in the police station, in Capone's office, or in the streets. We are also shown Wonie's headquarters: he owns the Saddam's Bar, at the back of which is his office.



Saddam's bar and Wonie's office.

Another important location is Ratty's house. It is also his headquarters, where he keeps the weapons hidden in the charity barrels, and where he plans what to do both for the neighbourhood and to usurp Wonie's status as don.



Ratty's house, yard and room.

Curiously enough, in this film we are shown many houses, but none of these belong to Capone. It seems that for him, a "house" is only a place where to sleep and have sex, and never totally separated from his work, as the first scene demonstrates.

The film closes in a "border" place. Capone and Floyd are taking Ratty to the airport, to put him on a plane to Antigua, because Kingston is not safe for him anymore, since he has informed the police on

⁵¹ See Chapter 4, pp.109-110.

Wonie. Thus the last shootout happens on the road that connects Kingston to the airport. This road goes no further: it just can take to the airport and Port Royal, and nowhere else.



The road to the airport.

So there is no escape in this situation: either Capone kills Wonie and his corrupted colleague, or he is killed with Floyd and Ratty. The fact that this confrontation takes place “on the edge” of the city reinstates Capone’s status as an effective cop, but somehow isolated, an outsider, a lone ranger who makes justice with his own methods.

6.11. *ONE LOVE*.

The setting of *One Love* is important, in that it connotes the characters and their religions. The photography of the film is notable, too, and it gives it a kind of dreamy aura, as if the love story was something so special as to be happening in a place not totally immersed in this world. This is true especially in the Rasta environment, which is always depicted with a soft and clear light, giving it a sense of supernatural paradise. Yet, the whole film tends to show the Jamaican countryside, with its lush nature, in all its splendour. People who live in these places are shown to inhabit a world made of harmony and beauty, with a suffused light that surrounds every scenario. The director chose to show Jamaica as a beautiful place, where nature invites good temperament and shows the way to live in unity and peace.



Three images that show how the countryside is represented.

The film draws a difference between the various religions through the environment they live in⁵². Actually, even if they all live in the same part of the island, the Christians are shown to live mostly inside of their houses and churches, while the Rastas live in their village, together, not specifically enclosed in their house. In fact, many of the Rastas’ daily life is passed in the community, especially when they hold a groundation or they gather to reason or sing. Probably, through the settings, the

⁵² See also Chapter 5, pp.172-185: religion is the real cause of the lovers’ separation.

director wanted to show the Rastas' vicinity to nature, and their Ital way of life, while the Christians do not disdain a way of life closer to modernity, not Ital. To demonstrate this, the Rasta village is set in an environment characterized by lush vegetation, very green, which makes the audience think of a heavenly place.

The credits sequence begins with some images of Jamaica "for tourists", with a movement of the camera from an extreme long shot to a close up of Kassa, who dives in the sea. Immediately follows a scene in Pastor Johnson's church: we are only given a glimpse of the Rasta environment, and then we are taken into the Christian temple. As I mentioned earlier, the scenes regarding the Christian characters are interior shots, either in the church or in the Pastor's house, adjacent to the church.



The church: exterior and interior (left) and the Pastor's house: exterior and dining room (right).

The church is immediately contrasted with Kassa's house, where there is also the Rastas' recording studio. This house is "open", the walls are made of bamboo, the light is allowed to flow naturally inside, it is made of natural material, and it is decorated with Rasta motifs, made of natural substances too.



Kassa's house: exterior, interior and recording studio.

Kassa's house is immersed in nature, close to a beach, where the Rastas have a stall where they sell their natural products and decorations. It is all very close to nature, and the photography of the film makes it appear even more so.



The Rastas' place.⁵³

⁵³ An image of the Rasta village can be found in Chapter 5, p.177.

Both the Rasta village and houses and Pastor Johnson's church and house are contrasted to Selector G's house. This is clearly a house where a wealthy person lives: it is very big, luxurious, with all the comforts one could wish for. The director does not show all of it; he gives just a few glimpses of a few rooms. For instance, we see the swimming pool, the office, the conference room. This house is immersed in the greenery too, but not because Selector G wants to live close to nature. The seclusion of the house, and the fact that it is positioned on a hill denote wealth: it is isolated from the "common people", it does not have to share anything with them.



Selector G's house (exterior) and office.

Basically, these are the only sets of the film. The action unfolds in any one of these locations. There are, however, some other places that become important during the story: the park, the stage, and the cemetery. The park is important as Kassa and Serena's first meeting place, while the stage allows Kassa to ask Serena to marry him, and to bring peace between the Rastas and the Pentecostals.

The cemetery is the place where the Pastor and Serena try to resolve their conflicts. Here Serena's mother is buried. When she has a problem, Serena goes there to talk with her, as does her father. On her tomb, the Pastor first tries to exorcise the evil out of Serena, and then, at the end of the film, he admits his faults and starts a new life, with fewer prejudices. The cemetery, usually thought of as scary or macabre, in this context becomes the place where God talks to his children, and where hope and love finally find their way to the Pastor's heart.



From left to right: the park, the stage and Serena's mother's tomb, in the cemetery.

One Love is a film set in the countryside. We are never taken to Kingston, but for a few images when Aaron thinks he is following Serena and the bus takes him to the edge of the city. However, the location is not far from Kingston either. In fact, the director shows Kassa, at a certain point, who has to choose where to go between Coopers Hill and Zion Hill. These places are on the hills, close to Kingston. Coopers Hill is in St. Andrew, and Zion Hill in St. Catherine. They are nor so distant from each other, and both are quite close to the northern edge of Kingston, the neighbourhood of Constant

Spring. This is probably where Aaron arrives after following the bus. Thus, both places are close to the city, but far enough not to feel its presence. The film, then, is a film of exteriors, with only a few interior scenes, totally set in the Jamaican countryside, rendered even more beautiful by the use of photography.

6.12. *GLORY TO GLORIANA*.

Lennie Little-White's second film follows the path led by *Children of Babylon*: it is set in the countryside. The place is not named, but we infer that it is close to Montego Bay, since Gloria starts her working career selling oranges in that town's market. However, she spends there the nights, sleeping in the market, because the road is probably too long to get back home everyday. So, probably it is also at some distance from Montego Bay. Of that town, we are shown only the market and a restaurant, and nothing of the beaches cherished by the tourists: in this context, it is the Jamaican aspect of it that interests the director, and not the postcard views.

The beginning of the film is set in a bucolic environment, with Gloria as a child who grows up in a rural district with no concrete roads, animals free to roam and the lush tropical vegetation typical of countryside Jamaica.



Some images of the countryside surrounding Gloria's growth.

From the beginning, Gloria is characterized as a child belonging to a poor family. Her parents' houses are those houses that can be found in the countryside, without any pretence of sophistication and of comforts that can be found in Kingston's rich neighbourhoods. Her mother and her father live separated, but at a short distance, reflecting a common trend in Jamaica that sees the parents not living together, but providing for the children and for each other if possible.



Gloria's mother's (left) and father's (right) houses.

The houses have a very important meaning in this film. From her parents' houses, Gloria moves to a house with Milton, and then buys a new one for their family. In the meantime, these houses are

contrasted with those Milton buys, with Gloria's money, for his other girlfriend Betsy. Then, Gloria becomes the lady of Mr. Sinclair's house, and finally she is alone in the only house no one will ever take from her, the one she builds in her hotel for herself.

This is a film with a woman protagonist, and as had happened in *Dancehall Queen*, women are still, both in Jamaican society and in the films that try to represent it as it is, generally viewed as confined to the house. In both these films, this holds true for Marcia and Gloria, but it must also be noticed that their role is not that of the passive women who accept male orders and a preordained place in society. While they both take care of their homes, men and children, they are also able to emancipate themselves and create a space where they can be free to express and fulfil themselves as they prefer: Marcia in the dancehall, Gloria in the business world.

From her mother's house, Gloria moves into Milton's house, whom she meets in the same village where she lives. She gets pregnant, has the baby at her mother's house, and then Milton tells her that they have to live together as a family. Gloria does not know about Betsy, who lives nearby and has six children by Milton. At first they all live in small houses, made of wood. When Gloria starts making some money in Montego Bay, she buys a house with Milton. Soon after, he buys a new house for Betsy too, who is jealous.



Milton's houses with Gloria (left) and Betsy (right).

Milton has also a peculiarity: the places where he courts both Gloria and Betsy. When he first dates Gloria, he takes her to a go-go bar, while his meeting place with Betsy is another bar, where they both are frequent customers.

In Montego Bay, Gloria meets Mr. Sinclair. One day, after she has got to know of Betsy and her children, and after Milton has beaten her again, she has lunch with him, and he offers her to go and see where he lives. When she does, he proposes to her to go to live with him, as a common law wife. Thus, she leaves the four children she had with Milton to her mother, and she moves in with Mr. Sinclair. Here, she not only becomes the owner of the house, but also of the shop. She accepts to live with Mr. Sinclair because the standard of living he offers her is much higher than that she is used to: his house is big and comfortable, he has a lot of land around it, and the shop is doing well and provides them with a constant flow of money.



Mr. Sinclair's property: from left to right the shop, the house, the garden, the veranda and an interior room.

When she discovers that Mr. Sinclair cheats on her too, she takes the son she had by him, and she runs away, pregnant with Sinclair's second child, back to her mother's house. She returns with Milton, takes care of him when he is sick, and has two more children with him.

She also returns to her job in the Montego Bay market, but with the passing of time she becomes more and more involved with the people living and working there. This is the reason why a man, who wants to retire, proposes to Gloria to buy his bar. She thus becomes the owner of a bar, and soon after, because of her success with it, of a building where clothes are made. However, Milton wants to be the manager, and he employs a woman with whom he again cheats on Gloria. When she discovers it, she transforms the shop: no more clothes, but a bakery.



Gloria's bar (left), shop (middle) and bakery (right).

Even though it seems that everything is going in the right direction for Gloria, she discovers, when Milton dies, that he has left no money for her. After having worked all her life to provide him with money, since Milton stopped working when Gloria started to sell oranges in the market, in the end he writes a will leaving all her money to his children, included those he had with Betsy. Gloria does not even have the money to pay for his funeral. It seems that she will have to start all over again, but then she sees her father's ghost who tells her what she has to do. When she drives to Montego Bay, she sees a piece of land for sale. She gets a loan to buy it, and here she builds her hotel, the first thing she does for herself. Here she also builds an apartment for her. The film opens and closes in this hotel, with the inaugural party by the sides of the swimming pool.



The land where Gloria builds the hotel, the inaugural party, and Gloria's apartment in the hotel.

There is a place, in this film, which acquires a symbolic importance for Gloria. It is a small lake, with falls and rocks. Here Gloria makes love with Milton for the first time, and then she recurrently goes there to meditate about her life and to decide what to do next. In this place, she also has the first vision of her father after his death, and her father will appear a couple of times to guide her in her decisions. These falls offer a brief image of Jamaica as tourists want to see it: beautiful, with lush vegetation, and a wonderful scenery for romance.



Gloria's "magical" falls.

Glory to Gloriana is a film of interiors, where houses are important as the women's dwelling place. Houses characterize the protagonists and their advancements in life, but they are always in the countryside. In fact, this is a countryside film, its aim is to concentrate on a country girl who is able to make it in her life. The biggest town of the film is Montego Bay, but only a small portion of it is set there, and the city is never shown. The rest focuses on the women in their houses.

6.13. *RUDE BOY*.

This was the first film made in co-production with the United States, and thus it is set partly there and partly in Jamaica. There is a continuous shift between the two locations, even if the story unfolds mostly in Los Angeles. Being a gangsters' story, the location in Jamaica is that of Kingston, but surprisingly it is not confined to the ghettos. Indeed, Crown's house is situated in the richest part of the city, Beverly Hills.

The pre-credits sequence is set in Los Angeles, in an enormous and anonymous building where Biggs, the boss of the trade in that town, deals with the massacre of four people who have stolen some money from him.

The credits sequence brings the audience to Kingston, and the director shows some views of the city. This is not what one would expect in a gangster movie: the director shows the "tourists' spots" in Kingston, such as the Bob Marley Museum, but not the ghettos. Probably, the director thought that people do not know Kingston, and thus he decided to show, at least at the beginning of the film, the "nice" part of the city. He preserved the depiction of the ghettos for a later moment.



Some views of Kingston for non Jamaican audiences.

In Kingston, the director immediately introduces Crown, the boss of the drug trade in Jamaica, who is partner in business with Biggs. At first he talks with Jimmy Cliff about the situation in town, and what he wants to do to make Kingston a better place. Then, we are taken to his house, a big house in the hills, very likely Beverly Hills. This is useful to show that the drug trade entails a lot of money, and that Crown has been able to move from the ghetto (supposedly) to the higher levels of Jamaican society. His house will be contrasted, obviously, with the houses of the other people working in the trade, those who have not reached those high levels.



Crown's house: exterior and interior.

For the business, Crown needs to send a mule to Los Angeles, to test the ground. This is how we are introduced to Julius, a would-be singer who thinks he will be able to launch his career in the USA. Julius is introduced to Gargon, Crown's right hand, who lives in the ghetto. It is not clear how Crown can afford to live in his big house while Gargon still lives in the ghetto, because it is likely that the latter has made a lot of money too, given his rank in the trade. Probably, he still lives in the ghetto to be in touch with the moods of the people working for him, not to lose contact with the place he comes from and that he exploits for the business. Yet, it is clear that his position in the ghetto is one of command: in fact, he has many bodyguards, and many people are around him, gaining through his presence some of his aura of power.



The ghetto (above) and Gargon's dwelling place (below).

After the meeting with Gargon, Julius goes to Los Angeles. He sees the city, and the audience with him. However, contrary to what happened with Kingston, the images of Los Angeles run very fast. Probably the director thought that every person has seen the classical images of this city, in countless films, and thus thought it not necessary to show them again here. The places Julius sees are the

traditional ones: the Walk of Fame, the skyline, Hollywood, and so on. Then, we are shown Biggs' house, the American counterpart of Crown's house in Kingston. This house is huge, luxurious and with everything one could think of. Among the various rooms and places, Biggs has a cinema, a recording studio, a basket field, an enormous swimming pool, and so on. It resembles a small town, and not just a house. Many people spend their time there, all working for Biggs but also enjoying his wealth and his comforts.



Biggs' house.

At first, Julius does not want to work for Rhino, Biggs' Jamaican right hand. He wants to find a decent and respectable job, to make his mother proud of him. But when he finds out that she is sick, and that he earns a pittance through his valet job, he changes his mind and accepts to work as a drug dealer and a killer for Biggs. Thus, he starts working in Los Angeles' ghettos, which are very similar to those in Kingston. He also has a room in a motel in downtown L.A., which is very decrepit. Indeed, there is only a bed. This does not discourage Julius, who will soon be able, with the money he makes with Rhino, to buy a big house in a nice neighbourhood. He also starts a relationship with Shawnette, whom he meets in Biggs' house. They will get married and move to live together, and Julius' life will change drastically. From the poverty of Kingston, he will move to the wealth of Los Angeles, even if he can achieve it only through illegal means.



Julius in Los Angeles: the motel room (left), the house he buys (middle) and his bedroom in that house (right). The house where Julius lives is not as rich as those of Biggs or Crown, yet it is not a ghetto house either. It is what could be viewed as a middle-class house, not luxurious but with everything one needs in everyday life. Along with the marriage with Shawnette, this house gives Julius an impression of respectability which his job had taken away from him.

Julius' life is going well in Los Angeles, until he discovers that Rhino wants to betray Biggs, and with him, back in Jamaica, Gargon wants to do the same with Crown. Shortly after, Rhino flies back to Jamaica, and kidnaps Julius' mother and Crown. Julius follows him back to Kingston, and liberates both Crown and his mother, killing Rhino.

The last sequence takes place in Los Angeles, where Julius has returned to his wife. He discovers that she is a cop, and that she is about to arrest Biggs. Thanks to her, he manages to escape, and the end titles tell the audience that he has gone to Brazil, which however is not shown.

Rude Boy is a film of exteriors, as is usual for gangsters' films. It is also set in the ghettos, both in Kingston and in Los Angeles. Here, the violence happens in the downtown streets. There are few interior scenes, inside of houses, more or less luxurious, but showing the rank of the owners in the trade hierarchy.

6.14. GANGSTA'S PARADISE.

As with *Rude Boy*, this film is set partly in Los Angeles and partly in Kingston. It is not clear, however, to which of the cities the paradise of the title refers to. Actually there are gangsters both in Kingston and in Los Angeles: the film is mainly set in L.A., thus this could be viewed as the paradise; on the other hand, Shotta wants to go back to Jamaica when his situation becomes difficult, indicating that this could be the place where gangsters rest after their "battles".

The action takes place mainly in Los Angeles, Kingston seldom being shown except in a couple of occasions. The credits sequence shows some views of the city, the glamorous side of it, the "decent" side of the metropolis. The violence, however, happens downtown, in the ghettos, as in Kingston. Also, it seems that the violence is concentrated there because this is the place where the "minorities" are confined, as if violence was the only way to survive in a country that offers nothing more than this to its citizens with foreign origins.



Los Angeles.



Downtown Los Angeles, where the action takes place.

Contrary to what could be expected in a gangster film, *Gangsta's Paradise* is set mainly in interior locations. The killings, of course, generally happen in the street, but the people involved in the business discuss in houses, restaurants, bars, cars and so on. Thus the main settings are Diamond's house, Reggie's house, Shotta's house and the restaurants of the Mafioso. As in any other film, the houses are useful to indicate the owner's status and wealth.

Diamond's house is very big, and luxurious. It demonstrates that he belongs to the upper class, even if his wealth has been acquired through drug trafficking, as his wife says in the tribunal, when she is denied her sustenance in their divorce.



Diamond's house: exterior and interior.

The Mafioso's houses are not shown, but they own a couple of restaurants, the "Steps of Rome" and the "Ristorante Franchino". Naturally, these restaurants emphasize their "Italianness", with the posters on the walls depicting famous Italian locations, and the overall furniture reminding of an Italian setting, if maybe pointing to the Italian past more than to the Italian present. This may be accounted for by the fact that immigrants tend to idealize their home country, and to see it as it was when they left it, and also by the fact that foreign countries have a preconceived idea of Italy and of how it should look like, and restaurants must comply with these clichés if they want to appeal to their customers.



The Steps of Rome and the Ristorante Franchino: two Mafioso restaurants.

The other houses that are (scarcely) presented are Reggie's and Shotta's. Reggie is a new acquisition in Diamond's trade, but he is willing and able to work, and he is able to make a lot of money in a very short time. Thus, from the motel room where he lived with his wife and son, he is quickly able to buy a big and luxurious house in L.A.'s good neighbourhood. Shotta, on his part, lives in the ghetto with his girlfriend. His house is not big, nor luxurious, but it has all the things Shotta needs.



Reggie's house (two left) and Shotta's house (two right).

When the action shifts to Kingston, there are a few images showing the city, and then the director moves to King's house. What is interesting to note about Kingston is that the places shown as a presentation are not those of the ghettos, where supposedly the violence and the drug dealing take place, but those of the in-between places, such as Halfway Tree and Papine. These two places are

spaces where people go shopping, and they are also junction places, where people can find means of transport to every other part of the city. Both Halfway Tree and Papine are constantly overcrowded with people and cars.



Kingston: Halfway Tree and Papine.

The only house we are shown in Kingston is that of King, the boss of the trade. This house is set in Beverly Hills, and it is visible from the streets of New Kingston. It is one of the biggest houses of the area, and even if we are not taken inside of it, it is nonetheless clear that the person living in it is wealthy and powerful.



King's house.

Gangsta's Paradise is unusual, in its locations, for a gangster film. It is mainly set in interior locations, and only a few scenes are shot in the streets. However, for the director the setting was not important. It seems that he did not pay much attention to it, since the majority of the film is made by close ups, and generally it concentrates on the depiction of characters and not of their environment.

6.15. *SHOTTAS*.

The latest co-production between the USA and Jamaica shifted the American scene from Los Angeles to Miami, where there is a huge Jamaican community. The whole film is set almost exclusively in exterior locations; even when the characters are in their houses, most of the time they are on the verandas or balconies. The first part of the film is set in Kingston, the second in Miami.

The credits sequence presents the ghetto where the story begins, Waterhouse, in West Kingston. The director used a tracking shot from above the area to introduce the audience to the location. He then focused on the streets of Waterhouse to introduce the environment in which Biggs and Wayne grow up and thus explain why they become gangsters.



Waterhouse: the last image demonstrates that little has changed in this area in twenty years.

When Biggs returns to Jamaica after twenty years in the United States, he finds out that Wayne is now a rich man, and living in the hills, in the wealthiest part of Kingston. His house is huge, and he shows off his money in very obvious ways, such as cars and jewelry⁵⁴. The lifestyle of Wayne and Biggs, different from that of their youth, is very evident if one compares Biggs' house in Waterhouse, when he was a kid, and Wayne's house in Beverly Hills, after he has become a real and powerful shotta.



Biggs' house in 1978 (left) and Wayne's house today.

Wayne's house connotes his status, and its position gives him dominance over the whole city of Kingston. It is clear that now he has become a person with a lot of money and power, even if all this is due to illegal businesses. Actually, we are shown his extortions and killings in the streets, and the police retaliations for them. These scenes are supposed to be shot downtown, in the ghetto, but they have been shot in New Kingston, uptown. As Cess Silvera explained in an interview, the crew (Caucasian and from the United States, many of them in Jamaica for the first time) was not feeling safe shooting in the "ghetto", and many left the island before actually finishing the job. Therefore, it was probably easier for them to shoot the film in places where it was less likely to have problems with the population, also because they had no permissions to shoot the film. Thus, Blacka's murdering is shot in Halfway Tree, and the murder of the politician is shot in a mall in Liguanea, uptown Kingston⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ This aspect is analysed in Chapter 7.

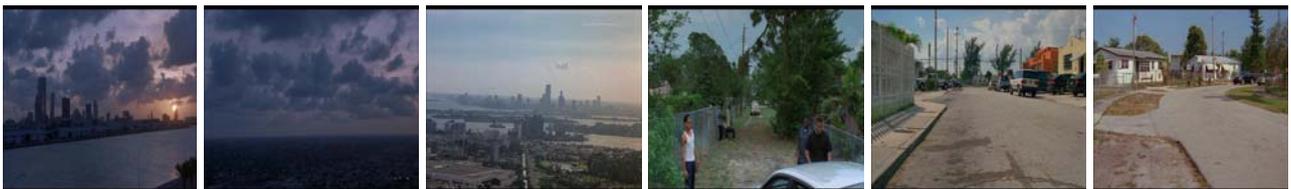
⁵⁵ This interview is contained in the "behind the scene" feature inserted in the DVD of the film (see Filmography, p.403). Chris Browne, interviewed by Bruce Hart on "The Making of Third World Cop", in a VHS titled *Jamaican Short Films by Director Chris Browne*, underlined the same difficulty in working in "ghetto locations". However, his reasons were different from Silvera's. Browne is a Jamaican, who understands his country and his people. Thus he understood that the difficulty was created by the fact that the communities involved in the shooting process did not



An uptown Kingston street and Sovereign's parking lot.

If one pays attention to the location, the difference between downtown and uptown locations is quite obvious. This, however, can also be symbolic of the way in which Wayne's illegal organization has reached every area of the city, and that he is immersed in uptown society, not confined anymore to downtown, or to the "ghetto", as a gangster is supposed to be.

When the situation becomes too difficult for Biggs and Wayne to stay in Jamaica, they go back to the United States, Miami in particular. Here, the director first presents some stereotypical images of the city, then he shows that Biggs and Wayne immediately return to the ghetto, to meet the people who used to work for them. During the film, the audience is shown many times the streets of Miami, where the action takes place.



Some images of Miami: panorama and the streets.

In Miami, as in Kingston, the traffics and the killings happen in the streets, thus the camera is very often showing this part of the city. And, as in Kingston, what distinguishes the people working in the trade are the houses, the cars and the ways thanks to which they can show off their wealth. The drug business has become only a matter of money. It is not anymore as it was for Ivan in *The Harder They Come*, a way of surviving, in which he could also enjoy the solidarity of his friends and the opportunities offered by the ghetto. In *Shottas* it is just a matter of money and power. There is no joy, no solidarity. If someone does not comply with the rules, he/she dies. The houses, as symbols of the characters' wealth, are of course enormous and luxurious. They are the kind of houses one can find in upper class neighbourhoods: the criminals are not in the ghettos anymore, they share the same space as the people who have money, they are in the "respectable" side of the cities.

Teddy Bruckshot's house looks like a castle. We are not shown all the house, but it is clear that it is very big. What is striking in this film is that all the houses, cars and jewels of the characters belong

understand why they were not recompensed for their compliance, thinking that a part of the budget had to be destined to them. Silvera cut the problem short: he prepared a second budget to pay the Waterhouse community, because his film did not have the necessary permissions to be shot, and this was the only way to avoid problems.

to them in their real life⁵⁶. There is a blurred distinction between respectability acquired through merits and respectability acquired through money and fear.



Teddy Bruckshot's house: front and back.

The only house we are shown to a bigger extent is Biggs'. This is due to the fact that it functions as a kind of headquarter for him, and that he is the only person that is shown in more private situations, such as his life with his girlfriend. As any other house, this one is big, luxurious, and its windows look on the ocean.



Biggs' house: exterior, kitchen, two interiors.

However, in this film, the houses and the locations are not important *per se*, but as a way of showing the characters' status. The action takes place in the streets, and the characters are almost always in exterior settings, even when they are at home. The houses are shown much as the cars and the jewelry, to show wealth and prestige. In both Kingston and Miami the “ghetto” is identified as the place where the traffics and the killings happen, but the protagonists live outside of it, in “good neighbourhoods” where they do not see, and thus take no blame for, what happens.

The film finishes with Biggs leaving Miami for another place, where to start all over again, and with a clichéd image symbolizing it with a new dawn.



The last scene, a new dawn.

6.16. CONCLUSION.

Jamaican films represent their country, and especially their capital city, Kingston. When co-produced with the United States, they expand their vision to include Los Angeles and Miami. On a

⁵⁶ In an interview contained in the “behind the scenes” feature of the DVD (see Filmography, p.403), Cess Silvera says that everything in the film is owned either by him or by one of the protagonists, who put at disposal their belongings for the film. This was due to the fact that this was an “illegal” film, and thus they had the authorizations for nothing.

total of fourteen films made, eight are set in Kingston, and only five in the countryside. Then there is *Countryman*, which could be included in both categories, since it is set outside of Kingston but so close to it that some scenes develop in the city.

This is a summary of the various locations and settings that we find in Jamaican films:

- *The Harder They Come* is set in Kingston, more precisely in Trench Town, and it is a film of exteriors.
- *Smile Orange* is set in Montego Bay, in a hotel, and it is mainly based on interiors: the kitchen, the office of the Assistant Manager, the restaurant and the front desk.
- *Rockers* is again set in the Trench Town neighbourhood of Kingston, and it shows almost constantly exterior shots.
- *Children of Babylon* is set in the countryside, and in the interior of the great house.
- *Countryman* is set in Hellshire, the beach close to Kingston, and is another film of exteriors.
- *The Lunatic* is set in a village in St. Ann, in the countryside on the north of the island, and it is a film of exteriors too.
- *Klash* is meant to be set in Kingston, but actually it is also shot in Port Royal, and it is a film of exteriors.
- *Dancehall Queen* is set in Kingston, and it is shot in the interiors of Marcia's house and the dancehall.
- *Third World Cop* is set in the Dungle neighbourhood of Kingston, and it is film of exteriors.
- *One Love* is set in the countryside on the north of Kingston, but it never reaches the city. It is a film of exteriors.
- *Glory to Gloriana* is a film of interior shot in the countryside close to Montego Bay.
- *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta's Paradise* are shot partly in Kingston and partly in Los Angeles. While the first is a film of exteriors, the latter is mainly shot in interior settings.
- *Shottas* is shot partly in the Waterhouse neighbourhood of Kingston, and partly in Miami, in both cities in exterior locations.

What appears in these films is that they reflect the classical division of spaces due to the sex of a person. Even if, in Jamaica too, more and more women work outside of the house, and some men stay at home during the day, nonetheless in the films women are seen indoors and men outdoors. One has the impression that women are at home, while the men can conquer and explore great spaces, a fact that reflects their greater freedom in all matters. This distinction is not always sharp, and there are exceptions. Yet, generally men are seen at home only to change clothes or to have sex, while women are seen at home doing something else, for instance taking care of the children. This is the case of both Marcia and Gloria, who have also a job and a career to take care of. The woman

who is an exception to this rule is Inga, but she is not Jamaican, and she is a sex tourist, thus in more than one way different from Jamaican women. And Penny can afford not to take care of a house only because she is a student coming from a wealthy family, and she can be free only until she moves in with Luke, who wants her in a more traditional role.

In general, Jamaican films seem to reflect the classical binary opposition that equates the city with “evil” and the countryside with “good”. Even if there are exceptions in this case too, and that it seems clear that the directors are all appreciative of Kingston, in all its facets, it seems that in Kingston there is the violence, while in the countryside everybody lives in peace. Kingston seems violent, drug infested, and the hiding place of criminals, while the countryside seems uncontaminated, not tainted by evil feelings. However, the “city directors” show that Kingston is not only violence and drugs, but also solidarity, friendship and opportunities. This is the case with Ivan, Horsemouth and Capone, for instance.

The perception one gets of the city depends on the way the director depicted it. For instance, *The Harder They Come* was shot in the ghetto, but we have the feeling that Kingston was happy and joyous at the time. In *Third World Cop* the happiness has disappeared, but there is a light of hope at the end of the film, which depicts the same poor and violent ghetto as the precedent films. In *Klash* then, the director depicted Kingston in a glamorous way. It is a city on the sea, glittering and with a lot of good music. It is less threatening than in other films, also because the clash seems isolated from the city life. If we are shown the countryside as a kind of paradise, we will think that Jamaica is a paradise. The particular vision a director has of what he wants to show influences how the audience will receive the message he wants to share, and the settings and locations are an integral part of the way we are presented a story.

In the Jamaican films, in general, it can be said that Kingston is depicted as it is, as is the Jamaican countryside. Jamaica appears beautiful and full of contradictions, as it is in its daily reality. In the end, to a closer analysis, it does not look so different from other metropolises of the world.

7. “TELL ME WHAT YOU WEAR AND I’LL TELL YOU WHO YOU ARE”: THE IMPORTANCE OF APPEARANCE IN FILMS.

The way a character emerges in a film has as much to do with the story developed for him/her as with the way he/she actually appears to the audience, that is through their clothes and their belongings, such as houses or cars. Yet this is a feature that is seldom analysed in film studies, and is always taken for granted, as if clothes had nothing to say. However, if it is true that a person communicates something about him/herself through the way he/she presents him/herself¹, the same holds true for a film, which is a representation, or a re-creation, of a virtual reality that mirrors everyday life.

Appearances, in this sense, are useful to further characterize the person, giving the audience an immediate perception of the kind of character presented. As Sarah Street argues in her analysis of dress codes in popular films:

Film costumes [...] occupy a shifting place within film narratives. They can advance plot, suggest character and provide an authenticating discourse for films which are set in the past. In many ways they can ‘exceed’ the demands of the narrative by suggesting intertextual connections and allude to star identities which have been forged outside the narrative system of that particular film.²

With a simple glimpse to a character’s appearance it is quite easy to understand to what milieu he/she belongs to, if he/she is a shy person or someone who likes to be noticed, and so on and so forth. The interpretation of a dress code gives access to a variety of information.

Clothes can be read on many levels: as instruments of plot development; as ‘signs’ of character and personality; as accomplices in the creation of an overall ‘look’ and visual style of a film; and as evidence for the application of theoretical concepts [...] in the interpretation of film texts.³

It is in this light that in this chapter I will analyse how the characters of Jamaican films are dressed, and which accessories distinguish them⁴. It will be clear that, in Jamaican as in any other cinema, clothes actually have a meaning, and that they are useful to convey the personality of characters beyond the story developed for them by the scriptwriter. This is especially true for the Jamaican

¹ See, for instance, Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture and Identity*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1992, but many other similar books have been written on this subject.

² Sarah Street, *Costume and Cinema. Dress Codes in Popular Film*, London and New York, Wallflower Paperback, Short Cuts: Introductions to Film Studies Series, 2001, p.32.

³ *Ibidem*, p.53.

⁴ I will focus only on the main characters, or on some features of secondary characters which have a particular meaning. To look at every character in every film would require a very long chapter and maybe would not be very interesting, since many times the characters just dress the way “fashion” requires at the moment the film was made. In this sense, Jamaican films reflect the trends of the period on the island, so that we can see that some things have remained, while others have changed, as in every other country around the world. Houses are also important in the determination of a character, but I will not mention them here, since I analyse settings and locations in Chapter 6.

gangster films, such as *The Harder They Come*, in which appearance becomes one of the key aspects of the characters.

7.1 *THE HARDER THEY COME*.

Perry Henzell's film consciously utilizes fashion and accessories as a means of conveying more information about his protagonist. Actually, even if all the characters do pay attention to what they wear, Ivan is the only one "obsessed" with fashion, always seeking the newest hat or outfit to show off with his friends. In this film, the change in Ivan's wardrobe and means of transport is also a signifier of his modifying status, from a poor country boy just arrived in town to the most popular outlaw adored by Kingston's population. The change in Ivan's dress code communicates to the viewer how the story is proceeding, even apart from the dialogue or the themes introduced by Henzell.

As regards Ivan's dress code, Gladstone Yearwood notes that it is based on the appearance only, since no real power matches its elaboration:

In the narrative, although Ivan appears to have acquired the trappings of power, such as guns, money and mobility, the filmic signification does not confirm their traditional meanings; rather it contradicts them. [...] Ivan acquires the form without the substance. There is the acquisition of material goods, but he does not control the power that society associates with having such possessions. Ivan is thereby an increasingly vulnerable and dangerous figure within the system of social signification, for the development of his character seems a fullness where in fact there is absence. [...] The flamboyant coquettish attire of the street hustler signifies an absence, the lack of power. In *The Harder They Come*, Ivan is transformed from square country boy to city slicker who wears fancy, colourful hats, jeans, suede outfits, wet-look vests, leopard-patterned shirt and dark glasses. Ivan is transformed into the Johnny-Too-Bad signifier from a song used in the film's soundtrack.⁵

About the means of transport, the same author says:

Henzell's narrative presents a sophisticated paradigm of social change coded in the form of transportation technology, which is used to propel the narrative. Ivan is in control when dealing with forms of transportation that he has integrated into his social existence. [...] he harnesses and masters the technology of the bicycle.⁶

And, below:

Using the form of a riddle, Henzell codifies the problems of Third World development in relation to the acquisition and utilization of forms of technology. This theme is developed in the Jamaican context through the metaphor of forms of transportation technology that the

⁵ Gladstone L. Yearwood, *Op. Cit.*, p.444.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p.446.

hero engages in struggling for his survival. The technological option he chooses, given the state of social development of his environment, contains the seeds of his survival or his narrative death. Ivan's encounter with various forms of transportation technology fuels the complications of the narrative. The more advanced forms of transportation technology – the motorcycle and the motor car – lead eventually to the hero's downfall and are linked narratively with various kinds of lawlessness.⁷

At the beginning Ivan is just a country boy, not used to the ways of the city, dressed simply and using public transport to move from the countryside to Kingston. We see him for the first time on the bus, while he looks around for the novelty of the capital, dressed modestly, with a yellow sweater and a pair of jeans. He immediately makes clear what his aspiration is: he looks admiringly at a white convertible which is following the bus, driven by a man in the company of two women. He dreams of a life of luxury, with a lot of money, and admired by the people around him.



The bus Ivan rides arriving from the country, and his clothes.

At the beginning of his adventure in Kingston, Ivan keeps wearing simple clothes, since he has no job and no money. But when he settles in the Preacher's house, and he starts to find his place in the city, he also begins to change his lifestyle. Ivan starts to wear more fashionable clothes, hats and jewelry, and he also acquires a new means of transport, a bicycle. Hats in particular are a hallmark for Ivan: he has many of them, each is meant to accompany certain clothes. Ivan is attentive to fashion, and he never wants to appear as not following the trend of the period. His necklace made of bones (or shark teeth) remains up to the end of the film, and he will become more and more careful in the choice of his shirts, which become more elaborated.

The favourite colour, especially for shirts, in this film, is yellow. Ivan often wears yellow shirts and sweaters, and José too likes to wear yellow clothes. As regards José, he is characterized by a black tam and sunglasses. This feature will reappear in all of Carl Bradshaw's films. Probably it is a choice of the actor, and not of the costume designer: every character played by Bradshaw wears hats and sunglasses.

While staying in the Preacher's yard, Ivan finds refuge in a car wreck. It is in the yard, and no one is using it. So Ivan spends some of his time there, with the few things he has: a toy gun, some records,

⁷ *Ibidem*, p.447.

and some *Playboy* magazines. His elaborate dress code, which emulates the rude boy style of the period, is noticed by every person surrounding him. Actually, one morning Longah comments on it, kidding Ivan:

Longah: “Hey, pretty boy... Pretty hat... Johnny Too Bad... [...] You have a pretty hat this morning.”

Ivan: “You like it?”

Longah: “You really look like Johnny Too Bad. You only need a gun to look like Johnny. But before you get a gun, get a broom and sweep out the shop.”

Longah is mocking Ivan’s attitude as a rude boy, his dress style, and the fact that Ivan aspires to something better than a job for the Preacher, but at the same time he is foretelling the future, since, as Johnny Too Bad in the song⁸, Ivan will buy guns, and he will not be able to escape from the police and his death.

Stephen Foehr gives a definition of the rude boys which can be quite simplistic, but which at the same time gives an idea of the overall feeling of these youths, in that period:

The rude boys had a self-assured, chip-on-the-shoulder attitude and a jive-ass walk, and they wore sharp, flashy clothes. [...] Rude boys earned [...] the reputation of being small-time thugs, street hustlers, drug dealers, enforcers and aggressive domino players, guys with nothing to lose, and the music reflected their way of life operating beyond the pale of respectability. The ghetto and the music gave the rude boys a milieu in which they felt part of a culture, a culture that rewarded those who seized the opportunities they made, rather than the culture of institutional approval and promotion.

[...]

Street fights, boxing matches, horse races, posturing tough and using and misusing women was the life in this subculture.⁹

These youths took as examples, just like Ivan, the gangsters they saw in films, especially in the Spaghetti Westerns. The gangsters of contemporary Jamaica are descendants of these 1970s rude boys:

The rudies modelled themselves after the attitude of American cowboys and gangsters. [...] They dressed sharp, swaggered with chips on their shoulders, talked tough, treated women as cream-filled buns to be licked up and discarded, carried weapons and, like today’s American street gangs, weren’t shy in blazing away. [...] Life was raw, fast, loud, unforgiving and brutal.¹⁰

This is the life Ivan lives in Kingston, the rude boys’ life.

⁸ See Chapter 3, pp.61-62, for an analysis of this song.

⁹ Stephen Foehr, *Op. Cit.*, pp.98-99 and p.100.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp.202-203.

While in the Preacher's yard, Ivan starts to earn some little money. This is used to buy clothes and to fix the old bicycle which lies abandoned in the yard. This is his first means of transport in Kingston, which he repairs by himself and for which he pays a lot of money. With this bicycle, Ivan goes out with Elsa and he does what the Preacher asks him to do, like carrying the master of the record to Mr. Hilton for the next church day.



Ivan's look in the Preacher's yard and his bicycle.

Because of his bicycle and of the Preacher's jealousy, Ivan has a fight with Longah, which causes him to be punished by the law. Instead of sending him to prison, the judge wants to be "generous" and sentences him to receive eight strokes with the tamarind switch. This punishment is first and foremost a humiliation, since Ivan is stripped naked and the strokes are given on his buttocks. In that moment, Ivan loses all his power of control over himself and his appearance; moreover, the strokes are so painful that they cause him to urinate, another sign of his loss of control over his body, which obeys to external stimulation and not to his command. The remembrance of this humiliation will be the cause of Ivan's first murder: he prefers to kill the cop rather than to go through the tamarind switch again.

At last, Ivan manages to record his song with Mr. Hilton. The latter's social status is made clear from his first appearance, as he is shown driving a white Mercedes Benz convertible, Ivan's dream. This car is a clear sign that he is rich, and that he belongs to the upper class of Jamaican society. When he records his song, Ivan wears a particular sweater: it is blue, with a golden Star of David in the middle of it, on Ivan's chest. This sweater is quite symbolic, since Ivan wants to become a star, and this star can represent his destiny, his aspiration, or it can even be an ironic comment on the kind of life Ivan wants: he wants to become famous, but he will not reach this through his song.



Ivan wearing the blue sweater with the golden Star of David.

When Ivan starts living with Elsa, after he has sold his song to Mr. Hilton, he does not want to work, because he thinks that he will be able to make money with his song and his talent as a singer. His only preoccupation is to party. He also pays more and more attention to his clothes. For this reason, he has a confrontation with Elsa. She does not want to go out with him, because she is tired after spending the whole day looking for a job. Moreover, she does not want to wear the miniskirt Ivan bought for her. He tells her that it is sexy, but she only wants to go to church. Elsa is not as obsessed as Ivan with appearances: she comes from a Christian environment, which values the spirit over the flesh, and he is a rude boy, who lives in the here and now.



Ivan, as a rude boy, goes out to party without Elsa.

Finally, Ivan enters the ganja trade. In this business, the position in the hierarchy is signalled by the means of transport. The small dealers, like Ivan and Pedro, ride a motorbike, while the boss, Detective Jones, drives a car. It is not a police car, and he does not dress as a policeman, so his position is even more reinforced: if he does not look like a cop, it will be easier for him to deal with (and control) the traders.

Ivan, like all the other small dealers, rides a motorbike. He earns some money, which enables him to live a decent life. But he is ambitious, he wants a life of luxury, and this is one of the reasons why he fights José. He does not understand why he has to be satisfied with a pittance while someone else is making big money through his job. In the meantime, his attention to clothes and to his appearance has increased more and more.



The motorbike Ivan drives when he becomes a ganja dealer.

His escalation toward vanity and luxury reaches the apotheosis when he becomes an outlaw. As a gangster, his popularity grows, and with it Ivan's self-esteem and pride. He quickly becomes a true narcissist: he sends a letter to a newspaper to claim the responsibility of the cops' murder, and he is

happy because at last he has become famous. He starts to go to expensive places, such as a luxurious hotel in Kingston, and he finally drives the white convertible he has always dreamed of. For him, it does not matter that the car is not his own, and that his popularity is due to homicides. All that matters is that at last he can lead the life he has always wanted.

The signifier of the white convertible, whose drivers seek to possess the power and success for which Ivan craves becomes a central factor in understanding the film's narrative structure. [...] The white convertible is a signifier that Ivan is forbidden to express; however within the film's narrative system, he is destined to possess it. Possession of the white horse within the system of narrative realism can signify only his death. When Ivan transgresses the fixed social positions and relations of society and seeks to reformulate the structures of the unconscious by moving from the position of the onlooker – that is, the passive object of power, to intrude upon a seemingly sacred rite; that is, the power and control of the white convertible – he must be punished.¹¹



Ivan's dream: to drive a white convertible.

He also starts to be extremely careful about the way he dresses: he can afford the best and fashionable clothes, and since he is a rude boy, and he is popular, like a rock star, he wants to look perfect every time he makes a public appearance.

Ivan's climax occurs when he goes to a photographer, to have some pictures taken of himself, to send to newspapers to publicize his persona and deeds. In this moment, he almost turns himself into a fetish. He becomes a star, a commodity for the use of his audience, an icon that transcends his being. He represents an ideal, not a real person.

In her analysis of the relationship between clothes and identity in the movies, Stella Bruzzi examines the American Blaxploitation movies of the 1970s, and the way Black people have been represented on screen in the United States. Though *The Harder They Come* does not belong to the Blaxploitation genre, as Perry Henzell has always made clear¹², Bruzzi finds some similarities between them. About the popularity of the Blaxploitation genre, she says:

¹¹ Gladstone L. Yearwood, *Op. Cit.*, pp.447-448.

¹² Andrew M. Butler, in *Film studies*, Herts, Pocket Essentials, 2002, p. 96, gives this definition of black exploitation: "Films primarily aimed at black audiences in America in the early to mid-1970s, made by black directors, featuring black characters often battling against white characters. Whilst they do often tread an uneasy line in racial stereotypes, they offered blacks a much wider range of roles than before." It is clear why *The Harder They Come* does not belong to this genre. First of all it was not aimed only at black audiences, especially not only American audiences. This film was made initially for Jamaicans, but not only coloured ones. Then, after the great success of the film, Henzell decided to

There is a particular conflation of signs and characteristics that render black action films more pleasurable and spectacular to a black audience than the criticisms imply, a dynamism based on a fusion of music, sexuality, success and flashy clothes that signals the arrival of a strong identifying model for a black audience. [The Blaxploitation films] achieved iconic status, symbolising a significant, transitional moment in the history of black involvement in popular cinema.¹³

Bruzzi finds in the characters' dress code an important element in the appeal of this kind of films. She defines it as "funky", and as the "Pimp Look". Moreover, she identifies *The Harder They Come* as being a Blaxploitation film, and, for her, Ivan taking pictures of himself represents the essential "Pimp Look":

In terms of dress, 'funkiness' came to be expressed by the 'Pimp Look', an eclectic amalgam of clashing styles most often seen on pimps, hustlers and other ghetto figures who had got rich by dubious means. Ivan (Jimmy Cliff) in *The Harder They Come* is a classic incarnation of the Pimp Look, posing for photographs in a garish combination of white cap, leopard-skin shirt open at the chest, long chain, leather waistcoat and snakeskin shoes. The Pimp Look is blatantly sexual, tight around the hips and crotch and low cut over the chest.¹⁴

Maybe what Stella Bruzzi does not acknowledge is the fact that Jamaica is not the United States, so here black people's fashion is not created in contrast to that of white people; and the fact that Ivan is not a Blaxploitation hero.



Ivan's photographs: a real gangster.

When he takes these pictures, Ivan is celebrating not only himself, but also the figure he represents: the rude boy, the gangster. What is important for him is not only his look, but also his guns. They have become part of his identity, they characterize him, and they are in the foreground in all the pictures he takes¹⁵. The guns are Ivan's way to fame and to death. They make him into a gangster,

export it all over the world, not caring about the colour of the audience. Moreover, in *The Harder They Come* all the characters are black, and Ivan does not fight against white characters. When there is a conflict, it is inside the community, and at any rate this film is not about a man fighting against another man, but about a man who tries by every means to lead the kind of life he has always dreamed of.

¹³ Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies*, London and New York, Routledge, 1997, pp.97-98.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp.100-101.

¹⁵ The role of the guns, and the significance of the figure of the gangster in Jamaican films are analysed in more details in Chapter 8.

and they make him feel powerful and unbeatable, like the heroes he has seen in the Spaghetti Western he so much likes.

Ivan's fall starts when he gets wounded the first time. From this moment, he needs to hide, he is abandoned by his former colleagues, and he begins to think, on Pedro's suggestion, about an escape to Cuba. He is not able to take care of his look anymore, he is not able to be a rude boy anymore.

His last means of transport is meant to be a mercantile boat, which however Ivan does not manage to reach. This is a bit ironic. Ivan's popularity has achieved such an iconic status that a more common means of transport would not be great enough for him. However, on the other hand, it is also weird that such a hero has to hide in an anonymous ship to escape from the police.



The boat Ivan should take to escape to Cuba.

When he dies, on the beach, Ivan wears once again the blue sweater with the golden Star of David in the middle of it. And once again, this garment is symbolic. Now Ivan is really a star, not because of his talent as a singer, but a star nonetheless. He is a popular hero, a hero for all the Jamaican population. And just when he achieves this status, he dies. His death is heroic, since he dies for the social justice he was fighting for. But he dies all the same, at the apogee of his success and his popularity, just when he was starting to live the kind of life he had always wanted.

In *The Harder They Come*, Ivan's clothes and means of transport mark his character and his trajectory in Kingston. He starts as a country boy, dressed simply and with nothing belonging to him. When he arrives in the capital, he starts to pay more and more attention to his look, becoming a rude boy, dressed in the latest fashion, with fancy clothes, hats and jewellery. He also buys some guns, to enhance his status as a gangster. The more he ascends the social ladder, the better means of transport he has. He starts fixing a bicycle in the Preacher's yard, then he acquires a motorbike, and finally he drives a white convertible. All his dreams fade away when he gets wounded, and he finishes his life as he had started it, with nothing belonging to him, but a sweater with a star, the symbol of what he has achieved and will never be able to enjoy.

7.2 SMILE ORANGE.

In a radical break with *The Harder They Come*, *Smile Orange* does not pay great attention to looks, or, better, since the whole film is set in a hotel, and the protagonists are the people working in this hotel, they wear uniforms. We do not see, apart for a few glimpses regarding Ringo and the Assistant

Manager, the characters' private life, and so we do not know what they possess or what they wear when they are not working.

As regards means of transport, we can see the tourists arriving on an Air Jamaica plane, and then on a taxi from the airport to the hotel. The only other means of transport we see is Ringo's car. It belongs to his family, so we do not know if it is his or his wife's car. At any rate, he takes it to escape from the house and go back to the hotel where he works.



Ringo's car.

This car, and the house where he lives, characterize Ringo as a character not belonging to the poorer social class. He may not be rich, but he owns a car and a house. Even if they belong to his wife's family, they nonetheless are Ringo's too. So even if he has to compromise in his job in order to make a living, he can go back to the countryside where he owns a small piece of land.

A peculiarity of this film is Ringo's wife, because she does not want to use any means of transport. She walks to wherever she needs to go, thus it takes her a long time to reach places. This is something that is repeatedly stated in the film.

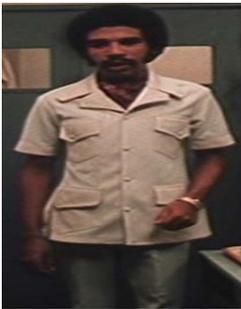
As regards clothes, there is not much to say. The tourists are dressed as American tourists in Jamaica, and the people working in the hotel and providing the entertainment are dressed as it is expected from them, to conform to the tourists' taste.

The waiters and the receptionist are dressed with the hotel's uniform. This consists of black trousers (or skirt for the receptionist), a white shirt, an orange waistcoat and a black necktie for the men. Of course, the colour of the uniform reminds of the title, and it is also ironically linked to the busboy's belief in the fruit's property. As he says at the end of the film, he does not want to eat oranges because "it rots your balls, sir!". Thus the colour of the uniform can be a hint at the compromises the waiters have to accept (such as prostituting themselves) to make a living, and the humiliations they have to endure to keep their job, which can make them feel less than men.



The hotel's uniform.

The other interesting character in this film is the Assistant Manager. He always tries to dress as a powerful man, careful not to be mistaken for a waiter, and thus he always tries to give himself an attitude, to appear serious and reliable even if in fact he is not. In a way, he wears a sort of uniform too, since he always appears as wearing the same kind of clothes. He likes suits, his shirts and trousers are always of the same colour: white, khaki, or brown. But he seems to prefer light colours. Moreover, he wears a neckerchief, which gives him a touch of elegance and refinement and distinguishes him from the other people in the hotel, waiters and tourists alike. Yet, even if he pays attention to appearances and he tries to look as if he was an important business person, his suits are not enough to gain him the respect of the people surrounding him. The waiters fool him every time, his wife cheats on him under his nose, and he realizes neither of these facts. He is the demonstration that appearances are never enough to create a person: to have to respect of the people, he should become what he pretends to be.



The Assistant Manager's style.

7.3 *ROCKERS*.

This film revolves around a motorbike, the stealing and the retrieving of it¹⁶. It is not really important how the characters are dressed, since they wear normal clothes, with no peculiar distinctive markers. The only garment that distinguishes Horsemouth is his constant wearing of a hat, which is typical in Jamaica, especially for Rastas, who in this way are able to control their locks. On the contrary, the means of transport are important, both for the story and for the justice that the Rasta musicians are seeking.

The film begins with Horsemouth collecting money to buy a motorbike, in order to sell Rasta records on his own, without having to depend on Babylon which is only exploiting the musicians. The motorbike represents not only Horsemouth's status, but also the hope for a better future for him and his colleagues. Horsemouth makes many sacrifices to buy the bike, he borrows money from friends, and he argues with his wife because he takes away the small money set apart for the family's needs. When he finally owns it, the motorbike becomes a symbol of optimism, a way to create a better future for the whole community.

¹⁶ For a picture of the motorbike, see Chapter 5, p.157.

During a party, the so-called “Mafia boys” steal Horsemouth’s bike. They act on behalf of people who are already very rich, since they are the owners and managers of a luxurious hotel on the north coast, but who probably do not want poor people to come out of the ghetto, to rebel to their rules, or just to live a better life.

The rest of the film revolves around the retrieving of the motorbike, which involves violence against Horsemouth and injustice for the musicians. What is different from *The Harder They Come*, for instance, is that the possession of the motorbike is not a way for Horsemouth to show off his status and his wealth. Differently from Ivan, Horsemouth is not interested in appearances: he does not care about how people will look at him with or without the bike; he is not concerned with becoming more famous than he already is. He wants the bike just to better his situation, his life, and that of his colleagues. His motorbike symbolizes his freedom from Babylon, not an instrument to be admired.

7.4 CHILDREN OF BABYLON.

Lennie Little-White’s film pays great attention to costumes: clothes (or the absence of clothes) become quite relevant for all the (female) characters. There are four main characters in the film, at the beginning divided into two couples: Rick and Penny, and Luke and Dorcas. Luke is a Rasta¹⁷ who believes that his woman has to follow his rules in everything, included her dress code. On the contrary, Rick is an open-minded upper-class Jamaican who likes to paint naked women, and so he not only allows his women to wear what they choose, but he also asks several times Penny to pose for him without any clothes on. Yet, Rick is not as flexible as he seems; he is still a sexist. Actually, he thinks it normal for him to ask Penny to pose naked, but when she asks him to do the same for her, he is surprised and accepts unwillingly¹⁸.

The most interesting characters in terms of appearances, however, are Penny and Dorcas, who are very distant from each other and yet have many things in common¹⁹. They represent two opposite types of women, Penny being free and “modern” and Dorcas being oppressed and “old-fashioned”, but then they exchange their roles, and they show that the border between the two situations is often blurred and unclear.

Penny comes from Kingston, she is sophisticated, emancipated and uninhibited. She represents the “city”, its smartness and its cunningness. On the contrary Dorcas comes from the country, she has no education, and she has always been used to Luke’s rude ways. She represents the “countryside” and the backwardness it is supposed to embody. Dorcas has always been a waitress in Rick’s house, she has always been dominated by Luke, she has no children and she is thus considered a mule by her

¹⁷ See Chapter 5, pp.159-161 for a description of this character.

¹⁸ See Chapter 9, p.293.

¹⁹ see Chapter 9, pp.302-305, for a description of these characters.

husband. She has no rights. Symbolically, she is given no voice. Dorcas is dumb for the most part of the film, and this allows her to listen to all the conversations and to observe carefully whatever happens in the house. She lives her life through sublimation, observing the masters' lives and dreaming of being like them. She is the demonstration that, had she had the opportunity to grow in Kingston in a wealthy family, she would have been like Penny is, and probably the same would have happened to Penny had she been born in Dorcas' place.

At the beginning of the film, Penny often appears wearing few clothes, or clothes made with transparent materials. She is also frequently naked, posing for Rick or making love with him. In any case, her body is regularly on display. Her freedom finishes when she starts the relationship with Luke, who wants to control her and what she wears. He tells her that she cannot wear translucent clothes anymore, nor shorts, miniskirts, or any other Babylon garment which allows her skin to be seen. Thus she starts to wear long skirts, long-sleeve shirts, and a tam to cover her hair. At the end of the film, she has become like Dorcas, a servant for Luke, a woman who is not allowed to be coquettish and has to preserve the sight of her body for her man only. She will return to her previous clothes only when she will go back to her parents' home in Kingston, after leaving Luke and his authoritarianism behind her.

Dorcas' path is the opposite of Penny's. She begins the film wearing the clothes Luke wants her to, thus long skirts and shirts which cover her body, and tams or handkerchiefs to cover her hair. Luke and the other dwellers of the house do not pay attention to her, she is almost invisible. No one, especially her husband, cares about her needs or wishes. However, she would like to dress like the women she sees in the house, she would like to be as free as they are. This becomes very clear as she always spies on the other people in the house, to see how they live, and it is evident when one day, thinking no one is at home and will see her, she tries the clothes of one of the white ladies. In this moment she also talks, perfectly mimicking the English accent of the owner of the clothes. She seems to be another person, and she smiles, she almost looks happy. Unfortunately for her, Luke is watching her, and he immediately rebukes her for mimicking the white people. He tells her that she should be proud of what she is, of being black, and then he tells her that she is ugly, anyway. Luke is praising the black body's beauty, but at the same time he is leaving his black wife to start a relationship with a white girl.

As a woman reviewer noticed in 1980, Dorcas is not what she seems to be, what the people in the house think she is:

She likes make-up and pretty clothes just like the missus, and parades in them whenever she gets a chance. At these two significant points in the film, the producer gives her a voice. For her 'imitation of white ways' Dorcas is lambasted by her man Luke, whose incredible cruelty

(ignorance?) cuts into her soul as he tells her how ugly she is and always will be, and that she might as well accept it.²⁰

When she finds out that her black body's beauty is not enough to keep her husband, Dorcas commits suicide. Significantly, and symbolically, she wears a special dress for the occasion: a red dress which she takes from one of the ladies of the house. The red colour is charged with symbolism, it can represent the fact that she has always hidden her true self, her passion for life, her free spirit, and so on. It might remind us of another similar woman, Bertha Mason, the mad woman of Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, or the misunderstood and abused Bertha developed in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Whatever meaning the director wanted to give to the red dress, it is of great importance that for her suicide Dorcas chooses this colour.

It is in that moment that she and Penny start to exchange their roles. In that moment Penny starts to become as Dorcas was. One of the great differences between the two women is that Dorcas never appears naked in the film: this is something reserved only to the white women. Nonetheless, through their clothes and their behaviours, Dorcas and Penny demonstrate that, in the end, even if at first they seem to belong to two opposite worlds, they are not so different, and both, in a way or another, are subjected to a chauvinist world which tries to control them.

7.5 COUNTRYMAN.

Countryman is a poor fisherman, belonging to the lower strata of Jamaican society. As such, his clothes reflect his status. Countryman lives almost naked: he has only a pair of black shorts, and a necklace made of (probably) shark teeth. He wears no shoes. He has no means of transport, so the few times he need to reach Kingston, he walks, or runs, to the city. His only possession is a small boat, which helps him in his job. As he explains to Beau²¹, this does not prevent him from living close to nature. On the contrary, his "natural" condition allows him to have a special relationship with his surroundings, which gives him a supernatural aura and wondrous powers to work in the name of good.



Countryman: his clothes and his boat.

²⁰ Joan Ffrench, *A Woman's View of 'Babylon'*, in *The Sunday Sun*, June 8th, 1980, p.2.

²¹ See quotation from the film, note 104, Chapter 5, p. 163.

There is no progression in this film. Countryman does not acquire wealth, does not change lifestyle during the unfolding of the story. He only wants to help the foreigners, but he is happy with his life, he does not want to transform it. Thus, he remains the same from beginning to end.

A peculiarity of this film is that two bodies are always seen almost naked. The first one is Countryman's, but Beau too is often without any shirt on. She gives it to Countryman at the very beginning of the film, to help him with the taming of the crocodile. Then, the first times we see her, she is always showing her breasts, and the director sometimes lingers on this, showing her while having a shower or exploring the place she has been hidden in. Then, she covers her breasts with a white cloth, but it is not clear how she finds it. What may appear a bit disturbing is that the only naked bodies we see are those of the woman and of the black man. This can be related to the stereotypes linked to women and blacks in previous Hollywood films, but it is uncomfortable to know that these same stereotypes have been perpetrated by a Jamaican director, maybe just in the hope of gaining an international audience. Generally, however, costumes have not been a major preoccupation in the realization of *Countryman*.

7.6 THE LUNATIC.

In this film, clothes, like houses, serve to indicate the social status of the characters. Aloysius is the village's madman, and thus he is at the very bottom of the lower classes. He has no belongings, in a way he does not belong to the community where he lives. He is an outsider. As such, his clothes reflect his position. At the beginning of the film, Aloysius is very poorly dressed. He wears a shirt and a pair of trousers, but both of them are ragged and dirty. Even when he starts his relationship with Inga, he does not change his clothes. He cannot do it, because he does not have the money necessary to buy clothes, and Inga never seems bothered by the fact that he is always dressed as a poor madman. Only at the end of the film, when Aloysius is hosted by Widow Dawkins, does he have new clothes. In that moment he acquires a place in society. He is not a madman anymore, but someone who lives with one of the most respected women in town, who, moreover, teaches him "manners". Thus, he cannot wear his rags anymore. The widow gives him the clothes her deceased husband used to wear, and he stays in her house. He fully becomes a member of society.



Aloysius: a madman and a member of society.

Inga too is interesting in terms of clothes. Like Aloysius, in a way she is alienated too from her society. We understand that she has a bad relationship with her father, and that for this reason she has become rebellious. This is probably why her behaviour is so carefree and challenging. But she, too, at the end of the film, is re-inscribed in her father's society, because he comes to rescue her from the Jamaican prison, and thus she, like Aloysius, abandons her poor clothes to dress as a "decent" person, with outfits that are deemed more "suitable" for a lady.

During the film, Inga wears light clothes, fit for the climate of Jamaica: shirts without sleeves, shorts or simple dresses. She very often wears a hat, or a tam, to cover her hair, which is always tied except when she has sex. At the beginning of the film she always has her camera with her, since she is a tourist. Since she is so sexually voracious, she is often naked, or with very few clothes on. Her dress code changes when the trial begins. She starts to dress in a way that reminds of German country girls, especially when she escapes from the prison. In the court she wears a red dress, but when she runs away from Jamaica, she wears a blue dress, with two long tresses tied around her head. In that moment she looks "tamed", as if she had come back to her father's traditional world and rules.



Inga "breezing" and in court.

As regards two of the other characters, Service is defined by his tam and his sunglasses, a bit funny because they look childish, while Busha is described as sticking a finger into his left ear whenever he is contradicted during a discussion, no matter if the person he is talking to is his wife, a lawyer, or Aloysius.

In this film, both Aloysius and Inga's dress codes are determined by society: if they are outsiders, they dress as they want; when they get again part of it, they are forced to wear what the community asks them to wear. As with other belongings, clothes mark the social status of a person.

7.7 KLASH AND DANCEHALL QUEEN.

In both *Klash* and *Dancehall Queen* the most important costumes are those for the dancehall scenes²². What attracts the gaze in these films is especially the female body, wrapped in the bare-as-you-dare outfits, and the provocative dance movements it makes. Outside of the dancehall context, the characters dress normally: in *Dancehall Queen* Marcia is a street vendor who works days and nights, and thus she does not have enough money to buy expensive clothes nor does she need clothes

²² I discuss dancehall outfits in Chapter 4, along with dancehall culture.

to go out, while Stoney in *Klash* is a photographer who has had problems on the job because of his use of drugs, and thus is in the same situation as Marcia. Moreover, being “normal” people, these characters are not obsessed with the way they dress and they do not feel the need to always be in the latest fashion.

What is worthy of note is, in the case of *Klash*, the character of Blossom. She is a go-go dancer, but she maintains her appearance as a sexy woman even when she is not working. All her clothes are revealing and provocative: either a mini dress or a long dress which shows all of her body. Even outside of the club where she works, Blossom wants men to look at her, and she keeps titillating them through her clothes. She is the only character who does not change her dress code on and off stage.



Blossom dressed to meet a man.

In *Dancehall Queen* there is one thing that Marcia says which makes the audience understand the difference between the dancehall world and the “real” world. When she sees Olivene, the dancehall queen, during the day, without her dancehall clothes, she marvels at how ordinary she looks. This is eventually what prompts her to try her chance in the dancehall. However, this is suggestive of the fact that the dancehall girls pay their attention to clothes when they dress for the dancehall, but not when they lead their daily life. Hence the great divide between the dancehall and the routine of the Kingstonians.

In this film, the character which is interesting for his costumes, and who does not belong to the dancehall world, is Priest. He is the villain of the story, and as such he is depicted. His appearance is made to match his morality, and to make the audience despise him. His looks are totally constructed, there is nothing natural in him, especially on his head. His hair is coloured red, he wears blue contact lenses, he has gold teeth and he wears a single earring with a cross. All these characteristics are used to reinforce the concept that he is a villain.



Priest.

7.8 *THIRD WORLD COP.*

Chris Browne's film pays attention to costumes. The characters are divided between gangsters and police, while Capone, in a way, belongs to none of these categories. He is a cop, but at the same time he often acts as if he were a gangster. Actually, he uses every means to achieve his goal, which is justice. This means that even if he has to go against the law, the goodness he pursues is greater than the evil he causes.

Capone is characterized as a special kind of cop since the very beginning of the film. During the credits sequence, images of him making love with a girl alternate with images of the objects he has in his bedroom. Thus we can see his beret and a picture of him in a police uniform, for instance, but also condoms and a spliff. There is a kind of ambiguity in Capone: he is a policeman, but at the same time he is not tied by his role. He behaves as a normal man, who enjoys all the aspects of life, feeling at ease in the world.

In the film, Capone is always dressed in the same way. He wears jeans, a white undershirt and an open shirt over it; he has a black beret, gold chains, bracelets and rings, and a pair of sunglasses.



Capone in his typical outfit.

His jeans are meaningful, since they hint at a certain kind of masculinity, the one of the lone hero in western movies. Actually, Capone is a lonely hero too, and as the heroes of Westerns, he fights crime without being totally integrated in the establishment. Jeans have a long history, and Fred Davis attributes their popularity to their

Symbolic appeal derived from its antifashion significations: its visually persuasive historic allusions to rural democracy, the common man, simplicity, unpretentiousness, and, for many, especially Europeans long captivated by it, the romance of the American west with its figure of the free-spirited, self-reliant cowboy.²³

Indeed, Capone seems to emulate a kind of John Wayne masculinity, fighting crime alone and avoiding social ties.

The only time Capone seems to abandon his masculine assertiveness is when he wears Rita's clothes to discover where Ratty is hiding. Yet, again, he accepts to do this for a greater goal, the triumph of

²³ Fred Davis, *Op. Cit.*, p.71.

justice. So, in a way, even when he is dressed as a woman, Capone reasserts his virile power and agency over the things happening around him.

On the other side of the barricade there are the gangsters, who are dressed in the latest fashion. Generally their outfits consist of very large trousers, worn very low, undershirts and shirts in very bright colours. They like to die their hair. They also wear sunglasses and gold jewellery: necklaces especially, but also bracelets, earrings and rings. These become the markers of their social status. In fact, this kind of jewellery is quite expensive, and in the ghettos, where there are no rich people, if one can afford this kind of accessories it means that he/she is a gangster. Thus, the more and the bigger the jewellery one wears, the more a dangerous gangster he/she is.



Small gangsters playing football.

Two gangsters are noticeable in this film. The first one is Deportee, played by Ninjaman. In this case, the stage figure and the real person merge. Actually, Ninjaman is a renowned gangster in Jamaica, he has also recently been charged for murder. Ninjaman likes to appear as a dangerous person, both on and off the screen.

The second gangster worthy of notice is Wonie, the Don. Beside having all the characteristics of the gangsters, he also has a special means of transport. He is the boss, and he underlines this driving a Beemer. This kind of car is very expensive in Jamaica, and generally only the very rich people, or the very important gangsters, can afford one. Thus, the car becomes a symbol of Wonie's riches and power.

Third World Cop pays attention to costumes, as it pays attention to other details. Carrying in its representation of Jamaican society also a social critique, all these details are useful to characterize this society and to give a realistic portrayal of it. If on one hand the figure of the lone ranger is a bit exaggerated to look realistic, on the other hand the depiction of the gangsters is close to reality, and their costumes help to convey this feeling to the (Jamaican) audience.

7.9 ONE LOVE AND GLORY TO GLORIANA.

In neither *One Love* nor *Glory to Gloriana* do clothes have a special function. In these films, the way the characters are dressed is just a reflection of their taste and their environment; they do not acquire symbolic or status implications.

In *One Love* the Rasta and the Christian communities, despite all the differences they claim to have, are very similar in their dressing codes. In the Rasta village, all the inhabitants wear robes, generally white with something bearing the Rasta colours, and the women cover their hair. However, the Rastas that leave the village, such as Kassa and his band, are dressed in the Western way. What is peculiar about them is that they do pay attention to what they wear: their clothes have to be always clean and decent, and they have to cover their bodies. Claudette is an exception, since she likes to wear mini skirts and revealing outfits. Moreover, given the Rastas' attention to their bodies, they have no tattoos, no piercing, and as less flesh exposed as possible. Bobo covers his hair for religious reasons.

The Christian community follows almost the same principles. When they go to church, the women cover their hair. In general, they are all careful not to show too much of their bodies. Their clothes are always respectable, never vulgar or showy. The people attending the church are people who live following the rules dictated by their beliefs, just as the Rastas do, and since the Book they find inspiration in is the same one, it is inevitable that many regulations are very similar, if not identical. The only difference between the two groups can be found in the means of transport. The Christian community and the people belonging to it are richer than the Rastas. Thus, the church owns a van, and Aaron, one of the most prominent members, drives a big SUV. On the other side, the young Rastas ride buses, and Kassa, in some way the leader of the band, rides a small motorbike.

Costumes are not paid much attention to in *Glory to Gloriana*, either. Only at the end of the film, when Gloria's father appears to her for the second time, does she say that he has told her that from that moment on she has to wear only white clothes. For the rest of the film, the only difference that can be noticed between Gloria and Betsy in their ways of dressing is that the latter wears more revealing clothes. Her relationship with Milton is mostly based on sex, thus she needs to be sexually alluring to keep Milton going to her house. Gloria is dressed more simply, less flashy, and with longer skirts.

In this film Gloria's climbing toward the higher levels of society is signalled by the change in her means of transport. At the beginning she has none, she walks. Then, when she starts to make enough money to buy something, she owns an old pick-up, then a nice car, then a bigger SUV, and finally, when she is looking for the hotel land, she is driving a BMW, a top class car.

7.10 THE GANGSTER FILMS: *RUDE BOY* AND *GANGSTA'S PARADISE*.

When it comes to gangster films, clothes become really important. Indeed, one of the characteristics of the gangsters is their obsession with how they look. This is true for *The Harder They Come*, but

even more for the three Jamaican-American co-productions, where the gangsters are updated to today's fashion and with the need of showing off their wealth²⁴.

As many critics have pointed out, the gangster genre is characterized by attention to details, and the gangsters are marked by their attention to their wardrobe, which becomes a mirror of their personality. Stella Bruzzi synthesises quite clearly the importance of clothes in gangster films:

Throughout the gangster genre clothes are equated with status, money and style. [...] Clothes are also over-valued objects of fetishism, which symbolize the gangster's identity. [...] The trait that distinguishes the screen gangster from the majority of other masculine archetypes is his overt narcissism, manifested by a preoccupation with the appearance of others and a self-conscious regard for his own.²⁵

If on the one hand this narcissism is somehow discomfoting for the audience, it is also one of the features that renders the gangster figure so appealing:

When considering the costumes of the screen gangster the spectator is struck by this ambivalence, that here are characters who have both cultivated an aggressively masculine image and are immensely vain, and whose sartorial flamboyance, far from intimating femininity or effeminacy, is the most important sign of their masculine social and material success. [...] gangster films are notably defined by superficiality and attention to detail. Colin McArthur divides the 'recurrent patterns of imagery' that permeate the genre into three categories, two that concern the iconography of the gangsters' milieux and the technology (such as cars and guns) at their disposal, and one that surrounds 'the physical presence, attributes and dress of the actors and the characters they play'.²⁶

Quite often, the first thing a gangster does after acquiring wealth is to look for new clothes, to look better and in tune with his fellow gangsters.

The transition point from petty hoodlum to successful mobster is often the acquisition of a new wardrobe. The gangster's new-found power is put on display, crudely shown off, often in a scene that shows him getting fitted for a suit.²⁷

This transition is evident in every Jamaican gangster film: for instance in *The Harder They Come* this phase is over-emphasised in the scene where Ivan has the pictures taken at the photographer's studio, and in *Rude Boy* we are also shown Julius trying on the new suits he wants to buy.

Rude Boy and *Gangsta's Paradise*, in a perfect gangster genre style, pay much attention to looks. The bosses of the organization are careful to let people know who they are through their looks, and the youths who want to emulate them wish to gain their status through the acquisition of material

²⁴ I will analyse the figure of the gangster in Jamaican films in more details in Chapter 8. Here I will focus only on their dress code.

²⁵ Stella Bruzzi, *Op. Cit.*, p.67.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p.70. The quotation is from Colin McArthur, *Underworld USA*, London, Secker and Warbung, 1972, pp.23-24.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p.74.

goods. As with Ivan in *The Harder They Come*, Julius' wealth, for instance, is signalled by his buying new clothes, a house and expensive means of transport.

Gangsters are attentive to their appearances for one simple reason, among more complex psychological and sociological ones: they need to assert their power. They acquire their status through violence and illegal means, but they show it off through clothes, cars, guns and accessories. Through the way they look, they need to convey the impression that they are dangerous, powerful and strong. This is also one of the reasons why they are always accompanied by a crew of youths at their service.

All the gangsters, in both films, look for a kind of elegance. In *Rude Boy* this is epitomized especially by Rhino, Crown and Gargon; in *Gangsta's Paradise* by Shotta, Diamond and the Mafioso. It must be noted that some of the actors playing in both films are the same, thus their dress code is the same too. So, in *Rude Boy*, Biggs, the boss, wears elegant clothes suited for a tycoon. In *Gangsta's Paradise*, Diamond represents a business man, who always dresses elegantly, and the Mafioso dress in the Mob's style, preferring the sartorial elegance of tailored suits. The small gangsters, finally, try to emulate their bosses preferring an elegant wardrobe.



Biggs in *Rude Boy*.

Ras Kidus, who plays Rhino in *Rude Boy* and Shotta in *Gangsta's Paradise*, is characterized by suits. He cares very much about his look, and this is the reason why he always matches his garments together. He wears suits, many times brightly coloured, and his shirts and hats are always toned with them. Moreover, his accessories also try to match the rest of his clothes.



Ras Kidus as Rhino (above) and as Shotta (below).



Beenie Man, playing Crown and King, carries in his characters his popularity as a singer. In Jamaica, he is renowned for his dress code, and thus this is transposed into the films too. The same holds true for Ninja Man, who is famous for his being a gangster also off stage. They may wear suits that sometimes seem a bit extravagant or a bit too flashy, especially Beenie Man, but it is clear that these things are expensive, and carefully chosen. Anyway, they often wear sartorial suits that make them appear elegant and rich.



Beenie Man (left) in *Gangsta's Paradise* and Ninja Man in both films.

What characterizes all the gangsters, no matter their rank in the hierarchy, is the obsession with jewellery. As soon as they get some small money, they immediately buy a big necklace to show that they are part of the gangsters' crew, that they are dangerous, and that they are getting rich. The jewellery, the bigger the better, becomes a symbol of social status and of wealth.

In both films, then, we are shown the trajectory, always tragic, of an aspiring gangster. As it happened with Ivan in *The Harder They Come*, here we can see the careers of Julius in *Rude Boy* and of Reggie in *Gangsta's Paradise*.

Julius shows his change of status and wealth throughout the film, with his new clothes, houses and cars. At the beginning, in Kingston and in Los Angeles, he is poor. He is dressed very casually, not really paying attention to what he wears, and preferring large shirts or sweaters over a pair of jeans. He has no means of transport of his own, and he lives with his mother in Kingston, and in a small and dilapidated motel room in Los Angeles.

When he starts to make money doing Biggs' dirty jobs, the first thing he does is to buy a big house in a nice neighbourhood²⁸. Then he goes to a tailor to have some suits made for him. As he contemporarily starts his career as a singer, he becomes more and more attentive to his looks.

²⁸ See Chapter 6, p.232.

Finally, he buys cars. At first he wants one for himself, and he chooses a Porsche. Then he gives a Benz as a present to Shawnette. These changes signify his ascending status in the gangster world, and the money easily made in this business.



Julius chooses a new wardrobe.



Julius' cars: a Porsche and a Mercedes.

The same kind of path is followed by Reggie. At first dressed casually and living in a motel, he then buys a house, a luxurious car, and starts to dress in an elegant gangster style. His fate, however, is tragic because he wants too much. Instead of keeping his place and doing his job, he has an affair with the boss's girlfriend, and this will cause his death.



Cleve and Reggie with their new clothes when they become gangsters.

7.11 SHOTTAS.

With *Shottas*, appearances acquire an over-important role. The riches shown in the film are even more striking if one thinks that all the houses, cars, jewellery and so on belonged to the people who made the film, director and actors. In this way, the life led by gangsters is compared to the life led by popular singers. It seems that the only difference between them is that the gangsters are doomed to enjoy that luxury only for a brief period, before dying tragically in the gang warfare.

Even if the underlying theme of the film is the friendship between Biggs and Wayne, what appears from the costumes and the accessories is that this is a world of appearances, where nothing is real, all can be bought and lost, and what is important is to show one's wealth. Actually these gangsters love to show off: their cars, their girls, their jewellery, and this is true especially in the Miami section.

The beginning of the film is set in the poverty of downtown Kingston, and this in part is used to explain the kind of life that Wayne and Biggs will choose, and why money will be so important for them. While in the ghetto, the kids own nothing. Biggs is forced to eat sardines every day, and their clothes are few, ragged, and too small for them. This is the background against which the gangsters' life strikes. In fact, as adults, Wayne and Biggs like to show that they have made it, and that now they are extremely rich, and can buy without having to care about wasting their money.

What slightly differs from the other gangster films is that in *Shottas* Wayne and Biggs care more about accessories than about clothes. It does not mean that they are badly dressed. On the contrary, it is evident that their clothes are expensive, and when they go to a party they pay attention to their looks. But when they are at home, or for their everyday routine, they are dressed casually, with jeans, undershirts and shirts.



Wayne and Biggs dressed for a party.

What is noticeable about their appearances is that Wayne almost always wears sunglasses, and he often shows different hair styles. Biggs, on the other hand, has a tattoo on his right arm, depicting Bob Marley. This is significant because of the actor playing this role. Ky-mani Marley is a Rasta, who should not tattoo himself. But at the same time he is also the son of Bob Marley, who sung about equal rights, freedom, peace and love. The fact that a gangster can have this kind of tattoo is possible, but his life stands at odds with Marley's philosophy.

For the rest, the gangsters in this film show all the attributes generally associated with this category. Cars are especially cherished in this film: they are many, luxurious, and the characters like to show them off. There is a profusion of Mercedes Benzes, but there are also Porsches, Jeeps of many kinds, Hummers, Lamborghinis, Ferraris and so on. Cars become a status signifier, and they are meant to become a symbol of the kind of man the gangster who possesses them wants to be.



Some of the cars that appear in the film.

However, cars are not the only means of transport of the characters. Having to show so much wealth, the gangsters also have boats, and Wayne and Biggs arrive at the party on a small plane. They are not the only ones, however, since it appears in the background that there are other planes there. It seems that in this world nothing is big enough, and nothing is expensive enough to satisfy the need to demonstrate that the money owned can buy anything a gangster fancies.



Wayne and Biggs arrive at the party on a plane.

The other characteristic of the gangster is jewellery, and in this film it abounds too. Two episodes about this subject are worthy of note. There is a scene in a jewellery shop which is quite telling about the way the gangsters lead their lives. Wayne and Biggs want to buy something, and they decide for two watches, one Cartier and one Rolex. They wear them immediately, they do not even want a package. When Biggs tells the shop assistant that he will buy both watches, she asks him “Don’t you wanna know the prices?” Smiling at her, he replies “Baby, if I have to ask the price it means I can’t afford it!” Biggs makes it very clear that for him money is not a problem, and he does not care if he spends it. The assistant is impressed by this showing off of wealth and self-assurance, and probably she is also attracted by the danger of starting a relationship with a gangster, which can give her a new *frisson*, and she thus offers herself to Wayne. Later, when Wayne shows his new jewellery to Biggs, the latter tells him that the girl is becoming expensive for him. We thus infer that, in order to continue the relationship with the assistant, Wayne keeps going to the shop and buying any kind of accessories, reassessing his wealth and power.



Some jewellery and the symbolic ring.

The second episode regards a diamond ring which becomes a symbol of power and friendship. The ring first belongs to Teddy Bruckshot, who ruled Miami while Biggs was deported to Jamaica. When Biggs and Wayne go back to Miami, they immediately search for Teddy, to tell him that they are back and they will retrieve their role as leaders in the city. In order to mark their words, when they

leave the restaurant Wayne takes away the ring from Teddy's hand. It is symbolic: it seems that the owner of the ring is also the ruler of the illegal business in Miami. The ring reappears at the end of the film, when Wayne gets killed. Biggs realizes that he is dead, and he wants to take revenge. For this reason, he takes the ring from Wayne's finger and puts it on his, and with it he goes to kill Teddy. Power has passed on from Wayne to Biggs, but the ring is also a symbol of the friendship that exists between the two gangsters. It is as if the ring had become a token of friendship: if Biggs wears it, he will not be satisfied until he has avenged Wayne's death.

Finally, one peculiarity of this film is that it shows that the gangsters keep their riches at home. When he goes away to avenge Wayne, and then to escape from Miami, Biggs takes with him what is contained in his safe. When he reaches Teddy's house, the latter offers him what he has in the house, that is fourteen millions of dollars, to spare his life. It is as if the gangsters preferred to keep their money under control, always at their disposal, in case they should need it for a quick escape, for instance, as it happens to Biggs.



Biggs' safe in his bedroom.

The gangsters' life, and the appeal it has on the youth, can be summarized by a dialogue between Ritchie and his son. What is important is what they can have immediately, the things they can enjoy in the present. No one thinks about the fact that this life will not probably last long, and that a tragic end will very likely meet all the young people who embrace gangsterism as a way of life.

Richie: "So, what do you want for Christmas, this year?"

Son: "Five million dollars".

Richie: "What you're gonna do with five million dollars, man?"

Son: "Oh, I will look for some clothes, some shoes, some jewellery and some women!"

7.12 CONCLUSION.

A character in a film is not built just through actions and dialogues. A way to convey further characterization to a person in a story is through attention to his/her costumes. Clothes, accessories, houses, means of transport and the like add meaning to the people inhabiting the world of a fiction. This becomes even more true for gangster films, which are obsessed with appearances. The same, of course, happens in Jamaican cinema.

However, it must be said that Jamaican fashion is developed on the island, and does not mainly depend on the international fashion industry. There can be various explanations for its uniqueness. First of all, fashion has to be suited for the tropical climate of the country: the hotter the weather, the less one needs to wear. It is a condition necessary for survival and for comfort. This may also be a reason why the colour black is avoided: since it tends to keep the heat, other, brighter colours are preferred (for instance, purple is particularly loved in Jamaica).

The environment is also among the factors influencing fashion. The lush vegetation that can be found everywhere on the island may require flashy colours for the people to be distinguishable from it. The opposite happens, for instance, in Europe or in America, in cold countries which have no such vegetation. Here people tend to prefer dark colours, but for the same reasons as Jamaicans: to keep them warm and distinguishable from the environment.

Yet there are also other reasons for this kind of fashion on the island. Since the social class represented in the films is generally the lowest one, it is clear that it does not have the necessary money to afford expensive outfits. If they cannot provide for “quality”, for sartorial or classy clothes, then they will find other ways to make them remarkable. Hence, they will recur to flashiness, exaggerated colours, materials and shapes, which eventually become the norm and are appreciated by the community as *the* fashion of the country, including not only the lower classes but also wealthier people.

Kingston ghettos are a difficult area to live in, and a difficult area to leave, because of socio-economical factors that keep ghetto dwellers in their place. In this environment, where a person does not have the possibility to acquire wealth, the only way to show off one’s personality is in his/her look. This is maybe the major reason why appearances are given so much importance here, and why they are represented as such in the films.

Most of the times, clothes and accessories are useful to define the social status of a character, and how he/she manages to climb social ladders, as happens for instance in *The Harder They Come*. In other cases, such as in *The Lunatic*, clothes are a means to communicate inclusion or exclusion from the village community. In the gangster films, they are a way to show off the rank in the hierarchy and the amount of money the criminals have.

In any case, since the films want to reflect Jamaican popular culture, the clothes that we see are those that reflect the popular taste on the island. As has happened for other aspects of these films, the way clothes and accessories are coded gives the audience a glimpse of how Jamaicans relate to them, and the significance they accord to appearance.

8. JAMAICAN MASCULINITY AS PRESENTED THROUGH FILMS.

Jamaican cinema is decidedly “masculine”. The directors are all males, and the stories, with a few exceptions, are about Jamaican men. Even the few films apparently centred on women were made by men, and thus give a masculine point of view of femininity. Given the easy and broad access of the cinematic medium, films can strengthen or undermine the stereotypes about Jamaican masculinity.

Generally speaking, the concept that is commonly associated with Jamaican men is that they are the “rough and tough” kind of men. The kind of masculinity that transpires from Jamaica is a violent one, both at the street level and in relationship to women. It is said that Jamaican men like to be as tough in their beds as they are in everyday life. What is a bit striking is that this is exactly what (foreign) women look for in Jamaican men.

Notions about black men as sexually hyperaggressive abound. [...] “Rudeness” is perceived as part of Jamaican masculinity, even though it verges on harassment and violence at times. Black male sexuality is allowed, indeed expected, to be vulgar and out of control – rough, tough, and abusive.¹

Naturally, these are stereotypes, and as such they cannot be relied on. Yet, some characteristics are undeniable.

It can be argued that there are historical reasons for men’s contemporary behaviour. The brutality of slavery has left its mark on Jamaican psychology forever. The slaves brought to Jamaica were rebellious and fierce, they never bowed to subjugation. This is a characteristic that has remained, and that can be noted in the aggressive street behaviour of the men. Yet, generally there is no overt violence. As the Italian consul in Jamaica, who also works with Amnesty International, notes:

Jamaican men are macho but not necessarily violent.

They often fight because of the great poverty, the lack of education and the desperation that reigns in many ghettos where people live in unbearable conditions.²

Moreover, slavery also influenced the relational conduct of Jamaicans. In the plantation system, male slaves were used to impregnate women slaves, but they were not allowed to create stable relationships with them. What was needed was their semen, then they were moved to other places and other women. Thus, they never felt tied to the women, and they never took the responsibility of their offspring. To a certain extent, this is the same behaviour that is condemned today, when men have children with many women and leave them all without taking care of the kids.

¹ Kamala Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race, and Sexual Labor*, London and New York, Routledge, 2004, p.130.

² Maria Carla Gullotta, in an e-mail to me, dated October 16, 2009. My English translation. The original text, in Italian, reads: “Gli uomini giamaicani sono machi ma non necessariamente violenti. Se spesso volano le botte è anche per la grande povertà, mancanza di educazione e la disperazione che regna in molti ghetti dove si vive ai limiti dell’inivibile.”

Then, Jamaicans are said to be lazy, to prefer to stay at home while their women go to work and earn the money for the family. Actually this too has historical reasons. Men have been less willingly employed than women, there is chronic unemployment on the island, and if someone comes from the ghettos, it is very unlikely that he (but also she) will ever get a “decent” job.

Thus, if a part of the stereotypes about Jamaican men is true, it is also true that history (and white colonisation) has created this kind of society. But stereotypes are what they are, and they cannot define a whole people. Indeed, even if some men fit into the stereotyped category, the majority of Jamaican males are caring, good workers, and peaceful people. Maria Carla Gullotta notes:

Jamaicans are more than three millions and the small group of criminals shapes an image of the people which is just a stereotype.

In the ghettos there are the gangs. But the majority of those living there is just a victim and would go away immediately if they could afford a higher rent.³

Jamaican films, depicting Jamaican society, could do a lot to discredit the stereotypes, but also to reinforce them. Since their aim is to represent Jamaica “as it is”, many times the masculine presence in the films is aggressive, if not overtly violent, and street-wise. This is true especially of the gangster films: *The Harder They Come*, *Klash*, *Third World Cop* (Capone is a policeman, but many times he acts more as a gangster than as a cop), *Rude Boy*, *Gangsta’s Paradise* and *Shottas*. But a tough kind of man can be found also in *Smile Orange* (to a certain extent, Ringo is a cunning character who learns to survive in a harsh world thanks to alternative methods), *Rockers* (Horsemouth fights for his rights, without letting Babylon destroy him), *Children of Babylon* (Luke represents the authoritarian kind of man), *Countryman* (the protagonist is somehow fighting against society all by himself) and *Dancehall Queen* (Priest represents the street gangster).

Jamaican films are predominantly gangster films, and even when it is not so, there is almost always a gangster or a street person in the story. This kind of films is very popular in Jamaica, and the people identify with the characters. Thus, it can be argued that gangsters, and street violence, are quite common in Jamaican everyday life. It can also be inferred that the kind of masculinity depicted in the films is one admired, renowned and aspired to by many Jamaicans, especially those who live the street life of the ghettos. Maybe, as Vernon A. Brooks argues in his somehow prejudiced book about Jamaican men⁴, they want to try to live up to the stereotype created by the Bob Marley image (a street-wise man who had a wife and innumerable girlfriends) and by the

³ Maria Carla Gullotta, in an e-mail to me, dated October 18, 2009. My English translation. The original text reads “I giamaicani sono 3 milioni abbondanti e il piccolo manipolo di mascalzoni condiziona una immagine che non è altro che uno stereotipo. Nei ghetti [è] vero, ci sono le gangs. Ma la maggior parte di chi ci abita è solo una vittima e se ne andrebbe di corsa se potesse permettersi di pagare un affitto più alto.”

⁴ Vernon Augustus Brooks, *Op. Cit.*.

assumptions foreign people have on Jamaicans (mainly based on their supposed rudeness and insatiable sexuality).

8.1 GANGSTER FILMS.

The gangster genre dates back to the 1920s, when America was facing Depression and Prohibition and people badly needed something to make them dream that an alternative kind of life was possible. The story lines of the films were often provided by newspapers' headlines, thanks to the exploits of Al Capone, John Dillinger and Lucky Luciano, among others. Their stories were developed, and the gangster was made "glamorous" in the films; he provided an escape from the gritty reality of the moviegoers.

Depression-era poverty and deprivation meant audiences badly needed a vehicle for cinematic escape. This combined with a need for on-screen glamour and a desire to hit back at a society that many felt was failing them. An additional factor is the judged moral landscape created by the further inequalities caused by the hypocrisy of the unenforceable 18th Amendment (Prohibition) and the criminal consequences of that.⁵

The most immediate reason why the gangster was so engaging is that he could do what common people, living in the real world and not in a fiction, could not do, namely to rebel against the establishment.

The habit that the leads in gangster pictures have of disposing of their ineffectual leaders and taking control can be seen as a fantasy that an audience is willing to buy in an era of apathy, defeat, disorientation and insecurity.⁶

Yet, there are also other psychological reasons why the figure of the gangster attracted so much sympathy from the audience.

In the figure of the gangster, audiences saw a man who was able to do what they could only dream about: make it to the gilded paradise using only his wits, although conventional morality demanded that he be ultimately punished for his actions, his success being material and thus transitory.⁷

Or, to put it differently:

Gangsters were colorful figures amid the bleak Great Depression, doing what moviegoers couldn't do, even if they wished to. Gangsters didn't so much break the law as flout it. But they flouted it in accordance with the American success scenario. They practiced their own form of upward mobility. [...] But, most of all, gangsters exercised their freedom, the quality Americans prize most dearly. Unrestrained by conventional mores, they gloried in their

⁵ Jim Smith, *Gangster Films*, London, Virgin Books, 2004, p.4.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p.7.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

independence, achieving an emancipation that moviegoers might envy but could never experience because the price was too high.⁸

The films, then, were made to exalt the gangster. Even though in the end he had to die, because standard morality could not allow crime to go unpunished, his death was always grandiose, and carefully staged. In this too resided the appeal of this figure.

Thus, the crime film portrays gangsters and criminals with a combination of fascination and compassion, stopping just short of exoneration. As the Production Code insisted, crime could not pay; but this stricture didn't stop Hollywood from giving gangsters a sinister charisma and making their lives high drama until the last few minutes when it came time for retribution. And even then, the gangster died in a grand manner, whether in the street or on a sidewalk, the surface of which was always elegantly black, as if specially prepared for those who revealed their dark side.⁹

In order to render the gangster sympathetic to the audience, however, he had to be a kind of pleasing scoundrel. He could not be totally bad. Moreover, his deeds had to be explained in a plausible way. There were three methods cinema generally used to convey this:

In order to present a story of organised crime in a sufficiently involving way the characters must, almost certainly, be human and sympathetic enough for the audience to be engaged by them, to want to follow their lives in order to see what happens to them. Yet these are inevitably going to be people who commit crimes, perhaps appallingly violent crimes, and there is a moral issue there. There's also the related, but distinct, issue of how to portray the glamorous lifestyle associated with ill-gotten gains [...] without making crime seem like a good idea to the audience. Additionally there's the more complex question of how to portray the process whereby someone embarks on a life of crime. Some pictures [...] seem to choose to portray the gangster as an exceptional individual, one drawn to criminality by something within himself. [...]. Other films [...] take the almost diametrically opposite tactic, and portray people pushed into organised crime by social problems and the impossibility of surviving otherwise. The first of these options is more morally comforting, the second more socially aware. [...] The nature-nurture divide is a critical cliché of little value, and the more sophisticated gangster picture chooses to combine the two, acknowledging, crucially, that *means* are themselves corrupting whatever the intended *ends* may be. It also acknowledges that few would choose a life of danger, of almost endless confrontation (despite the financial rewards), if there were another way.¹⁰

⁸ Bernard F. Dick, *Op. Cit.*, p.132.

⁹ *Ibidem.*

¹⁰ Jim Smith, *Op. Cit.*, pp.7-8.

Even if Depression and Prohibition are over, the gangster genre has continued to be a favourite one, and, through various adaptations to the recent times, it is present in contemporary cinema too. Today it is only more bloody, and now crime can pay.

Although the crime film has never shied away from violence, it has become bloodier since the 1930s and 1940s. The contemporary screen is much freer than it was in the past; no longer is the “crime does not pay” mandate enforced. [...]

[...] the public can't get enough of types they would never want to encounter in real life, only on the screen.¹¹

The reason why gangster films have such a great popularity in Jamaica can be linked to the fact that the island's social situation is in certain ways similar to that of the United States at the end of the 1920s. Of course, there are many and immense differences between the two situations, but the feeling of frustration and anger that characterized the Depression era can be found in contemporary Jamaica too. It may be for different reasons, but nonetheless it produces similar effects.

8.2 THE JAMAICAN SITUATION.

Jamaica is considered a Third World country, and as such it has to confront all the problems that face this kind of countries¹². Once again, the perennial socio-political and economical problems have historical roots, especially in the slave trade and the plantation system that crippled the healthy development of the island. Moreover, politically, since its independence, Jamaica has been characterized by an oscillation between two parties, which has very often led to violence.

In 1962 Jamaica was granted formal independence, but the country has never been fully independent. Its links with England first, and the power of the United States then, have inhibited an autonomous development. Moreover, Jamaica chose to free the market, and to allow foreign companies to settle on the island. These companies exploit local labour, but keep the capital in their hands, and send profits back to the mother country, be it England, Canada or the USA. Finally, among many other factors, the banks are not allowing the Jamaican government to operate freely. The loans granted to the country tie it to the banks' policies, and thus to the policies of the countries or the companies that govern them. The International Monetary Fund, as a last resource, has kept Jamaica under tight control, and has imposed its rules in every sector of the economy. Unfortunately, the island has not enough currency and political power to be able to operate without these external

¹¹ Bernard F. Dick, *Op. Cit.*, p.135.

¹² Many books have been written on Jamaica's history and its political and economical development. Among the others, Tom Barry, Beth Wood, and Deb Preusch, *The Other Side of Paradise: Foreign Control in the Caribbean*, New York, Grove Press, 1984; Rex Nettleford ed., *Jamaica in Independence – Essays on the Early Years*, Kingston, Heinemann Publishers Limited and London, James Currey Ltd., 1989; and Patrick Bryan, *Inside Out & Outside In: Factors in the Creation of Contemporary Jamaica*, Kingston, Grace Kennedy Foundation, 2000.

helps (the country has applied to IMF again in July 2009), and thus it has to submit to foreign interference in its own political and economical agendas.

On the purely political front, on the other hand, the country has not had a peaceful democracy¹³. Two parties have governed since independence, the People National Party (leftist) and the Jamaica Labour Party (rightist). The leaders of the parties have always relied on violent politics, arming the people of their supporting ghettos and urging them to fight against one another. This conflict, though not as violent as it was during the 1980s, is still present today. It is also because of politics that Jamaica today is such a violent country, because the proliferation of weapons was first made possible by the political leaders in the 1970s, who imported them for their own ends.

Political unrest, violence, and the economic hardship faced by the country are mirrored in the people's lives, especially in the ghettos, which have always been marginalized and exploited for ends which had nothing to do with them. Moreover, a man from a ghetto, still today, will have scarce opportunity to find an employment, and thus will never be able to move from there. This situation worsens with time, and, in order to survive, people often turn to criminality as the only way to earn some money.

It is thus easily explainable that Jamaicans love gangster films. As it happened for the Americans of the Depression era, the gangster represents a dream of rebellion against a society that is unjust, a dream of a better life.

8.3 BLACK MASCULINITY.

In the seminal work *Male Order*, Jonathan Rutherford clearly explains what consequences the non availability of employment has on the male perception of himself:

The new work order has denied large sections of the adult population the prospects of meaningful employment and precipitated one third into a state of semi-permanent poverty and economic redundancy. [...] Traditional working-class masculinities, without work and divested of the role of family breadwinner, have suffered a crisis of identity. [...]

Violence, criminality, drug-taking and alcohol consumption become the means to gaining prestige for a masculine identity bereft of any social value or function. [...]

The decline of traditional male roles, job insecurity, the boredom, poverty and sense of worthlessness created by redundancy, unemployment and meaningless, badly paid work have placed many men on the threshold of an inner feeling of emptiness in which dreams, wishes

¹³ I mention some of the political problems faced by Jamaica in Appendix 2, since Jamaican music has always reflected the socio-political situation of the island.

and desire appear to be entirely lost. The legacy of this pain is not just male self-destruction but domestic violence and murdered women and children.¹⁴

Moreover, many scholars have pointed out that black masculinity in the American continent has been shaped by the experience of slavery, which has altered the perception of blacks and of whites toward the black man. Because of slavery, black masculinity has been disrupted and denied assumptions that were thought of as normal for white males.

Kobena Mercer and Isaac Julien, in their contribution to *Male Order*, explained what happened to the African American man, but their considerations can be valid for Jamaican men too, since the experience of slavery is familiar to the island, in many ways even more violent and inhuman than in the United States:

Robert Staples' central thesis is that black masculinity is a contradictory experience giving rise to a system of black male gender roles built upon conflicts which stem from the legacy of slavery. [...] Whereas prevailing definitions of masculinity imply power, control and authority, these attributes have been historically denied to black men since slavery. The centrally dominant role of the white male slave-master in the 18th and 19th century plantation society debarred black males from the patriarchal privileges ascribed to the masculine role. [...] In racial terms, black men and women alike were subordinated to the power of the white master in the hierarchical social relations of slavery and for black men, as *objects* of oppression, this also cancelled out their access to positions of power and prestige which are regarded as the essence of masculinity in a patriarchal culture. Shaped by this history, black masculinity is a highly contradictory formation as it is a *subordinated* masculinity.¹⁵

They also consider the consequences produced by the internalisation by black people of the prejudices and stereotypes created by the whites to justify their beliefs in the inferiority of the blacks, combined with the internalisation of notions of patriarchal masculinity. This is where the construction of the "macho" black man, of the kind visible in Jamaican films, finds its origins:

There is a further contradiction, another turn of the screw of oppression, which occurs when black men subjectively internalise and incorporate aspects of the dominant definitions of masculinity in order to contest the conditions of dependency and powerlessness which racism and racial oppression enforce. Staples sees the legacy of the past writ large in the development of 'macho' attitudes and behaviour in contemporary society. 'Macho' is the product of these historical contradictions, as it subjectively incorporates attributes associated with dominant definitions of manhood – such as being tough, in control, independent – in

¹⁴ Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford eds., *Male Order. Unwrapping Masculinity*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1988, p.5, p.7, pp.8-9. It must be noted that this book was written twenty years ago, and in this section the male referred to is American and white. However, the change occurred in that decade affected the whole world, and thus Jamaican males too. In addition, very little has changed in the Jamaican situation since the 1980s.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp.111-112. The reference is to Robert Staples, *Black Masculinity: The Black Male's Role in American Society*, Black Scholar Press (USA), 1982.

order to recuperate some degree of power or active influence over objective conditions of powerlessness created by racism. 'Macho' may be regarded as a form of misdirected or 'negative' resistance, as it is shaped by the challenge to the hegemony of the socially dominant white male, yet it assumes a form which is in turn oppressive to black women, children and, indeed, to black men themselves, as it can entail self-destructive acts and attitudes.¹⁶

The reason why black males, who are not given access to jobs of any kind, often turn to criminality, or to illegality, can be found in the desire to conform to the classical notion of the man as the breadwinner, even if this is sometimes paradoxical, since it places black men in search of the values of the white people who historically have oppressed them.

Black males have developed various 'hustles' which involve illegality as a style of life. [...] While it is intelligible as a valid response to conditions of racism, poverty and exploitation, it does not challenge that system of oppression but rather accommodates itself to it: illegal means are used to attain the same normative ends or 'goals' of consumption associated with the patriarchal definition of the man's role as 'breadwinner' [...]. The figure of the 'hustler' is often romantically depicted as a social outsider, whereas in fact this life-style involves an essential investment in the idea that a 'real' man must be an active and independent economic agent, an idea which forms the cornerstone of patriarchal capitalism and its ethic of 'success'.¹⁷

This definition of the hustler applies perfectly, for instance, to Ivan in *The Harder They Come*. As a last consequence, which is relevant in the Jamaican context, where men's sexuality is always on the foreground, the creation of the macho type involves also an internalisation of stereotypes about black sexuality.

By internalising the mythology of black super-sexuality, black men have developed a 'macho' role which trades off and perpetuates the stereotype and gives rise to exploitative uses of sexuality.¹⁸

Jamaican films reflect this attitude of black men, in all the spheres of their lives.

8.4 JAMAICAN MASCULINITY IN THE FILMS.

The kind of male that emerges from Jamaican films is a macho: self-assured, assertive, and violent when needed. Generally these men try to avoid violence on women, but this may happen too. Though there is no rational justification for this act, it has been argued that violence on women is a (wrong) way for the (black) male to assert his dominant role, in a society that denies him every

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp.112-113.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p.114.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p.120.

possibility of self-fulfilment¹⁹. In the Jamaican context, Maria Carla Gullotta notes that men often behave in wrong ways because of a lack of conscience of what they are doing. With her role in Amnesty International, she often visits Jamaican prisons, and talks with men condemned for violence on women. She acknowledges the utility of treating these people with the same humanity that they have denied their victims, to make them understand their mistake and make them reflect on it, but most of all to make them feel as human beings.

In men's prisons the subject of women is much discussed, because there are no women there.

I have learned that everybody is afraid to be abandoned, to be forgotten. Many are guilty of sexual crimes and it is difficult to sympathize with them, but after some time you've known them, you understand that often they did not even realize how serious their offence was.

They learn if you teach them, if you talk to them kindly, if you make them feel as humans and not as brutes.²⁰

She attributes this lack of "sensitivity" to the absence of positive models in their lives as young men, to the fact that in their families there were generally no fathers, and boys were expected to find out a "correct" behaviour in the street.

There is no male model for the male children, who learn the life of the ghetto in the streets.

Generally, the person who teaches them is an older boy already weaned, and thus their destiny is often marked. Solitude is a serious problem because it implies the lack of teachings and confrontations.²¹

Probably, though it is not a justification, boys who grow up in the streets where one has to be tough to survive think that being tough in the household is as necessary as in the streets. Hence their violence on women, as a last resource to assert their power and their masculinity. Moreover, young people who spend most of their time in the street feel entitled to take what they want, even if this implies the use of force, and they translate the same behaviour in their houses. This conduct is deplorable and condemnable, but in a way it can be explainable with the lack of strong (and correct) behavioural models. At any rate, since the female characters are so few and so marginal in the films, women are not at the centre of the men's worlds.

¹⁹ See this Chapter, note 14, p.275 and note 16, p.276.

²⁰ Maria Carla Gullotta, in an e-mail to me, dated October 18, 2009. My English translation. The original reads: "Nel carcere maschile si parla molto di donne perché non ci sono. Ho imparato che tutti hanno paura di essere abbandonati, di essere dimenticati. Molti hanno commesso crimini sessuali ed è difficile simpatizzare, ma dopo un po' che li conosci capisci che spesso neppure si rendevano conto di quanto grave fosse quello che hanno fatto. Imparano se gli stai accanto, se gli parli con gentilezza, se li fai sentire delle persone e non dei bruti."

²¹ Maria Carla Gullotta, in an e-mail to me, dated October 16, 2009. My English translation. The original reads: "Il modello maschile manca ai figli maschi che imparano per strada la vita del ghetto. In genere chi li istruisce è un ragazzino più grande già svezato e perciò il loro destino è spesso già segnato. La solitudine è un male grave perché implica la mancanza di insegnamenti e di confronti."

Even the films which are not related to gangsters or which are not violent present an aggressive kind of man. This does not mean that men are always belligerent, or that they want to assert their power at all costs, but that they are always tough characters.

In *Smile Orange*, for instance, Ringo is a man who uses his wits to survive. He is married, but this does not prevent him from extra-marital affairs, both with local women and with tourists. Even if he complains about the compromises he has to accept in order to make a living, he nonetheless enjoys what he is doing. He likes having sex with the tourists, and he likes fooling the Assistant Manager. He tries to pass for a brainless waiter, but actually he is the most powerful man in the play. He devises everything, and in the end he manages to obtain exactly what he wants from whoever he wants.

Horsemouth, in *Rockers*, is another tough character. He is married too, but he is the “man” of the house. He loves his wife, but when she tries to tell him what to do and what she thinks, he silences her and asserts his status as the head of the family. He makes very clear that he is the man, and she has to obey to him and accept everything he does.

Moreover, Horsemouth is the kind of man who will not tolerate injustice. When the Mafia boys steal his motorbike, he finds it and takes it back. When he is beaten because of this, he gathers all his Rasta friends and plans a revenge. Horsemouth is not violent, but he is aggressive. He responds to what happens around him immediately and with intensity. He is typically Jamaican: street-wise, tough, and cunning. He has a kind of assertive masculinity, very close to the macho kind of man.

In *Children of Babylon*, Luke represents the “bad” man. He is the old-minded male, who thinks that women have to obey to their men, according to the Biblical passage he quotes to Penny, “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22). He is authoritative, his woman has to do exactly what he tells her, she cannot think and she is not allowed free will. He feels entitled to beat her, and he treats her as a servant. He is violent and rough with Penny. For instance, when they have sex (exclusively in the missionary position, thus asserting the male power and dominion²²), the only thing that matters to him is his pleasure; he never thinks about Penny’s. Luke endorses all the negative stereotypes created around the Jamaican males, and because of this he is clearly contrasted to Rick, who embodies a kind of masculinity thought of as more “western”, more open-minded, more “suitable for white people”, and not Jamaicans, according to white racist assumptions or to internalisation of prejudices by black people.

Countryman is somehow different. He has a kind of mystique surrounding him, thus he is represented as not totally human, endowed with supernatural powers that help him in difficult situations. Yet at the same time he is a tough character, a tough man who is able to fight against the

²² See Chapter 9, p.291.

establishment while at the same time saving two foreigners from becoming the scapegoat in a political attempt to defeat the Jamaican government. We are never shown if he has a family, and how he behaves with them, but we know that he is not violent. His power derives from his strength of mind, not from brutal force. Countryman is different, but at the same time he is assertive too, self-assured. He may not be macho, but the story demonstrates that he is what is thought to be a “Man” nonetheless.

Finally, in *Dancehall Queen*, the character of Priest represents again all the negative stereotypes about Jamaican men. He is violent, he lives in the streets, thus he knows how to survive in the harsh conditions of the ghetto, and he demonstrates his “manliness” at every occasion. He embodies the gangster who behaves as a macho, both with women and with other males. He is the kind of man who will never accept to obey to someone else’s will: actually he rather dies than have his reputation damaged by Larry.

Nevertheless, the films in which the “real” Jamaican macho comes out are mostly the gangster films. Not surprisingly, these are also the films that are more appreciated on the island. It must be noted, however, that the purely Jamaican films present a slightly different masculinity than the co-productions with the United States, where the Jamaican characters are only criminals, without any humanity.

8.5 JAMAICAN GANGSTER FILMS.

In Jamaican gangster films, violence reigns. All the male characters are violent, and they all act as macho. In his analysis of contemporary Jamaica, the historian Patrick Bryan links violence to drug trafficking and to the change of mentality of the youth:

The structure of violence that makes prisoners of most of us is commented upon as if it were a new phenomenon. [...] What is new is that the gun has replaced old tools of violence and that there is a wave of violence associated with criminal international narcotics trafficking and gun-running. [...] The materialism that pervades the world’s nations has also affected our youth. The older generation cannot take refuge in some ideal past when elders spoke and the young instinctively obeyed. The youth revolution, from the late 1960s, encouraged youth to disregard convention. The challenge to authority has become a value in its own right. Unrestricted freedom of the individual is favoured over old authoritarian systems. Materialism is a greater driving force than a commitment to excellence.²³

What immediately appears in these films is the massive presence of guns. It starts with *The Harder They Come*, and the latest films show a huge amount of weapons of many kinds. Clearly, the gun is also a symbol, particularly a phallic one. In films which are characterized by a strong masculinity,

²³ Patrick Bryan, *Op. Cit.*, p.87.

and where the display of this maleness is overtly important, guns assume their symbolism perfectly. A man is defined by his gun, the gun adds value to the man.

The crime film has other features in common with the western. In both, the gun is an icon. Just as the gun in the western can be a reflection of the user's personality, the gun in the crime film can be a projection of the user's neurosis or sexuality.²⁴

The comparison between gangster films and westerns is interesting, because Ivan, in *The Harder They Come*, is a fan of the western genre, and he sees himself as a western hero. Moreover, his death is theatrical, and his guns are very important for him. At first he buys the couple of guns because he likes them, but then, when he starts using them, they become part of his personality. He never gets around without them. At his apotheosis, when he goes to the photographer to be immortalized, the guns are with him, in the foreground of all the pictures²⁵. His guns symbolize who he is, the status he has attained in society. As Dan Martin, in his review of the film, says:

Throughout the film Ivan develops a strong love affair with his gun. His gun becomes an extension of who he is and what he represents. Without a gun Ivan has no power or control over the course of his life. As soon as he uses his gun and defies the system, he takes control of his own destiny and his music begins to gain in popularity; his crimes become a form of musical and individual promotion/propaganda. The problems that Ivan encounters in this film require a revolution to overcome; they can not be overcome through sheer persistence. The gun symbolizes the need for revolution and action.²⁶

Every gangster in Jamaican gangster films has a weapon. The preferred one is the gun, since the characters can carry it on them, without it being noticed. But there are also rifles, and Mad Max, in *Shottas*, besides using firearms, also has a preference for knives. It is also because of this that he is defined as "mad": his murders are personal, he feels his victims' death in his hands. Using a knife is different from using a gun, it makes Max appear as more bloodthirsty than the other characters.

There is another similarity between the gangster genre and the western, which Yvonne Tasker identifies as a problem of location and position.

The hero of the action narrative is often cast as a figure who lacks a place within the community for which he fights, a paradox familiar from the Western genre. In the recent action cinema, problems of location and position are increasingly articulated through the body of the male hero.²⁷

²⁴ Bernard F. Dick, *Op. Cit.*, p.134. The first similitude mentioned at p.133 between western and crime films is the presence of "theatrical death scenes".

²⁵ See Chapter 7, p.248.

²⁶ FilmNotes, <http://www.professionalenglishservices.com/FilmNotes.html>, accessed March 04, 2009.

²⁷ Yvonne Tasker, *Op. Cit.*, p.77. It must be noted that this book was written with the *white* action hero in mind, in Hollywood blockbusters movies of the 1980s. Actually, Tasker refers mainly to actors such as Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis and the like. When she writes about black actors, she either refers to the Blaxploitation films of the 1970s, or to actors who are used as backing to white heroes, such as, for instance, Danny Glover and Mel Gibson in the *Lethal Weapon* series. Nonetheless, the main difference between Jamaican and

All the characters are deeply immersed in their social context, but at the same time they are outside of it, they are lone heroes fighting against the establishment. This is true even of Capone, in *Third World Cop*, who represents the law but often acts against it.

The cinematic representation of the hero is bedevilled by the need to provide a space in which he can perform, in which he can be, in Laura Mulvey's words, a dominating 'figure in a landscape'. A definition of the heroic figure emerges as one who is typically outside, if not actually opposed to, the mainstream. He is a loner who accrues an additional romanticism by being out of the ordinary. The (temporary) rejection of violence is, perhaps ironically, a common theme of the contemporary action narrative.²⁸

This definition of the hero can be applied to Ivan, Capone, and all the gangsters of the other films. Moreover, Biggs, in *Shottas*, also rejects (temporarily) violence. When he returns to Jamaica, he acknowledges that there is too much violence in Kingston, and that it is killing the youth. When he discovers that Wayne's brother is a gangster too, he tells Wayne "we are creating monsters". Thus he tries to avoid violence. He tries to find a peaceful way to live, which does not mean that he abandons the gangster's life, but only that he uses violence if strictly necessary, never gratuitously. He returns willingly to violence only at the end of the film, when he decides to avenge Wayne's death.

All the heroes of the Jamaican gangster films fight against the establishment. They are characters at the margins, trying to be part of the establishment, but at the same time disliking some aspects of it. This is the reason why they clash with it. Simultaneously, they fight to gain the same consumption possibilities that are valued in the upper/middle-class world, to which they would like to belong but that does not want them. As Tasker says, they are trying to find their own space in the world, being at the same time romantic figures out of the ordinary.

Along with guns, the gangsters' world, both in the Jamaican and in the co-production films, is also populated by drugs. In Hollywood, drugs are related almost indissolubly to blackness.

Blackness is understood within Hollywood's symbolic in terms of marginality and criminality. This criminality has been most often expressed in action narratives of recent years not through sexualised images, but through the ideological figure of drugs. [...] Representing the 'enemy within', drugs offer a way of speaking about the circulation of capital and relations of dependency and power. Drugs have also represented a key part of American political discourse. [...] By and large though the association between drugs and blackness, often cast in terms of a 'foreign' element invading the country, has been increasingly invoked in American representations of recent years.²⁹

Hollywood films is that in the Jamaican ones there are no white actors, thus the black actors become the undisputed protagonists of the films, just as if they were white actors in Hollywood films. It is with this in mind that I use Tasker's suggestion to adapt it to the Jamaican context.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.104. The quotation is from Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, London, Macmillan, 1989, p.20.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p.32.

The truthfulness of this statement can easily be seen in the co-production films. In *Shottas*, then, we are also shown the ambiguous position of the city of Miami in the American collective imagination:

Within American culture, Miami has often been imaged as the site of potential invasion, a space for drugs and immigrants, both defined as utterly ‘foreign’, to infiltrate American territory.³⁰

Yet, there is an enormous difference between the drug world in *The Harder They Come* and that of later films. As already noted elsewhere³¹, Henzell’s intention was to show that many people, especially ghetto people, were forced to turn to ganja dealing because no other opportunities were offered them. But this was a joyous world, where solidarity was a value and people worked willingly, without competition and greed. In *The Harder They Come*, the ganja trade was only a means to survive, a job available for people who had none. It was not a way to become rich and famous, as Ivan soon discovered. The greatest thing one could have was a motorbike, and just enough money for bare necessities.

In later films, this world has changed. There is no joy anymore, no solidarity. It has become an arid world, where high competition and greed affect all the participants. Since the 1980s, people who get involved in the drug dealing (which has become international: it is not ganja anymore, but mainly cocaine that passes through Jamaica on the way to the United States) do it because of money. The only reason why people take part in this business, notwithstanding all the risks, is to be able to make a fortune, to lead a luxurious life. The friendship, the fun, and the camaraderie are all gone. Now it is just hard business.

Ivan, or Rhygin, became an icon not because he was a drug dealer, but because he fought against injustice, for a better life. He was a symbol for the dispossessed, who admired him because he was doing something they all wanted to do. They appreciated him because he was their spokesperson. The gangsters of later films have nothing to do with this. There is no idealism anymore. They are admired for what they possess, not for what they are or for what they do. What they promote is a life style, made of the here and now and the showing off. They are much richer than the dealers in the 1960s and 1970s, but they are lonely, and they know that they will very likely be able to enjoy what they have for a short time, until new dealers come forward and take their place. This world is pitiless, cynical, and made only of appearances. The gangster world of *Klash*, *Third World Cop*, *Rude Boy*, *Gangsta’s Paradise* and *Shottas* is totally different from that of *The Harder They Come*. Maybe the only film that goes in a way close to Henzell’s picture is *Shottas*, since one of its main themes is the friendship between Biggs and Wayne.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p.112.

³¹ Especially in Chapter 9, pp.314-318.

As it is, however, all the characters in these films convey a certain feeling about Jamaican masculinity. All the males are gangsters, killers, most of times selfish, violent, and so on. Very few films try to give a better impression of Jamaicans. Thus, stereotypes are strongly reinforced.

8.6 *THE HARDER THEY COME.*

Ivan is the first gangster of Jamaican cinema. His exploits are based on the true story of Rhygin, a Jamaican outlaw who scorned the police, scared the middle-class and won the approval of the lower-class in the 1950s. He was also a Rasta, and for this reason was imprisoned and tortured. He then started his career as a street bandit, until the police killed him and desecrated his body. However, his deeds had become a legend, and he was acclaimed by the dispossessed Jamaicans³².

When the film was released, it was such a huge success also because Jamaicans could at last identify in the characters, who spoke their same language, acted stories common to the everyday experience of the population, and lived the same kind of life as they did. Henzell wanted it to be a purely Jamaican experience, and this is just what the film is. It is interesting, however, that Jamaicans identified with the characters. It means that Ivan, for instance, was the typical Jamaican man of the street, and he behaved as the majority of the islanders did.

Ivan is the first example of the tough Jamaican man. He loves Elsa, but he does not disdain affairs with other girls. He needs a place to stay and a way to survive, but he does not want to take orders from the Preacher. He wants a greater part of the money from the ganja trade because he wants to live a life of luxury in this world, without waiting for “milk and honey in the sky”. He wants to become famous, no matter how. He is selfish. He becomes violent when he is pursued by the police. He does not allow people to fool him. He is street wise. He is a tough character, representing the majority of the Jamaican males who live their lives in the street, hustling or trying to survive by any means.

Ivan becomes the prototype of the Jamaican man, the model of what public (foreign) opinion thinks the Jamaican male is. Yet he is also a sympathetic character: Henzell managed to make him appear appealing to the audience. Thus he, even more, represents the average Jamaican man: unreliable in many ways, but very engaging.

8.7 *KLASH.*

All the “glamour” and the vitality of the gangsters’ world has disappeared by the 1990s. In *Klash*, this world is in the background, since the film focuses on Stoney and Blossom. Nonetheless, it is there, and since it is the only aspect of Jamaica we are shown (beside the dancehall scene, which,

³² Stuart Samuels, *Op. Cit.*, p.79.

however, is chauvinist and male-oriented too³³), it lets us think that Jamaica is just that. It is interesting to note that the two biggest Jamaican gangsters are a Rasta and a Chinese, two categories of people who are, in Hollywood cinema, more often associated with Mafia, drug dealing and the like.

We are not shown very much about the gangsters, except for the robbery. Mr. Lee acts as if everything belonged to him, not only places and money, but also people. Blossom, for instance, is a property for him, of which he can dispose as he likes. The punishment for her disobedience is death. Ragga, on the other side, is violent, pitiless, and does not accept assumptions about his personality. The gangster world is now interested only in money and power, nothing else matters. Mr. Lee and Ragga epitomize the kind of Jamaican man that will become popular in Hollywood-made films: a man with no soul, no mercy and just interested in making money.

8.8. *THIRD WORLD COP.*

In this film, the most interesting male character is the cop, Capone. As already stated, he looks and acts more as a gangster than as a policeman. His jewellery is typical of the gangsters, and his attitude is more than assertive. He is the toughest character in the film. He is violent and disposed to kill his best friend to pursue the law and reassert the social order. He does not seem to have a private life. At the beginning of the film, he is having sex with a girl, but we are not led to think that she is his girlfriend. Then, he seems to start a relationship with Rita, but again, we are not led to think that it will last, or that it will even begin, since nothing happens between them. It is as if Capone were better alone, without ties to society, so that he can act as he thinks is better without having to explain it to someone close to him. Both his clothes and his attitude remind of the heroes of the Western films, who arrived in town, solved the problems, and then went away to another town and other problems. This kind of masculinity appeals very much to the Jamaican audience, who loved *Third World Cop*. As happened with Ivan, the (male) audience identified with Capone, with his attitude. He proves to be a man who knows how to survive in the streets. He is not used to the affluence of the middle-class to which he belongs. He is tough, and every occasion is good to show it. The image he conveys to the audience is that Jamaican men are not people to play with, and Jamaican men, to a certain extent, like to be thought of as “dangerous” men.

8.9 *RUDE BOY AND GANGSTA'S PARADISE.*

The co-production films show a slightly different image of the Jamaican man, influenced by Hollywood mainstream cinema and its prejudices. America has always had a difficult relationship

³³ See Chapter 4.

with Jamaicans emigrating there, especially with the Rastas³⁴. This ambiguity is reflected in the films.

In “Jamerican” films, the humanity that was nonetheless present in the male characters of Jamaican films totally disappears. There is no fun for these males, no sympathy, no solidarity, no heart. They are pitiless killers, drug dealers, interested in money, power and the material goods that their status can allow them to buy. They are solidly positioned in a hierarchy, and they only obey to orders.

If someone has never seen a Jamaican film, and builds his/her opinion of Jamaican men on these co-productions, it will be a negative opinion. The masculinity that comes out of them is utterly depressing. Men are selfish, they use women as commodities, they are violent, they value appearances above everything else. In *Gangsta’s Paradise* this is even more emphasised than in *Rude Boy*, especially in the scene depicting Peaches’ murder. Shotta kills her, and then he tells other Rastas to chop her to pieces and throw her in the water. In the cutting process, the Rastas are shown covered with blood, but enjoying what they are doing. Their eyes are wide, as if the blood made them crazy. They are depicted as madmen, bloodthirsty, without any trace of humanity.

The kind of masculinity that appears in these films make Jamaicans seem totally alien in the American society. They are involved in the underworld because it seems the only place where they are at ease. What appears is that Jamaicans are irremediably bad and cruel. They perfectly fit the stereotype that America has of Jamaicans in general and Rastas in particular.

8.10 SHOTTAS.

Another Jamerican film, *Shottas* promotes the same kind of masculinity as *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta’s Paradise*, even if in a less accentuated manner. This is probably due to the fact that the directors and the actors are Jamaican, and thus less keen to represent their people as heartless murderers. This is why the friendship theme is important: it gives human feelings to the characters. Moreover, Biggs is also in love with his girlfriend. He does not mistreat her nor does he cheat on her. The characters are gangsters, but they are not as utterly bad as they are in the two other co-productions. They are more like Ivan, or Capone: they are appealing, sympathetic characters.

The only character who is somehow heartless is Mad Max. He likes to kill, he likes to see blood. He is defined “mad” probably because of this side of his personality. Yet he is also human, as the other characters in the film. He has feelings, which he shows mainly at the end of the film. He is not tied to any particular woman, but friendship is for him the most important value. He is the most stereotyped character, but he is different from those of *Rude Boy* and *Gangsta’s Paradise*.

³⁴ See Chapter 5, pp.168-170 for a description of how Rastas, particularly, were perceived in the United States when their immigration started and, to a lesser extent, are still perceived today.

In *Shottas* too the masculinity that is exposed is tough and violent. What appeals in the characters is their life style, and the fact that even if they are gangsters, they can nonetheless have values and feelings.

8.11 CONCLUSION.

Jamaican masculinity is often thought of in terms of stereotypes. Cinema is one of the means through which these prejudices are circulated. Hollywood cinema, in particular, reflects the fears and misunderstandings that the American society has toward immigrants in general, and Jamaicans in particular. The latter are almost always Rastas, and they are invariably associated with international drug trafficking. Yardies scare Americans, and the latter exorcise their fears through cinema. In *Marked for Death*, for instance, as already noted³⁵, the drug-related character, who is violent for no reason, is a Jamaican with the Rasta appearance. In this film, moreover, this man is devoted to an occult religion, which is linked to Vodun because of the blood sacrifice, the dolls and other characteristics usually associated with that religion. In this, there is little accuracy. First of all, the directors who insert Vodun scenes in their films usually know very little about that religion, and thus show stereotyped (and wrong) images of it. Then, Jamaicans do not practice Vodun. The link between Jamaicans and Vodun is given by their being both from the Caribbean, and being both perceived as a threat to American morality and society. However, *Marked for Death* is just one among many examples. Generally Hollywood films portraying Jamaicans make a large use of stereotypes. Very few attempt to give a more realistic description of these immigrants.

Jamaican films could do very much to discredit these prejudices. What they are depicting is their people, and thus they should not be influenced by the way foreign productions show Jamaicans. And indeed the man represented in Jamaican productions is far from Hollywood stereotypes. Yet, at the same time, the masculinity they promote is a tough one. Thus, it may be right to infer that the Jamaican male is really the kind of male that is seen in the films. Jamaicans are tough, street-wise, used to survive by any means, and unwilling to be duped by anyone. They are violent, if necessary. This is not to totally condemn Jamaican men. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, it would be wrong to assume that *all* Jamaican men are bad and dangerous because a few are. It would be wrong to judge a whole people because of a minority of its population, even if this minority is the one which is most renowned outside the island.

Jamaica has a Constitution which is similar to the Constitutions of other democratic countries. Among the fundamental rights and freedoms, it grants to every person, “whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex” the rights to “life, liberty, security of the person, the

³⁵ See Introduction, p.3.

enjoyment of property and the protection of the law; freedom of conscience, of expression and of free assembly and association; and respect for his private and family life.” Moreover, the Constitution protects from any kind of discrimination and of inhuman or degrading treatment³⁶. Since these are the basic human rights, recognized as such by every sensitive human being, Jamaicans too take them for granted, and respect them. Those who do not are just a minority, who ruin the country’s reputation with their bad behaviour.

As regards men’s relationship with women, it is true that they often have kids with them and then abandon both mother and children. But this trend is changing, and more and more young men are taking the responsibility of their offspring even if they leave the mother. On the other hand, women do not rely anymore exclusively on men for their survival. Statistics on education show that women study and obtain higher degrees than their male counterparts, which translate into better jobs for them. And, as Maria Carla Gullotta says:

Jamaican women are not resigned. Indeed many of them work and they are more independent than it may appear.

The female work force is greater than the male one and not just in humble jobs. Women are ministers, employees, chiefs of industries, of political and social movements and they are more determined and strong than men.³⁷

Women, rightly, do not accept anymore to be ruled by men, to be beaten or humiliated. They have taken the responsibility of their lives, and sometimes this is another reason why men feel more and more powerless. Yet, this is not a justification for a violent behaviour, and today women are able to defend themselves in many ways.

As regards cheating, it can be said, in very general terms, that, in Jamaica, society accepts the fact that both men and women have multiple sexual partners. So, it is true that men cheat on their women, but it is also true that women (with due exceptions, of course) may have several children with different partners (because of the reticence of Jamaicans to use condoms and/or other birth control methods – which is also one of the causes for the catastrophic spread of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean region). Probably the only difference lies in the fact that while women have different partners, but one at a time, men have many at once. Though this practice can seem somehow strange to external eyes³⁸, it is accepted (to a certain extent even expected) in Jamaica, since young people are encouraged to experience sex at a very early age to demonstrate their entry into the adult world.

³⁶ Jamaican Constitution, 5th August 1962, Chapter III: Fundamental Rights and Freedoms.

³⁷ Maria Carla Gullotta, in an e-mail to me, dated October 18, 2009. My English translation. The original reads: “Le donne giamaicane non sono troppo rassegnate. Infatti lavorano in moltissime e sono più indipendenti di quello che sembra. La forza lavoro femminile è più di quella maschile e non solo ai livelli di lavori umili. Le donne sono ministre, a capo di industrie, di movimenti politici e sociali e sono più forti e determinate degli uomini.”

³⁸ That is, non-Jamaican eyes, coming from societies where Christian churches establish the sense of morality, and where virginity is supposed to be the absolute value, to be broken only after marriage and by one person only.

Indeed, as Kamala Kempadoo makes clear in her book³⁹, Jamaican adolescents have sex for many reasons. In the case of girls, it may be that they have sex with an older man in exchange of presents or money. In the case of boys, they can have sex in order to receive money (for lunch, for instance), to “get experience”, since it is not infrequent that males have sex with older and more experienced partners, or because of the pressure around them to be “a man”, to show that they are macho. As a consequence, ideas about sexual activity and the necessity to have many partners to show one’s worth are instilled in people at an early age, and they influence the (men’s) behaviour for the rest of their lives.

Again, a difference must be made between people coming from the ghettos and uptown people. This is not to say that downtown people are more “free” or “degenerated” than other classes, but only that their economic means deny them access to education and sophistication, and to the example of different behavioural trends. Thus they keep repeating patterns they have seen for all their lives, of people who adjust to difficult situations by every means in order to survive. If they had the ease of money and the faculty of choosing a different kind of life, probably they would choose fewer partners and could find other ways to demonstrate their virility.

What must be acknowledged, however, is that not all the men are machos, and that, influenced also by the media and the kind of man promoted in western societies (especially the American one), Jamaican men are changing, or at least they are trying to be more in tune with other men in the rest of the world.

³⁹ Kamala Kempadoo, *Op. Cit.*.

9. MINOR THEMES.

The Harder They Come became a model for all later films made on the island. The themes it faced were picked up by other directors, and developed to suit their stories. However, later films were not a mere mimicking of Henzell's: they also elaborated new themes and new ways to narrate them to the audience. In this chapter, I will analyse some of these novelties which I found most recurring and interesting.

9.1 SEXUALITY.

Of all the Jamaican films, only *Rockers* and *One Love* do not stage any scene dealing with sex and/or nudity. *The Harder They Come* started the trend, showing Ivan and Elsa in love scenes, and Ivan also in a brief sexual encounter with Pinky. Henzell showed the male and female bodies, at a time (the late 1960s) when in other countries, especially in the United States, for instance, it was still a problem to stage nakedness in mainstream cinema. However, even if most Jamaican films show some sex scenes, two focus more overtly on sexuality: *Children of Babylon* and *The Lunatic*. One might wonder why Jamaican directors feel more “free” to stage sex than their foreign colleagues. Maybe for Jamaicans sex is not a problem. Sex is a natural desire, and as such it is dealt with in a relaxed manner, without the sense of guilt and shame that churches have imposed on it in other countries. Yet, this is not totally true, or it is not true for all the Jamaican population. Indeed, in Jamaica there are many Christian churches, and their rules are as strict as in any other country. The way they regard sex is as guilty and shameful as it happens in the Catholic church, for instance¹. However, the films made on the island focus on the working-class, and the target audience is very likely the same one represented (often the middle and upper classes do not like the way Jamaica is represented in indigenous films, just because it is too “working class”). And more often than not the working class is not as worried about the church as other social classes. Moreover, as I stated in Chapter 5, many people in Jamaica affirm to belong to a Christian denomination, but at the same time practice other religions more African derived, and less (or not at all) preoccupied with sex.

It is also true that sexuality in Jamaica has been influenced by the country's history. The slaves who were brought to the island came from a continent where sex was perceived in a different manner than in Europe. Moreover, when they colonized Africa, Europeans defined African sexuality through their perspective and their practices, without trying to understand their

¹ There are booklets which explain to people how to behave as good Christians, exhorting them especially to avoid pre-marital sex and/or extra-marital affairs (See Chapter 5, p.176). An example of how strict the rules of the Evangelicals are can be seen in the film *One Love*, where Serena refuses to have sex with Kassa (and Aaron too, even if they are engaged and close to the wedding) because she has to be married first.

difference. This allowed them to label the Africans as savage and backward, and to carry on their colonization and their rapes of African women. In the end, Europeans modified African sexuality to make it resemble theirs, totally disregarding the indigenous customs. What is thus notable is the fact that Africans did not perceive sex as “guilt”, “shame” or “sin”. For them, sex was a natural function, disengaged from religion.

The sexual norms and practices of pre-slavery Africa were very different. A variety of sexual behavior existed among pre-European contact civilizations of the African continent. Among these widely differing African societies, a common strand was the strict regulation of sexual practices by the rules of the different tribal groupings. [...] the individual in Africa did not have the discretion to decide which rules to obey and those to be ignored. The group was paramount and violation of its rules could be punished as harshly by castration and death.

[...]

Unlike the ancestors of Euro-Americans, God did not speak to the conduct of Africans in the sexual realm. It was purely a secular matter governed by the rules of each tribe or clan. In most cases, sexual intercourse was seen as a natural function.²

This is not to say that sexuality in Jamaica is as it was in the African continent, but that it has been influenced by many factors, including the practices forced on men and women (rape, especially) by colonialists during slavery, which have disrupted the notion of family and community among the African Jamaican³.

Many times, in Jamaica, sex is only an expression of vitality, of life, very far from guilt and shame. Sex has to be enjoyed, as it is indeed enjoyed by the majority of Jamaicans. From here comes, probably, the relative ease with which indigenous directors stage sex scenes in their films. It is also true that sex in these films might have more to do with attracting an audience than with freedom of representation⁴. As in any other country, in Jamaica too the promise of sex in a film helps to reach a wider audience, for various reasons⁵. Moreover, these films are made with a crossover audience in mind, and sex scenes can attract foreign audiences too.

In any case, in *The Harder They Come*, *Klash*, *Third World Cop*, *Rude Boy*, *Gangsta's Paradise* and *Shottas* sex remains marginal. One or a few scenes appear, but they are not part of the main narration. In *Smile Orange* sex is included in the relationship between tourists and waiters, and

² Robert Staples, *Exploring Black Sexuality*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford, Routledge, 2006, p.1 and p.3. This book is about African American sexuality, yet the first chapter is interesting in that it explores sexuality in the African continent, before and during slavery.

³ See also the introduction to Chapter 8, p.269.

⁴ This was suggested to me by Dr. Rachel Moseley-Wood in August 2009.

⁵ See, on this subject, Tanya Krzywinska, *Sex and the Cinema*, London and New York, Wallflower Press, 2006. In Part 1 she analyses how sex is generally framed in mainstream cinema and the kind of response it encourages in the audience.

thus becomes part of the film's satire⁶. In *Countryman* there is no sex, but Beau, especially at the beginning of the film, is often seen with the upper part of her body naked⁷. In *Dancehall Queen* and *Klash* there are many explicitly sexual references, but these are confined to the dancehall world and its dance movements⁸: otherwise, in *Dancehall Queen* there is no sex shown. Sex happens, but off screen.

Glory to Gloriana is a film which does not concentrate on sex, but here the sex scenes are more frequent than in the other films. The director is the one who shot *Children of Babylon* too, and it seems that his TV series is also loaded with sex scenes⁹. In this case, the depiction of sex is more linked to the director's whims than to the films' necessity.

The main protagonist of the sex scenes in *Glory to Gloriana* is Milton, whom we see having sex with both Gloria and Betsy, but also with the manager he employs when he and Gloria start their clothes shop. For Milton, sex is another way of asserting his power and his dominant position. He has sex when *he* wants, and in the position *he* wishes in that moment. This way of having sex, and of depicting it on screen, reveals the structure of power that shapes sex as any other aspect of life. This is very clear, for instance, also in the opening scene of *Third World Cop*, where Capone is having sex: he is naked, but he is firmly on top.

Even in more passive positions, power structures our perceptions, so that men can never be represented in the same manner as women. Even nude they are perceived differently, with a tendency towards a greater fetishisation, and concentration on different parts of the body. [...] When horizontal, men, unlike women, are almost exclusively prone [...]. Prone positions allow you to obscure and protect your genitals. They are also easier to rise from, and tend to be instinctively perceived as more powerful. Women on the other hand have a monopoly of missionary positions, or ones which arch them back, passive and vulnerable, throats exposed like victims in a lower order.¹⁰

Thus Milton, and all the other males in Jamaican films (with the notable exception of Aloysius, as we shall see later), reassert their status as powerful and dominant also through sex¹¹, determining the way Jamaican women have to do it.

⁶ I analyse this subject, and the tourism as exposed in the film, in this Chapter, p.299-302.

⁷ See Chapter 7, p.255.

⁸ See Chapter 4.

⁹ *Royal Palm Estate* started in 1994. It is a kind of Jamaican soap opera.

¹⁰ Rowena Chapman, *The Great Pretender: Variations on the New Man Theme*, in Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford eds., *Op. Cit.*, p.238.

¹¹ This can be linked to the tough kind of masculinity that is promoted in Jamaican films. Sex is just another aspect of the lives of these tough characters. See Chapter 8.

9.1.1 CHILDREN OF BABYLON.

[...]

Children of Babylon is a film about people making love while searching for love. The vortex is Penny, a young university graduate student; Rick – an artist; Luke – a “dreadlocks” farmhand; Dorcas – the housekeeper and Laura – the wealthy American owner of the plantation and greathouse, which silently represents the proverbial “house divided against itself”.

The sexual interactions provide a replay of what historian Gordon Lewis describes as “the common eighteen-century sexual code”. This code, says Lewis, is the practice of consensual cohabitation and extra-residential mating shared by both upper-class and working-class. But *Children of Babylon* is not an eighteen-century love story – the lines are not as rigid, and variations on what Lewis wrote about can be easily seen on the New-Nation-States founded on the plantations of yesterday.

The mating habits of the working-class provide a striking contrast to that of the upper and middle-classes. However, conflicts are inevitable when partners come from different sides of the class barriers.

[...]

Children of Babylon is not just another pictorial essay about love and life in the Tropics.

It is a timely social comment which illustrates the contradictions which arise in a society stratified by economic and class determinants.¹²

This is, in part, how Lennie Little-White described his film in 1980. Though not denying that sex plays an important role in the film, he tried to link it to ideological or social factors. However, when it was released, the film attracted much criticism and debates, because sex seems depicted just for the pleasure of it, and seems not to have anything to do with divisions between social classes. Many people found it offending, especially feminists in Jamaica¹³. And indeed, the film indulges in the depiction of nudity and sex among various couples.

¹² *Children of Babylon*, Historical Perspective, http://www.mediamix-palm.com/children_historical_main.htm, accessed October 03, 2009. It is unclear who Gordon Lewis is. The reference might be to Lewis Ricardo Gordon, a philosopher born in 1962. The online encyclopedia Wikipedia says he is “a black philosopher, who works in the areas of African philosophy, philosophy of human and life sciences, phenomenology, philosophy of existence, social and political theory, postcolonial thought, theories of race and racism, philosophies of liberation, aesthetics, philosophy of education, and philosophy of religion. He has written particularly extensively on race and racism, postcolonial phenomenology, African and black existentialism, and on the works and thoughts of W.E.B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon.” He is also sometimes a visiting Professor at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. It may be likely that Little-White has heard of him and his theories there. For more details on Gordon and his studies, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Gordon, accessed October 03, 2009.

¹³ Along with *The Harder They Come*, this is the film on which I found most reviews in the National Library in Kingston. Many times these newspaper articles are not just simple reviews, but opinions, sometimes inflamed, on the film and its director. The film was critiqued mostly because of the many sex scenes. Very few people mentioned something else beside them. Actually, still today, it is surprising to notice how many times sex is depicted in this film.

White women especially are often seen naked (Penny and Laura), and Rick with them¹⁴. Rick is Jamaican, but he is very light-skinned and bourgeois. While the women are naked both to have sex and to pose for Rick, he is naked only to have sex. He reluctantly accepts to take off his clothes to pose for Penny, and while he does it, he feels uncomfortable. The whole posing session does not last very long, and when we see Rick naked again, it is because he is having sex with one of the white women in the house. On the contrary, the black characters (not by chance they are also the working-class characters) are not seen as much naked as the white ones. They do have sex too, but it is different from that of the bourgeois people of the house, and it does not imply a great display of nudity. This does not depend only on the position of the people, but also on a choice of the director, who preferred to show the bodies of light-skinned people rather than those of the black actors. Indeed, if he had wanted to, he could have shown the nakedness of Luke and Dorcas, even if they were in the missionary position; but he chose to show only the nakedness of people in other positions.

I do not think it is by chance, either, that the white characters are shown making love in various positions while Luke always does it in the missionary one. In Jamaica there is a stereotype that wants white women (especially) as more “liberated” than black ones, and more insatiable too. Thus, it is believed that white women are willing to do things that black women would never think of doing. This is one of the reasons why Jamaican men sometimes fantasize about having an affair with a white woman. It is not surprising, then, that Rick, Penny and Laura seem to enjoy sex more than Luke and Dorcas. The director, in this sense, reinforces the stereotype that classifies white people as more “degenerated”, or more open-minded depending on the point of view, than black Jamaicans, because he shows them obsessed with sex and doing it on every occasion and in every manner. He also reinforces the stereotype that wants middle-class people as more flexible than the working-class, depicted here, through Luke, as backward and chauvinist.

And how true to life is the picture of sexual reality painted by Lennie Little-White? One suspects a little too stereotyped. The middle-class guy comes across as the one who can really ‘do it’, and the ‘roots’ guy as insensitive and primitive. The lines are not that clearly drawn. Talking to a broad spectrum of women across the class lines suggests that middle-class men are just as prone to jump on and off, particularly if they are ‘sure’ of the woman, whether by virtue of marriage or other forms of dependency, usually economic.¹⁵

The film proposes various forms of couples. At the beginning there are Rick and Penny opposed to Luke and Dorcas. Then, Rick has sex with Laura, which causes Penny to leave him. She thus starts a relationship with Luke, causing Dorcas’ suicide. However, the director tried to contrast Rick and

¹⁴ See also Chapter 7, p.252.

¹⁵ Joan Ffrench, *Op. Cit.*, June 1, 1980, p.2.

Luke, showing the difference between the two men (and the two social classes) in making love. They all enjoy doing it but Dorcas, who submits to Luke's desires but does not feel any pleasure. While we are shown Rick and Penny having fun, we are also shown Luke imposing himself on Dorcas. On the other hand, the way Dorcas feels pleasure is through other people's experience, in a sublimation of her desires. She likes to look at Rick and Penny, or at Rick and Laura, and in this she finds her pleasure.

The same cannot be said for Dorcas, who represents that vast sector of women whose needs have not been articulated yet. Hence the reason for making Dorcas dumb. But although she does not speak, except for two significant points in the film where she is 'given a voice', we know a substantial amount about her from her actions. We know that contrary to the myth of frigidity and passiveness, she yearns for sexual fulfilment. She peeps through a keyhole and uses a mirror to watch Rick and Laura making love, and ends up masturbating in ecstasy outside the door.

[...]

The relationship between Luke and Dorcas is essentially that of master and slave. Luke uses her for sexual release, regarding her as a 'mule' because she has no children. She gets no pleasure from the act. He does not caress or fondle her. She is not the least bit aroused, and merely allows him to ride her as she lies prone with a pained look on her face and her eyes staring into the distance.¹⁶

The film is saturated with sex, and with the power relationships that it engenders. Interesting from this point of view is the relationship between Rick and Laura, and the fact that Penny goes to the countryside to research on the sexual habits of the country people.

From the beginning of the film, Penny declares to be interested in sex. This is the subject of her PhD research: "Demographic Variables Influencing the Mating Habits of the Working Class and Tangential Linkages Which Affects the Psyche of Jamaican Black Women". The reason why she goes to the countryside is to interview rural women about their sexual habits. We are shown her talking to these women, but what is striking is that we are shown her only. The camera is fixed on her. We hear the answers of the women, but we never see them. They become an indistinguishable mass of people sharing the same feelings, and more importantly the same backwardness, about sex. Indeed, what comes out of Penny's interviews is that, in the countryside, women have sex to please their men. It is very clear that they think that only men have the necessity (and the right) to feel pleasure. This, again, is part of the stereotyping of sex and social classes that the film sustains. Moreover, it shows Penny as totally detached from these people, and thus in a way her position

¹⁶ Joan Ffrench, *Ibidem*, June 1, 1980, p.2 and June 8, 1980, p.2. It must be noted that this journalist is an admirer of *Children of Babylon* and of Lennie Little-White. Indeed, she sees in the film empathy between Penny and Dorcas, which does not really appeared to me. In her article, she also calls the director "one of our more 'aware' males", forgetting his stereotypes and his staging of sex also in order to attract an audience.

(both in society and with the camera fixed on her) is one of power and superiority toward country people.

The relationship between Rick and Laura is also fraught with power and money. Rick is the middle-class talented painter, and Laura is his upper-class American patron. Laura is the landlady of the mansion where Rick finds inspiration and paints, but she is seldom there. What appears from the film is that she knows nothing about Jamaica: she talks through stereotypes, and asks the Rasta Luke only to provide her with ganja. However, she is the most powerful person in the house. She has the money, she employs the people working for her. She is never there, but she dictates the rules of the mansion. If she wants to have sex with Rick, he cannot refuse because he depends on her for his survival.

Rick (Don Parchment) is the middle-class artist who cannot make a living out of the local market and must depend on the support of his expatriate patron Laura (Elizabeth DeLisser), in exchange for sexual 'servicing' – a sort of high class prostitution in reverse. When the urge dictates, Rick goes off to Laura's country mansion to luxuriate and create.¹⁷

Laura is the most powerful person in the film, because she does what she wants when she wants, not caring about other people's feelings. She is very rich, and she behaves as the old plantation owners did.

All in all, the film seems an excuse to stage sex. Some critics have even defined it as a kind of soft porn. It may have as its aim to show a class struggle in an up-to-date plantation system, but many times the indulgence on sex and nudity seems exaggerated. Rather, it seems that the director enjoyed filming it, and that he did it mainly to attract a foreign audience that identifies Jamaica as an island where everything can happen, and where sex is one of the major attractions for white women in particular. To give credit to the director's claim of the link between sex and class struggle, the following quotation is a clear example of how Little-White presumably expected his film to be received:

Sex is mental as well as physical.

Producer-director-screenwriter Lennie Little-White [...] alludes to aspects of mental sex that Styron never mentions, the sexual 'slumming' that Penny and Laura delight in for different reasons. Laura slums because it exacerbates her ownership of everything on her plantation, Penny because it's politically correct to sleep with men outside her class. By contrast, there's the upwardly mobile mental attraction of Luke and Rick to Penny and Laura, powerful women who, they may hope, can unlock the prison of their class.¹⁸

¹⁷ Joan Ffrench, *Ibidem*, June 1, 1980.

¹⁸ Unknown author, 'Babylon' Abroad: *The Myth and the Message*, in *Sunday Sun*, December 14, 1980, p.22. The reference is to William Styron and his 1979 best-selling novel *Sophie's Choice*.

9.1.2 THE LUNATIC.

This film is as saturated with sex as *Children of Babylon*, but the tone is very different and sex is mixed with a social critique of the sexual tourism that takes place in Jamaica. This is meant to be a comedy, and the sex scenes are actually lighter than those of *Children of Babylon*, causing also the audience to laugh at them.

The protagonists of the sex scenes are Inga and Aloysius. She goes to Jamaica to visit the country and to have fun, but what she seems to look for is sex. Indeed, when she finds Aloysius, she immediately makes love with him. Their relationship is later spiced by adding a new member, Service. Inga chooses with whom she wants to have sex, and she has total control over the two men because of the “pum pum rule”¹⁹. However, while we know that Inga has sex with Service, we are never shown it. It is suggested but never shown in front of the camera. The only two people whom we are shown doing it are Inga and Aloysius.

Inga is the boss of the group. She is dominant. Probably not coincidentally, the village she stays in Jamaica is called “Bamboo Village”.²⁰ The only thing she is looking for is sex.

If there is a caricature, it is in the portrayal of the German visitor. [...] She has come to Jamaica ostensibly to research the flora, the fauna and the language, but is more intent on satisfying her insatiable sexual appetite. The camera work makes her copulating with Aloysius seem[s] more like aerobics than love-making, though the smiling madman begins to take her sexual attention for more than it is, and responds by claiming that he now loves the domineering visitor.²¹

Then, Inga seems interested in experiencing sex with a black man especially. This is fraught with stereotypes and prejudices about black masculinity. Yet, Inga is doing what the majority of white female tourists do in Jamaica. Indeed, the sexual tourism that is present in Jamaica is produced by (mainly American) white women who go to the island to have an affair with a black man, preferably Rasta-looking (hence the habit of the Rent-a-Dread²²). They often go to the island to experience something that at home they would never have the courage to do, because of prejudices, racism and bigotry.

In the midst of all the fun and fantasy, the film manages to prick more than a few consciences, and to provide much food for thought. Firstly, Inga’s obsession with sex can

¹⁹ See Chapter 2, pp.48-49.

²⁰ This village really exists in Jamaica, but the name is somewhat ironic in this context. Indeed, the term “bamboo” is usually used on the island to refer to the penis. Thus, Inga seems to arrive in the “village of the penis”.

²¹ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.102.

²² See this Chapter, pp.299-300.

be seen as an obsession with black sex, and as such can reopen the entire debate over inter-racial sexuality, over which race secretly desires which one to be totally fulfilled.²³

The film is saturated with phallic symbols. However, these symbols are not the usual ones, denoting strength or power. On this subject, Richard Dyer made some interesting remarks. First of all, he observes that in cinema male sexuality is almost invariably associated with the penis, which is never shown but only suggested.

The symbolism of male sexuality is [...] overwhelmingly centred on the genitals, especially the penis. Penises are not shown, but the evocation of male sexuality is almost always an evocation of the penis. Male sexuality is repeatedly equated with the penis; men's sexual feelings are rendered as somehow being 'in' their penises. Sexual arousal in women, where it is represented at all, may use a plethora of indications [...]. With men, the symbolism implies the erect penis. [...] The list of objects that have been used as penis symbols is endless [...]. However, there is no other accepted symbol of male arousal, even though we know that many zones of the male body are erogenous. Even when other parts of the male body are used to represent sexuality it is only because they can symbolize the penis.²⁴

This kind of symbolism is always used because it reminds of the power of the phallus, what renders Man (generally white, heterosexual and belonging to the Christian tradition) most powerful in the human hierarchy. The power of the phallus is what justifies patriarchy. Yet, penises are not necessarily tough, and other, more gentle ways of representing them could be found:

One of the striking characteristics about penis symbols is the discrepancy between the symbols and what penises are actually like. [...] There are very exceptional cases where something of the exquisiteness and softness of the male genitals is symbolized. [...] Male genitals can be thought of as beautiful, and there are instances of male nude painting and photography which do treat the genitals as if they are something lovely to look at [...] Yet such examples are marginal. Far more commonly the soft, vulnerable charm of male genitals is rendered as hard, tough, and dangerous.²⁵

The Lunatic can be considered an exceptional case, since here the penis is never represented as hard or dangerous. On the contrary, though always very clearly phallic symbols, flowers and fruits stand for the penis. Inga appears for the first time in the film while she is taking pictures of these plants, and she is also touching them. The phallic/sexual symbolism is made very clear, but it also has a kind of poetry, a gentle touch which maybe contrasts with the dominant Inga and the way she makes love.

²³ *Ibidem*, p.103. It must be said, of course, that not all the white tourists go to Jamaica to have sex with Jamaicans, and that there are relationships between blacks and whites which have nothing to do with prejudices, racism, or the search for new thrills. Generally the relationships between blacks and whites are just relationships as any others.

²⁴ Richard Dyer, *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations, Second Edition*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, p.90.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp.90-91.



Phallic symbols. The last one is made explicit, should it not be clear what these flowers and fruits stand for.

Inga and Aloysius' love making is rough. There is no care, no love. There are no caresses and no kisses. The sexual intercourse is focused on penetration. Inga is interested only in having an orgasm. She never feels affection nor tenderness for Aloysius. He, on the other hand, falls in love with her. He tells her that he loves her, and that she is his only family, but she does not respond to this. She is just using Aloysius and Service for her own pleasure.

When they have sex, Inga has always the dominant position. She is always on top of Aloysius. Moreover, she likes to do it in different places. For instance, they do it in an abandoned building, on a boat, in the bushes, in a cemetery. When they finally try to do it in a bed, in Inga's hotel room, she wants to tie Aloysius to the bed. It is as if, when the place where she is doing it is too "ordinary", Inga has to find something else to make sex interesting. It is as if she could not find pleasure in "average" sex.



Two of the places where Inga and Aloysius have sex.

In this film, Aloysius is given a position that in mainstream cinema is generally assigned to women. Inga is the dominant character, not only for her strong personality, but also physically. She guides him to make him satisfy her. In this film, Aloysius becomes an "object" for Inga. Even if he does not want to do all that she wants, she forces him, with the threat of going away and leaving him alone again. Aloysius is the dominated character, who has to obey to Inga's orders. In the end, however, Aloysius has his revenge: in the house of the Widow Dawkins, he is still dominated by the woman, but he acquires more freedom and power. His relationship with the widow is based on equal terms, not on subjugation.

In this film sex is an important theme, but it is handled with humour and delicacy. Unlike in *Children of Babylon*, where sex is loaded with social meanings and is present in the great majority of the film, in *The Lunatic* sex is meant to provoke thought, but also to make the audience laugh. And indeed it succeeds in this aim: the big German woman dominating the mad Jamaican incites hilarity, and sex is rendered lighter thanks to this.

9.2 TOURISM.

Tourism is the main factor sustaining Jamaican economy²⁶. But tourism in Jamaica is not just caused by the sun and the beaches, the heavenly environment. Jamaica is also a destination for sexual tourism. The beaches of the North coast (Montego Bay, Negril, Ocho Rios) are famous for their beauty, but also for the phenomenon of the “Rent-a-Dread”, that is the phenomenon of Jamaicans assuming the aspect (but not the faith) of Rastas (mainly locks and beards – which seem to be what women require most) and prostituting themselves to (female) tourists coming for the most part from the United States, Canada and England.

The term *rent-a-dread* was coined in the 1990s to name young male beachboys in Jamaica, due to the preponderance of dreadlocked hustlers and the marketability of the Bob Marley image to the rest of the world. By 2000, however, the Rasta style had made way for a Michael Jordan look. Men in their early twenties, with lean, lithe, muscled bodies and closely shorn heads, sporting low-slung, baggy, knee-length shorts and stylish dark sunglasses, worked the beach, immediately making contact with any new arrivals, insisting on becoming a companion. They were quick, smart, and to the point, and known locally as “rentals”.²⁷

Their approach is explicit, their aim too, and their clientele ever growing, and requiring just this kind of behaviour from them.

In contrast to the laid back Rasta image, the new generation of rentals are quick, busy, and energetic. Some flit back and forth between clubs and hotels on the tourist coasts and their homes elsewhere on the island. They engage in direct hustle, open flattery of women’s bodies, and constant references to the sexual pleasure they can give a woman, and operate with a conviction that the woman will pick up the tabs at the restaurant or bar. Many express outright an eagerness to travel abroad. The young men flaunt their bodies as their primary asset, exposing their well-muscled dark torsos at the slightest opportunity.²⁸

Both the rentals and the customers know that this is a form of prostitution, and that without the tourist’s dollars it would not happen, but neither of them see it as illicit. The male hustlers claim that they do it for their own pleasure, while tourist women call these relationships “romance”, thus trying to remove from their conscience the monetary transaction. Yet women are perfectly conscious of what they are doing, and they require Jamaicans to be rude and vulgar. It probably gives them a thrill that they cannot find at home. What interests them of Jamaican men is the fulfilment of the stereotypes that circulate about them.

²⁶ Arguably, cannabis (which I analyse later in this chapter) is the main real factor sustaining Jamaican economy. However, being it illegal, and certainly not acknowledgeable by Jamaican governments, tourism remains the first official income for the island’s economy.

²⁷ Kamala Kempadoo, *Op. Cit.*, p.130.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.132.

The encounter between women tourists and black male hustlers reveals another set of myths that are articulated by the men themselves. The men take great pride in their “hardness”, which includes an aggression and force in pursuing a woman, a “vigorous” style of lovemaking, and the promise of complete sexual satisfaction that usually implies an eternally erect penis. It is an aspect of their masculinity that is thought to be marked only by a strong woman.²⁹

Aware that sexual tourism is part of the package Jamaica offers, the industry tends to more and more capitalize on this subject, thus inviting more and more tourists and Jamaicans to invest in this illegal and humiliating practice.

Two of the hallmarks of hegemonic Caribbean masculinity – an insatiable sexual desire and a large, ever-hard penis, both of which are continually in need of expression and can tirelessly sustain multiple sexual partners – are continually evoked and paraded in the tourism industry.³⁰

The two films which face the theme of tourism, exploring various facets of it, are *Smile Orange* and *The Lunatic*. The first touches on prostitution and the often dismissing attitude of the tourists, the latter faces the subject of white foreign women going to Jamaica looking for sex.

9.2.1 SMILE ORANGE.

Trevor Rhone’s film is a satire of the tourist industry. Here we can see the behaviour of the people working in Jamaica, of the (American in this case) tourists, and of the black customers, in a little cosmos which is meant to represent Jamaican tourism as a whole.

The waiters working in the tourist industry do it to make a living. They often play the role of the fool, but they do it in order to fool their boss and the tourists. They are used to the manners of the foreigners, and think that they are spoiled and stupid. Tourists are in Jamaica on holiday, and thus often behave very differently from when they are at home. They feel authorized to do things that would not be accepted in their society and their everyday life. Jamaican waiters sometimes behave patronizingly with the tourists and with the customers, because they feel in a way superior, knowing that on holiday these foreigners are like kids, while they are wiser because used to this kind of life.

At the same time, however, the waiters are accomplices with the industry, because they exploit it to earn more money. They take advantage of the tourists in every conceivable manner, knowing that having sex with the foreign women is the easiest way of obtaining money from them. One of the first things that Ringo teaches the busboy is how to choose the right woman, and what to do

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp.132-133.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, pp.133-134.

with her. Then, he has to make sure that the woman pays for his services. This phenomenon is part of the larger prostitution by Jamaican men with foreign women, attracted to the island by the boasted sexual potency of these men. As Keith Warner says:

There is subtle criticism of the cultural prostitution involved in earning the tourist dollar, and of the emasculation of many of those plying the tourist trade, symbolically encapsulated in the significance of the title, a reference to the mistaken belief that the consumption of oranges leads to impotence.³¹

The other side of the tourist industry are the tourists themselves. These people are depicted through stereotypes too. They all embody some negative behaviours: the couple in honeymoon who wants to eat everything because they have paid for everything, the angry woman who is dissatisfied with everything, the lonely woman looking for sex, and so on. They also betray a certain racism, and certain prejudices, in dealing with the Jamaican waiters³². Many times they are patronizing, they consider the waiters only as servants, and they exploit them in every conceivable manner.

We now see the guests, most of whom are shown arriving by Air Jamaica. Most are but caricatures, though, hardly even speaking, and playing set roles – the hen-pecked husband, the nagging wife, the glutton – none of which are very flattering to the tourists.³³

Finally, there are the black customers of the hotel. The Social Director is ignored by the waiters, who later tell the Assistant Manager that they do it because, historically, black people have never treated black waiters on an equal basis. Blacks have treated the waiters as the white foreign tourists do, thus gaining the antipathy of the working class.

Black visitors to Caribbean hotels in countries with major tourist attractions can identify with the play/film's Social Director who was not served in the dining room as readily as the white guests. They can also understand how they could be seen as the very cause of the problem, for the other side of the coin shows them treating black waiters with scant respect.³⁴

The whole tourist industry is viewed with little sympathy in *Smile Orange*. It is exploitative from every point of view: the waiters', the tourists', the black customers'. Yet, it is necessary to the island, which needs the money coming from the tourists.

As Keith Warner notices, however, the criticism is not too hurting for the foreigners, especially because it is mixed with laughter and exquisite dialogues. This is mainly due to the fact that tourism is an integral part of Jamaica's economy.

³¹ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.88.

³² See Chapter 2, p.38.

³³ Keith Q. Warner, *Op. Cit.*, p.88-89.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p.88.

The criticism of the tourist industry, and of the white people who are an integral part of it, is not really taken to heart. There is a tongue-in-cheek quality to the criticism because there can be no doubt that the country needs the jobs and money brought by this industry.³⁵

9.2.2 *THE LUNATIC*.

As we have already noticed, the aspect of tourism that is emphasized in *The Lunatic* is sex. As in *Smile Orange*, the portrayal of the foreign woman, under this light, is not very flattering. She arrives in Jamaica and she behaves like one of the Valkyries, whose music accompanies her sexual exploits with Aloysius³⁶, choosing the men she wants. She represents the average female tourist on the island, who exploits the prostitution of Jamaicans for her pleasure during her short holiday, and then leaves the island and the men for the next flow of tourists.

Naturally, *The Lunatic* does not represent this side of tourism and prostitution in a clear and critical light. It is understated, also because the men are not prostitutes, and Aloysius falls in love with Inga. Yet the German woman behaves like a sex tourist, who moreover also decides to go against the law.

9.3 WOMEN STORIES.

As I have already noted³⁷, Jamaican films are predominantly masculine. The directors are males who make up stories for other males. There are only four exceptions to this rule: *Children of Babylon*, *The Lunatic*, *Dancehall Queen* and *Glory to Gloriana*. However, even these films (that have a woman as the protagonist) were shot by men, and sometimes reflect their point of view.

9.3.1 *CHILDREN OF BABYLON*.

Little-White's film is the first in Jamaican cinema to position a woman at the centre of its story. Indeed, there are many women in his film. Laura, the landlady of the greathouse, is a secondary character who is useful only to interrupt the relationship between Rick and Penny and to show that the behaviour of the absentee plantation owners has not changed over the centuries. The other two important women are Penny and Dorcas, in a way the two faces of the same coin³⁸.



Tobi as Penny (left) and Leonie Forbes as Dorcas (right)³⁹.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p89.

³⁶ See Chapter 3, p.79.

³⁷ See, for instance, Chapter 8.

³⁸ See Chapter 7, p.252.

³⁹ The images were found on http://www.mediamix-palm.com/children_b.htm, accessed October 08, 2009.

Penny is the axis on which the story unfolds. She destabilizes the balance that reigned in the house before her arrival, she undergoes a painful process of change and learning, and she finally goes back to her parents' house as a different person. However, even if the film was meant to reflect her point of view, the director failed to think as a woman, thus giving his interpretation of what a woman should think and how she would behave. Many reviews of the time identify Penny (but also the male characters) as a loser. She does make experiences in the country, but they are all negative. In the end, she may be wiser, but she is also certainly sadder.

All the film's characters are negative losers, seen through the eyes of the white girl – herself as beautiful; the black woman as ugly and dumb [...] the white woman patron as her superior because of wealth; the “Rastaman”, a defiler of her body; the soul-head kept-man, the best that society offers her.⁴⁰

Penny is an emancipated woman. She has a rich family, an education, she is free both in her body and in her mind. She is ideologically committed, but she does not put her ideas in practice⁴¹. Her lifestyle is attractive to many, because her status allows her to behave as she prefers. She hopes to find true love, but she finds herself cheated by Rick, and exploited by Luke.

Educated, confident and attractive, Penny is a self-proclaimed Marxist who loves the masses, but has to learn their language; hates minority wealth, but is coaxed to enjoy its benefits as she makes love to Parchment amid embossed couches and sparkling wine. She is not, however, chained to it, and thinks nothing of exchanging it for Luke's poor room in the servants' quarters when it seems that she can have an honest relationship with Luke, as compared with the dishonesty of her experience with Rick.⁴²

Yet, even if the director rendered Penny sympathetic, she fails to be a credible woman for many reasons, she embodies stereotypes, and men's thoughts about women's behaviours. Penny is the vortex of the story, but the men around her decide her destiny.

Children of Babylon ultimately fails to claim and establish a position of centrality for the female protagonist, to retrieve the female persona from the margins and establish her as a subject in her own right, and to create for the Jamaican female character (as *The Harder They Come* did for the Jamaican male) a compelling story which rejects Hollywood's imposed exoticism and instead seeks to explore what Stuart Hall refers to as the “complexity of emotion and relationships and social situations”.⁴³

What is especially striking about Penny is the reason why a woman like her should endure Luke's mistreatments. She is not in need of money, nor is she getting love. She is beautiful and could have

⁴⁰ Barbara Blake, *Children of Babylon... Beautiful Photography but... Unattractive, Negative Portrayal of Woman*, in *Sunday Gleaner*, December 30, 1979, p.7.

⁴¹ I analyse ideologies and political commitment later in this chapter.

⁴² Joan Ffrench, *Op. Cit.*, June 1, 1980, p.2.

⁴³ Rachel Moseley-Wood, *Op. Cit.*, p.176.

other men, also thanks to her sexual availability. But she does love Luke, and while she leaves Rick as soon as she discovers that he has had sex with Laura, she remains with Luke humiliations notwithstanding. This is what leads Moseley-Wood to see Penny as a stereotyped woman:

After so carefully establishing Penny as an individual: a woman with strong views and opinions who is unafraid to express them and who is also unafraid to express and display her sexuality, Little-White then reduces her to a stereotype. Penny's continuation of the relationship with Luke places her within the ranks of the nameless, faceless women who endure domestic abuse. In Penny's case, however, none of the usual reasons of poverty, dependent children or lack of alternatives are available to explain her dilemma. We are left then only with masochism and the suggestion that it is natural for the female to submit to the male.⁴⁴

The last sentence is maybe a bit too strong, but it is true that there is no good reason why Penny should remain with tyrant Luke, if not love. Love is a powerful reason, and maybe this was just what the director had in mind. This, however, in its turn, would be contradictory with the declared aim of the film, namely to explore class and social divisions in the greathouse. Thus, in the end, it remains unclear why Penny stays so long with Luke, because love is not contemplated in political theories.

It is true that all the characters in the film are losers. Penny too is a loser. She loses when she discovers that Rick is willing to prostitute himself for patronage. She loses with Luke, first with the humiliations he imposes on her, then with his beatings, and lastly with his rape. When she goes back home, she is not triumphant for the success of her research. Instead, she is a loser, who has lost her innocence but also a great part of her *joie de vivre*.

Penny's counterpart, Dorcas, is not given a better treatment. She is denied a voice, and thus expression. She is submitted from the beginning to her husband, but she is also a servant for all the people in the house. She cannot choose to go back to her parents' house, and thus the only choice she is left is to commit suicide. However, even this extreme gesture does not give her much visibility, since no one seems to care much about it. Penny is affected by Dorcas' act, and she feels guilty for it, but only for a short time, because she soon moves to Luke's apartment. Dorcas is most of the time ignored by the film's characters.

Female masochism and submission are further suggested in Little-White's treatment of Dorcas, the servant who has lived and worked all her life on the estate. Dorcas is portrayed as a sad, pitiful creature who is mute and voiceless – unable to speak, to express an opinion,

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p.189-190.

communicate or make herself heard. She is so peripheral that the tragic dimensions of her eventual suicide are largely ignored, both by the film and by the other characters.⁴⁵

All told, *Children of Babylon* is not feminist at all. The fact that it was made by a man is very clear in the way the female protagonists are depicted. Moreover, if it is true that all characters are losers, it is also true that women are doubly victimized: by society and class divisions, like men, but also by the men themselves, who exert their power over them in the old tradition of patriarchy.

Penny's political ideology is lacking in even the most fundamental awareness and appreciation of feminist discourse, as is Little-White's film. [...]

Little-White presents his female characters as objects. They are not thinking individuals but characters who conform to a convention that has been imposed by patriarchy. The film's approval of this convention is signalled by its failure to interrogate both Dorcas' and Penny's self-destructive choices which it depicts as rational and acceptable.⁴⁶

Children of Babylon is the first Jamaican film to put a woman at the centre of its story, but nonetheless the female characters are not depicted from a female point of view. At the end of the film, one has the impression that women here are as defined by the men's world as in the other films.

9.3.2 *THE LUNATIC*.

The way Inga is portrayed in *The Lunatic* is not more flattering than the one used for the women in *Children of Babylon*. This is not really a woman story, since the real protagonist is Aloysius, the lunatic of the title. But Inga is a co-protagonist, and she is, like Penny, the vortex that ignites the events. She is a very strong character, and she is the boss of the group. She is fierce, independent, sexually liberated but at the same time also fragile, angry with her father for the love he did not give her.

Inga is, in a way, a caricature. Her manners are exaggerated, her toughness as well. This is why she is extremely authoritarian, and the reason why she is obeyed by both Aloysius and Service is that she is a woman. She can give to these men what they want, sex. But she submits them by giving it only when *she* decides, and in the way *she* wants. The power of her sexuality renders the men blind, ready to do what she wants them to, even if it is illegal.

Yet, for all her toughness, Inga is also fragile, as she reveals at the end of the film. Her aggressiveness is a façade, a mask for her frailty. She is too, like Penny, looking for love, that love that she has not been given by her father. This lack is what pushes her to live her dangerous kind of life, going around the world in search of adventures of many kinds. Indeed, when she leaves

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p.190.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p.190 and p.192.

Jamaica, she does not remain in Germany. As we get to know from the letter she writes to Aloysius, she has moved to Italy, to join a group of dissidents who are using illegal methods to make their claims, and she is thus wanted by the police of the country. Inga's adventures lead her to be hunted by many armed forces: Jamaica's and Italy's are only those we get to know about. She escapes thanks to her father's wealth and power, but at the same time this wealth and power are the cause of her rebellion.

In the film, Inga remains memorable for her toughness, and also for her being a bad girl. Moreover, she is obsessed with sex. The picture the director gives of her is not flattering, but it is part of what makes the film so humorous and funny, since she is confronted with the gentle and fragile Aloysius.

9.3.3 *DANCEHALL QUEEN*.

This is the first Jamaican film where a woman is the undisputed protagonist. The story revolves around Marcia, and it is her exploits we are made to admire and support. Yet, Marcia has also negative sides, and in a way reflects many Jamaican women who are forced to accept her same compromises in order to survive.

Marcia is a ghetto woman and a street vendor. She depends economically on Larry, who supports her and her two daughters. Unfortunately for her, Marcia discovers that he does it for a reason, and she forces her daughter to accept Larry's approaches in order not to lose his money. This is a critical point in the film, which seems to justify prostitution as a "normal" way of survival for ghetto women.

But Marcia is also a strong character, who realizes her mistakes and then chooses to find a new way to earn a living. She is not afraid to work, and she is not afraid to put herself on the front line if it is necessary for her family's survival.

It is in the glittering and sensual dancehall world that she finds an easy and affordable way to become independent⁴⁷. According to Moseley-Wood, here she becomes a symbol for all (Jamaican?) women:

It is in the concept of the female body as a commodity that a sense of pervasive, socially accepted and institutionalised system of value emerges, and it is this idea that is presented as a universal statement that applies to all women.⁴⁸

This world, however, is again not viewed through the eyes of a woman. This can be due to the fact that both directors were involved in making music videos in Jamaica before doing this film. They were used to the masculinity of the place, and to the way of making a video for a dancehall song:

⁴⁷ See Chapter 4.

⁴⁸ Rachel Moseley-Wood, *Op. Cit.*, p.202.

many girls, almost naked, big gold jewellery, big cars and money. In these videos women are just objects for the male gaze, and this particularity has been transposed in the film. In the dancehall context, Marcia and Olivene too become objects for the male scrutiny. Probably the directors' intention was to evaluate this world, and the women participating in it:

Part of the intent of this film is to push the limits of acceptability by attempting to re-interpret and reassess representations of the female body that have been conventionally forbidden and labelled negative, dirty, crass and vulgar.⁴⁹

But being men in a patriarchal world, and being used to patriarchal views that portray women in determinate ways, the directors are not able to escape a somehow stereotyped way of depicting the women participating in the dancehall.

The film's very definition of eroticism remains bound up in, constrained and circumscribed by conventional patriarchal ideas of what is erotic and "sexy" in the female, and of how female sexuality should be presented, or in this case, packaged. The film's intention therefore, to validate female sexuality by elevating the status of the "whore" does not challenge, or indeed re-interpret, the received patriarchal image of the whore along with its stereotypical representations of female sexuality. Instead, the film merely insists on the validity and authority of these representations as expressions of female sexuality, when in fact, such representations are really the male's definition of female sexuality imposed on the female body. The stock signs of these representations and images – high heels, tight revealing clothes and excessive make-up – thus also become the chosen costume of the dancehall.⁵⁰

The camera work reinstates these patriarchal views of women:

When the camera looks at the female dancers, it shows mainly dismembered body parts: the focus is on the breasts, the frontal pubic area and the buttocks in particular. Close ups and medium shots are most often used for the female dancers as well as shots in which the camera tilts upwards [...]. In contrast, the male dancers, of which there are only a few, are mostly well clothed and are most often viewed through medium or long shots.⁵¹

It is interesting that a character like Marcia became the first female protagonist of Jamaican cinema. In choosing her, the directors chose a "common" woman: coming from the ghetto, without economic means, without access to the sophistication of the upper classes, hard-working. What is somewhat disturbing is that the way she chooses to elevate herself (in the male directors' minds) is not through work, or wit, but through sexuality. Once again, the value that is seen as female *par excellence* is sexuality; women are defined by their sex. Nonetheless, this gives her power and toughness.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p.213.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p.216.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, pp.222-223.

As the first Jamaican heroine in film, Marcia becomes a kind of Nancy figure who, lacking the resources for open rebellion, fights and wins her battles by manipulating her opponents and by exploiting their weaknesses. It is significant too, that in the struggle of the first celluloid heroine to find and define self, sexuality, and particularly the public display of sexuality, remains such an important element within that struggle.⁵²

9.3.4 *GLORY TO GLORIANA*.

The director of this film also directed *Children of Babylon*, and this explains many of the similarities between the two stories. Purportedly a true story, Gloria's life is nonetheless fictionalised in order to make it appealing for the screen. Gloria is the protagonist, the undisputed character on which the film focuses from beginning to end. She has an antagonist, also female, in Betsy, but the latter is quite stereotyped. If women are often represented through the "Madonna/whore" dichotomy, then Gloria represents the Madonna, while Betsy is the whore. Indeed, her behaviour is overtly sexual, and her relationship with Milton is mostly based on sex. She is the kind of woman who relies on a man for economic support, and to ensure it she gives Milton six kids and sexual fulfilment whenever he needs it.

The film is clearly sympathetic with Gloria, who is depicted as a poor girl who had to struggle all her life against the complications of existence, but who in the end, thanks to her will and her good character, manages to obtain what she had always dreamt of: a life of luxury, economic independence and freedom from the constraints of poverty. She proves to be a strong character, able to overcome all the problems her men give her. Indeed, she accepts Milton's infidelity, his violence, the fact that he takes her money to give it to Betsy, the fact that he stops working when she starts and that he lives at her expense, and the fact that he leaves her nothing of her earnings in his will. Maybe Gloria loves Milton, but like Penny in *Children of Babylon*, there is no clear explanation for her forgiveness.

What is striking in this regard is that when she lives with Mr. Sinclair (whom she always call Mr. Sinclair, as if she did not know his first name), she does not accept of him what she accepts of Milton. Mr. Sinclair is rich, so money is not a problem between them. He treats Gloria as a queen, never raises a hand on her. But he cheats on her. When she discovers it, Gloria immediately leaves him, to return with Milton, now sick but ready to behave with her as he had always done. And indeed, as soon as he gets better, Milton retrieves his relationship with Betsy, beats Gloria, steals her money, and so on.

However strong Gloria's character may appear, it is a losing character too, as was Penny in *Children of Babylon*. She has no rational reason to stay with Milton. She is not tied to him on

⁵² *Ibidem*, p.232.

economic grounds, since she is the person offered jobs and buildings to buy, and thus she is the person who supports the family. She has kids with Milton, but it seems that they are all with Gloria's mother in the countryside, so they do not depend on Milton to grow. She can find other men, as she finds Mr. Sinclair. Once again, we are faced with the probability that it is only masochism that keeps Gloria with Milton.

When considering Little-White's films, one has the impression that his vision of the world is extremely patriarchal. He tries to make films with women as protagonists, but in the end he treats them in an unflattering way, as beings who need a man to feel human, and the worse the man the better they love him. At the end of both films, the women are alone. Gloria is triumphant, because she has acquired social status. But she and Penny are alone, having found none of the love they have been seeking throughout the films. Little-White's female protagonists are meant to be models for, or symbols of, the average Jamaican woman. But their status is far above that of the average woman, and thus they fail to become "common" people. They remain alone because they are not able to free themselves from the patriarchal notion that a woman must have a man to be someone. They both succeed on a professional level, but they both miserably fail on a personal level. This is the measure of their loneliness and their defeat.

To conclude, what appears in Jamaican films is that women are rarely the protagonists, and even when they are, they are not as successfully developed as their male counterparts in other films. Female characters fail to be represented as strongly and as assertively as the males. This is only another demonstration that Jamaican cinema is male-oriented, chauvinist and patriarchal.

9.4 MARIJUANA.

In popular fantasy, Jamaica is always associated with marijuana. This is in part due to the Rastafari movement, using the weed for religious purposes⁵³. But ganja is not, and has never been, smoked by Rastas only. The plant was familiar to the British invaders who had used it for hemp fibre for centuries, but its recreational use was introduced in Jamaica by Indian indentured labourers (hence the Indian name *ganja*, but it is known by many other names all over the world), and has been smoked since then by most sectors of the population. Ganja is still very popular nowadays in Jamaica, and as such it appears in the island's cinema, which aims to represent and to please popular taste.

⁵³ See Chapter 5, p.148. I will not give details about the plant, its history, its properties, its persecution and so on, because it would be useless here. I am not discussing on the consumption of marijuana, but only on its appearance in Jamaican cinema. However, many books have been written on the subject, which has been extensively debated especially during the last century, both on cannabis in general and in Jamaica in particular. See especially Martin Booth, *Cannabis: A History*, London, Bantam Books, 2003, Chapter 21, *Island in the Sun*, which focuses on Jamaica. For more details, however, on the relevance of cannabis in Jamaica, see this Chapter, p.314.

If one looks at Jamaican films, it could easily be thought that cannabis is smoked by the whole population. But this is a wrong assumption. Indeed, many sectors of society regard it as a drug like harder ones and would like it banned. Religious people, upper- and middle-class people (especially middle and old age) but also ordinary people who have prejudices against ganja do not like it to be so much associated with Jamaica. These are people who would never smoke it, and who do not accept it being so widely spread on the island. On the other hand, lower-class people, Rastas, but also many people who are not usually associated with the smoking of ganja (among them middle- and upper-class members, but also policemen, for instance) make a huge consumption of it, making it become one of the most lucrative businesses in Jamaica. Indeed, many people assert that ganja, and not tourism, is the main economic resource of the island. Jamaican films, as we have seen trying to portray “popular” Jamaica, include ganja because it is such a widespread phenomenon. Few films are set in upper- or middle-classes (and even then, as we shall see, ganja appears sometimes), and lower classes are represented realistically, thus also smoking cannabis.

Among Jamaican films, only four, strangely enough, do not show a single spliff. The first was *Smile Orange*. The explanation can be quite simple: the set is a hotel, where people work, and generally ganja is not smoked on the job. As we are not shown the waiters’ private life, we do not know if they are ganja smokers or not. However, in this case, neither the tourists ask for it. This is a bit strange because, after sex, cannabis is the second most demanded service by foreigners. In this film it seems that neither the local people nor the tourists are consumers, which gives a good impression of the island but is quite improbable.

The second film not showing anything about the ganja culture is *Dancehall Queen*. It can be that Marcia does not smoke it, and it is likely that neither her daughters touch it. But it is totally unrealistic that ganja is absent from the dancehall world. It is true that the posse frequenting the dancehalls deal in other kinds of drugs⁵⁴, but ganja is so popular, especially for nights out to party, that it is highly unbelievable that ganja is missing where Marcia is. Probably it was not the directors’ goal to show this side of the dancehall, and they just avoided the showing of spliffs.

Strangely enough, *One Love* does not show any ganja. It is strange because Kassa and his band are Rastas, and more than likely smoke marijuana. It is true that it is not compulsory for a Rasta to use it, but it is implausible that *all* of them abstain from it. However, during the film marijuana is mentioned, for instance by Aaron who says that Rastas are notorious for smoking it. The explanation may reside in the fact that this is a film focusing on religion, and that as a deeply religious and obedient person Serena has been taught to dislike ganja, as does her father and her

⁵⁴ See Chapter 4, pp.116-117.

congregation. Probably out of respect for her, Kassa does not make use of cannabis in her presence.

Finally, *Glory to Gloriana* too ignores ganja. Gloria is an upwardly mover, and so, even if she used to smoke ganja before her ascent, she needs to hide it when she becomes part of the upper-class. But she, like any other character in the film, is never shown to use it. This a difference from the previous film by the same director, *Children of Babylon*.

The second part of *The Harder They Come* is set in the ganja trade, thus not only are we shown spliffs, but also cannabis fields, chalices, and so on. Henzell showed marijuana in its Jamaican context: for many the only way to survive, and for most a way to share time. For the Rastas, a religious sacrament. For the director, the ganja trade was also a means of delivering his criticism of Jamaican corruption and foreign interference in the affairs of the island⁵⁵. Here we are clearly shown that the police may not smoke it, but it certainly profits out of it, and it can be inferred that the government too benefits from it.

What many people ignore is that cannabis is illegal in Jamaica. It has always been associated with the working-class and with the Rastas, and for this reason has been seen a degrading habit for the upper classes. Many laws were passed to disallow Rastas, especially, from smoking ganja⁵⁶. Still today, marijuana is illegal on the island, with people being arrested and signalled as consumers to the authorities for a single spliff. Yet this has never discouraged the population and the tourists from smoking it. Ganja sellers work in the streets, in the dancehalls, on big public occasions, and so on. It is very easy to find ganja in Jamaica, and many times it is smoked freely and carelessly in the streets and in public places.

Naturally, ganja is smoked by all the Rasta characters in Jamaican films. It is also smoked by many tourists. In *Countryman* ganja is one of the things the protagonist offers to the two Americans. It helps them relax and be more friendly with Countryman. It must also be noted that in this case, Beau and Bobby had come to Jamaica to buy some weed to sell back in the States.

In *The Lunatic* Inga smokes a lot. She is often shown with a spliff, especially before and after having sex. Service smokes with her, but not Aloysius. He just looks at them smoking, but never tries it.

In *Children of Babylon* almost all the characters smoke ganja. The supplier is, not by chance, the Rasta Luke. Laura gives him the responsibility to find her good herb, because she likes to smoke it when she is in Jamaica. However, here, beside Laura and Luke, Rick and Penny smoke too. They are two members of the upper class, but nonetheless they enjoy having a spliff.

⁵⁵ I analyse this subject later in this chapter: it constitutes a part of Henzell's political commitment.

⁵⁶ For more details, see, for instance, Horace Campbell, *Op. Cit.*, Chapter 4.

Two more curiosities about the ganja world come from *Third World Cop* and the gangster films. In its very first scene, *Third World Cop* shows a burning spliff in Capone's bedroom. In this, the film is quite realistic, showing that cannabis is not restricted to the "criminals" but is also used by cops. The gangster films, on the other hand, show that gangsters smoke marijuana, but at the same time they deal in hard drugs. They make use of something which is a light drug, and they leave the hard stuff for the people in the streets.

Ganja is so widespread in Jamaica (but also in the rest of the world) that it would have been totally unreal to show the island without it. In representing what is popular in Jamaica, the directors could not but show that cannabis is part of the daily life of the greatest portion of the population.

9.5 IDEOLOGIES: MARXISM IN *CHILDREN OF BABYLON*.

Lennie Little-White's idea, when he shot *Children of Babylon*, was to make a film which showed the social and class divisions in Jamaica in the 1970s, and demonstrated that in fact the plantation system had not disappeared in Jamaica. In the presentation of the film, he states:

Laura is the absentee landlord who still controls the institutions which determine the lives of the people. Penny represents the overseers who have assumed the role of the bourgeoisie in the absence of the owners. The overseers administer the State and have the power to manipulate and use the masses. Rick, the mulatto, is a part of the nouveau riche who seek for all the material trappings of the "motherland". The lumpen proletariat is evidenced in Luke who parallels those field or yard slaves whose main ambition is survival at any cost. Dorcas is the house-slave who continues to live in the shadow of the glory but never ever sees the light.⁵⁷

The director's idea was to mix social critique with sexuality, showing how one could influence the other⁵⁸. It is true that every character represents a social class: Laura is the white foreign plantation owner, who most of the time lives out of her domain; Penny is the descendant of the white colonizers, rich by this virtue and thus belonging to the upper class; Rick is a bourgeois light-skinned artist, who owes his money and his success to a foreign patron, and thus gives her his total allegiance; Luke and Dorcas are the working-class personae, not by chance dark-skinned, at the orders of the white masters. It is also true that in the greathouse all the classes mix for some reason, and sexual relationships overlap class boundaries. Laura has sex with Rick, as a kind of reward for her support; Rick has sex with Penny, whom he likes, but who belongs to a richer status than his; Luke and Dorcas are married, because they belong to the same class and thus do not

⁵⁷ Children of Babylon, Historical Perspective, http://www.mediamix-palm.com/children_historical_main.htm, accessed October 02, 2009.

⁵⁸ In this chapter, subjects continually overlap. I am trying to divide them to give clarity to the exposition, but inevitably all the segments regarding, for instance, *Children of Babylon*, are connected and should in the end be understood as a whole, to reach a satisfactory interpretation of the film.

contradict social boundaries; Luke has sex with Penny because she represents upward mobility, and Penny has sex with Luke because she does not believe in class divisions. Actually, Penny keeps repeating her Marxist orientation throughout the film.

Ideologically, Penny is an ambiguous character. Since the beginning, she keeps proclaiming her Marxist beliefs, and she keeps criticising Laura and Rick for their wealth and lifestyle. She disapproves of Rick, especially, because she does not accept that he obeys Laura's orders to earn money. At the same time, she starts a relationship with Luke because she does not care about the class difference between them, she believes in equality for all people.

On the other hand, however, Penny comes from a rich family. Their wealth was probably acquired through the exploitation of working-class people (if not slaves), and it is this wealth that has allowed Penny to get an education and learn about Marxism at university. She also appreciates the luxury of the greathouse where she stays with Rick, and it is clear that she is used to have people working at her service.

Her Marxism is somewhat of an affectation, since she talks about an equal society, about the erasure of privileges of wealth and so on, but at the same time she proclaims these clichés from an advantaged point of view. Indeed, she is a woman who will never have to suffer hardships, since whenever she has a problem she can go back home and let her parents' wealth take care of her.

Little-White's film attempts to explore the issue of social classes in Jamaica, but in the end this subject is not carried to its maximum potential, eclipsed as it is by the overwhelming attention to sexuality. As Moseley-Wood states:

While Little-White certainly does attempt to examine these ideological and social issues his treatment of such questions is disappointing, unsatisfactory and ultimately superficial because he sacrifices complexity in order to showcase and focus on the sexual elements of the film. He allows nudity and sexual titillation to dominate and overwhelm the narrative and subvert his attempt to explore the conflicting ideological positions of his characters. Thus, the suggestion that the characters' relationships and their sexual liaisons are a reflection of broader social issues and conflicts remains nebulous, unformed and underdeveloped, overshadowed by the desire to titillate the viewer with nudity and sexual content.⁵⁹

Children of Babylon is not a bad film, especially in its technical aspects. The subjects it faces are also of interest. The only problem with this film is that, in searching a wide audience, the director placed too much emphasis on sexuality and nudity, leaving the social and ideological issues aside, and thus losing a bit of credibility in its proclamation that this is a film exploring in depth the contradictions of Jamaican society.

⁵⁹ Rachel Moseley-Wood, *Op. Cit.*, pp.177-178.

9.6 POLITICAL COMMITMENT AND SOCIAL CRITIQUES.

9.6.1 *THE HARDER THEY COME.*

The Harder They Come is a political film. Henzell used Ivan's story to criticize the Jamaican government's policies and the exploitation practiced on the island by the United States. He took the ganja trade to illustrate it, as an example among many others. This choice earned him some criticism by the Jamaican audience, who did not like Jamaica to be always associated with ganja, but it was effective for Henzell's goal. He showed a different side of the business, and he showed how important the cultivation of cannabis is for the island⁶⁰.

Ganja has always been a critical factor in the relationship between Jamaica and the United States. On the Caribbean island, it is widespread and many small farmers survive thanks to it. Indeed, marijuana is easy to cultivate, and it has a wide market, which renders it a more profitable crop than any other. During the 1980s, scholars noted that

Ganja is probably the nation's largest private business. *Newsweek* reported in 1981 that Jamaica was the second-largest supplier to the United States after Colombia. [...] an estimated 8,000 farmers cultivate ganja. [...] Mostly foreign dealers broker this major export crop.⁶¹

Today ganja has been replaced mainly by cocaine, but the same relationship between the two countries remains. The United States have repeatedly asked the Jamaican government to eradicate the cultivation and the trade of marijuana, but it never happened, for various reasons.

The U.S. Bureau for International Narcotic Matters has targeted Jamaica because it is both the major regional producer of marijuana and an important transfer point for drug traffickers. The agency budgeted \$1 million in 1983 to block Caribbean drug traffic and set up a training program for Jamaican police. Prime Minister Seaga is reluctant to cooperate with the Reagan administration's campaign against Jamaican ganja because of its recognized importance to the economy as a producer of foreign exchange. The prime minister also cannot ignore a 1981 newspaper poll that found 62 percent of the populace opposed to the U.S.-sponsored campaign to halt the ganja trade.⁶²

Ganja was, and still is, too important to Jamaica to eradicate it. Moreover, the States only formally wanted to stop the trade, since as a matter of fact they were in control of it (as they are today of the cocaine market). Many Americans have settled in Jamaica in large estates to cultivate cannabis, and even when the farming is in the hands of Jamaicans, the greatest profits are made by Americans, who are the first recipient of Jamaican ganja. Thus, in more than a way, the United States decide how the trade works, and they run it.

⁶⁰ See this chapter, pp.309-312.

⁶¹ Tom Barry, Beth Wood, Deb Preusch, *Op. Cit.*, p.47.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p.48.

This is clearly shown in *The Harder They Come*, where Henzell illustrates exactly how the trade works. He begins by defining the hierarchy. When we are introduced to the ganja trade, it is through José, who tells Detective Jones that the army has shot Pedro's wife. Jones is upset by this piece of news, not because of the woman's death, but because the army has acted without warning him. He thus calls a member of the government to voice his complaints. The hierarchy is fixed, and insurmountable: at the bottom there are the small dealers, like Ivan and Pedro, then there is José, a dealer who is in touch with the higher sphere and who collects the protection money to pass over to Jones. José directly deals with Detective Jones, a policeman. Above him there is the army and the government. The man to whom Jones talks responds to him that he knows that Jones controls the ganja trade, but that he "cannot explain it officially". Which means that officially, the police and the government fight against the ganja trade, but in fact they all benefit from it. In this way, they please the public opinion that does not agree with cannabis use and commerce, by burning some fields now and then, and they also make profits out of it most of the time. Indeed, the money the dealers have to pay for "protection" (that is to bribe the police who turns a blind eye on the commerce) goes to the higher levels of the hierarchy, who also earn money from the international traffic.

What Henzell also shows is that the farmers and the small dealers are the only ones suffering from the government policies. In fact, they all make a living out of the trade, but when the army burns the field, the farmers do not earn money, and they have to start again a new cultivation. At the same time, if the supply of ganja does not arrive, the dealers have nothing to work with, and thus they also fail to make a living. The problem for all of them is that the ganja trade is their only way to survive, since no other job is available. The higher levels of the hierarchy, on the other hand, do not care about them, because they have a lot of money and other ways to make more of it.

Two dialogues tell the audience how the trade works, and who gets the profits of it. The first one is between Ivan and Pedro, when Ivan finds out that he has to pay 15 dollars to José for protection.

Ivan: "How come José not rich?"

Pedro: "It's not just José, you know."

Ivan: "Who does the money go to?"

Pedro: "You ask too many questions!"

It seems that everybody knows how things work, but no one wants to talk about it. The system is corrupted, and yet it gives a means to survive for many people who would otherwise be jobless and starving. For this reason, they all accept the rules, even if unjust. At least they can make some money to provide for themselves and their families.

The next sequence shows a small plane, which arrives in Kingston, collects a bag of marijuana, and goes back to Florida without even stopping on the secondary strip where it lands. Through the

words of the newspaper Elsa is reading to Ivan, we come to know that this plane has been held by the police at his arrival in Florida, and that the value of the ganja it contained was 100,000 dollars⁶³. Moreover, Elsa reads that “the US government will aid the army to clamp down on them”, that is on the cultivators and dealers of cannabis in Jamaica. In that moment, Ivan, and the audience with him, understands that the United States are directly involved in the island’s policies, and also that someone is making a lot of money at the expense of the bottom of the hierarchy, who takes all the risks and earns a pittance for their jobs.

The second dialogue happens between Ivan and José, when Ivan meets him to ask him for an explanation for his exploitation.

Ivan: “They caught a plane.”

José: “Two got through.”

Ivan: “Someone is making plenty of money. Not us. I’m only getting splits. Who’s making all the money?”

José: “Ask no questions, hear no lies.”

Again, it seems that everybody knows how the trade works, but no one wants to explain it clearly. They all work with the system that enriches a few and exploits the mass. This is what makes Ivan decide to set on his own an export of ganja directly to the States, without intermediaries, to earn more money. José asks him if he is well aware of what he is doing, because, as in every corrupted system, it is impossible to skip the hierarchy. Doing so would mean to search for serious problems, and indeed this is what will happen to Ivan.

Shortly after, we are shown the army burning some ganja fields, probably to please the powerful neighbouring country, and arresting some farmers. Ivan refuses to pay for protection again, understanding that someone is getting rich at his and the other dealers’ expense. As a justification, he involves the States, and their intervention in all things Jamaican, from the burning of the fields to the earning of the ganja money. He says to Pedro: “Let José take our share from the money they make in America. It’s them that caused the army to burn the fields.”

Ivan’s lines and the piece of news read by Elsa make it very clear that the United States put pressure on Jamaica to comply with their foreign policies. The States’ position, however, is ambiguous. Officially, they cannot tolerate that ganja grown in Jamaica is traded there, and so they have to ask the Jamaican government to stop the traffic. On the other hand, however, the benefits from marijuana grown in Jamaica are mainly made in America. In fact, once cannabis has crossed

⁶³ In the film it is never stated if the dollars they talk about are Jamaican or American. The difference is great, even if in the 1960s and 1970s the Jamaican dollar was much stronger than today. For instance, in 1962, when Jamaica gained independence, one Jamaican dollar was equivalent to one English pound. However, no matter the nationality of the dollar, the message of the film does not change, and the exploitation of the small dealers and farmers remains the same.

the borders, the dealers in the States make great profits out of it. The pattern is very simple: black farmers are exploited in Jamaica and are given a pittance for their work; cannabis is sold by powerful Jamaicans who earn a lot for it (in turning a blind eye on the traffic, the government, the army and the police also get an economic return for it); rich white people in America sell it to local consumers making the greatest profits out of it⁶⁴.

The United States' power to influence the politics of Jamaica (and of many of the so-called Third World countries) is due to many reasons, among which economic supremacy and cultural imperialism are over-important. Jamaica is indebted to them, and to the banks that are directly or indirectly controlled by them, and thus is forced to comply with some of their guidelines⁶⁵. Thanks to the great economic control (for instance, through the IMF) that the United States have over Jamaica, they can request that the island's government impose policies dictated by them, thus assuring the foreign control of politics and economy and the neo-colonial status of the island. Moreover, the United States, being so close to Jamaica, export there their culture, so that in Jamaica there is everything that is popular in America, even if the people on the island more often than not do not have the money to afford these goods. What happens is that there is the creation of a need for everything American, without the same background and without the same economic possibilities. This form of neo-imperialism further assures American control over Jamaica, limiting its freedom to little more than it was when the country was the old colonial state under the British rule.

Through the example of the ganja trade, Perry Henzell is very clear about this subject, and his criticism of this situation is clear as well. Even if later in his life he somewhat distanced himself from this political commitment⁶⁶, he nonetheless was politically committed in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. He was a friend of Prime Minister Michael Manley and was part of the leftist intellectuals in Jamaica. In *The Harder They Come* he condemned the corruption that was prevalent (to a lesser extent, it is prevalent still today) in the Jamaican establishment at all levels.

⁶⁴ Horace Campbell (*Resistenza Rasta*, Milano, ShaKe edizioni, 2004, p.131) states that in 1974 a kilo of ganja was sold in Jamaica at about 15-20 dollars, while once arrived in the USA that same kilo was sold in the streets of New York at 40 dollars. This figure is already telling, but I think there could be an error. It is not clear if the dollars are meant to be Jamaican or American dollars. In any case, it is possible that there was a misprint in Campbell's book, and that the actual price for the kilo of ganja in New York was 400\$. While searching on the web for my MA thesis, I found the current prices of marijuana at the beginning of the 1980s, and even if the years do not correspond, I believe that it is plausible to think that if in 1980 the price for a pound of ganja in New York (and a pound is not a kilo) was between 350 and 600\$ (for example, see Marijuana supply, sales, and seizures, <http://www.cedro-uva.org/lib/harrison.cannabis.04.html>, accessed August 23, 2004, or Marijuana prices by marijuana addiction.info, <http://www.marijuanaaddiction.info/marijuana-prices.htm>, accessed August 23, 2004), then in 1974 the price for that same pound could have been 400\$. Moreover this price also justifies the great amount of money made in the USA with Jamaican marijuana.

⁶⁵For more details about this subject, see especially Tom Barry, Beth Wood, and Deb Preusch, *Op. Cit.*; but also Rex Nettleford ed., *Op. Cit.*

⁶⁶ Perry Henzell talked to me about his political ideas and *The Harder They Come* in two e-mails to me, dated July 19, 2005 and July 25, 2005.

In the film, we are shown this phenomenon through the church, the music business, and the police. But the government is also involved, and all the other public services on the island.

9.6.2 *COUNTRYMAN*.

Few other films attempted to follow *The Harder They Come* in its political commitment. Maybe the changing of the political situation on the island made it more dangerous to go against the establishment. The only film which tried to give a political implication to its story was *Countryman*.

The reason why Beau and Bobby have to hide is not that they are wanted for the ganja in the plane. The amount would be so small that probably the army would not waste time on it. Their problem is that Colonel Sinclair, at the service of the political party in power, wants to make them become the scapegoat for an attempted boycott of the Jamaican elections.

When the plane crashes, Sinclair builds false evidence to show that it is “part of a CIA operation in conjunction with the opposition to disrupt the election.” In this way, the director points immediately to two factors. The first is that the CIA interferes in Jamaican elections, the second is that the officers of the army are corrupted and at the service of politics. If the Colonel’s plan works, the party already in power will maintain its place, he will have a rise in rank, and the two Americans will go to a Jamaican prison with a serious charge.

The accusation moved to the United States and the Jamaican government is powerful, but it hints at real situations in the Caribbean. In Jamaica, the CIA helped to destabilize the Manley government. Indeed, in 1980, when the film was released, Edward Seaga became Prime Minister, and his Jamaica Labour Party would remain in power for many years. Mr. Seaga’s politics was “friendly” with that of the United States. However, he came to power after years of sabotage of the Manley government, made by the CIA. At first, Manley was accused to be a communist leader, because he did not want to cut relations with Cuba. Then, since Manley did not want to comply with American foreign policies, the United States modified their relations with Jamaica, discouraging, for instance, tourism toward the island. Finally, there was a defamatory campaign against Manley both in Jamaica and abroad, aiming at discrediting both the leader and his government. Manley could not resist without the American support (also because the banks are controlled by Americans), and had to resign in 1980. The elections were violent and difficult (800 people died in the battles between opposing factions), and inevitably the opposing party, backed by the United States and friendly to them, won the election. Thus, the charge against the CIA as interfering in Jamaican elections, made in *Countryman*, is based on solid ground.

Then, the director also accuses the army's corruption. The Colonel lives in a splendid house, which he has very likely acquired with the money earned from the political party that uses him for its own ends. Moreover, he organizes the coup d'état in his own interests, not in those of the country which he says to serve. He does not care about who governs the island. All that matters to him is his personal gain and prestige.

Even if the story of *Countryman* is not focused on political criticism (as was *The Harder They Come*), it nonetheless appears throughout the film, and it is contrasted with *Countryman's* lifestyle and goodness. Indeed, the Colonel and *Countryman* are meant to be opposites. Moreover, the suggestions given in the film about the USA intervention is quite precise, since it was normal practice for the United States to subvert leftist governments and back puppet regimes. And it is also true that the Jamaican army and government were corrupted (it is debatable if they are still so today, but this does not appear in films anymore). So, the suggestion that *Countryman* makes is quite realistic, and its denunciation is effective.

9.6.3 SOCIAL COMMENTARY.

If no other Jamaican film is politically committed, it does not mean that none of them is socially aware or does not try to say something about the Jamaican social situation. *Smile Orange* and *The Lunatic*, for instance, in their criticism of the tourist industry in Jamaica, can be said to be a commentary on neo-colonial attitudes of the tourists⁶⁷. *Children of Babylon* too, as I have outlined, behind the sex scenes, attempts to analyse social structures in Jamaica and to comment on them.

But also other films, apparently estranged to this kind of stance, introduce a social commentary. *Rockers*, for instance, shows and condemns the exploitation of the Rasta musicians by the Babylon system. It is this reason that pushes Horsemouth to buy a motorbike: he wants to give a better trade to his colleagues. Moreover, some scenes, such as the one in the disco, criticize the tendency of Jamaicans to see everything Jamaican as bad and to aspire to an American-style kind of life. This is exemplified through music, but it can be applied to all sectors of Jamaican life.

Dancehall Queen comments on the fact that in Jamaica women are still viewed as sexual objects, and that for them, if they come from the ghetto, there are few opportunities to change their lives.

Third World Cop holds the same position, showing that for the ghetto youth there are few possibilities to get a decent job. For them, who grow among violence and gangs, criminality becomes the only available model. They are forced by their context to embrace this kind of life, but probably they would prefer a middle-class lifestyle. However, for these youths, the place of

⁶⁷ As I said at p.301 in this chapter, tourists often behave patronizingly with the Jamaicans, thinking that they are better than anyone else, especially of the black waiters working for them. Many times, it seems that the tourists still think to be the masters that want to be obeyed.

birth becomes a handicap, since it is unlikely that they will ever get a job uptown if they come from downtown. This is a spiral from which it is impossible to escape, and this film shows, behind the main story, exactly this situation.

Finally, in *One Love* there is the condemnation of the discrimination that still exist of the Rastas. Even if they are widely accepted today, and that prejudice has almost disappeared, Rastas still suffer discrimination. For instance, if the police has to search a car, they will go to the car with a Rasta in it, and the same is true in every other similar situation. Through an idealistic story, this film shows that it is difficult for some Jamaicans to abandon the ancient intolerance against the Rastas.

9.7 CONCLUSION.

In this chapter, I have analysed some minor themes that characterize some films. Even if some of these subjects become overwhelming, such as for instance sexuality in *Children of Babylon* or political commitment in *The Harder They Come*, they are nonetheless confined to few films, or are so secondary (such as ganja) as to go almost unnoticed. Yet these are themes which add meaning to the films, and for this reason they are worthy of analyses.

CONCLUSION: JAMAICAN CINEMA.

Jamaican cinema, as a body of works made in Jamaica by Jamaicans¹, is quite young and has produced few films. Nonetheless, it is important for many reasons. The films made so far will never be acknowledged as masterpieces, except maybe for *The Harder They Come*, but they give a realistic description of Jamaican popular culture, and they stand out as a deliberate distancing of their directors from the cultural imperialism imposed by mainstream cinema.

First of all, Jamaican cinema can be classified in the broad category of “Third Cinema”², that is a cinema different from First Cinema (Hollywood productions promoting bourgeois and imperialistic values) and Second Cinema (European art cinema focused on the personality of the *auteur*). The notion of Third Cinema was coined in the late 1960s by Argentinean filmmakers Solanas and Getino, who were searching for a cinema addressed to people living in the so-called Third World, and concentrating on their life conditions.

The Latin Americans based their notion of Third Cinema on an approach to the relations between signification and the social. They advocated a practice of cinema which, although conditioned by and tailored to the situations prevailing in Latin America, cannot be limited to that continent alone, nor for that matter to the Third World, however it is defined.³

Third Cinema, both in its scope and in its themes, was meant to be different and more in touch with the tribulations of “Third World people” than any other kind of cinema.

Though not totally belonging to this trend, not the least because of the different periods of production of Third Cinema and Jamaican cinema, the latter nevertheless presents some characteristics that appeared in that previous movement. Jamaican cinema refuses (and is refused by) Hollywood and mainstream cinema in general. It faces themes which are unknown to mainstream cinema, in that it tells the stories of Jamaicans as they are in their country, without the prejudices associated to them in the United States (especially). Moreover, it places Jamaican characters in their context, in storylines that are suited to them, in situations they are likely to encounter in their daily lives⁴. In doing this, it allows the Jamaican audience to identify with the characters, and thus to feel truly represented in the films. This, for instance, does not happen with films made abroad featuring a Jamaican character: here the “Yardie” will very likely be stereotyped (linked to the drug underworld and depicted as a murderer, or trying to get a visa to escape from Jamaica by having sex with/marrying tourists), therefore missing the opportunity to represent the great majority of the island’s population.

¹ See Introduction, p.10, for an explanation of what I think is a Jamaican film.

² See Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, *Op. Cit.*, and the Introduction of this thesis, pp.7-9.

³ Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, *Op. Cit.*, p.8. There is not a clear definition, in this book, of what Third Cinema is, but only what it promotes and what it refuses. It is treated more as a concept than as a program. Yet, it is quite clear what is meant by this term.

⁴ Though, of course, fictionalised to be rendered suitable for feature films.

Jamaican cinema has never received any help from Hollywood, though Hollywood has come many times to the island to shoot sequences of or whole films “on location”. However, thanks to this, Jamaican directors have learned how to make films from Hollywood crews, and as a consequence they have taken what could be useful to them and they have used it for their own purposes. This is what most of all links Jamaican cinema to Third Cinema. It uses mainstream cinema techniques to convey the lives, the struggles and the socio-political commentaries of a whole country which does not belong to the few over-privileged nations of the world.

This attitude is the main reason why, on the other hand, mainstream cinema in its turn does not acknowledge Jamaican cinema (and so many other national film productions). The stories told in Jamaican films do not conform to Hollywood “rules”, and many times subtly accuse the Western world, especially the United States, of being among the causes of the country’s many political and economical problems. Jamaican cinema, as many non-mainstream cinemas, is oftentimes critical of whatever is mainstream.

The reason why Jamaican cinema cannot totally belong to Third Cinema is that, in order to gather an audience, it needs to keep the pace with the changing times. This is also one of the reasons why Jamaican directors need to borrow some of Hollywood’s techniques: action movies with a thrill and gunshots, relying on easy and cherished stories of bad guys fighting good cops, are a sure way to marketability. These films may not have the sophistication of some of the new mainstream movies, and for sure they do not have the same special effects, but they are certain to be appreciated in their home country. Had they been “art” films, they would not have had the success they encountered on the island.

As a consequence, Jamaican cinema, while maintaining its difference from Hollywood, has incorporated features that could please the local (and international) audience, such as for instance humour, sexuality and music⁵.

There is another category in which Jamaican cinema could be included: that of independent cinema. Generally, assumptions about indie cinema are made taking for granted that it is just an American phenomenon. This is, for instance, the definition that Andrew Butler gives of it:

Usually low-budget movies, made out of studio control, often personal expressions akin to ART CINEMA. Given the limited amount of independent distribution, so-called independent films are often completed by studio money and distributed with their other products. Some studios have divisions dedicated to making quasi-Independent product or manufacturing sleeper hits. [The] Term only really has meaning in relation to American films of the 1980s and 1990s.⁶

⁵ See the quotation from Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Op. Cit.*, in the Introduction, p.9.

⁶ Andrew M. Butler, *Op. Cit.*, p.86.

This restriction to twenty years of “real” independent films probably relates to the debates that see, nowadays, so-called indie productions as just another product of major studios, which see them merely as another marketable opportunity and thus include them in their policies in order not to leave anything out of their control. The Sundance Film Festival, for instance, which was born as an occasion where to show independent films, is losing credibility today because of the always increasing presence of major studios among the films presented and the people judging them. Every definition of independent cinema points to the fact that films must be free from major studios and made with low budgets.

An independent film, or indie film, is a film that is produced mostly outside of a major film studio. The term also refers to art films which differ markedly from most mass marketed films. In addition to being produced by independent production companies, independent films are often produced and/or distributed by subsidiaries of major studios. In order to be considered independent, less than half a film’s financing should come from a major studio. Independent films are sometimes distinguishable by their content and style and the way in which the filmmakers’ personal artistic vision is realized. Usually, but not always, independent films are made with considerably lower budgets than major studio films. Generally, the marketing of independent films is characterized by limited release designed to build word-of-mouth or to reach small specialty audiences.⁷

It is clear that Jamaican cinema shares many of these characteristics: low budget, independence from major studios, and small production companies for their distribution. Among these, Lions Gate Films and Palm Pictures, which are recognized to be among “the most prevalent of the modern independent studios”⁸.

It must be noted, however, that even if these definitions point toward American indie films, the notion of an independent film can be applied to other countries’ cinemas too. These are even more independent because of their (physical) distance from Hollywood. For all the aforementioned reasons, Jamaican cinema can be included in the category of independent cinema beyond any doubt. Still, there is a major difference between Jamaican cinema and the indie movement: the former is not art cinema⁹. On the contrary, it is rather popular and commercial. First of all, Jamaican cinema is made for a local audience, and thus has to tempt Jamaicans to go to see the film. It must show stories with which the islanders can identify, or it will not be appreciated. Of course, when a Jamaican

⁷ Independent cinema, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_cinema, accessed November 11, 2009.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Andrew Butler, in *Op. Cit.*, p.80, gives this definition of art cinema: “term used to describe films, predominantly made outside of Hollywood, that attempt to act as personal expressions rather than simply to make money, and which may be considered AVANT-GARDE. They often feature non-linear narratives, if indeed they have narratives at all, feature open endings and ambiguous morals – in other words reject CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD. Peter Wollen describes such films as COUNTER CINEMA. These films often play in repertory art cinemas rather than multiplexes, although can occasionally turn into a hit. Arguably much of so-called INDEPENDENT cinema is art cinema.”

director makes a film, he hopes it will reach a crossover audience, and maybe international success. But he knows that the first step toward this global recognition is in his mother country, and he knows that, lacking proper distribution, it will be difficult for his film to be seen outside of Jamaica. Maybe it will reach Jamaican communities in England, Canada and the United States, but other countries and non-Jamaicans will likely never see it. As a consequence, a Jamaican director recurs to stories he knows will be appreciated by his local audience. And, as it is recognized by many critics, action movies are among the most popular genres all over the world.

Moreover, since the target audience is the lower strata of Jamaican society, the films need to be accessible to them. Of course, the whole Jamaican society goes to see Jamaican films, and the whole society can identify with the stories and the characters. But the stories are generally set in the urban “ghettoes” and reflect that environment, so that the portion of society depicted is also basically the portion of society a director wants to address. Not by chance, this is also the greatest portion of Jamaican society in general. This is one of the reasons why the films sometimes lack sophistication. This is not to say that Jamaican directors do not know how to make a film, nor that the (lower-class) Jamaican audience is ignorant or cannot tell a good film from a bad one, but just that for them (as it is true of all lower classes in the world, and very often not only of lower classes) art cinema might result boring or even nonsensical. Art cinema is directed to quite a restricted audience, which is supposed to understand, and hopefully share, the director’s ideas. Moreover, its techniques are refined and require an active participation of the spectator in their decoding. All over the world, this kind of cinema is aimed at people who are familiar with cinematic languages, and who also have some kind of education. Arguably, audiences who do not possess these qualities will not appreciate art cinema. This is why it is considered a niche cinema, and it seldom is marketable.

This can explain why Jamaican cinema is so “simplistic”: in pleasing popular tastes, it is sure that it will gather a numerous audience, and that it will be appreciated by everyone. The stories are not sophisticated, they do not require an educated public, they reflect the stories of working-class Jamaicans. Every person can go to the cinema and understand the film, and then judge whether the film is good or not. This is what happened, for instance, with the film *Klash*, which had no success on the island because deemed a bad film. Thus, a Jamaican film need not be just populist. It has to be a good film pleasing the Jamaican popular taste.

The major reason why Jamaican films are appreciated by Jamaican audiences is that they reflect the Jamaican “way of life”. They represent Jamaican people in a Jamaican context. Moreover, the films, taken in a chronological order, show the evolution of Jamaica’s society and culture, so that the audience can feel at ease and experience the pleasure of recognizing their own culture on the screen. As is true for any other cultural form, cinema is not static, but progresses along with any other

cultural product. It is true that cinema can be totally detached from contemporary reality, for instance representing historical facts, fantastic or futuristic events, and so on, but this is not the case with Jamaican cinema. Since its beginnings, Jamaican cinema has always aimed at representing “real” Jamaica, even if realism has not always been its favourite technique. Taking for granted that the stories are fictionalised to be suitable for the cinematic medium, the films nonetheless show situations that can be expected on the island: marijuana smoking/dealing, sexual tourism, dancehall competitions, and so on. Since Jamaican films have been made in a period of approximately thirty-five years, they reveal the evolution of Jamaica in this period of time.

The most obvious way to show the changes is by considering the “look” of the characters. Clothes, accessories, furniture and cars are updated in every film. But other adjustments are more important and concern more deeply the people’s lives. For instance, the films seen in their chronology show the variations of the “ghetto” and of its perception by Kingstonians. In *The Harder They Come*, Trench Town is represented as a place for poor people, but not as a hopeless place. Here are the destitute, the jobless, the people who survive just by their wits, but at the same time these people are united, live in harmony, help each other if they can. They share the same kind of life, thus they know how important it is to have someone to count on in moments of difficulty, even if the difficulties are shared by the whole community. In this film, the ghetto is a hard place to live, but it is also the only place in Kingston where to find solidarity. For this reason it is opposed to uptown, where people live isolated in their big houses, despising the lower classes, and living just with and for their families.

In *Rockers* Trench Town is depicted in the same way: only here do all the Rasta musicians contribute to the money necessary to buy the motorbike, and only here are they all happy for Horsemouth’s success. Again, the contrast is with rich people, who try to keep ghetto people in miserable conditions by stealing all their belongings.

The films made in the 1990s show a different vision of the “ghetto”, since they were made after actual changes in downtown Kingston. During the 1980s, the various downtown areas were exploited by politicians, who armed the youth to assure the (coercive) support of their areas to their parties. The violence of that time never completely disappeared, the guns remained, and the ghettos became dangerous places. This stigma is still attached to downtown Kingston, universally viewed as one of the most unsafe places in the world. Though political violence has diminished (but not disappeared), today the place is dangerous because the gangs’ headquarters are located there. Of course, what is universally forgotten is that there are also ordinary people living downtown, people who do not have the opportunity to move to other areas, honest people who are working and manage to survive downtown, rumours about the place notwithstanding.

Marcia, in *Dancehall Queen*, lives in Trench Town, but this has become a place to be feared. Many times, during the film, there are hints at the fact that it is not a safe place to live in, and that chances are for people who live there to start relationships with other ghetto dwellers, since uptown people would not want to be related to those living in a ghetto.

The same is true in *Third World Cop*. The ghetto has become a place ruled by a gang, that carries out there its illegal traffics. Yet in this film there is hope, again. The dancehall night organized by Ratty has a particular function¹¹: it is a peace dance that wants to mark and celebrate a period of peace between two formerly hostile areas. Rita clearly explains that the area was torn by warfare between gangs, but now they have agreed to a peace “treaty”, and the place is safe again. To honour it, a dancehall is organized, an event where people can communicate and share joy and love.

In the co-produced films, the ghettos turn into a place where only criminals find refuge. Here downtown Kingston really becomes a dangerous place, to be feared: it is an area where gangs rule, drugs are smuggled, and gunshots are an everyday matter. It seems that the only people living there are criminals.

Another aspect that changes throughout the films is the drug traffic. It started with marijuana, and in small quantities. Even when smuggled to the United States, *The Harder They Come* shows us that ganja is transported on small planes, the trade is not organized by international warlords. Moreover, the dealers are friends, they share the profits of the ganja selling. The whole trade is suffused with joyfulness and cheerfulness. On the contrary, by the last film, when the drug trafficking has changed from marijuana to cocaine, it has lost every trace of humanity. It is a highly competitive business, where the more pitiless one is, the more successful he is.

More generally, the music used in the films mirrors the changes in Jamaican society, which in turn mirrors the changes in the world. Every nation has been facing periodically various shifts in its cultural values, and this has happened in Jamaica too, both autonomously and because influenced by foreign models. As Pedro Noguera, in an essay about popular culture in the Caribbean, clearly explains:

During the 1960s and ‘70s in most parts of the Caribbean [...] a more general affirmation and ascendance of the once repressed Afro-Creole culture took place. Throughout this period, nationalist expressions which affirmed these cultural traditions were combined with support for contemporary expressions of popular culture which were rooted in the reality and experience of the lower classes. [...] The rise of nationalist consciousness in politics was matched by an outpouring of nationalist expressions in literature, music and the arts. [...]

In contrast, the 1980s and ‘90s have been characterized by a decline in nationalist tendencies and a strengthening of neo-colonial attachments. Though efforts to facilitate the construction

¹¹ See Chapter 4, p.109.

of an authentic Caribbean identity have continued to be central to the work of numerous Caribbean scholars and artists, the deepening structural dependence of the region's economy has mitigated against its emergence.¹²

So, for instance, in the 1970s we can hear Rasta-influenced music¹³, preaching about respect and justice. In the United States, the same period witnessed the birth of the Flower Power Movement, which had a few things in common with Rastafari. Among these, the desire to change the social order to reach equal rights for every person, the use of marijuana (though for different reasons), the wish for a more natural way of life, and the stress on “peace and love”. During the 1980s, things changed. The world saw a dramatic move toward conservative policies, the international economic problems made things difficult for every country, culture receded into less relevant themes. It is often said that the 1980s were a decade where – apparently – nothing serious happened. The music itself seemed to change, to be for its own sake, abandoning the topics of the previous period. No more justice, peace and love, but hedonism, sex and money-making at all costs. Jamaican music faced the same change, which was also caused by the political violence that met those who dared to oppose the party in power (which was backed by the United States and strengthened the neo-colonial ties with that country). Thus, the songs' subjects became sex, the objectification (and vilification) of women, and the boasting of the deejays about themselves: what was called by Jamaicans “slackness”. The 1990s saw another shift, toward a new consciousness raising, a new point of view on the social problems. Again, the Jamaican scene followed the world trend. Through the changes of the soundtrack in the films, one can get an idea of the various alterations of Jamaican culture through the last four decades.

Yet, Jamaican cinema does not only reflect changes in society and culture, but also in technology. The achievement itself of the films has evolved throughout the years. Perry Henzell started in 1972 using a 16mm camera, and doing much of the editing work himself. *Dancehall Queen* was the first film shot with digital techniques, and today almost everything is shot in digital. The opportunities to make a film may not have changed on the island¹⁴, but the way to make it has indeed.

Jamaican cinema, reflecting Jamaican (low) culture and depicting the lower classes of the country, shares also some trends of postmodernism, for which the distinction between “high” culture and “low” culture is less and less meaningful¹⁵. Actually, as many critics claim (for instance Jameson,

¹² Pedro A. Noguera, *Education and Popular Culture in the Caribbean: Youth Resistance in a Period of Economic Uncertainty*, in Alvina Ruprecht and Cecilia Taiana eds., *Op. Cit.*, pp.419-420.

¹³ A brief history of Jamaican music is presented in Appendix 2.

¹⁴ See quotation from Chris Browne, in the Introduction, p.7.

¹⁵ Many books and essays have been written on the subject of postmodernism. To quote them all would be impossible and useless for the aim of this thesis. However, alongside the seminal books by the theorizers of postmodernism, such as Frederic Jameson, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, or the theorizers of structuralism and post-structuralism, such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and so on, there are other authors belonging to other disciplines, such as Adorno, Althusser, Gramsci and so on, and others still such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel De

Harvey, Foster, and Storey, among others), it would be more correct to speak about *postmodernisms* in the plural, since there is no univocal definition of what the term indicates.

There can be no single authoritative account, still less a dictionary definition of postmodernism. More than any other term of contemporary theory, many of which argue to the same effect, it makes clear that there is a plurality of possible meanings: postmodernisms rather than one postmodernism.¹⁶

In fact, postmodernism has been involved in many (probably all) disciplines, since its main thrust is a rebellion against many facets of Modernism, after the latter's assimilation in the academy and its acceptance of its elitism; it would also be more correct to talk about a "condition" rather than a definable style.

The response of the postmodern 'new sensibility' to modernism's canonization was a re-evaluation of popular culture. The postmodernism of the 1960s was therefore in part a populist attack on the elitism of modernism. [...] postmodernism first emerges out of a generational refusal of the categorical certainties of high modernism. The insistence on an absolute distinction between high and popular culture came to be regarded as the 'unhip' assumption of an older generation.¹⁷

Peter Brooker gives this definition of the period of "postmodernity" in his glossary of cultural theory:

'Postmodernity' is commonly used to refer to a historical and cultural period, primarily in the advanced information and consumer societies of the West. The precise dating of this period is a matter of debate. (Jameson sees its beginnings in the 1950s and 1960s, David Harvey [1989] the economic slump of the 1970s. Others point to the 1980s). Some, moreover, view this transition as a radical break with an earlier phase of 'MODERNITY', while others see an intensification and acceleration of existing processes. [...] What is being discussed are the compound changes that have taken Western capitalism into a new phase [...] and are otherwise commonly described as 'late' or 'multi-' or 'global' capitalism.¹⁸

As regards postmodernism itself, the same glossary gives this definition:

'Postmodernism' [...] is used to refer to particular cultural texts and the sensibility or condition [...] of the period of postmodernity. This aims to describe a prevailing postmodern AESTHETIC, evident in literary texts, films, TV, music, buildings, environments, street fashion, and so on. This has been identified [...] as the conspicuous display of a formal self-consciousness, a borrowing from other texts and styles across GENRES in such a way that

Certeau, or David Harvey for instance, who greatly influenced the movement. Moreover, other authors have worked on glossaries, editions of essays and the like to try to grasp the meaning of postmodernism, such as John Storey, Hal Foster, or Peter Brooker, among the others.

¹⁶ Peter Brooker, *Cultural Theory: A Glossary*, London, New York, Sydney, Auckland, Arnold, a member of the Hodder Headline Group, 1999, p.199.

¹⁷ John Storey, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, in Stuart Sim ed., *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, New York, Routledge, 1999, pp.147-148.

¹⁸ Peter Brooker, *Op. Cit.*, pp.197-198.

distinctions between high and low CULTURE, Western and other cultures, or the past and present are broken down. The result is a self-ironic eclecticism and knowingness, experienced by media-wise audiences and readers along with the postmodern artist, as well versed in the use of the key postmodernist devices of PASTICHE, PARODY, recycling and sampling. Postmodernism in this light is playful and allusive; its works are self-referential and intertextual METAFICTIONS – or meta-architecture or meta-film – exploiting a bank of past texts and diverse cultural forms, made available in the here and now of a seeming ‘perpetual present’ by computerization and new media technologies.¹⁹

A clear example of meta-film is, for instance, *The Harder They Come*, where the director consciously quotes another past film, Sergio Corbucci’s *Django*²⁰, for purposes pertaining to his narrative of Ivan’s “heroic” adventures and death. Then, among the others, *Rockers* broadly appropriates the storyline of *Bicycle Thieves*²¹, while *Third World Cop* quotes mafia films about Al Capone and the gangster genre.

Postmodernism refuses the notion of a “high” culture imposed by an elite, seeing in many various manifestations of popular taste another culture – the so-called “low” culture – as valuable as the former. Without distinctions between the two, the value to be given to “cultural” texts of whatever genre has to be negotiated between various social groups, in order to create or modify social orders and relationships between them²². This, as a consequence, blurs the borders between culture and theory. As John Storey concludes:

Perhaps the most significant thing about postmodernism for the student of popular culture, is the dawning recognition that there is no absolute categorical difference between high and popular culture. [...] there are no longer any easy reference points, to which we can refer, and which will automatically preselect for us the good from the bad. [...] without easy recourse to fixed categories of value, it calls for rigorous, if always contingent, standards, if our task is to separate the good from the bad, the usable from the obsolete, the progressive from the reactionary.²³

The trend to re-evaluate low culture started after World War II, and especially in the 1960s, when the world experienced a broadening of cultural possibilities. Television started to acquire an overwhelming importance, music was the vehicle for the youth to express their feelings, fashion became another way to communicate one’s identity. Literature ceased to be centred on “great” novels and “high” poetry, to encompass serialized novels, popular poetry, songs’ lyrics and so on. This new cultural system needed a new critical reflection and new ways to approach it. This is the

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.198.

²⁰ Sergio Corbucci, *Django*, Italy/Spain, B.R.C. Produzione s.r.l. and Tecisa, 1966.

²¹ Vittorio De Sica, *Ladri di Biciclette*, Italy, Produzioni De Sica, 1948.

²² See, about this subject, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 1984, quoted in John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, Essex, England, Pearson Education Limited, 2001.

²³ John Storey, *Ibidem*, p.169.

reason why Cultural Studies were born and, in 1979, in Birmingham, the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies was created, as a place where to theorize new understandings of postmodern society. One of the main focuses was the new media, among which cinema was prominent. Their aim was to study everything considered as “culture” to give voice to people until then marginalized and denied expression, people left out of/by high culture.

Culturalists study cultural texts and practices in order to reconstitute or reconstruct the experiences, values, etc. – the ‘structure of feeling’ of particular groups or classes or whole societies, in order to better understand the lives of those who lived the culture.²⁴

It is as difficult to define popular (or low) culture as it is to define postmodernism. Peter Brooker’s glossary gives again a useful explanation:

Popular culture can designate the culture of the ‘people’ or working class (or sometimes ‘working people’); folk culture; youth or SUBCULTURES; or popular GENRES in fiction and film. Often the term has been accompanied by a judgement of VALUE which views these cultural forms as authentic or as banal and conformist. Furthermore, such qualitative judgements may be contrasted or supported by a quantitative description which measures the popular by how conspicuous it is or by its commercial success. This is the most common underlying definition, equating the popular (and popular attitudes and taste) with the products of MASS production processes and the mass media. In another important distinction the popular in this latter case is produced ‘for’ and not ‘by’ the mass or the people, who are consequently defined as consumers.²⁵

John Storey acknowledges the difficulty to give a univocal definition of “popular culture” when he proposes seven different ways to understand it, and at the same time highlights the weakness of every description²⁶. Thus, he says that popular culture is “culture which is favoured or well liked by many people”, “culture which is left over after we have decided what is high culture”, “mass culture”, “culture which originates from ‘the people’”, “a site of struggle between the ‘resistance’ of subordinate groups in society and the forces of ‘incorporation’ operating in the interests of dominant groups in society”, “culture [...] informed by recent thinking around the debate on postmodernism”, and finally “a culture that only emerged following industrialization and urbanization”.

The wide spectrum along which it is possible to find popular culture has meant that one single theoretical frame is not sufficient enough to understand it. Hence, the postmodern recourse to various theories to explain what is far from being universally accepted – both in its meaning and in its value.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p.57.

²⁵ Peter Brooker, *Op. Cit.*, p.190.

²⁶ See John Storey, *Op. Cit.*, pp.6-14.

Work in this field has consequently employed a number of explanatory concepts from theories of IDEOLOGY (especially HEGEMONY), GENDER, RECEPTION, and the construction of the SUBJECT. Much of the study along these lines (Fiske, Hebdige, McRobbie) has sought to view the popular, whether in relation to the mass media or youth cultures, as the positive expression of cultural meanings, as a subversive or CARNIVALESQUE rebuff to the homogenizing intent of DOMINANT ideology [...] This has suggested affinities with some of the more pluralist definitions of POSTMODERNISM.²⁷

One of the reasons for the emergence of popular culture, as all critics agree, is the creation of the late capitalist order (in Jameson's words²⁸), and the globalisation of the media. In fact, as I have already said, the fields which have been more studied as exemplar popular culture are television, cinema, and music. Their spread was due to the development of cultural industries, which started to create not only the products to be consumed but also the needs and desires for them – advertising is perhaps the most clear example of this trend. Culture industry makes it appear as if new things are already popular, and absolutely necessary, and it includes in its products what has been marginalized and deemed not good enough for high culture – that is, popular culture.

The industry attempts to produce what the public (or, at any rate, the more affluent sections of it) wants. But at the same time it generates public desire by marketing its products [...] as if they were already popular. [...] People will buy what other people love and desire. Through these political and commercial tactics and logics, the popular is constantly pushed towards the normal, even the universal.²⁹

Cinema, being one of the most popular forms of entertainment, belongs beyond any doubt to the category of popular culture. Specifically, Jamaican cinema includes features of postmodernism in that it consciously mixes the images with music and various other references, in a *pastiche*³⁰ cherished by postmodern artists:

The pleasure of the texts consciously spills over into an audience's knowledge of other films, other performances, other musics. [...] The referent becomes part of the treasure house of signifiers that constitute popular culture.³¹

What I have tried to do in this thesis can be included in the field of cultural studies, since I have analysed Jamaican films, decidedly belonging to popular culture (mass entertainment for the working class), in order to reconstruct the experiences and values of the island to better understand the lives of those who live and create its culture.

²⁷ Peter Brooker, *Op. Cit.*, p.191.

²⁸ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London and New York, Verso, Duke University Press, 1991.

²⁹ Simon During ed., *The Cultural Studies Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993, p.23.

³⁰ This word, as a characteristic of the postmodern condition, has been used extensively by Frederic Jameson, especially. See *Op. Cit.*

³¹ Val Hill and Peter Every, *Postmodernism and the Cinema*, in Stuart Sim ed., *Op. Cit.*, p.104.

In fact, an analysis of Jamaican films demonstrates the existence of a Jamaican tradition, even if a young one, and made of few works³². All Jamaican films face more or less the same themes, through the same method, and they focus on the same social class. Every aspect analysed in this thesis proves that Jamaican cinema wants to be “local”, in that it wants to show the country and its people as close as possible to what they actually are. Moreover, it promotes Jamaican “low” culture as the most valuable sign of authenticity of the island. It does not matter if Hollywood does not accept this cinema; Jamaica will prove to be culturally independent from it in showing the richness of its culture.

The very first feature of Jamaican films that strikes a non-Jamaican audience, language (Jamaican Patwa), is itself an act of rebellion against mainstream cinema³³. It is almost unintelligible to foreigners who are not used to it, and for this reason becomes a strong stand in the hands of the various directors. They prefer to use Jamaican rather than Standard English, even if they know that also because of this their films will not find a proper distribution. They use language for emancipatory purposes, to assert the country’s identity, independence and authority. Both Patwa and its variant of Rasta talk³⁴ are acts of resistance to English, and to its imposition of colonialism and mental slavery. In talking their own language, Jamaicans reclaim their identity, autonomous from the English definition of it given during colonialism.

Jamaican directors show in their films the broad linguistic spectrum available to Jamaicans, hinting at the economic, ethnic, and cultural factors that dictate a person’s choice of the language he/she wants to use. It is not by chance that in these films Standard English is spoken by rich and fair-complexioned people, while Jamaican is used by working-class blacks. A fair complexion, for historical reasons, generally means an easier access to wealth, and thus also to education. Since people usually believe that an educated person should speak Standard English, still considered as a marker of social prestige, it becomes a distinctive sign from the lower classes, which instead use Jamaican, considered by the upper classes as uneducated and unsophisticated. On the other hand, those who are not mentally enslaved, and recognize Patwa’s intrinsic value, despise the mimicry of English, and prefer to use their language instead of the former colonizers’ one.

The choice of Jamaican as a cinematic language demonstrates the authenticity, the maturity and the sense of identity of the island’s directors. Indeed, the use of Jamaican gives a faithful portrayal of the country, and the films are clearly sympathetic with the Patwa-speakers. The directors chose not to bow to money-making strategies, and to show Jamaica in its natural linguistic variations.

³² The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Fifth Edition*, Oxford University Press, 1995, gives this definition of tradition: “a belief or custom passed on in this way; any established method, practice, etc.”.

³³ See Chapter 2 for an analysis of language in Jamaican films, especially pp.30-37.

³⁴ See Chapter 2, pp.44-47.

Jamaican cinema's evaluation of local low culture is also reflected in the use of the soundtrack, which reflects the island's popular tastes. Music is fundamental in Jamaica, it is part of everyday life for every islander. It is one of the few ways to express various kinds of feelings, and for a long time it has been one of the few means of survival for a large section of society. Directors make a huge use of music, and they include it in the films in many ways³⁵. It can be said that music and films are the two faces of the same coin; in more than one aspect they reflect and complete each other. Indeed, Jamaican music (mento, ska, rocksteady, reggae, but also dancehall and ragga) is a reflection of Jamaican society, both in its evolution and in its lyrics that evoke and/or condemn Jamaican social problems. On the other hand, films too are a reflection on Jamaican society. In an obvious way, the films mix with music to give a more complete picture of the country, and some films go as far as staging acclaimed musicians in main roles to link more firmly cinematographic and musical popular cultures of the island, and to gather a wider audience. Again, it is not by chance that many films were shot in Trench Town, maybe the most famous ghetto in Kingston: here reggae was born, and with it many of its most acclaimed performers.

When they depict dance, Jamaican films look for popular dance, in their quest for the depiction of the lower classes of society. There are many types of dance on the island, but the directors did not want to focus on the sophisticated one, nor on the religious one. They pointed instead to the dancehalls, the places where lower classes meet to have social experiences³⁶. These places are despised by the upper classes, who see them as spaces focused on sexuality, where women dance provocatively and scantily dressed, and where drugs are easily available because of the people attending them: dangerous locations to be avoided by the "decent" people who have a "high moral status" – that is, uptown residents. In the films, however, there is an emphasis on the social value of this institution, and it is depicted as a joyful location, where working-class people can be free to express themselves without the constraints of what is expected to be a "respectable" behaviour outside the boundaries of the dancehall.

Dance has had a great importance in Jamaican life since the beginning of slavery, when it became for the slaves one of the few means of communication and a mode of resistance to white oppression. Moreover, dance has been a means of expression in religion, in socio-political protests and for the identity, especially, of women. The contemporary dancehall has created a lively debate in Jamaica: while a great majority of the population views it as a corrupting habit, many scholars think this is a place where young people positively assert their values and convey their frustrations about a life that offers them few opportunities. They see it as one of the most important spaces where the youths

³⁵ See Chapter 3 for an analysis of the use of music in the films, and Appendix 2 for a brief history of Jamaican music.

³⁶ See Chapter 4 for an analysis of the role and importance of dancehalls in lower classes' lives, especially pp.100-103, and pp.111-115 for the description of the contemporary dancehall scene.

express themselves, creating one of the most renowned Jamaican features outside of the island. In other words, dancehall has become a real culture, and among the most popular for that matter.

The reasons why dancehall is so reviled are basically two: first of all there are the songs' lyrics focusing on the objectification of the woman, the sexual prowess of the deejays and the so-called gun talk; then, there are the outfits of the dancehall divas and their sexually explicit movements. Yet, some scholars³⁷ are valuing these same things in a positive way because they see them as a means (maybe the only one) through which women can finally and freely express their sexuality. In the dancehall, there happens to appear a reverse of the usual (patriarchal) behaviour in Jamaican society: here the male is subjected to the female body, he has to obey the rules set by the dancers.

Apart from the debate on the women participants, however, the dancehall is objectively important for other reasons. Its primary role has been in the formation of a lower class culture. Here a (low) culture for the people who have no access to (high) Culture is created and experienced every day. Moreover, the dancehall is also a space where the lower classes can convey and release their frustrations about their social conditions, thus preventing rebellions and civil wars. In the dancehall the downtown youth deal with poverty, violence, racism and exploitation; they create their identity; they find a medium for communication, social interaction, education, moral leadership, political action, and economic activity; they find a safety valve for their anger; and finally they assert their values in contrast to uptown values. The dancehall is one of the places where the creation of low culture is most evident, and it is as such that it is depicted in Jamaican cinema.

Jamaican culture can then be found in various Afro-Christian (or syncretic) religious practices, and in the ever growing Rastafari movement. Jamaican cinema pays homage to these forms of worship because, again, they belong to the lower classes of society, even if Rastafari, since its birth, is creating a culture that is spreading across the whole world³⁸.

The religions presented in the films are not the great Established Religions, but sects of Christianity syncretized with African beliefs, distinguishable from each other by the amount of African practices survived (even the Non Conformist Christian Churches, such as Pentecostalism or Evangelism, can be said to be syncretic religions, especially in their forms of worship). The beliefs depicted are not those of the former planters, but instead those of the former slaves: those religions which arrived on the slave ships and mixed in the Caribbean with elements of Catholicism, Anglicanism, and so on. These religions, such as Kumina or Revival, are despised by the upper classes and deemed superstitious and backward, but they demonstrate the still strong presence of "Africanisms" in

³⁷ Chief among whom is Carolyn Cooper, Professor of the University of the West Indies and Head of the Reggae Studies Unit in the same university. See *Op. Cit.*

³⁸ See Chapter 5 for an analysis of Revival (pp.131-134), Obeah (pp.135-140), Kumina (pp.140-143), Evangelism (pp.126-130), Pentecostalism (pp.172-173), and Rastafari (pp.143-154 – the Bobo Ashanti group is analysed at pp.178-180).

Jamaica. Even if Jamaicans today have almost nothing to do with Africa, especially with the Africa from where the first slaves came since the 16th century, traces of that civilization are still present in their forms of worship, beside some linguistic patterns both in Patwa and in some religious practices, such as Kumina. These religions' survival has been made possible thanks to the lower classes, who have remained in touch with their ancient roots, refusing the "Americanisation" that has affected the upper classes.

Rastafari, on the other hand, is a purely Jamaican experience, but it was created among the poorer people of society, the dispossessed, who, beside having nothing on their own, were also marginalized and brutalized because of their new belief. Today Rastafari is becoming more and more accepted, with members of the middle- and upper-classes embracing the faith and its principles, but it is still viewed with some suspicion. It is popular, and less discriminated, outside of Jamaica, where many people see it as an alternative and natural way of life. Rastafari is generally depicted with sympathy in the films, showing a "good" side of Jamaica: religious, supportive and caring. The flaws that can be found in the religion or the people who practice it are usually disregarded by supportive directors, who prefer to depict the goodness of religion and ignore the human factor that can sometimes stain it.

The religions that the directors decided to include in their films reflect once again the working-class Jamaica, the target audience of Jamaican cinema. Religion is used to add another fragment to what emerges as a Jamaican (low) culture, which reveals itself to be rich and valuable as much as, if not even more than, high culture. Moreover, the African reminiscences of the syncretized religions contribute to the rehabilitation of African culture, destroyed by colonialism, and deemed as non-existent, savage and backward by white masters.

Another aspect which is useful in order to understand the target audience, and the social class depicted in the films, is that of the locations³⁹. Jamaican films are mostly set in downtown Kingston, the area that is continually marketed abroad as one of the most dangerous places on earth, where the poorest people of the city live. However, Jamaican films try to discredit the stereotypes created around downtown Kingston, showing that there are other things there apart from violence and poverty. Jamaican directors express sympathy for the sufferers, and make clear that most of the times ghetto dwellers do not have many choices about their lives.

In the films, there is a constant confrontation between uptown and downtown. Many details, such as houses, denoting wealth and social status, concur to show the great difference between the two parts of the city, and they are meant to be a social commentary about Jamaican life conditions. They show that on the island discrimination still exists, maybe not based on skin colour, but certainly on wealth

³⁹ See Chapter 6: in this chapter I analyse locations and settings, including the houses that characterize the characters.

(even if it is not by chance that the poorest people are also the darker skinned). The films also show that uptown lacks one of the fundamental features of downtown: the yard culture. It is the one condition that provides solidarity among the ghetto dwellers. On the contrary, uptown is characterized by selfishness and isolation, a place where people can afford to buy material things but where they also lack human proximity.

All directors show sympathy with the downtown locations. They acknowledge that life in that part of the town is hard (not just because of the violence, but also, probably mainly, because of the poverty), yet they also seem to convey the message that it is more joyful and supportive than uptown. In their depiction of the “ghettoes”, directors show that there is hope for the future, that in this part of the city the true culture of Jamaica, the one created by its inhabitants – far from the academy but experiencing life on the island day by day – can be found in many aspects, which are also explored in the films: music, language, dance, and so on.

The films set in the countryside tend to show it as beautiful, yet the same patterns are used as in the “urban” films: houses, cars, and so on are used to denote the status of the characters. What changes is just the setting, not the message. In these cases, the countryside, as peaceful and innately good, is opposed to Kingston, as evil and chaotic.

Hence, through the choices of their locations, Jamaican directors show a country which is beautiful, but at the same time full of contradictions. In this, they give a realistic portrait of the island. Indeed, Jamaica is attractive also because of its inconsistencies, and in this its capital city reflects its status as a metropolis of a “Third World” country, immersed in modernity, emulating more powerful “First World” countries such as the United States, and yet expressing its own identity, unique and different from that of any other country because of its history and of its people.

As to the characters, their looks become important for the directors, especially in gangster films⁴⁰. In this case too they point to characters belonging to the lower classes of society: in fact, the gangsters shown in the films come from those strata, and they engage in criminal behaviour because they see no other opportunity for them. These people know that they will not be offered jobs, because of the place they live in and because their economic conditions have prevented them from having an education or a marketable skill. Thus they know that they have to find an alternative way to survive. Criminality is the easiest way to make money fast, it does not matter if life expectancy is quite short in this activity.

The potential for quick and easy access to cash, and the thrill derived from participating in a trade in which violence and glamour characterize the lifestyles of those who are most successful, have made drug dealing one of the most visible manifestations of this new

⁴⁰ See Chapter 7 for an analysis of look, means of transport, and other characteristics of the protagonists of the films.

rebellious and defiant youth culture. Despite its self-destructive and socially malevolent consequences, these illicit activities are being construed as a viable means for “beating the system” that is increasingly perceived as negligent and unresponsive to the needs of Caribbean youth.⁴¹

Obviously, only a minority of the ghetto dwellers turns to gangsterism as a way of life. The majority of the people finds other ways to survive, even if their life conditions remain similar to those of the gangsters before they enter the underworld.

In order to be a “real” gangster, it seems, one has to possess a certain style, in clothes and accessories. Since gangsters have generally lead a life of deprivation in the ghetto, the first and most effective way to show off one’s newly acquired wealth is to start wearing expensive clothes, following the latest fashion. Then follow cars, houses, and accessories. Jewelry, in particular, is a quick and useful way to show one’s affluence: the bigger it is, the more money one has. It does not matter if it is chains, bracelets, watches or anything else. What matters is that it be visible, a clear sign that a dispossessed person has acquired riches.

Uptown and foreign people generally have a different concept of elegance. For them, who tend to follow Euro-American fashion standards, the downtown dress code is viewed as “vulgar” and “awkward”. Yet, in depicting them, the directors once again demonstrate that it is not so. The fashion may be different from the Euro-American one, but it is not at all random. On the contrary, people (as everywhere in the world, no matter the social status) pay attention to what they wear, and they carefully choose it. There are reasons for the various dress codes, and Jamaican films illustrate, and sympathise with, the awareness of downtown people of the importance of appearance in our Western societies.

Since most of the protagonists of Jamaican films are gangsters, the overwhelming majority of characters are males⁴². There are a few films concentrating on women, but they were made by men, and they fail to create convincing female characters in whom women can identify⁴³. This does not mean that these films were not appreciated on the island. On the contrary, *Dancehall Queen*, for instance, is one of the films that Jamaican audiences loved most. Nevertheless, once the suspension of disbelief is over, when the film is finished, one realizes that the female characters are totally inscribed in “the male gaze”, in what men think women are, and they never try to breach it. This is due to the fact that Jamaica has a sexist society, where patriarchy is the rule. This does not mean that women are viewed as inferior to men. But patriarchy has never (or rarely, and without success) been questioned in Jamaica, and although men rely on women for all they need (sex, children, food, house

⁴¹ Pedro A. Noguera, *Op. Cit.*, p.428.

⁴² I analyse the kind of tough masculinity promoted by Jamaican films in Chapter 8.

⁴³ An analysis of the “women stories” in Jamaican films, and their failure to promote a positive example of woman, is analysed in Chapter 9, pp.302-309.

care, but also money, if men are unemployed), they are still deemed the “strong sex”. It is in this context that Jamaican directors shape their characters, which reflects this patriarchal society. Thus, Jamaican cinema is decidedly “masculine”, made by men, and depicting men in whom Jamaican men can identify. The kind of masculinity shown in the films, though debatable, is one which the average male audience aspire to: tough, self-sufficient, showy and rich.

Jamaican masculinity has been shaped by centuries of slavery and of stereotypes about black men forged by the white dominant class. Still today, some clichés are attached to black men (and women) through which foreign people consider them. Among these, those that describe Jamaican men as rough, tough, violent and sexually uncontrollable. The films made on the island, for some reasons, do little to discredit these stereotypes, and prefer to represent males that fit quite perfectly in this formula, even if the average Jamaican man is as “ordinary” as “ordinary” men from other nationalities.

In the films, the male characters are aggressive, violent, street-wise and “macho”. Even when they are not overtly challenging, they nonetheless are ready to fight for their rights; they do not accept mistreatment from anyone. This is the case, for instance, of Horsemouth in *Rockers* or of Countryman in the film by the same title. The aggressiveness of the males is particularly evident in the gangster films. This is probably due to the fact that, beside necessitating this quality because of the very nature of criminality, many of these people have experienced violence at an early age in their environments. Since gangsters come from the ghetto, it is likely that they have been in touch with criminality for a long time, before entering it. Furthermore, the underworld is a space where only the fittest survive, hence the death of a gangster means a new life for another one, probably the one who has killed him. On the other hand, it must be kept in mind, as outlined above, that quite often, the people who enter the criminal world do so for the absence of alternatives, because they see it as the only way to survive. This, in turn, is due to socio-economic factors that characterize the ghettos and their poverty, leaving their inhabitants with few opportunities to find a steady and honest job.

Strangely enough, since clichés about Jamaican men are given some credit in the films, there are almost no hints at the stereotype *par excellence*, namely that of the sexual drive of the Jamaicans. Beside *Children of Babylon*, only the two films focusing on tourism, *Smile Orange* and *The Lunatic*, place emphasis on sexuality. In these cases, all the assumptions about this subject held both by Jamaicans and foreigners are illustrated to make the audience reflect about the stereotypes’ construction.

Other minor themes follow the trend of showing popular Jamaican culture⁴⁴. For instance, the presence of marijuana shows its importance in some parts of society. Further, all the films present a social critique. This trend was inaugurated by *The Harder They Come*, where the socio-political commentary on the Jamaican situation is strong and clearly developed. All the later films, though lessening the message, nonetheless try to illustrate some of the problems that are afflicting the country, and they try to give an explanation both for the situation and for the people's behaviour in such circumstances.

All told, it can be said that Jamaican cinema proposes the island's popular culture, its "low" culture, as a value *per se*. In the films, the "real" Jamaican culture, as it has been experienced by Jamaicans in the last decades, emerges powerfully, and demonstrates to be rooted in the lower classes and kept very much alive by it. This culture is very distant from the academic one, the one deemed "high" and taught at the highest levels of the education system. Yet, it is the one culture practiced by the overwhelming majority of Jamaicans, and not only the lower classes, even though middle and upper classes would never admit participating in such "low" customs, such as dancehalls or African-derived religions. These habits (concerning language, music, religions and so on) can be thought of as expressions of identity, through which Jamaicans can find a common terrain in which to identify, following the nation's motto "Out of Many, One People". This is the main reason, in my opinion, why Jamaican directors chose to depict these aspects instead of upper-class traits that would not be involving many people in the country. For instance, it is true that there is an acclaimed tradition of ballet in Jamaica, but "common" people would rather go to a dancehall than to a theatre to see something they think they would probably not like. This is true for every aspect of Jamaican culture. Of course, there is a "high" culture on the island: its university is among the most outstanding in the region⁴⁵, it has given birth to many acclaimed poets, novelists, and artists, and its academic debates are intense and focusing on the country's possibilities. But the majority of the island's inhabitants have no access to such levels of education, to the country's sophistications and subtleties, being too busy in merely trying to survive in hard life conditions. This is why in Jamaican films, "high" culture is absent. It is practiced by too little a portion of the population to be considered "popular". Instead, what is really popular is taken as subject, and by viewing the films one gets a glimpse of the complexity of Jamaican culture, in all its facets.

It must also be remembered that other filmic traditions exist in the country. Many documentaries have been shot, advertisement and music videos are made every day, and there are national

⁴⁴ See Chapter 9: here I analyse sexuality (pp.289-298), tourism (pp.299-302), women stories (pp.302-309), marijuana (pp.309-312), ideologies (pp.312-313) and political commitment/social critiques (pp.314-320).

⁴⁵ The University of the West Indies *is* the most outstanding university in the region, servicing the whole Caribbean, but it has three main campuses in three different countries: one in Kingston, Jamaica; one in St. Augustine, Trinidad; and one in Cave Hill, Barbados.

television programmes viewed by the whole island. Their focus is, for their very nature, different from that of cinema. I did not mention them because in this thesis I focused only on feature fiction films. But they are part of Jamaica's popular culture as much as its cinema.

There appears to be many reasons justifying the uniqueness of Jamaican cinema. Yet, this distinctiveness can primarily be attributed to the cultural autonomy of the directors, who have never bowed to easy representations and clichés promoted by Euro-American cinema. Jamaican cinema is interesting in its differentiation from Hollywood, in its being authentically Jamaican even if this means a poor distribution outside of the island. In the films, the directors reclaim their cultural identity as Jamaicans, as people independent from foreigners' representations of them, able to create their own stereotypes, meant to contrast those imposed on them by centuries of white domination. What interests Jamaican directors is the depiction of their country as is it. Perry Henzell's statement, that in *The Harder They Come* he wanted to give the world "a purely Jamaican experience", can be seen as the goal of every director who made a Jamaican film. Furthermore, an analysis of Jamaican films offers a realistic picture of the island, far from the stereotypes or the limited experience one can have on a brief vacation in a tourist resort. Jamaica is beautiful also because of its many contradictions, and the films faithfully depict a great amount of them.

Jamaican cinema is not, and probably will not be in a near future, a masterpiece cinema. Nonetheless, it is valuable for aspects that go beyond mere technical aspects or achievements. This cinema truly and realistically portrays the local low culture, and this kind of culture is the one practiced by the great majority of the population of the island. To watch Jamaican films means to watch Jamaican popular culture; an analysis of Jamaican cinema helps to understand the country and its culture.

APPENDIX 1: TECHNICAL INFORMATION.

THE HARDER THEY COME

Cast:

Ivan: Jimmy Cliff
Elsa: Janet Bartley
José: Carl Bradshaw
Pedro: Ras Daniel Hartman
Preacher: Basil Keane
Mr. Hilton: Robert Charlton
Det. Ray Jones: Winston Stona
Mother: Lucia White
Pushcart boy: Volair Johnson
Housewife: Beverly Anderson
Market woman: Clover Lewis
Longa: Elijah Chambers
DJ at dance: Prince Buster
Photographer: Ed “Bim” Lewis
Fitz: Bobby Loban
Barmaid: Joanne Dunn
Editor: Adrian Robinson
DJ: Don Topping
Freddie: Karl Leslie
Girl: Sandra Redwood
Elsa’s friends: Ulla Fraser, Carol Lawes
Drunk: Aston “Bam” Wynter
Ivan’s double: Alton Ellis

Crew :

Photography : David MacDonald, Peter Jessop, Franklyn St. Juste
Art director: Sally Henzell
Editors: John Victor-Smith, Richard White, Reicland Anderson
Writers: Perry Henzell, Trevor D. Rhone
Producer: Perry Henzell
Director: Perry Henzell
Production manager: Yvonne Jones
Assistant directors: Robert Russell, Tony Straw
Sound: Bob Povey, Winston Rodney
Camera assistant: Ernest Davis
Gaffer: Roy Mardsen
Processing: Humphries Laboratory
1972, International Films Management, Ltd.

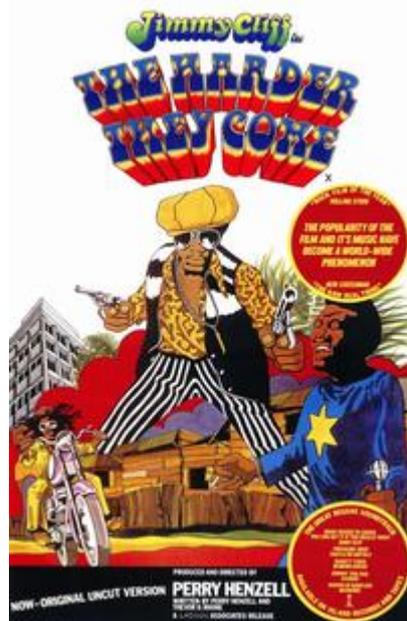
Soundtrack :

You Can Get It If You Really Want, Jimmy Cliff, 1970
Draw Your Brakes, Scotty, 1972
Rivers Of Babylon, The Melodians,
Many Rivers To Cross, Jimmy Cliff, 1969

Sweet And Dandy, The Maytals,
The Harder They Come, Jimmy Cliff, 1972
Johnny Too Bad, The Slickers,
007 (Shanty Town), Desmond Dekker, 1968
Pressure Drop, The Maytals, 1972
Sitting In Limbo, Jimmy Cliff, 1971

Plot Summary :

Ivan arrives in Kingston to become a singer. He soon discovers that the town is not an easy place, and that he needs help to survive. He finds refuge in a Preacher's yard, where he falls in love with Elsa. The Preacher is in love with her too, and when he discovers the relationship between the two, he throws them out of his house. Ivan manages to record a song, but he receives only 20\$ for it, since the music producer keeps all the benefits of the songs. Having no money left and no job, Ivan accepts to work in the ganja trade. He finds out that this business has a hierarchy, and that he has to pay 15\$ for "protection". This money goes to Ray Jones, a policeman who controls the trade. Ivan starts to rebel to this payment, which he finds an injustice. This is the reason why the police starts to run after him. After killing some policemen, Ivan becomes a star for the people in Kingston, but the most wanted criminal for the police. Jones stops the trade to force Ivan's colleagues and friends to betray him, and this is the only way he will be able to catch and kill him. Only then the trade resumes and the dealers obtain what Ivan was fighting for.



¹ The poster was found on <http://www.imdb.com/media/rm1754171904/tt0070155>, accessed February 16, 2009.

SMILE ORANGE

Cast:

Ringo: Carl Bradshaw
Bus Boy: Glenn Morrison
Assistant Manager: Vaughn Crosskill
Joe: Stanley Irons
Featuring: Robin Sweeney
 Charlie Babcock
 Nell Bourke
 Jordan Christensen
 Sylvia Bishop
 Robert Palmer

Crew:

Producer: Eddie Knight
Vocals: Marilyn Curtis
Recording Engineer: George Raymond
Director of Photography: David MacDonald
Assistant Cameraman: Robert Harvey
Sound Engineer: Robert Povey
Assistant on Sound: Malcolm Hernould
Production Manager: Yvonne Jones-Brewster
Assistant Manager: Starr Brewster
Screenplay: Trevor D. Rhone and David Ogden
Editor: Mike Gilligan
Assistant Director: Yvonne Jones-Brewster
Casting: Paul Issa
Costumes: Joanna Crosskill
Continuity: Maria Witter
Post Production: Animatic Production Ltd.
Executive Producer: Milton L. Verley
Director: Trevor D. Rhone
1976, Knuts Productions Limited

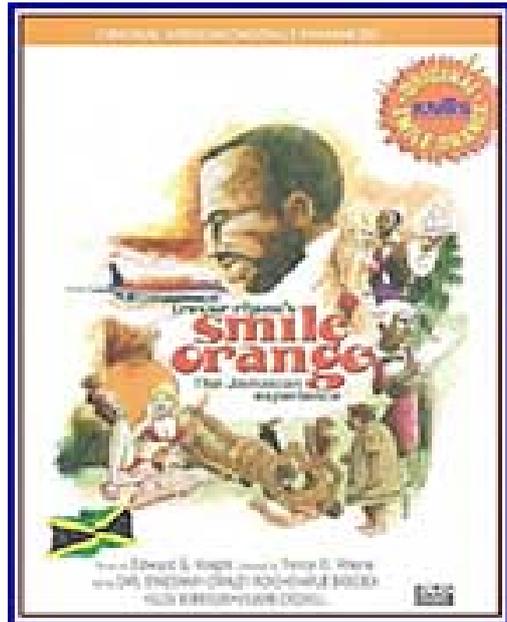
Soundtrack:

Music: Melba Liston
Lyrics: Trevor D. Rhone and Melba Liston
Folk Singer: Alaine Grant

Plot Summary:

The story unfolds in a Montego Bay hotel, where we are presented the personnel working in the business, and the tourists on vacation. The film is a satire of the tourism industry in Jamaica, where the waiters are seen as prostituting themselves for few dollars and the tourists as patronizing and fitting set roles. The hotel is run by the assistant manager, an over-anxious light skinned man, trying to satisfy every tourists' wishes and govern his undisciplined subalterns, and able to do none.

Moreover, he is so inadequate in everything he does that his white wife cheats on him with the gardener. Meanwhile the waiters working in the hotel try to make a living in every possible way. This means that they are willing to seduce the female tourists (who however are shown as expecting it) in order to raise some money, while they avoid serving the black customers of the restaurant because black people do not give high tips. The tourists, on the other hand, behave as spoiled children, who are capricious and feel superior to the waiters. Things could turn to the worst when a drunk customer falls in the pool and almost drown. One of the waiters tries to save him, but he is not able to swim. What could be a tragedy, thanks to the ability of the waiters, becomes a way to earn some more money and some praises by the assistant manager. At the end of the film, the tourists go away, leaving the waiters to prepare for the next flow.



² The poster was found on <http://www.cduniverse.com/images.asp?pid=6808504&style=movie&image=front&title=Smile+Orange+DVD>, accessed February 16, 2009.

ROCKERS

Cast:

Leroy (Horsemouth) Wallace
Richard (Dirty Harry) Hall
Monica (Madgie) Craig
Marjorie (Sunshine) Norman
Jacob (Jakes) Miller
Gregory (Jah Tooth) Isaacs
Winston (Burning Spear) Rodney
Frank (Kiddus I) Dawding
Robert (Robbie) Shakespeare
Manley (Big Youth) Buchanan
Leroy (Smart)
Lester (Dillinger) Bullocks
Ashley (Higher) Harris
Peter (Honeyball) Honiball
L (Jack Ruby) Lindo
Trevor (Leggo Beast) Douglas
Herman (Bongo Herman) Davis
Raymond (Jeep Man) Hall
Junior (Natty Majesty) Wilby
Robert (Jah Wise Van) Campbell
Errol (Knatty Garfield) Brown
Syndrel (T Dread) Easington
Berris (Prince Hammer) Simpson
Theophilus (Easy Snapping) Beckford
Phylip (John Dread) Richards
Winston (Dr. Alimontado) Thompson
The Mighty Diamonds
Poppa-Sharon-Rickie
Joe Gibbs
Martin Williams
Fay Bennett
Robert Colesberry
Sandy McLeod
Pam Clark
Sylvan Morris
Sister Aloma
The black invaders
Ruffy and Tuffy
Dennis Jackson
Monte Blake
Edna Scott
Beverly Edwards
Ivan Bigger Hall
Edsel Scotty Scott
Andrel Pounali
Noel Thompson

Crew :

Cinematographer : Peter Sova
Sound : Nigel Noble
Editor: Susan Steinberg
Associate Producer: Avrom Robin
Producer: Patrick Hulsey
Writer/Director: Theodoros Bafaloukos
Associate Producer/Production Manager: David Streit
Production Manager: Phillip Harvey
Art Director: Lilly Kilvert
Costume Designer: Eugenie Bafaloukos
Assistant Director: Walter Rearick
Production Coordinator: Shelley Houis
Script Supervisor: Sandy McLeod
Camera Operator: Edward Marritz; Daniel Lerner; Craig Di Bona
Assistant Cameraman: Dallas Rodgers
Sound Recordist: Kit Withmore
Sound Assistant: Ivan Brotherton
Still Photographer: Avrom Robin; Susan Finkelstein
Sound Consultant: Richard Newton
Subtitles: Jean Wardle
Assistant Editor: Eric Beason
Music Editor: Todd Kasow
Sound Editor: Ron Kalish, B.A.E.
Assistant Sound Editor: Leslie Gaulin
Re-recording Supervisor: Dick Vorisek
1978, Blue Sun Film Company

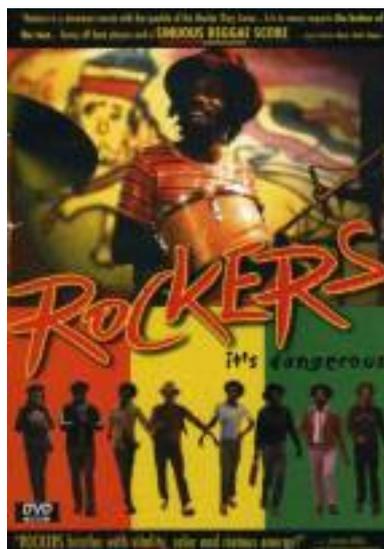
Soundtrack:

Satta Amasagana, The Abbyssinians with Ras Michael and The Sons of Negus
Jah Lion, Lee Perry and The Upsetters
Graduation in Zion, Kiddus I
Book of Rules, The Heptones
Money Worries, The Maytones
Stumbling Block, Dillinger
We A Rockers, Jacob Miller and The Inner Circle
Midnite Rock, Big Joe – Jah Thomas
Police and Thieves, Junior Murvin
Jah No Dead, Burning Spear
Tenement Yard, Jacob Miller and The Inner Circle
Sweet Sensation, The Melodians
Water is Power, Mount Salem A.E.M. Zion Church
Satta Amasagana, Third World
Fade Away, Junior Byles
Get On Up/Get On Down, Roundtree
Rockers, Bunny Wailer
Slave Master, Gregory Isaacs
Stepping Razor, Peter Tosh
Treasure Dub, Joe Gibbs and The Professionals
Natty Takeover, Justin Hines and The Dominoes
Original Soundtrack Music for *Rockers* performed by The Rockers All Stars:

Theodoros Bafaloukos: Producer
Leroy Horsemouth Wallace: Drums
Earl Chinna Smith: Lead Guitar
Robert Robbie Shakespeare: Bass Guitar
Bertram Ranchie MacLean: Rhythm Guitar
Rad Bryan: Rhythm Guitar
Keith Sterling: Piano
Belly Lloyd: Piano
Earl Wire Lindo: Keyboards
Bernard Touter Harvey: Keyboards
Augustus Pablo: Keyboards, Melodica
Tommy McCook: Tenor Sax, Flute
Bobby Ellis: Trumpet
Richard Dirty Harry Hall: Tenor Sax
Herman Marovis: Alto Sax
Vincent Don D. Jr. Gordon : Trombone
Donald Nambo Robinson : Trombone
Carlton Santa Davis: Drums
Isiah Sticky Thompson: Percussion
Lloyd Parks: Percussion
Herman Bongo Herman Davis: Percussion
Zoot Barthalomew Scully Sims: Percussion

Plot Summary:

Leroy, a Rasta musician, wants to start distributing the records made by him and his Rasta colleagues, because who is in charge of the business is exploiting the musicians, not giving them what they deserve. He thus buy a motorcycle, to be able to move around with the records. During a party, the so-called “Mafia Boys” steal his motorcycle. From this moment, he starts looking for it. He finds a useful friend in Sunshine, the daughter of the owner of the hotel where he works as a drummer. She tells him that his father, and the director of the hotel, charge some people working for them to steal various kind of things. She also tells him where to finds all the stolen goods, so that Leroy, with the Rastas, go and take back everything, re-distributing them among the people of the ghetto.



³ The poster was found on <http://www.imdb.com/media/rm519020032/tt0079815>, accessed February 16, 2009.

CHILDREN OF BABYLON⁴

Cast:

Penny: Tobi
Rick: Don Parchment
Luke: Bob Andy
Dorcas: Leonie Forbes
Laura: Elizabeth De Lisser

Crew :

Director : Lennie Little-White
Music: Harold Butler
Photography: Franklyn St. Juste
Writer/Producer: Lennie Little-White
1980, Mediamix Productions.

Plot Summary:

Penny is a rich PhD student who is making a research on the sexual behaviour of women in the countryside. This is the reason why she leaves the city to go to the country to interview some women. She meets along the way Rick, an artist who lives in a great house, and she accept to live in his house while doing her interviews. She starts a relationship with him, that ends when she discovers that he cheated on her. As a kind of revenge, she starts another relationship with Luke, the Rasta who takes care of the garden and the horses. When Dorcas, Luke's wife, finds out the affair, she commits suicide. Penny is happy for the first period of time, but she soon discovers that Luke is a bad man, who behaves like a master and wants her to be a servant. She willingly accepts this new kind of life, until the moment Luke rapes her. In that moment, she decides to leave the house, Rick and Luke to return to her parents house and her life as it was before her journey.



⁴ Since the film is not available in DVD or VHS formats for the public, the technical information about cast and crew were found on the web site <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0080525/>. The poster is a picture I took at Mediamix Productions, Kingston.

COUNTRYMAN

Cast:

Bobby Lloyd: Hiram Keller
Captain Benchley: Carl Bradshaw
Colonel Sinclair: Basil Keane
Mosman: Fresney Richardson
Beau Porter: Kristina St Clair
Jahman: Jahman
Sadu Baba: Papa Three-Card
Periera: Monair Zacca
Mr. Porter: Dee Anthony
Wax: Ronnie McKay
Woman in white: Claudia Robinson
Biker: Ronald Gossop
Pillion: Oliver Sammuels
Fish vendor: Chin
Ezekiel: Buster Jameson
Policemen in bar: Bobby Russell; Lucien Tai Ten Quee
Boat Captain: Peter Packer
Larry: Jim Newman
Cockfighters: Kingsley Rose; Money Fernandez
Dwarf: Duncan Booth
Beau's Double: Tracey Loggia

Crew:

Original Story: Dickie Jobson
Screenplay: Dickie Jobson and Michael Thomas
Super Film Editors: John Victor Smith and Peter Boyle
Art Director: Bernard Leonard
Director of Photography: Dominique Chapuis
Original Music: Wally Badarou
Executive Producer: Stephan Sperry
Producer: Chris Blackwell
Director: Dickie Jobson
1982, Island Pictures

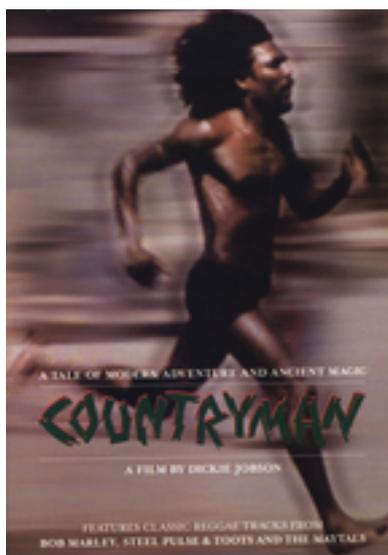
Soundtrack:

Natural Mystic, Bob Marley and The Wailers
Theme from Countryman, Wally Badarou
Pass It On, Bob Marley and The Wailers
3 O'Clock Roadblock, Bob Marley and The Wailers
Rastaman Chant, Bob Marley and The Wailers
Guidance, Wally Badarou
Time Will Tell, Bob Marley and The Wailers
Wisdom, Jah Lion
Obeah Man Dub, Wally Badarou
Bam Bam, Toots and The Maytals
Ramble, Isco

Rat Race, Bob Marley and The Wailers
Sound System, Steel Pulse
Mosman Skank, Aswad
Small Axe, Bob Marley and The Wailers
Sitting and Watching,
Carry Us Beyond,
On Air, Fabulous Five
Dreadlocks in Moonlight, Lee Perry
Revenge of Jah, Wally Badarou
Jah Live, Bob Marley and The Wailers

Plot Summary:

A small plane crashes in a swamp just outside of Kingston. The two people in the plane, a man and a woman coming from the United States, are rescued by a Rasta, Countryman, who hides them and protects them from the police which is looking after them to give them the responsibility of a coup to destabilize the government. Actually the election are menaced by a colonel of the army, who is looking for a scapegoat in the American tourists. These latter are introduced to the Rasta way of living by Countryman, who takes care of them giving them a shelter, food and ganja. Even if the police is trying to catch Countryman and his “guests”, they manage to hide until the Rasta finds the woman’s father and gives both the American back to him.



⁵ The poster was found on <http://www.imdb.com/media/rm2601752064/tt0083762>, accessed February 16, 2009.

THE LUNATIC

Cast:

Aloysius: Paul Campbell
Inga: Juliet T. Wallace
Service: Carl Bradshaw
Busha MacIntosh: Reggie Carter
Barrister Linstrom: Winston Stona
Sarah MacIntosh: Linda Canbrill
Widow Dawkins: Rosemary Murray

Crew:

Producers: Paul Heller and John Pringle
Associate Producers: Kathy Zebrowski and Marnée K. Bie
Costume Designer: Patricia Griffiths
Director of Photography: Richard Greatrex
Editor: Michael Connell
Music: Wally Badarou
Co-Producer: Matthew Binns
Executive Producers: Chris Blackwell and Dan Genetti
Screenplay: Anthony C. Winkler, based on his novel "*The Lunatic*"
Director: Lol Crème
1991, Island Pictures

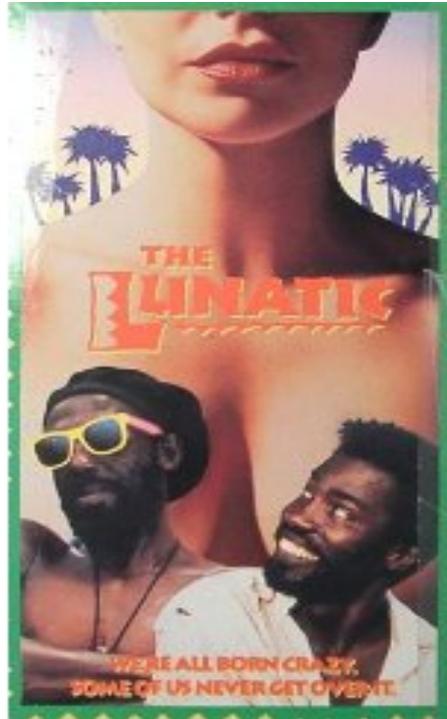
Soundtrack:

Theme of the Lunatic, Wally Badarou
The Lunatic, Kirk Allen
Hurricane, J.C. Lodge
Fire, Brinsley Forde
Workey, Workey, Clarence Edwards
Evil Eyes, Donovan Francis
Beautiful Woman, Toots Hibbert
Dancin' Mood, Alphonsus Cassell
Youth of Eglinton, Michael Rose

Plot Summary:

Aloysius is a mad man who lives in the countryside, eating what nature offers him and talking with trees and animals. The people of the village where he lives do not really like him, but they tolerate him because he is harmless. One day he meets Inga, a German tourist who is in Jamaica because she wants to take pictures of the island's beauty. However, she soon reveals to be a sex addicted, starting a *ménage à trois* with Aloysius and Service, a butcher, that causes great scandal in the village where they dwell. When Inga's father stops sending her money, she decides to take it from Busha's, the rich landowner of the village. Aloysius is not willing to take part in the assault, which actually results in the wounding of Busha. Aloysius, Inga and Service are brought in front of a court, to face their charges. Service is sentenced to prison, Inga is almost kidnapped by her father's agents and brought back to Europe, and Aloysius is forced to go to Bellevue, Kingston's asylum. Thanks to his lawyer's ability, he can avoid this sentence by having someone who will look after him and assure that he is not doing anything wrong anymore. In the final scene, Widow Dawkins is

teaching Aloysius how to correctly drink tea, how to dress, and she is reading him a letter by Inga. The irony of this scene lies in the fact that actually the Widow is taking care of Aloysius because she wants a man in her house, in this way becoming a bit like Inga.



6

⁶ The poster was found on <http://www.amazon.com/Lunatic-Paul-Campbell/dp/6302531837>, accessed February 16, 2009.

KLASH

Cast:

Stoney: Giancarlo Esposito
Blossom: Jasmine Guy
Inspector Lovelace: Cedella Marley
Walker: Carl Bradshaw
Ragga: Stafford Ashani
Ultimate: Paul Campbell
Mr. Lee: Lucien Chen

Crew:

Associate Producers: Colin Leslie, Richard Lumsden
Editors: David Leathers
Sound Design: Turbosound, Inc.
Art Director: Giorgio Ferrari
Co-Executive Producers: Peter McAlevey, Bruce Binkow
Live Performances by Shabba Ranks, Patra, Snow, Cobra, Ninjaman
Sound Systems: Super Dee, Metro Media, Bodyguard, Jam Rock
MC: Tommy Cowan
Dancers: Carlene "Dancehall Queen" Smith, X Girls Dancehall Dancers
Director: Bill Parker
1995, Xenon Entertainment Group, Kingston Pictures, in association with Hawk's Nest Production Ltd.

Soundtrack:

First Blood, Prince Midas and Brian & Tony Gold
Rude Boy, Prince Midas and Brian & Tony Gold
Gun Stupid, Terror Fabulous
Big Up and Trust, Beenie Man
Show Fi Flop, Beenie Man
Sex Therapist a.k.a. Sexperience, Mad Cobra
Breakfast in Bed, Lorna Bennett
Whining Skill, Patra
Monday Morning Blues, Loose Caboose
Klash Ha Fi Lick, Junior Demus
Nasty, Born Jamericans, the K.O. Boys & Dewey Danger
Watch Your Speech, Shaggy
A Little More Time, Buju Banton and Beres Hammond
Bunny Shop a.k.a. Bugs Bunny, Instrumental
Tour, Capleton
Down In The Ghetto, Bounty Killer
The More The Better, Mad Cobra
Programme, Papa San & Stanryck
Informer, Snow
Freestyle, Ninja Man
Love Punaany Bad, Shabba Ranks
Girl, I've Been Hurt, Snow
Shine Up Your Gun, Shabba Ranks
Rivertown, Snow

Worker Man, Patra
Wrong Move, Josey Wales
Sweetie, Chaka Demus & Pliers
Complain, Garnett Silk
No, No, No, Dawn Penn
Walk Like A Champion, Buju Banton
Jah Works, Billy “Mystic” Revelers
Fat Piece... a.k.a. Well Done, Shabba Ranks
I Spy, Steel Pulse
In The Mood, Patra
Oh God Of My Salvation, Buju Banton
Iron, Lion, Zion, Bob Marley
Corduroy, Paul Henton
Dem Flop, Spragga Benz
Wave Dem, Tanto Metro
Moving Up The Line, Spragga Benz
Luv 2 Luv U, Jasmine Guy

Plot Summary:

Stoney is a photographer who arrives in Kingston from the United States, to take pictures of a musical event, a musical clash between various sound systems. The occasion allows him to meet again Blossom, his former lover, who now works as a go-go dancer in Mr. Lee’s club. What Stoney does not know is that he will be involved in a plan to steal the money made from the sound clash. Actually, he will be caught in a war among Blossom, Mr. Lee, and a local don, Ragga, who are all trying to rob the money. The main action unfolds during the clash, where many artists perform on stage. In the end, Stoney will be the only survivor, who will have to explain what happened to the police. The last scene shows Walker, the owner of the boat where Stoney lived and the only person not involved in the robbery, going away with the money that Stoney had left in the boat, giving thanks and praises to Jah.



⁷ The poster was found on <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0113558/>, accessed February 16, 2009.

DANCEHALL QUEEN

Cast:

Marcia: Audrey Reid
Priest: Paul Campbell
Larry: Carl Davis
Tanya: Cherine Anderson
Junior: Marc Danvers
Ms. Gordon: Pauline Stone-Myrie
Olivine: Patrice Harrison
Tasha: Anika Grason
Sonny: Donald Thompson
Iggy: Henry Brown
Special Guest Appearances: Officer #1: Carl Bradshaw
Officer #2: Michael London

Crew:

Concert Performers: Beenie Man, Lady Saw, Anthony B., Chevelle Franklyn
Casting: Maxine Plummer, Janet Morrison
Score: Wally Badarou
Music Supervisor: Maxine Stowe
Costume Designer: Kathy Haley
Marcia's Dancehall Costumes: Sandra Robinson
Art Director: Rick Elgood
Director of Photography: Louis Mulvey
Editor: Suzanne Fenn
Executive Producers: Chris Blackwell, Dan Genetti
Producers: Carolyn Pfeiffer, Carl Bradshaw
Based on an idea by Ed Wallace, Carl Bradshaw
Written by Suzanne Fenn, Ed Wallace, Don Letts
Directors: Don Letts and Rick Elgood
1997, Palm Pictures and Island Jamaica Films, in association with Hawk's Nest Productions.

Soundtrack:

Dancehall Queen, Beenie Man featuring Chevelle Franklyn
Tune In, Bounty Killer and Sugar Minott
Unbelievable, Marley Girls
What's the Move, Chaka Demus & Pliers
Tear Off Mi Garment, Beenie Man
Nuff Gal, Beenie Man
When I Hold You Tonight, General Degree
Serious Allegations, Lady Saw
Little and Cute, Frisco Kid
Shot Mek You Wiggle, Junior Demus
Mavis, Merciless
Joy Ride, Wayne Wonder & Baby Cham
Fire Pon Rome, Anthony B.
Praise Him, Sanchez
Fed Up, Bounty Killer

Gal Dem A Ride Mi Nature, Bounty Killer
Soap Opera, Prezident Brown
1865 (96° In The Shade), Third World
Badman Sonata, Buccaneer
Boof 'N Baff 'N Biff, Black Uhuru

Plot Summary:

Marcia is a street vendor, who makes a living for her and her two daughters thanks to the help of Larry, a rich man who gives her some money for the girls' school. When he asks Tanya, the older girl, to have sex with him as a reward for his help, Marcia forces her to accept, only to repent shortly after and look for another solution. When she sees how Olivene, a dancehall queen, looks shabby when she is not wearing her dancehall outfit, she decides that she can try to make money in the dancehall. She transforms herself into the "Mystery Lady", attracting the attention of the dancehall males and the resentment of the ladies. This is how the contest for the crown of dancehall queen takes shape: to see who is the real queen between Marcia and Olivene. In the meantime, Marcia also finds out that Larry and Priest, a bad man who is Larry's right hand, are responsible for the murder of one of her friends. The contest night sees Marcia as a winner, and getting rid of both Larry and Priest. She can now start a new life, in which to be in charge of her life.



⁸ The poster was found on <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0127497>, accessed February 16, 2009.

THIRD WORLD COP

Cast:

Capone: Paul Campbell
Ratty: Mark Danvers
One Hand: Carl Bradshaw
Rita: Audrey Reid
Floyd: Winston Bell
Not Nice: Lenford Salmon
Deportee: Desmond Ballentine a.k.a. Ninjaman
Tek-9: O'Neil "Elephant Man" Bryan
Crime: Andrew "Nittie Kutchie" Reid
Razor: Devon "Angel Doolas" Douglas
Carla: Winsome Wilson
Police 1: Joslyn "Captain Barkey" Hamilton
Police 2: Philip "Cutty Ranks" Thomas
With Special Appearances by Janice "Lady G" Fyffe
Buccaneer
Adenai Disco

Crew:

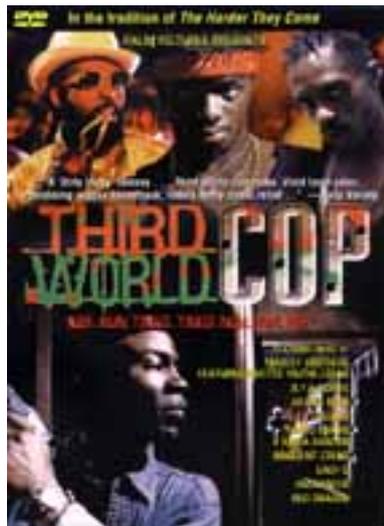
Casting: Sheila Lowe Graham, Suzanne Fenn, Sharon Burke
Costume Designer: Michelle Haynes
Music Supervisors: Sly Dunbar & Robbie Shakespeare, Maxine Stowe
Composers: Wally Badarou, Sly & Robbie
Director of Photography: Richard Lannaman
Line Producer: Natalie Thompson
Editor: Suzanne Fenn
Executive Producers: Chris Blackwell, Dan Genetti
Producer: Carolyn Pfeiffer Bradshaw
Writers: Suzanne Fenn, Christopher Browne, Chris Salewicz
Director: Christopher Browne
1999, Palm Pictures and Island Jamaica Films in association with Hawk's Nest Productions.

Soundtrack:

Zen Concrete, Sly & Robbie
Man, A Bad Man, Lady G
Bad Man Story, Buccaneer
Dungle Boogie, Beenie Man
Papers, Innocent Crew
Scare Dem Train, Scare Dem Crew featuring Shereen
Mambo Jumbo, Innocent Crew
Drilling For Oil, Sly & Robbie
Fake Name, Tanto Metro featuring Mega Banton
Soft Core Surge, Sly & Robbie
Call The Police, The Marley Brothers
Police And Thieves, Luciano
We Run Tings, Red Dragon

Plot Summary:

Capone is a policeman who is willing to do whatever is needed in order to get rid of outlaws. Hence his reputation is that of an easy killer, but effective cop. He returns to Kingston after many years, and he is assigned to one of the most violent parts of the city. He soon discovers that there is a local don who is trafficking illegal firearms using charity barrels for various churches of the area, and that one of the friends of his youth is involved in the illegal affairs. Thus he starts to look for evidence against the don, and he tries to convince his friend to change life. He manages in the end to eradicate the traffic and arrest the don, but many people get killed along the way, included his friend and all of his gang.



⁹ The poster was found on <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0179063>, accessed February 16, 2009.

RUDE BOY – THE JAMAICAN DON

Cast:

Julius: Mark Danvers
Biggs: Michael "Bear" Taliferro
Crown: Beenie Man
Gargon: Ninja Man
Lorenzo: Daryl Heath
Slick: Rapheal Saadiq
Rhino: John "Ras Kidus" Cornelius
Mamma: Marcia Griffith
Shawnette: Anita Kopacz

Crew:

Associate Producers: Nile Evans, Sharon Burke
Producers: Trenten Gumbs, Susan Crank
Costume and Wardrobe: Valerie Adams
Score: Timothy Christian Riley, Desiple
Editor: Shawn Adams
Co-Editor and Production Designer: Richard Gumbs III
Director of Photography: Shawn Adams
Screenplay: Bentley Kyle Evans, Trenten Gumbs
Executive Producers: Bentley Kyle Evans, Alan M. Solomon
Producer: Bentley Kyle Evans
Director: Desmond Gumbs
2002, Amsell Entertainment, Ben Outta Shape Productions, 3G Films.

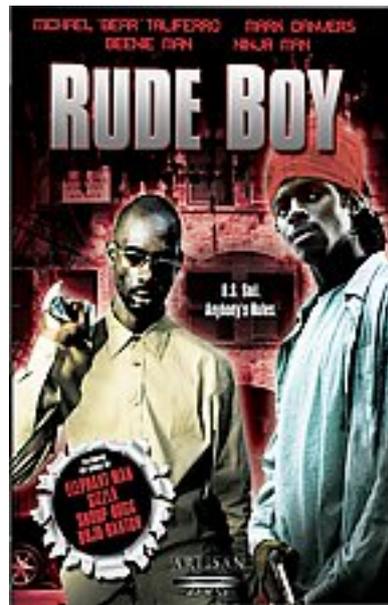
Soundtrack:

Buju Banton
Snoop Dog
Elephant Man
Wayne Marshall
Assassin
Warfare
Sizzla
Tafari
Kiprich
Woodstock
Hurricane Gilbert
The Band Bliss

Plot Summary:

After having been a gunman for almost all his life, Julius decides that he wants to change, and start a career in music. This is the reason why he accepts to work as a mule for a Jamaican drug dealer working with an American boss. His intention is to transport some cocaine only once, to be able to reach the United States, and then to find a decent job and concentrate on his music. However, once in Los Angeles, his mother tells him that she is sick. His job does not allow him to earn enough money to cure his mother. This is the reason why he changes his mind and accepts to work for Biggs, the American boss. He starts to sell drug and to kill people for him, putting himself in the

middle of a Jamaican-American traffic of cocaine, and a war for supremacy among the people working in the trade. Actually, Julius soon discovers that Rhino, Biggs' right hand, is trying to usurp his position at the head of the traffic, and he warns Biggs. For this reason, Rhino tries to retaliate, and goes back to Jamaica to kill the boss in Kingston and Julius' mother. Julius manages to save his mother, the boss, and to kill Rhino. When he goes back to Los Angeles, he discovers that his wife, whom he met at Biggs' house and married in a very short time, is a policewoman, and that she has used him to frame Biggs. The film concludes with the arrest of Biggs and all his gang, and Julius' escape to Brazil.



¹⁰

¹⁰ The poster was found on <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0383607>, accessed February 16, 2009.

GANGSTA'S PARADISE

Cast:

Diamond: Samuel Marshall
Shotta: John "Ras Kidus" Cornelius
Salvatore Nutchie: Angelo Miller
Joey Lamano: Vincenzo Pellico
Murder Mas: Ninja Man
King: Beenie Man
Reggie: Terrence Hatter
Cleeve: Jerome Caldwell
Ratchett: Hurricane Gilbert

Crew:

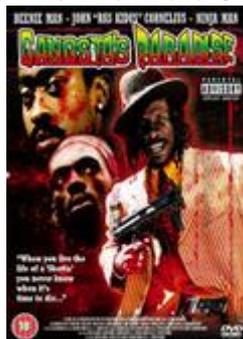
Associate Producers: Chelsea A. Brown, Sharon Burke, Terrence Hatter
Producers: Trenten W. Gumbs, Bentley Kyle Evans, Desmond Gumbs
Original Score: Disciple
Editor: Richard Gumbs III
Director of Photography: Richard Gumbs III
Screenplay: Trenten W. Gumbs
Executive Producers: Trenten W. Gumbs, Bentley Kyle Evans, Richard Gumbs III
Director: Trenten W. Gumbs
2003, 3G Films, Ben Outta Shape Productions.

Soundtrack:

Moses, Beenie Man
Ring, Kiprich
Rocky Road, Wadi Gad
General, Majestic
So Blessed, Tally Knott
Give You All I Have, Tally Knott
Liberation, Yami Bolo & Capleton

Plot Summary:

Rhino works for Diamond, an American drug dealer who does business with the local Mafia. Diamond is pitiless, and he does not hesitate to kill the people who works for him but try to steal money from him. When Diamond gets in trouble with the Mafia, he goes away from the city, and Rhino decides to take up his role and his link with Jamaican bosses. In the end, the police manages to stop the traffic and kill the traffickers who live in the United States.



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¹¹ The poster was found on <http://www.blackstarvideo.com/videos2/Gangstas-Paradise.html>, accessed February 16, 2009

ONE LOVE

Cast:

Kassa: Ky-Mani Marley
Serena: Cherine Anderson
Aaron: Idris Elba
Selector G: Winston Bell
Pastor Johnson: Winston Stona
Obeah Man: Carl Bradshaw
Scarface: Vas Blackwood
Claudette: Kelly Barrett
Neville: Chris Daley
Bobo: Michael Holgate
Joshua: Luke Williams
Peter: Michael Nicholson

Crew:

Original Story: Yvonne Deutschman
Screenplay: Trevor Rhone
Editor: Jon Endre Mørk
Original Score: Simon Bass
Line Producers: Kwesi Dickson, Claire Hunt
Co-Producers: Ola Hunnes, Mark Hammond, Colin Neale
Director of Photography: John Christian Rosenlund
Co-Executive Producers: Nik Powell, Finola Dwyer, Paul Trijbits, Bill Allan, Emma Hayter
Producers: Yvonne Deutschman, Sheelaagh Ferrell, Bjørg Eivind Aarskog
Directors: Rick Elgood and Don Letts
2003, Film Council and Baker Street, in association with BV International Pictures, Take4
Production, One Love Films/ Euromax / Exposed / Nik Powell Film.

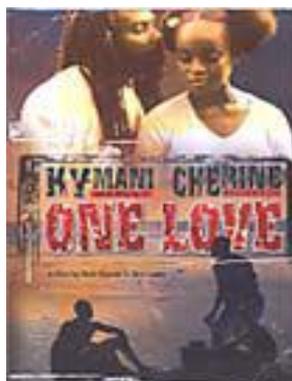
Soundtrack:

One Love, Bob Marley and The Wailers
Give Me The Touch, Debrah Glasgow
Love You Like Crazy, Chaka Demus & Pliers
Jump No Fence, Frankie Paul
Hill and Gully Rida, Traditional
Raging Storm, Bounty Killer
Mexican Chick, Stena
Fire Fire, Kymani Marley
Esposa, Innocent Crew
Love So Nice, Junior Kelly
Solid as a Rock, Sizzla
Onward Christian Soldiers Skit, Stena
Have Faith, Luciano
Krazy Rhythm, Don Vendetta Bennett
Calico Jack, The Revolutionaires
Jump Around, Morgan Heritage
Just One of those Days, Sizzla
Mad Ants Rhythm, Shiah Coore
Respect Your Wife (Diwali), Cecile

I'd Rather Have Jesus, Sons & Daughters
Natural Mystic, Wayne Marshall
Nyabingi (Rastaman Chant), De Akwabee Drummers
Champion Lover, Debrahae Glasgow
Rastaman Chant, Bob Marley
Furthermore, 4th Street
Humble Calf, Elephant Man
This Angel, Cherine Anderson
I'm still in love with you, Sean Paul & Sasha
One By One Roots Version, Kymani Marley
Feel Love, Cherine Anderson
Hot Gal, Sandra Melody
WU Jingle, Square One
Impossible Train, Innocent Crew
One by One acoustic remix, Kymani Marley
One By One dancehall version, Spice
One By One, Kymani Marley & Cherine Anderson
Geenie, Shaggy feat. Brian and Tony Gold
No Letting Go, Wayne Wonder

Plot Summary:

Kassa and Serena are two young people who fall in love. They have many things in common, especially the love for music. Kassa is the leader of a Rasta band, and Serena is the leading singer of her church choir. The problem between them is religion: Serena's father does not accept her relationship with a Rasta, and Kassa's friends do not like his relationship with a Christian girl. Moreover, Serena is engaged with Aaron, who does whatever he can, even if illegal, to destroy their relationship. In the meantime, a musical competition puts thing at a critical point. Both Kassa and Serena, with their respective groups, participate. In the end, every truth is revealed: Serena leaves Aaron, who will go to jail, the Rastas accept the Christian girl, and the pastor accepts the Rastas. The film closes with the two groups singing in harmony Kassa's song, and Kassa asking Serena to marry him.



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¹² The poster was found on <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0387467>, accessed February 16, 2009.

SHOTTAS

Cast:

Biggs: Kymani Marley
Wayne: Spragga benz
Mad Max: Paul Campbell
Richie: Wyclef Jean
Teddy Bruckshut: Louie Rankin
Young Biggs: J.R. Silvera
Young Wayne: Carlton Grant, Jr.

Crew:

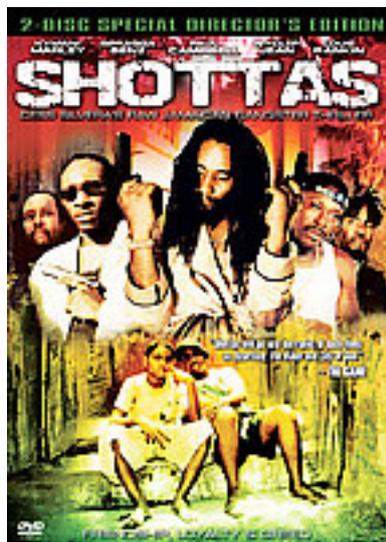
Music: Stephen Marley
Music Supervisors: Joel Chin, Cess Silvera
Editor: Danny Sapphire
Production Designer: Iyla Kaperonis
Director of Photography: Cliff Charles
US CREW:
Production Manager: Keith Deans
Associate Producers: Phil Pabon, Michael Effs, Richie Effs, Destiny Danny Campbell, Jamie O'Malley
JAMAICA CREW:
Production Manager: Romeo Effs
Director: Cess Silvera
2005, Triumph Films, Destination Films, Lucky Bastard Films Production

Soundtrack:

Welcome to Jamrock, Damian Marley
Far East, Barry Brown
Trial and Crosses, Nitty Gritty
In the Ghetto, Little John
Coming in from the Cold, Bob Marley
Dead This Time, Bounty Killer
Bad Long Time, HawkEye
BackShot, Spragga Benz and Lady Saw
Catch a Fire, Damian Marley
Gun Man Tune, Pan Head
Gangsta Story, Big Yard All Stars
It A Ring, Tonto Irie
Fire, Ky-Mani Marley
Would A Let You Go, Junior Cat
Bandelero, Pinchers
Call The Police, John Wayne
Quench the Fire, Nicky Seizure
I Believe, Ky-Mani Marley
Rain, Ky-Enie
Discipline Child, Inner Circe
Revelation Time, Nicky Seizure
The March, Ky-Mani Marley

Plot Summary:

Biggs and Wayne start a real friendship during their childhood in the ghetto of Waterhouse, Kingston. Here they start at a very tender age to be “shottas”, gunmen: they rob a man to have the money to go to the United States. Here, in Miami, they pursue their career in illegality, becoming involved in the drug dealing and trafficking, and in the murdering of their rivals. Twenty years later, they come back to Jamaica as deportees, brought back from a Miami prison. They continue to lead the same kind of life: they extort, kill, and deal in drugs, until they seize the opportunity offered by a corrupt politician to go back to Miami. Here, they resume their traffics, but in doing so they start a war with the people who had taken their place. There is a series of murders to establish the supremacy of Biggs and Wayne, until their main rival decide to get rid of them once and for all. His killers go to Biggs’ house and kill Wayne, seriously wounding Mad Max. Biggs swears to revenge Wayne, his only true friend, more important for him than his girlfriend, and kills Teddy Bruckshut, just before leaving the town.



¹³

¹³ The poster was found on <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0281190>, accessed February 16, 2009.

GLORY TO GLORIANA

Cast:

Gloria: Carol Campbell
Milton: Rodney Campbell
Betsy: Gracie-Ann Watson
Teenage Gloria: Kerie-Ann Lewis
Young Gloria: Briana Harris
Precious: Suzanne Mari
Bass: Winston Bell
Mimi: Marguerite Newland
Sinclair: Bobby Smith
Irene: Ce'Cile Chartlon
Mr. Bailey: Teddy Price
Pastor: Oliver Samuels
Miss Ivy: Leonie Forbes
Mr. Azan: Munair Zacca

Crew:

Art Direction and Costumes: Michelle Haynes
Director of Photography: Ray Smith
Editor: Carla Thomas
Original Score: Jon Williams
Screenplay: Raye Addison
Associate Producer: Damali Little-White
Executive Producer: Eugennie Carroll Minto
Co-Executive Producer: Lennie Little-White
Producer: Lennie Little-White
Director: Lennie Little-White
2006, Basscarroll Limited. A production of Mediamix.

Soundtrack:

Glory to Gloriana, Luciano
Sweet lovin' Love, Dwight Pinkey, Akill, Pam Hall, Scatta, Dean Fraser
My Lord Is Sweet, Jon Williams & Rohan Reid
Lord Give Me Strength, Luciano
Girl I've Got a Date, Alton Ellis
Carry Go Bring Come, Justin Hines & the Dominoes
The Things you say you love you're gonna lose, The Jamaicans
Wake the Town, U-Roy
Eastern Standard Time, The Skatalites
River Bank, Baba Brooks
Fat Girl, Leroy Sibbles
Better Must Come, Instrumental
Kumina, National Dance Theatre Company
Father I Love You, Richie Stephens
Tempted To Touch, Beres Hammond

Plot Summary:

This film is the true story of Ms. Minto, who was born as a poor child in the countryside and was able to build a hotel in Montego Bay. Gloria is very young when she meets Milton Minto and falls in love with him. She soon gets pregnant, and starts to live with him. She also soon discovers that Milton has another girlfriend, Betsy, with whom he has six children. When she tries to clarify her position with him, he starts to beat her. After four children and a job as a fruit vendor in the Montego bay market, she decides to go away. She starts a new life with Mr. Sinclair, but when she is pregnant with his second child, she discovers that he cheats on her with a girl working in his shop. She returns with Milton, to her old life. She is able to buy a bar, and then a bakery. She keeps working and having children, while Milton keeps having extramarital relationships and beating her. In the end, he gets sick and dies, leaving all his goods to his children, and nothing to Gloria, who has always worked for him and taken care of him. After having had a vision of her father, she understands that she needs to do things for herself, and this is why she buys a piece of land, on which she will build her hotel: Hotel Gloriana.



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¹⁴ The poster was found on <http://www.hotelgloriana.com/>, accessed February 16, 2009.

APPENDIX 2: A BRIEF HISTORY OF JAMAICAN MUSIC.

In Jamaica something quite peculiar happened. This small island, a former colony of Britain, gave birth to one of the most popular musical genres ever, loved and imitated by many people in other countries, even those nations that generally impose their own models over less rich and powerful ones. Actually, it usually happens that a country, like the United States or England, for instance, exerts its influence on the ex-colonies, imposing a way of life that is more suited for the former than for the latter. And this occurs in Jamaica too, but not as regards music. Jamaica has introduced many foreign (mainly North American) habits, but music is something different. Jamaican music has always been independent and powerful. This is why it had the opportunity to cross the island's borders and to spread worldwide. Jamaican music has influenced the rest of the world's music, and it started in 1962, when the country became independent, with ska. But, contrary to what many people think, ska did not come out of nowhere: many different genres and experiences influenced its birth.

1. EARLY INFLUENCES ON JAMAICAN MUSIC.

Jamaican independence was celebrated with ska, the first recognized indigenous music. But in order for ska to reach its definitive mode, it was necessary that it absorbed and appropriated previous styles. The most obvious and acknowledged influence was that of the African heritage, but this was not the only one.

The great majority of Jamaica's population has African origins. The slaves who were brought to the Caribbean maintained few links with their homelands; the most evident were religion and music. As Don Ohadike says:

It was religion and music that first unified the African exiles in the Americas. [...] In the Americas they had to fall back on religion and music to help them cope with their pain and longing to return to their native Africa. [...] Without religion and music, the initial problem posed by language and religious differences would have been difficult to surmount.¹

However, the influence of African music was not direct, but based on musical elements that can be traced back to the continent of origin.

Perhaps the most conspicuous sorts of Africanisms evident in Caribbean music consist more of general principles than specific elements. Slave communities usually combined people from different African regions and ethnic groups, whose musical traditions tended to blend accordingly. Interaction with European musics further diluted the original African practices, as did the relative cessation of contact with Africa after the slave trade stopped. Moreover, Afro-

¹ Don C. Ohadike, *Op. Cit.*, p.5.

Caribbean musicians have always applied their own creativity to their art, so that the music has tended to take on its own life, departing from its original, transplanted forms.²

The first characteristic of African music to be adjusted in the Caribbean was the “collective participation”³, more relevant for the social context than for the music itself. Many scholars have highlighted the distinctly musical features that have passed from Africa to the Caribbean.

The most often noted feature of African music is its *emphasis on rhythm*. African music is rich in melody, timbral variety, and even two- and three-part harmony, but rhythm is often the most important aesthetic parameter, distinguishing songs and genres and commanding the focus of the performers’ and listeners’ attention. [...] Much of the rhythmic interest and complexity derives from the interaction of regular pulses (whether silent or audible) and offbeat accents. This feature is often described as “syncopation”.⁴

In his 1963 seminal analysis of the origins of blues, Amiri Baraka, in order to trace a sociology of African Americans through their own music, linked the African rhythm to the use of the drums:

The most important survivals of African music in Afro-American music are its rhythms: not only the seeming emphasis in the African music on rhythmic, rather than melodic or harmonic, qualities, but also the use of polyphonic, or contrapuntal, rhythmic effects. [...]

The reason for the remarkable development of the rhythmic qualities of African music can certainly be traced to the fact that Africans also used drums for communication; and not, as once were thought, merely by using the drums in a kind of primitive Morse code, but by the phonetic reproduction of the words themselves – the result being that Africans developed an extremely fine and extremely complex rhythmic sense, as well as becoming unusually responsive to timbral subtleties.⁵



1. Talking drums from Niger, Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. <http://www.bongocentral.com/drums.htm>.

Amiri Baraka analysed African harmonies and vocal techniques, that were transplanted in the New World:

² Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Caribbean Currents – Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae*, Revised and Expanded Edition, Kingston, Ian Randle Publishers, 2006, p.7.

³ *Ibidem*, p.7.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.8.

⁵ LeRoi Jones, *Blues People. Negro Music in White America*, New York, William Morrow and Company, 1963, p.25-26.

Also, the elaborately developed harmonic system used in the playing of percussion instruments, *i.e.*, the use of drums or other percussion instruments of different timbres to produce harmonic contrasts, was not immediately recognizable to the Western ear; neither was the use of two and three separate rhythmic patterns to underscore the same melody a concept easily recognizable to Westerners used to less subtle musical devices.

Melodic diversity in African music came not only in the actual arrangements of notes (in terms of Western transcription) but in the singer's vocal interpretation. The "tense, slightly hoarse-sounding vocal techniques" of the work songs and the blues stem directly from West African musical tradition. [...] In African languages the meaning of a word can be changed simply by altering the *pitch* of the word, or changing its stress [...]. Philologists call this "significant tone", the "combination of pitch and timbre" used to produce changes of meaning in words. This was basic to the speech and music of West Africans, and was definitely passed on to the Negroes of the New World.⁶

Another characteristic of Caribbean music that can be traced back today to ancient African origins is the call and response pattern.

Another widespread feature of African music is vocal *call and response*, which is well suited to communal performance in general.[...] A related characteristic is the technique of building a piece on *repetition*, especially of a short musical cell, or *ostinato*. Variety can be provided by altering the pattern or by combining it with another feature, such as narrative text, responsorial singing, or a drum solo. [...] Pieces using this format are open-ended, additive entities, loosely expandable or compressible in accordance with the desires of the performers, the audience, or the occasion.⁷

Amiri Baraka foregrounded this importance of call and response, and added other features too:

Another important aspect of African music [...] is the antiphonal singing technique. A leader sings a theme and a chorus answers him. [...] And improvisation, another major facet of African music, is certainly one of the strongest survivals in American Negro music. [...] Of course, the very structure of jazz is the melodic statement with an arbitrary number of improvised answers or comments on the initial theme.⁸

To conclude the analysis of African music, Amiri Baraka presented some of its characteristic, traces of which can be found in contemporary African American and Caribbean music:

Another important aspect of African music was the use of folk tales in songs lyrics, riddles, proverbs, etc., which, even when not accompanied by music, were the African's chief method of education, the way the wisdom of the elders was passed down to the young. [...]

⁶ *Ibidem*, p.26.

⁷ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.9-10.

⁸ LeRoi Jones, *Op. Cit.*, p.26-27.

And just as the lyrics of the African songs were usually as important or *more* important than the music, the lyrics of work songs and the later blues were equally important to the Negro's concept of music. [...]

African music [...] differed from Western music in that it was a purely *functional* music. [...] "Serious" Western music [...] has been strictly an "art" music. [...] "Serious music" [...] has never been an integral part of the Westerner's life. [...] It was, and is, inconceivable in the African culture to make a separation between music, dancing, song, the artifact, and a man's life or his worship of his gods. *Expression* issued from life, and *was* beauty.⁹

However, European music had its influence too. The colonizers brought with them their music, and this subsequently mixed with other styles, present on the island, to create what would become the distinctive Jamaican sound. The European music that arrived in the Caribbean was varied:

These forms included not only the well-documented classical music of the era but, more important, the various folk and popular songs and dances of contemporary Europe. [...] sailor's chanteys, church hymns, military marches, and, especially, social dances like the quadrille and contredanse. [...] As performed over the generations by Afro-Caribbeans, the dances eventually became creolized and came to incorporate typical syncopations and other distinctly local features.¹⁰

The reason why these kinds of music could be creolised was that they presented features that were similar in some ways to African music.

Two- and three-part vocal harmony occurs in African as well as in European traditional music, while Protestant hymns used call-and-response "lining out" compatible with African practices. [...] Further, most European folk musics, like African music, were orally transmitted traditions rather than written ones.¹¹

As regards the social dances, quadrille was the most influential on Jamaican music. It could generally pass from the Europeans to the slaves thanks to the so-called "house slaves", those working not in the fields, but in the masters' homes.

Slaves were often taught to play European musical instruments, such as fiddles and fifes, so that they could entertain their owners and overseers at dances. In this way, the European eight-note scale was absorbed by the slaves and practiced alongside African forms, such as the far more complex rhythms. A dance that was particularly popular with the slavocracy was the quadrille, and this was gradually adapted by slaves for their own entertainment and as a subtle commentary on the manners and mores of the slave-owning class.¹²

⁹ *Ibidem*, p.28-29.

¹⁰ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.12-13.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p.13.

¹² Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.5.



2. Quadrille. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quadrille>.

Through the quadrille, and the other European musical traditions brought to the Caribbean, the slaves could become familiar not only with the European musical scale, but also with new instruments, and they could syncretize their knowledge of African patterns with the European ones. It was only through this process that a new culture could emerge.

The British were especially effective at getting the slaves to adopt a colonial mentality that regarded everything African as backward. [...] While such a rejection or repression of a musical tradition can cause a kind of deculturation or cultural impoverishment, it can also stimulate new creation, typically in a creolized form.¹³

However, it must be noted that the slaves never abandoned their African heritage. Even if the drumming was banned on the plantation, they continued to practice it secretly.

New instruments, like the fife, were adopted for the celebration of “Jonkanoo”, a West African festivity that was brought to the Caribbean, and that would also have an influence in the creation of Jamaican music.



3. Johnkankus. <http://www.black-collegian.com/african/johnkankus1299.shtml>.

Fife and drums bands, which date back at least to the eighteenth century, also played their own variations of European dance music, including the quadrille, but they added military march tempos. While not restricted to any single style, they are best known for music played for a

¹³ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.17.

raunchy dance variously called “John Canoe”, “John Connu” or “Jonkanoo”. Revolving around a cast of colourfully costumed characters, Jonkanoo originated in a West African fertility ritual that was associated with the yam harvest, but then incorporated Christian elements such as the Devil into the overall presentation. It was further absorbed into Christmas carnival celebrations, and survives in this role today in various parts of the Caribbean. Some of the rhythms have been incorporated into digital ragga recordings [...]. A less obvious heritage from Jonkanoo is audible in the press-rolls and percussive accents used by Jamaican drummers generally.¹⁴

Besides these secular influences, there were religious ones. Jamaica has always been deeply spiritual, and the various creeds, of African or European origins, have been characterized by a strong musical participation. It was impossible that this tradition would not influence the secular music on the island.

Both Revival Zion and Pocomania combined African and Christian religious elements, and involved handclapping, foot-stamping, and the use of the bass drum, side drum, cymbals and rattle. The influence of both is found, alongside that of American-style Baptist Church services, in the early records of [...] the Maytals [...]. The rhythms of Pocomania church services have also periodically been reborn in the dancehall.¹⁵

Kumina¹⁶, especially, had a great influence on Jamaican music, mainly because of its deeply African traditions and practices. This is due to the fact that the “hymns” in Kumina are characterized by “a deep [...], resonant bass pattern, a rhythm like the beating of an excited heart, which [...] was the spiritual root of Kumina, the «heart-string» connecting the living and the dead.”¹⁷ Another important feature of Kumina music is the use of drums, brought by indentured labourers from Central Africa after Emancipation. Drums would be an essential element of Jamaican music, especially in conscious Rasta songs, and they have become an aspect of continuity between Africa and Jamaica. In Africa, drums are not simply instruments. They have special powers that give them such an importance in the community.

Sacred drums are at the heart of most African music, dance and religious worship. Charged with supernatural forces, drums speak the language of the ancestors. To become sacred, an ordinary drum must first be consecrated in order to provide it with godlike attributes.¹⁸

¹⁴ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.6.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p.5.

¹⁶ For a discussion of Jamaican religions, see Chapter 5. Kumina, especially, is discussed at pp.140-143.

¹⁷ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.179.

¹⁸ Don C. Ohadike, *Op. Cit.*, p.2. The consecration of drums is still important today in Jamaica, especially for Kumina practitioners. Rum is generally used to consecrate a drum, and a special person is appointed for this task.



4. Djembe drums from Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Mali. The most powerful hand drums in the world.
<http://www.bongocentral.com/drums.htm>.

Beside having a name and belonging to a specific group, drums also have a language of their own:

The language that sacred drums speak can be regarded as texts that one can learn to read and write. [...] When properly performed, sacred drums may express special feelings like joy, affection or grief. It is not difficult to see that the African drum is not just a musical instrument; it is a communication tool, used to transmit oral traditions.¹⁹

What is significant for Kumina practices is precisely this communicative intent, and the link drums provide with ancestral Africa.



5. Kumina drummers. <http://mountalvernia.tripod.com/id7.html>.

Various other folk forms influenced the creation of ska and of all the subsequent Jamaican music. Among these, not only Jamaican forms, in which must be included the work songs derived from the plantation system, but also North American black music and genres coming from the whole Caribbean archipelago.

Afro-Cuban forms like the rumba, bolero and mambo all made an impact, as, crucially, did the music of Black America – firstly big-band swing, then r&b.²⁰

With the passing of time, all these diverse influences began to creolize, and to give birth to the first really Jamaican kind of music: mento.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.3.

²⁰ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.3.

2. MENTO.

Mento has been for a long time described as “Jamaican calypso”, because of its role as social commentary. Actually, mento bands took over the part of previous street singers who “would make up lyrics about the latest events and sell them in tract form for a penny a copy”²¹. Mento, basically a live music, was played by bands who

Employed a very similar line-up to the quadrille bands, usually involving banjo, hand drums, guitar and the ‘rhumba box’, a large thumb piano which played the bass part. This basic line-up, frequently augmented by bamboo saxophone, penny whistle and the occasional steel pan, was used by the outfits who played during the interval of ‘orchestra dances’ as well as at weddings and parties. By the 1950s these mento bands were playing to the tourists.²²



6. A mento band. <http://www.mentomusic.com/>.

Like calypso, mento drew its lyrics from the facts of life. It was a kind of observation of what happened in the lives of common people in Jamaica, expressed with humour and joyfulness.

Most mento songs were wryly humorous accounts of everyday life among the Jamaican poor, with plenty of references to the perennial topic of sex. [...] A certain level of material discomfort was taken as an inevitable aspect of existence, and acceptance of it was actually facilitated by the humour of mento.²³

Apart from Trinidadian calypso and the genres illustrated so far, mento absorbed many other influences.

Add to these musical forms several kinds of work songs used to accompany a wide variety of chores in rural Jamaica [...]. A host of other, less well-known musical traditions could be cited. Some of these, such as the “digging songs” used in cultivating and planting crops or the “ring game” songs used for rural entertainment, have long been leaving their mark on mento.²⁴

Mento can be considered the first truly Jamaican music, since it was recognized and appreciated all over the island, and it had “no special association with any particular community, region, religion, or social group within Jamaica”²⁵. Moreover, along with Jamaican r&b and boogie, modelled on

²¹ *Ibidem*, p.6.

²² *Ibidem*, p.6.

²³ *Ibidem*, p.7.

²⁴ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.186.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

American styles, mento was the first kind of music to be recorded in Jamaica by local producers. In fact, with mento the Jamaican music industry actually started.

3. SOUND SYSTEMS.

The only way for poor Jamaicans to hear some music, since they did not have radios and could not afford clubs, was to rely on sound systems, a typically Jamaican resource to gather people, listen to music and dance.

These dances had a low entry price, and the sound systems' mobility and the fact that live musicians were not involved meant that they could be set up at country venues that lacked a stage or had only minimal facilities. So this kind of entertainment was accessible to a wide general audience who were often barred from the elite venues where live jazz was featured.²⁶

The sound systems phenomenon began in the 1950s. At the beginning, they were quite simple. Their aim was simply to air some music. As time passed, however, they became more and more important, and real feuds started among the followers of the various sound systems.

The very early sound systems were fairly basic, comprising one record deck, a valve amp and the largest commercially available loudspeakers. As the 1950s progressed, however, they became more powerful and technically sophisticated. [...] By the second half of the decade, a speaker cabinet known as a 'House of Joy' [...] was a common feature of the larger sets [...]. The man who played and introduced the records became a crucial figure: the slang- and jive-talking Jamaican deejay [...] was master of ceremonies in every sense, as well as a precursor of today's rappers.²⁷



7. Early sound system. <http://www.iconocluster.com/clusterblog/2008/04/21/jamaica-old-sound-system/>.

The music that could be heard through the sound systems was varied, and reflected what people wanted to hear. Actually, the popularity of a sound system depended on the availability of rare records of the preferred material.

These systems played what their urban patrons wanted to hear: the hot African American rhythm 'n' blues then reigning in the United States, with a special preference shown for the New Orleans sound. But most of them made room for a certain amount of variety, spinning an occasional

²⁶ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.4.

²⁷ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.11-12.

Cuban dance number, perhaps, or a calypso, and almost all of them played at least some mento records.²⁸

African American music was a favourite with the sound systems, and this facilitated its influence on the birth of Jamaican music. Sound systems are still today the easiest way to hear some music in Jamaica, and to dance at a low cost (some have evolved in contemporary dancehalls). However, the rivalry between different sounds has calmed down. At the time of the first sound systems, when there were few of them, followers were almost at war with each other.

Most widely known of these pioneering sound systems was Tom the Great Sebastian [...]. With Count Machuki as MC and Duke Vin [...] as selector, Tom ruled Beat Street until the advent, in the mid-1950s, of the 'Big Three' who were to rule the dancehalls until the end of the decade. These were Clement Seymour Dodd (aka Coxson), whose second and very successful system was called Sir Coxson's Downbeat [...]; Arthur 'Duke' Reid, whose Trojan Sound was also a multi-set system; and Vincent 'King' Edwards, whose system gained the name Giant, and by 1959 was the most powerful on the island. The rivalry between the different sounds was fierce, and inspired loyalty akin to that of football supporters.²⁹

Many people who started with sound systems then progressed into the music business. For instance, Coxson Dodd later created Studio One, that would produce the most talented musicians and hits for decades, and Duke Reid did the same with his Treasure Isle. Lee 'Scratch' Perry, who started in a sound system too, never built his own studio, but became one of the greatest music producers in Jamaica.

One of the greatest and most durable achievements of sound systems was to help the starting of the recording industry in Jamaica. When the owners of the sounds could not find enough new American records to play, they started to create their own, to supply the demand of the followers.

A major impetus for the development of a local recording industry came when North American R&B began to take a new direction toward the end of the decade, so that it became increasingly difficult for sound systems operators to import U.S. recordings in the styles favored by Jamaicans. [...] the ability to obtain exclusive copies of "hot" records and to keep them out of the hands of other operators could make or break a sound system. [...] some sound system operators invested in basic recording equipment and began pressing records of local artists performing R&B.³⁰

²⁸ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.187-188.

²⁹ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.13.

³⁰ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.188.

4. THE BEGINNING OF A RECORDING INDUSTRY.

The first musical genre that Jamaicans started to record was modelled on African American rhythm and blues.

The Southern states provided rich pickings, yielding plenty of discs that had been no more than local hits in the US. Thus Jamaican musicians and singers were influenced by a range of regional r&b styles [...]. Jamaican audiences preferred the more adult, harder-edged and ‘blacker’ style of jump blues to the material that had enjoyed crossover success with the white American teenage rock’n’roll audience. [...]

The American city that exercised the most obvious influence on Jamaica’s musical development was New Orleans. [...] Jamaican musicians attempted to emulate both the shuffle boogies and the distinctive New Orleans syncopation [...] and some commentators even claim that it was their failure to get those rhythms quite right that gave Jamaican r&b its unique character.³¹

Actually, the first songs played by Jamaican performers were in a boogie style, or were r&b ballads. However, Jamaicans added their own touch to the music. They did not limit themselves to the imitation of the model; they took the model and adapted it to the local situation. This is what allowed for the creation of the first truly recognized Jamaican genre, ska.

Before long, these local recordings were displaying subtle evidence of stylistic change. [...] The prevailing mood of nationalistic pride encouraged an increasing openness toward indigenous cultural expressions – at least in the arts – and stimulated a certain amount of conscious musical experimentation with rural folk forms. It was in this general climate that Jamaica’s first truly new and distinctive form of urban popular music, known as ska, emerged.³²

5. SKA.

Ska began, as a proper kind of music, roughly around 1962, when Jamaica gained independence. This is why ska is seen as a “celebration” music: the festivities for independence were honoured with ska. It was a new kind of music, that derived quite clearly from earlier styles, but at the same time evidently distinguished itself from them. What most differed from previous Jamaican recordings was the different beat.

Ska differed from boogie mainly in the accent of its beat. Instead of the fore-beat emphasis of boogie woogie, ska used honking horns or staccato guitar chords to emphasize the after-beat – that is, the second and fourth beats of every measure, rather than the first and third. It was also a faster music than most R&B, with wild drum rolls accelerating the pace, while vibrant horn players used jazz techniques for expressive solos and melodic backing.³³

³¹ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.16-18.

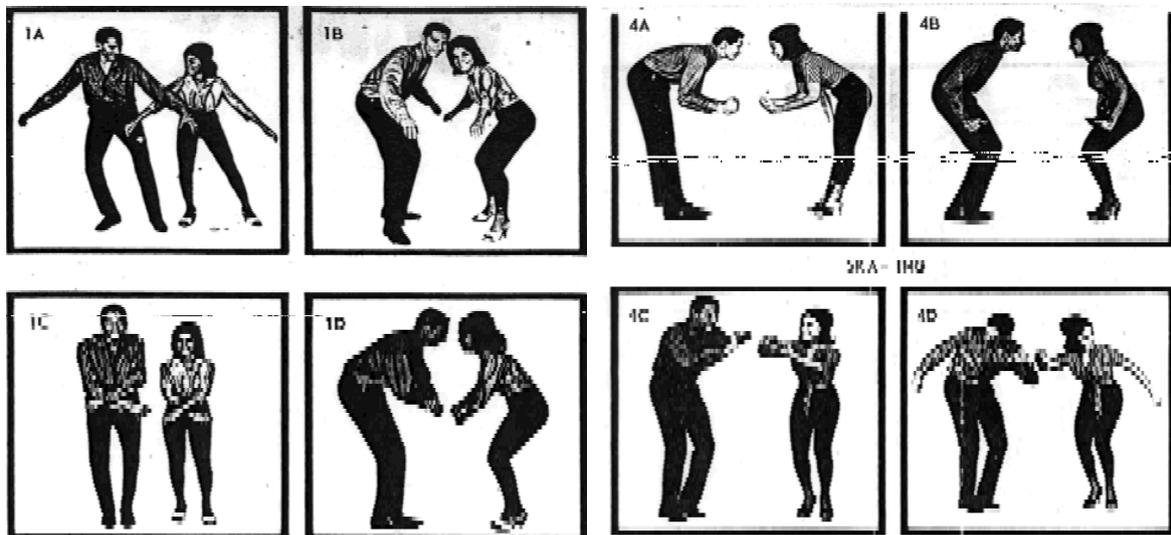
³² Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.188.

³³ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.31.

The precise origins of ska are difficult to trace, since at that time, in Jamaica, music was part of everyday life, and everybody could be involved in it. It was not a business assigned to professional singers and players only.

Precisely because this emergent popular music was a product primarily of downtown musicians, producers, and audiences, beyond the pale of “respectable” uptown society, the circumstances of its genesis were not carefully documented by the local media.³⁴

In the same way, the origins of the name ska are obscure, though assigned to various people. The most frequent attribution is to a greeting by musician Clive J, as David Katz tells in his survey of Jamaican music: “Common tale [is] that the name ‘ska’ derived from Clive J’s use of ‘skavoovie’ to address his fellow musicians”³⁵. As any other genre in Jamaica, ska was associated with a specific dance.



8. Ska dance. <http://skatmans.blog.cz/0706/ska-dance>.

The dance did not come out of nowhere, but was “strongly rooted in Jamaican folk traditions”³⁶. Ska was created mainly by Prince Buster, a sound system owner who would be the starter of the habit of “toasting” and “deejaying” too.

It was the Prince [Buster] who kick-started a change in Jamaica’s musical gears once he was free to record his first productions. An early session yielded a number of significant hits employing a markedly different beat.³⁷

However, Prince Buster was not the only important figure in this period. One song in particular, *Oh Carolina* by the Folke’s Brothers, produced by Prince Buster, would be influential in the following

³⁴ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.188-190.

³⁵ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.31.

³⁶ Dick Hebdige, *Cut ‘n’ Mix. Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1987, p.66.

³⁷ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.33.

years for Rastafari music and roots reggae. For the first time, Nyabinghi³⁸ drums were brought to the attention of non Rastafari Jamaicans, and they had a great success:

By placing Ossie's drums on 'Oh Carolina', Prince Buster brought the sound of Rastafari into Jamaica's popular consciousness. [...] After this success, music proclaiming an African identity became somewhat less taboo. [...] However, such material was still in the minority.³⁹

Count Ossie was one of the first popular Rasta drummers in Kingston. His role was not only that of a musician, but also that of an "elder", that is a Rasta who can teach to younger ones his experiences and the teachings of Jah. For both these reasons, many different people gathered around him in the 1950s in downtown Kingston.

Count Ossie, aka Oswald Williams, had long been a creative catalyst. From the late 1940s, Kingston's leading jazz men often mingled with the drummers at Ossie's downtown yard in Salt Lane for late night jams. After Hurricane Charlie destroyed the space in 1951, the Count established a large Rasta camp at Adastra Road in Rennock Lodge, East Kingston, and the capital's leading jazz men congregated for regular sessions in the surrounding Wareika Hills, making music in praise of the 'Most High'.⁴⁰

Rasta drumming is closely related to African memories, and it came to the Rastafari through the teachings of the Burru men, a group of Jamaicans who were deeply conscious of their African heritage. The Burru men and the Rastas met in the 1940s in the slums of West Kingston, between Trench Town and what is today Tivoli Gardens.

It was here [Back-O-Wall and Dungle] that the Rastafari are said to have encountered another group of social outcasts, the burru men, who migrated from Clarendon in the 1930s. The burru propagated the drumming traditions of their West African Asante ancestors, using a large bass drum (hit with a rounded or padded stick) and the smaller *funde* to hold the rhythm, with the repeater or *kette* taking the percussive lead. The two groups, who both venerated aspects of African culture that were rejected by Eurocentric mainstream Jamaican society, traded religious indoctrination for musical instruction. Count Ossie's mastery of the drum, learned from a burru man in Back-O-Wall, made the trio of burru drums the root of Rastafari music.⁴¹

The music of the Burru men had a community function, that they fulfilled generally at Christmas time:

Burru songs closely parallel the "praise songs" of original African tradition, which would expose the good or evil aspects of a person or a village. [...] The Burru people sang topical songs about current events and especially about "newsmakers" in the community who, during the year, may

³⁸ There are various spelling of Nyabinghi. It can also be found as Nyahbingi or Nyabhingi.

³⁹ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.33-34.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p.33.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p.34.

have been guilty of some misconduct. This reflects another African custom found among Gold Coast tribes.⁴²

Bass, kette and fundeh are still today at the core of Rastafari music, and they are used not only for Rasta chants, but also in contemporary Jamaican music, in different ways, but always to express the pride of having African origins.



9. Rasta drums. <http://www.tafaricraft.net/>.

As regards the way of playing the music, ska is mainly characterized, apart from the emphasis on the offbeat, by horns and piano. This is one of the reasons why ska was well suited to be an instrumental music. Actually, the legendary Skatalites, the greatest ska band in those years, played only instrumentals, and the break up of the band meant the end of the ska era.

Besides the broken beat of ska and the lung power of its vocalists, perhaps the most crucial contribution to its uniquely Jamaican development was that brought by these horn players. The brass sections would add a uniquely Jamaican take on jazz to give ska a particular feeling, be it in the big-band arrangements of a jumping tune or in the expressive soloing of horn-led instrumentals.

Another noticeable change in the treble section of ska arrangements came on the piano. Instead of playing a strolling rhythm with the left hand and treble chord with the right hand [...], ska piano parts often had chord melodies played with both hands on the upper end of the piano keys.⁴³

However, in Jamaican music nothing remains for a long period, so ska lasted for little more than a couple of years. This does not mean that at a certain date musicians just stopped playing ska. There are still today bands, not only Jamaican, who perform ska. But on the island this music gave way to another change in the mood of the music. Rocksteady would begin in 1966, but before it there was a brief parenthesis of another kind of music, called “rudeboy music”.

⁴² Verena Reckord, *From Burru Drums To Reggae Rhythms: The Evolution of Rasta Music*, in Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer and Adrian Anthony McFarlane eds., *Op. Cit.*, p.234-235.

⁴³ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.40.

6. RUDEBOY MUSIC.

Though Jamaica had attained independence, the life conditions of its inhabitants had not really improved. The music reflected what was happening in the society: the birth of the rude boys, young criminals trying to make a living in any possible way. Rude boys would characterize both the rudeboy music and later rocksteady.

From early 1965 [...] to 1967 [...] the youths of West Kingston danced to a different style of music, one that was to act as a bridge between two more fully developed forms. It was a style that was characterized by two features in particular: musically it carried a far more dynamic bassline [...]; and lyrically its performers addressed their target audience – the ghetto youth – as their own kind.⁴⁴

Musically, rudeboy music was different from ska, looking towards rocksteady and reggae:

Looking forward to rocksteady and later reggae, the horns tended to stay in the background, while the slower pace allowed the vocals to gain a fresh prominence. The status of the vocals was in itself a factor in the music's ability to communicate with the ghetto kids, who could have their collective identity affirmed by the lyrics of singers of their own age and – for the most part – from the same West Kingston background. [...] The starring role was moving away from the musicians [...] to the new wave of vocalists and harmony groups.⁴⁵

The reason for the ascendance of the rude boys, whose culture would be in some way celebrated by Perry Henzell in *The Harder They Come*, are to be found in the society and the hardships of life in 1960s Jamaica. The violence that was caused by the disillusion after independence would not stop with the rude boys era, but would characterize the rocksteady and reggae period too, and most of Jamaican history up until today.

By the mid-1960s it was becoming increasingly clear that Jamaica had exchanged the political rule of Britain for the economic domination of the United States. As far as the sufferers of the ghetto were concerned, there had been no great qualitative change in daily life, and the mounting resentment felt in Trench Town and the other ghettos of West Kingston frequently found expression in outbursts of violence. [...] The years following independence brought a marked rise in the crime rate.

A major reason for the growth in lawlessness was the sheer number of young men attracted to the city from the country. A high percentage of these migrants from the rural areas found themselves without hope of employment in the overcrowded shanty towns, and unable to fulfil the dreams that had prompted their move. [...] The spaghetti westerns of directors such as Sergio Leone, and Sergio Corbucci, along with James Bond's celluloid adventures, also made their own contribution to rudie culture, providing rough and tough heroes to be emulated. Many of

⁴⁴ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.56.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*

Kingston's young criminals named themselves after the characters and actors they saw on the screen, as did later streetwise deejays.⁴⁶

This practice would be reflected not only in Henzell's film, that even shows a clip of a film by Sergio Corbucci, but also in the book written after the film⁴⁷, where the author lingers on these young characters named after popular actors, and their attitude taken directly from spaghetti westerns and gangster movies.

Being only a transition form, rudeboy music would soon give way to a new genre, known as rocksteady.

7. ROCKSTEADY.

Though rocksteady is the direct descendant of ska, it is very different from it. What is immediately clear, even to an untrained audience, is that it sounds slower than ska.

As rocksteady emerged during 1966, it developed characteristics that identified it as almost the opposite of its predecessor, ska. In a nutshell, rocksteady was slower, more refined and, most of all, cooler. Firstly, the regularly paced 'walking' basslines that ska inherited from r&b became much more broken up: in rocksteady the bass didn't play on every beat with equal emphasis, but rather played a repeated pattern that syncopated the rhythm. In turn, the bass and drums became much more prominent, with the horns taking on a supportive rather than a lead role. For further emphasis, Lynn Taitt, the most significant rocksteady musician, would play a line on the bass strings of his guitar in unison with the bassist. Taitt was the arranger for all the records generally cited as the first examples of rocksteady. [...] The impact of various soul styles on Jamaican music was also apparent in the more refined style of rocksteady vocalists, which meshed perfectly with the slower tempo.⁴⁸

Another characteristic of rocksteady is that it changed the importance of some instruments: now keyboards and guitars acquired greater importance, while horns almost disappeared.

In rocksteady, ska's rumbling bass lines became deeper and still more noticeable. The brass was phased out to be replaced by guitar and keyboards set-ups. The main solo instrument of early ska – the trombone – disappeared virtually overnight, although saxophone breaks in the Latin American style were featured on many rocksteady records.⁴⁹

David Katz focuses on the Skatalites' breaking up as the initial movement of rocksteady, and sees the drum and bass patterns as the major differences between ska and its successor:

The division of the Skatalites into two self-contained recording units signalled an end to the era of big-band jazz arrangements; rock steady was created by smaller, studio-based groups that used

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p.57.

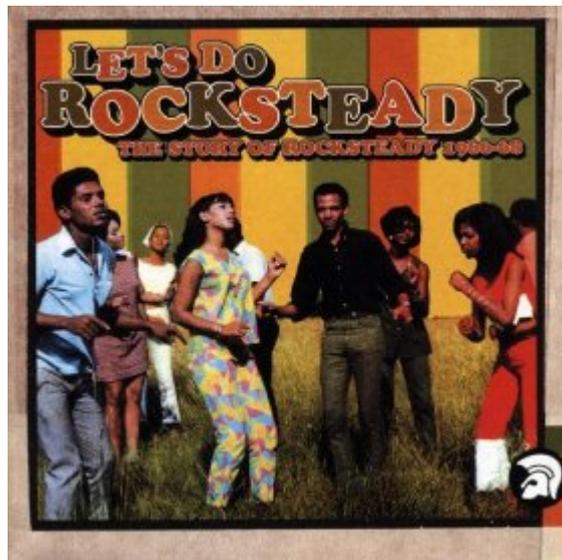
⁴⁷ Michael Thelwell, *The Harder They Come*, New York, Grove Press, 1980.

⁴⁸ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.55.

⁴⁹ Dick Hebdige, *Op. Cit.*, p.71.

horns as complementary instruments rather than as musical focal points. [...] The gradual ascendance of the slower, less cluttered rock steady came largely from a change to the dominant beat. Instead of the after-beat emphasis of ska, rock steady made use of a rhythm known as the 'one drop', encompassing a pronounced whack on the bass drum or floor toms on the third beat of every bar. The new rhythm, driven by chugging snare beats, was offset by strolling electric bass patterns, full of rest stops and pushed to the fore to provide the melody line. The greater prominence and melodic importance of the bass would allow dancers to abandon the clenched fists swinging between splayed legs of ska in favour of a stationary pose with a rocking body, jerking shoulders and snapping fingers.⁵⁰

Probably the dance arrived earlier than the music, since it started in 1965, while the first rocksteady hits date back to 1966. It was Alton Allis who identified the genre, with his 1966 hit *Rocksteady*, though his first hit, in rocksteady style, was *Girl, I've Got A Date*. Alton Allis would always be associated with rocksteady, even though many other performers sung in that style.



10. Let's do Rocksteady! http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/61IzOW-rGXL._SL500_aa280_.jpg

Because of socio-political problems, after a couple of years the music started to change again. The violence in the ghettos became political, and kept increasing. The rude boys era was over, and singers started to feel the need for more conscious lyrics. Around 1968, rocksteady slowly gave way to reggae.

The shift in subject matter was one of the many changes that came to the fore of Jamaican music once rock steady began to wane. The reggae style that followed it may have begun as another sound to fit a dance pattern, but conscious and politically motivated lyrics would increasingly become part of reggae's focus. As with the shift from ska to rock steady, the most immediate

⁵⁰ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.65.

differences involved a particular instrumentation and melodic arrangement, with the bass retaining its crucial role.⁵¹

8. EARLY REGGAE.

In 1968 music started to change again. It was the birth of reggae. Many songs hinted at the evolution rocksteady was undergoing, but the first one to use the term “reggae” was Toots & The Maytals *Do The Reggay* in 1968. Though the etymology of the name is unclear, many scholars have attempted to give it an explanation. For instance, David Katz, after various interviews with Bunny Lee, Clancy Eccles, Niney the Observer and others, affirms that reggae “derives from ‘streggae’, a derogatory term connoting a woman of low morals”⁵². On the contrary, Don Ohadike says that reggae derives “from the term ‘regular people’, or ordinary people, bearing in mind that in Jamaica the word regular also means ordinary”⁵³. Actually, today it is difficult to state exactly the meaning of the word, and its accurate etymology. And maybe it is superfluous, since the term has come to encompass, for the rest of the world, the whole of Jamaican music, ignoring differences between ska, reggae, or dancehall.

Contrary to what is commonly believed, early reggae was not slower than rocksteady, but faster. This is due to the testing period when the first reggae records were produced.

In fact, Jamaican music now took on a greater diversity than it had ever displayed before. What tied it all together was a new rough quality to the tunes, and the assigning of an even more pivotal role to the electric bass. Reggae in all its variations signalled a break from the smoothness of rocksteady [...]. The music was more extrovert.⁵⁴

Moreover, this early style of reggae was a synthesis of what happened before, and it was showing the way for all the future music in Jamaica:

Reggae began in a period of extraordinary experiment, in which almost all later styles were prefigured and all previous styles absorbed. The music of 1968-1974 ranged from the fast, jerky instrumentals of session bands [...], through the work of vocal harmony groups [...], to the minor-chord sounds and Rasta imagery of tracks that anticipated the roots revolution of the mid-1970s. It was in the early reggae era that it became common for sound-system deejays to chat on record, and the origins of dub techniques lie here as well.⁵⁵

Before the 1970s, reggae was not exactly what we think of it today. It was still searching its way. As with the other previous musical trends, what made the difference was the bass.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p.95.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p.98.

⁵³ Don C. Ohadike, *Op. Cit.*, p.97. It can be useful to notice that Ohadike was a Nigerian, and not a Jamaican.

⁵⁴ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.87.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

The bass of ska was an acoustic stand-up, frantically pumping to the beat; rock steady was an electric sound, with more audible and typically melodic strolling lines. As the early reggae bass is even more to the fore, its melodic features take a heightened emphasis, particularly at Studio One where augmented equipment boosted bass frequencies.⁵⁶

Though reggae is usually associated with Rastafari and dreadlocked singers, at the beginning their music was not appreciated by the Jamaican society. So the reggae middle- and upper-classes would listen to was “softer”, not menacing, not politically committed. This was also the means by which reggae could be distributed outside of Jamaica.

Not all reggae sounded like a gun being placed against the eardrums. The kind of reggae which was most popular in Jamaica at this time was generally lighter and less menacing. The lyrics dealt mainly in the language of love and broken hearts. Singers like Alton Ellis, John Holt, Pat Kelly and Ken Boothe began recording smooth romantic ballads, sometimes with a lush accompaniment of strings and a full orchestra. These were very popular with the slightly older age group. And they also sold outside the usual reggae market. [...]

As far as the international record companies were concerned, Jamaica’s heavy stuff was too rough and rude for white ears.⁵⁷

However, this was just a phase in reggae music. Soon it would start to take its road, to define itself, and to be almost appropriated by Rastafari musicians. The decade of the 1970s would be the period of the roots reggae, the “golden” age of reggae.

The new decade would see all kinds of further changes. In the increasingly turbulent 1970s reggae would undergo shifts in tempo, pace, subject matter and composition, and its creators would come up with a further series of innovations to keep their music perpetually unique.⁵⁸

9. ROOTS REGGAE.

This kind of reggae lasted until 1975, when the roots period began. However, between 1968 and 1975, many changes occurred in the music. Roots reggae is identified with a slower pace, slower than rocksteady, and with the prominence of the bass.

The sixties ended with reggae still trying to find its feet. It had arrived as a startling burst of energy, but by mid-1970 the music had slowed again. The new style that began to dominate was generally slower, heavier, thicker and more complex – a meditative and naturalistic sound equally suitable for ballads or songs of social protest. Several important developments were brought to Jamaican music in the early 1970s, altering and strengthening the foundations laid in

⁵⁶ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.119-120.

⁵⁷ Dick Hebdige, *Op.Cit.*, p.76.

⁵⁸ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.133.

the preceding decade; as before, some of the most significant changes came from the ghettos of Western Kingston.⁵⁹

David Katz explains quite clearly how few singers and musicians helped to change the mood of the music:

Though their music was somewhat out of step with the love songs that were still dominating the charts, the rise of groups like the Abyssinians, Wailing Souls and Burning Spear pointed the way towards the spiritual and political focus of the approaching roots reggae period.⁶⁰

And again, he points out the importance of Studio One in shaping the new music:

Though the Gladiators had an unseen hand in shaping the form of the music emanating from Brentford Road, their greatest contribution in the early 1970s, like that of their peers Burning Spear and the Abyssinians, was aiding the shift of focus at Studio One. On songs that spoke of spiritual devotion blossoming in a land plagued by social injustice these artists helped to usher in the format later designed as 'roots', whilst Soul Syndicate and Now Generation were responsible for the dominant musical backing utilized by other producers. In the same era, a number of significant changes to the reggae form arose from experimentation in the camp of Coxsone's traditional rival on Bond Street.⁶¹

Reggae music, though widely appreciated around the world, is the one that is more closely associated with indigenous and African roots. In reggae, the influences of folk traditions and of African reminiscence came to be clearly audible, much more than in ska and rocksteady.

By 1968, when reggae proper became established on the scene, indigenous influences were becoming even stronger, partly as class-consciousness was converging with increasing cultural assertiveness. The popular expression "roots" came to refer as much to the downtown ghetto experience of suffering and struggle as to the African sources of Jamaican culture.⁶²

Moreover, among the influences of reggae music, Rastafari⁶³ came to have the greatest importance, and with it, the Nyabinghi drumming.

The "Jamaicanness" of reggae style may derive from a number of sources. [...] mento [...] Afro-Protestant musical contribution. [...] With the ascendance of Rasta-oriented reggae, those elements of traditional Rastafarian *Nyabinghi* music that derived from Revivalist sources were transferred to urban popular music, lending much of '70s reggae a hymn-like quality that would be familiar to the ears of churchgoers all over rural Jamaica. The melodies and chord progressions of many Rasta reggae songs, as well as the biblical language and prophetic

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p.135.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p.154.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p.160-161.

⁶² Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.192.

⁶³ For a description of Rastafari religion, see Chapter 5, pp.143-154.

messages that typify the genre, owe much to Revivalism. Yet another influence was local versions of Afro-American gospel singing.⁶⁴

Nyahbinghi music would have a great relevance for Rasta oriented reggae, and even more in dancehall. The kind of drumming and chants that are heard in a Rasta meeting would be echoed in roots reggae, which would be sung mainly by Rasta singers and musicians.

Nyahbingi [...] music in its purest form is the music played at Rastafarian meetings or 'grounations', and is based around a style of relentless drumming and chanting. Sometimes a guitar or horns are used [...] but no amplification at all is employed.

The drumming, which usually involves three hand drums of different sizes (the bass, the funde and the repeater), exercised an influence on early recorded Jamaican music [...]. However, though the drumming style – and even the master Rasta drummer Count Ossie – appeared on major hits in the 1960s, nyahbingi music was heard too sporadically to be considered a commercial trend until the computerized 1990s, when hard-core ragga deejays like Capleton, Shabba Ranks and Buju Banton chose to mouth 'cultural' concerns over rhythms that included traditional Rastafarian percussion. The one period in which Rastafarian ensembles regularly made records that were untampered by commercial considerations was the roots era of the 1970s.⁶⁵

A significant change that happened in Jamaican music was the lyrics' variation in subject matter. More and more, songs were not about love themes anymore, but tried to reflect the society, with all its problems and the frustrated aspirations of the "sufferers". This coincided, paradoxically, with the growing of popularity of Jamaican music abroad.

Much Jamaican music had become local in lyrics content as well as in style. [...] it was not long after the appearance of ska that popular music in Jamaica began to reflect the social tensions caused by the glaring divisions between elitist, bourgeois, uptown society and disenfranchised but increasingly self-conscious and assertive downtown. Many ska songs of the '60s sang of the shantytowns, of the travails of the "sufferers", and, ambivalently, of the rude boys who, in a milieu of poverty and instability, sought respect in street-corner machismo and petty or not-so-petty crime.⁶⁶

Rastafari, a cult that was enormously growing in Kingston in the 1970s, informed much of the roots reggae songs. However, reggae, though being closely associated with the religious group, was not limited to it. Many singers played reggae music, and many diverse styles and themes appeared on their records. Generally, what amalgamated all these singers was the attention they gave to social themes, and their urge to help to better society. Their utopian wish was to change the world through music, to make it a better place to live in, thanks to the regenerative power of sound.

⁶⁴ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.193.

⁶⁵ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.172.

⁶⁶ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.193.

To most Jamaicans a roots record is simply one that concerns itself with the life of the ghetto sufferer – with ‘reality’. Though often informed by the millennial cult of Rastafarianism, it takes in a range of music [...]. The term ‘roots’ was first widely used in the mid-1970s to describe the work of artists such as the Wailers, Burning Spear, the Abyssinians, Junior Byles, the Royals, the Wailing Souls, Big Youth and Vivian Jackson. The music that they (and countless others) made was largely concerned with ‘truth and rights’ and the legacies of colonialism. Occasionally, though, the same people cut love songs [...] over the same sort of rhythms that underpinned their cultural material. These rhythms shared certain musical motifs, such as nyahbingi drumming and/or minor-key horn chords, and were played in the ‘rockers’ and ‘steppers’ styles that are still indelibly associated with the roots genre. [...] Rockers was essentially a militant update of classic rocksteady rhythms, while ‘steppers’ was an even more assertive take on that, tailored for a high-stepping, march-like dance move.⁶⁷

Though “serious” themes have always been present in Jamaica music, since before ska up until contemporary dancehall, these reached the dominance in the middle of the 1970s.

The early reggae years then saw a significant increase in the number of records with Rasta/cultural themes, and by the middle of the decade these had achieved a position of dominance. This was particularly obvious in 1974-75.⁶⁸

As regards the music, the difference from the previous one was once again in the way bass and drums were played.

The new “dread rhythms” were called *rockers*. As with every other shift in Jamaican pop music, the new sound can be traced back to the way the drums and bass guitar were featured on recordings. In rockers, the bass was as heavily amplified as ever and continued to provide the basic background throb – reggae’s heartbeat. But the bass patterns also became more complicated and experimental. In some type of heavy reggae (especially in instrumental or “dub” music) the bass takes over the prominent role normally reserved in rock music for the lead guitar.⁶⁹

As with any other musical genre, roots reggae did not come out of nowhere. Its appearance was already foreshadowed in the ska period. But the great leap was accomplished in 1975, when reggae became Rasta-oriented and its subject matters focused on “reality”.

By 1975 a seismic shift had occurred in the mainstream of reggae with the eruption of Rastafarian-dominated ‘roots’ records. This development was clearly anticipated by the so-called ‘rebel music’ of the first half of the decade, a term used to refer both to the influx of younger producers at that time and to the social discontent often expressed in the music of their artists – many of whom were committed Rastafarians. The Wailers exemplified the changes in youth music, having evolved from representatives of West Kingston’s rudeboys into more conscious

⁶⁷ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.135.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p.136.

⁶⁹ Dick Hebdige, *Op. Cit.*, p.82.

‘soul rebels’. [...] Furthermore, traditional Rastafarian chants, which had occasionally surfaced on record before, were now increasingly being recorded – sometimes given a more commercial gloss by non-Rastafarian producers such as Derrick Harriott, Lloyd ‘Matador’ Daley and Leslie Kong.⁷⁰

More and more Rastafari were involved in the music business, and more and more youths were attracted by the cult. This was partly due to the socio-political conditions of Jamaica, as Prime Minister Michael Manley was not realizing what he had promised in the election campaign. In 1972, leftist People National Party (PNP), led by Michael Manley, had been elected thanks to its appeal on the poorer strata of society.

In the 1972 general election Michael Manley defeated the JLP incumbent Hugh Shearer, striding into office on a platform of elevating the poor, and it was partly reggae music and symbolic, Rasta-sympathetic rhetoric that got him there. Delroy Wilson’s determined ‘Better Must Come’ topped the charts in 1971; Manley coopted the tune as his campaign song. He made public appearances with a staff he said had been given to him by Haile Selassie – it was dubbed the Rod of Correction by his followers, who saw Manley as ‘Joshua’ and Shearer as ‘Pharaoh’ – and got Clancy Eccles to organize political bandwagons featuring the Wailers and other artists performing around the island in his support. [...]

Manley did implement a number of policies aimed at improving conditions for the poor majority, but most of the promised changes were slow to arrive and artists who had supported his campaign were soon voicing dissent.⁷¹

Moreover, Rastafari was part of the movement of black pride that was growing around the world, and it was the religion to which the Wailers belonged. The Wailers, the most internationally popular reggae musicians ever, contributed to spread the cult and the music out of Jamaica.

There were a couple of likely reasons for this popularity. Disillusionment with Michael Manley’s initially well-received PNP government played a part in turning the ghetto youth towards Rastafarianism, with its message of spiritual and social salvation. The Black Power movement in the United States had also made an impact by then. [...] By the mid-1970s even the intelligentsia were switching to Rastafarianism. The other important – and perhaps clinching – factor in Rastafarianism’s wide acceptance was that the cult was embraced by all three of the Wailers, the first reggae act to have an album financed by a foreign record company.⁷²

⁷⁰ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.127.

⁷¹ David Katz, *Op. Cit.*, p.171-172.

⁷² Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.136.



11. Bunny Wailer, Bob Marley and Peter Tosh: the first Wailers at the beginning of their career, before embracing Rastafari. <http://www.myspace.com/thewailingwailers>

In contrast to the harsh conditions of life, Rastafari offered a vision of glorious African ancestry, peace, solidarity and black pride. This attracted many ghetto youths who had no hope of making a life in the city. With reggae, Rastafari found a way to express themselves and their creed.

RASTAFARIANS had a highly effective vehicle and reliable conduit that disseminated the ideas, concepts, life style and culture of the RASTAFARIAN Livity, which predominately inspired and informed reggae music.⁷³

However, in Jamaica the music never remains the same for a long period. The audience's taste changes rapidly, and so it was for roots reggae. As reggae, thanks mainly to Bob Marley, was gaining popularity around the world, in its homeland it was starting to be felt as something old, that had lost touch with Jamaica, its trends and its problems.

The '70s were the heyday of roots reggae [...]. Yet by mid-decade their music, although respected on the island, was already regarded by most young Jamaicans as a distinctly "international" and already somewhat old-fashioned style.⁷⁴

Reggae evolved into something else. Because of socio-political changes that fostered a drastic adjustment in subject matters, reggae became dancehall, and more precisely what is regarded as "slack style reggae". The singers no more chanted about peace and love, but about sex and violence. Another particularity of Jamaican music had been the invention of dub and versioning, which started along with reggae, at the beginning of the 1970s, though experiments had been made before.

10. DUBBING, DEEJAYING AND VERSIONING.

When they started to record their own music, Jamaican producers owned the products. As it is shown in the film *The Harder They Come*, which traces quite realistically Jimmy Cliff's and every other Jamaican singer's early career, the musicians worked for the producers. The performers were paid for a recording session, then all money made belonged to the producers, be it a song or an instrumental. With these discs (in Jamaica they were called acetates, or soft waxes), they could do whatever pleased them. It became common to use them for deejays to chat over, creating in this way many different versions of the same song, or simply to experiment with the music. This is why

⁷³ Yasus Afari, *Op. Cit.*, p.129.

⁷⁴ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.197.

sometimes one has the impression that Jamaican music proposes always the same song: it is just the same instrumental, over which various singers or deejays put their lyrics. These practices, still in use today all over the world, especially in rap music, are known as “dub” and “version”.

Before the 1970s, the deejays were already at work in Jamaican music. They worked in the sound systems, introducing songs, heating up the audience and using catchphrases to keep the attention or make their presence felt.

The early 1970s marked the beginning of the ascent of the deejay, a trend that continued during the roots era, and went on to become dominant throughout the dancehall and ragga phases. The story of the Jamaican record can be traced back to the ska era, when the men who took the mic at the dances could occasionally be heard on vinyl, shouting an introduction and/or interjecting their catchphrases. [...] The role of the deejay at this point, however, was still largely confined to the dancehalls of the day, encouraging the dancers, and promoting the sound-systems on which they were appearing.⁷⁵

When the deejays started to be considered on the same level as the singers, they began to record their commentaries on instrumentals, or on songs where the record engineer had deleted or modified the singing track. At this point, they could make a real record on which they could voice their own concerns: about society, about “reality”, about their Rastafari consciousness. The first deejay to become popular in this way was U-Roy, also known as The Originator.

Though not the first deejay to make records, U-Roy is often referred to as the ‘Originator’ because of the unprecedented popularity of his early records and the influence of his style. His recordings for Duke Reid dominated the Jamaican charts during 1970 and had an enormous influence on every deejay who followed him into the studio. [...] his rich-toned voice proclaimed sizzling, jive-saturated lyrics rather than simply inserting a few phrases. Moreover, he rode the pared-down instrumental track all the way through, rather than interjecting at crucial points.⁷⁶



12. U-Roy. <http://www.uroy.nl/albums.aspx>

Thanks to this method, deejays’ popularity equalled that of singers and musicians. Sometimes, deejay records sold more than those by the most popular singers. Still today, deejays are as popular as musicians, and they perform on stage alongside the greatest singers and groups.

⁷⁵ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.120.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p.121.

The other great revolution in Jamaican music was the invention of dub, due to a record engineer called King Tubby, in 1972. Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton identify three phases in the creation of dub:

The word 'dub' is now used throughout the world of dance music to describe a remix. It's not so widely recognized, however, that the technique of the remix was pioneered in Jamaica as far back as 1967 [...]. Broadly speaking, the history of dub in Jamaica has passed through three phases. First, there were the so-called 'instrumentals', not originally conceived as such, but becoming so by the removal of the vocal track. Initially these instrumentals were strictly for sound-system play, but before too long they were being issued commercially. Versions on which the contribution of the studio engineer was more obvious then emerged around the end of 1968, and by 1970 these remixes – called 'versions' – were appearing on the B-sides of most Jamaican singles. The producer would have the engineer remove all (or most) of the original vocal, leaving the raw rhythm track, which could be spiced up by a deejay adding shouted exclamations and/or extra instrumentation. [...] These 'versions' provided sound systems with tracks for their own deejays to talk, or 'toast', over.⁷⁷



13. King Tubby. <http://reggae.com/artists/tubby/index.htm>

Dub properly arrived in 1972, and soon King Tubby was followed by other engineers. It became a phenomenon so common that, on buying a record, the customer would check not only the singer, the group, or the producer, but also the engineer, when looking for quality or a specific sound. Dub was born in the sound systems, to make people dance, but it was created in studios.

The starting point for a dub record was the instrumental flip side of a record, which sound systems would play for deejays to chat over, or for dancers to sing over. From the early '70s, recording engineers like King Tubby and Augustus Pablo (d.1999) took over the art of remastering a step further, manipulating fliers, faders, echo effects, and the like to alternately cut out and then reintroduce various tracks (drums, back-up vocals, guitars etc.), adding reverbs and other effects and perhaps even bringing back snippets of the original lead vocal. Though produced in the studio, dub was meant to be heard "live" in the sound-system dance [...]. Together with the deejays, the constant flow of fresh dub versions provided a sort of spontaneity to sound-system shows that more than made up for the absence of live bands.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p.215.

⁷⁸ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.198.

Soon what had begun as an experiment became a steady feature of Jamaican music:

By the end of 1976 the initial trickle of dub albums had become a flood [...]. While the earliest dub sides had featured effective but fairly minimal reorderings of the original instrumental mixes, by mid-decade improved studio equipment and the enthusiasm of dancehall crowds for the form led to far wilder remixes. By 1977, virtually every producer had his or her own dub album(s) on sale or were about to release them, and a variety of styles were on offer – based on the divergent kinds of rhythms employed, from rocksteady originals to Pablovian rockers – and the different approaches of the engineer reworking them.⁷⁹

Dub resisted in Jamaica well into the 1980s, though it started to lose the affection of the audience because of its predictability.

The advent of the 12” single [...] and of the ‘showcase’ album [...] kept dub alive as the 1980s dawned. However, dub was becoming less surprising, even formulaic, and Jamaican music was undergoing another major change. A new generation of singers and deejays became known for their ability to improvise lyrics live in the dance over well-loved Studio One rhythms. This became the new dancehall style, which would dominate until Jammy led the digital revolution in 1985 with the first totally digital reggae record – Wayne Smith’s “Under Me Sleng Teng”.⁸⁰

Dub persisted in Jamaica. However, as with any other genre that was created by people coming from Downtown Kingston, the reactions to it were ambiguous: some loved it, others hated it. Dick Hebdige, writing in 1986, noticed that

Talk over and dub have had a mixed reception from the reggae audience. The music is extremely popular with the young sound system fans. But the Jamaican radio stations have banned it because of pressure from the musicians’ union. The union is indignant that the musicians who record the original versions (which then get transformed into dub and talk over records) don’t get any royalties.⁸¹

The same author, later in the chapter, also highlights the merits of dub and versioning:

Dub and talk over are important because they are the basic material of the sound systems. And it is the sound systems which are largely responsible for keeping the tradition and the spirit of reggae music alive. It is here at the grassroots level that many of reggae’s fads and fashions emerge – new dances, new attitudes, new tastes and trends. [...]

The sound system provides an opportunity for the grassroots people to talk back, to respond, to choose what they like and they don’t like. [...]

And often the talk over artist, like the calypso singer, can help to clarify local opinion on social and political issues. [...]

⁷⁹ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.230.

⁸⁰ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Ibidem*, p.236.

⁸¹ Dick Hebdige, *Op. Cit.*, p.86.

This process of feed-back – of the three way flow between artists, record producers and the audience – is what helps to make reggae different from other types of pop music. The distance between the performer and the fans is never allowed to grow too great.⁸²

As it is by now clear, Jamaican musical taste never remains still for a long time. After having enjoyed roots reggae for a period, and dub and deejaying for another period, the audience was requiring something new. The mutated socio-political conditions helped in the creation of a new genre, the dancehall.

11. DANCEHALL, OR SLACK STYLE REGGAE.

As for any other musical genre all over the world, dancehall did not appear out of nowhere. It was an evolution of previous reggae, and it modified the deejaying of the previous decade to adapt it to a new style and a new mood.

1980s dancehall did not evolve overnight, as if from a vacuum, but can be seen as the logical evolution of the deejay/sound-system music that had dominated the island's dance-music scene throughout the '70s. Perhaps the main change in the late '70s was that what was once, like early rap, a primarily live art form now came to be widely marketed on records. [...] By the end of the decade, with the emergence of deejays like Ninjaman, Super Cat, Shabba Ranks, and the often lyrically artful Buju Banton, Spragga Benz, and others, the modern idiom of dancehall was in full flower.⁸³

The advent of dancehall was not only an evolution of reggae. The most striking difference from previous conscious roots reggae is the different subject matter. No more social problems, human love, and upliftment for everyone, but sex and violence. The reason why dancehall is called “slack” is precisely that of speaking quite crudely about female anatomy, sexuality, and guns. A new sort of singer/deejay emerged: a kind of “super macho”, who boasts about his many girlfriends, his sexual prowess and his violent behaviour.

One of the reasons why the subject matters changed was the new political climate. In 1980, Jamaica held a general election, which saw the growing of political violence with an estimated number of deaths in that period of around 800 people, and of the ensuing repression. To talk about freedom and human rights was not safe. The PNP, led by Michael Manley, was not re-elected. At its place, the right wing JLP (Jamaica Labour Party), led by Edward Seaga, took power. Mr. Seaga aligned himself clearly with the United States, and the period that followed his election was characterized by social turmoil and growing poverty.

In 1980, following a period of destabilization (orchestrated by the CIA) and increasing economic problems for Jamaica, Michael Manley's nominally socialist PNP lost the general election to the

⁸² *Ibidem*, p.87-88.

⁸³ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.200.

right-wing JLP, led by Edward Seaga [...]. What followed was a respite from the extreme levels of violence that the island had endured prior to, and especially during, the election [...], but the IMF-prompted deregulation and free market policies of the new government [...] brought hardships that disproportionately affected the poor. A significant rise in unemployment, accompanied by falling wages for many still in employment, made things still worse.⁸⁴

The reaction to these changes was immediately felt in the music, which distanced itself from “reality”.

In reaction, the island’s music became conservative and inward-looking. The reliance on tried and tested rhythms became more pronounced, while lyrics tended to turn away from social, political or historical themes. Now the emphasis shifted to traditional dancehall concerns: new dance moves, ‘slackness’ (sexually explicit lyrics) and sound clashes. Furthermore, in the harsher economic climate record producers played safe by using rhythms and lyrics that had already proved successful in the dancehalls. There a new wave of sound systems had come to the fore.⁸⁵

Dick Hebdige, writing in 1986, saw with contemporary eyes what was happening in Jamaica, and explained quite clearly the musical differences between the ages of Manley and of Seaga:

Michael Manley had lent his support to Rasta-influenced reggae. He had invited Selassie to the island for a state visit in 1966. In election campaigns, Manley had used the language of the Bible to win people’s votes. He had stressed the links between the socialist tradition and the Rastafarian search for justice and a spiritual home. [...] The only difference was that Manley said that that better place was here in the Caribbean and not back in Africa. [...] The links between socialist and Rastafarian beliefs could not be made most clearly through reggae music. There were two reasons for this. First, reggae was the perfect medium for expressing all these ideals, hopes and dreams. And, secondly, the record industry could create wealth for the island so that those ideals, hopes and dreams could be put into action.

[...] When he came to power, Seaga had no stake in the Rastafarian connection which Manley had helped to foster. [...] For Seaga, Jamaica must be a modern nation able to compete in the capitalist world, not a country of “sufferers” obsessed with their “roots”. [...] By linking up with roots and Rasta reggae, Manley was also linking Jamaica’s future with the Third World rather than with white America.

When Seaga came to power he set out to break those links once and for all. As the new decade opened, a new mood began to dominate the music. And that mood is clearly summed up in the rise of *slack style* reggae. Slack style is the name given to the “dirty” talk overs of the new generation of djs headed in the early 1980s by Winston Yellowman Foster. [...] Yellowman stopped dealing with controversial political issues. Instead he began to develop his famous

⁸⁴ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.247-248.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p.248.

pornographic *slack* toasts. These toasts concentrated largely on insults to women, and on themes of sex and money and the relationship between them.

[...] In Seaga's Jamaica Inc, sex, money, flash and nonsense have tended to become the new religion of the airwaves. [...] It wasn't long before "slackness" was all the rage.⁸⁶



14. Yellowman, the albino slack style deejay. http://www.urbanimage.tv/watermarked/yellowman_jb.jpg

Peter Manuel and Kenneth Bilby explain the rise of dancehall with the argument that people were not as free as they were under the Manley government, and so to talk against the establishment was not tolerated anymore. Many vocalists (and other public figures too) had been shot in the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s because of their political opinions. In 1976, there was an ambush at Bob Marley's house, and he and several of the people present in the house were shot. No one died, but the message was clear: the ambush happened just before a concert with political overtones, and it was mused that the Wailers were supporting the PNP. Lee Perry's studio was burned down in 1979, and Peter Tosh, one of the most effective accusers of Babylon, was murdered in 1987, allegedly only to rob him and his house. In 1983, the poet Michael Smith was stoned to death by three men in Stony Hill, near Kingston, for political reasons. These are only few examples of the tense climate that there was in Jamaica in those years, and that can clarify why artists chose to retreat from public themes to more innocuous ones.

The mood of the Jamaican public seemed to change overnight [...]. No longer at the forefront was the vision – whether socialist or Rasta – of overthrowing imperialism, casting down Babylon, or returning to Africa. For its part, roots reggae, linked to this declining spirit of messianic optimism, suffered further setbacks. [...] Youth interest shifted decisively from roots reggae to the artful chantings of the deejays, which in the mid-'80s came to be called "dancehall". In a situation where denouncing the government could be mortally dangerous, the deejays retreated to the politically safe topics of sex and boasting.⁸⁷

The same authors go on to illustrate some of the differences between classic reggae and dancehall. Some of these, such as the language, become clearer through the analysis of the Jamaican films.

The trademark "skank" rhythm of classic reggae persisted in many '80s dancehall songs, but by the end of the decade that beat was just one possible rhythm among many and is seldom heard in

⁸⁶ Dick Hebdige, *Op. Cit.*, p.123-125.

⁸⁷ Peter Manuel with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Op. Cit.*, p.199.

modern dancehall. [...] Even the language of the two genres differed: much classic reggae used standard English, often with a biblical flavor, while dancehall revelled in the expressive power of Jamaican patois/patwa, often delivered at high speed [...]. Moreover, much roots reggae generally used conventional “song” format, with original compositions with flowing melodies, changing chord progressions, and verses and refrains. Dancehall, by contrast, typically features the deejay intoning verses in what is often a short, repetitive tune (“chune”) superimposed over a “riddim” (rhythmic accompaniment), which generally consists of a repeated, and often digitally generated or reproduced, ostinato.⁸⁸

Dancehall relied heavily on deejays and on versioning. Few new rhythms were created during dancehall: the producers preferred to use rhythms that had already proved to be successful.

The riddims themselves acquire a special importance and have a unique role in the music system. [...] Many riddims are recycled [...]. The riddim could be named after the original song that popularized it [...], or it could be given a name by its producer [...]. Typically, the producer, having created a new riddim (or an imitative “re-lick” of an existing one), would hire deejays to “voice” over it and would handle the marketing of the resulting recording himself. A deejay could voice (both live and on record) the same verses over different riddims, and, conversely, he could record and sing different voicings over the same riddim.⁸⁹

This can be in part explained by an economic factor: a successful rhythm is more likely to sell than a new one. In turn, this gave birth to the trend of creating “one rhythm” albums, that is a whole album by a single deejay, who invents new lyrics for the same riddim.

Since the 1980s, Jamaican music has been voiced almost exclusively by deejays. They have become more important than singers and musicians, especially since the music has become totally digital.

The new decade [1980s] was first and foremost about deejays. The plethora of chatters that emerged was presaged at the close of the preceding decade, when a handful of deejay versions were released *before* the corresponding vocals. [...] Men like Yellowman, Josey Wales, Charlie Chaplin and Brigadier Jerry nearly always recorded over dramatically updated cuts of vintage rhythms, their contemporary talk bringing them back into flavour. Singers [...] would then follow with their own interpretations, either on the same rhythm track or over another producer’s hastily recorded version.⁹⁰

A great and long debate has been created around dancehall music, not over the music in itself, but over the lyrics. Many people feel that the lyrics are vulgar, dangerous and disrespectful of women.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p.200-201.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p.201.

⁹⁰ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.254.

Others, on the contrary, feel that it is a way to uplift women, and a place where they can find a free expression of personality and creativity⁹¹.

Dancehall has never stopped since the 1980s in Jamaica. It has changed, it has evolved, as any other genre, but still today the music created in Jamaica is dancehall. It has acquired a new name, but the first dancehall itself was known with many names. Since its digitalisation, dancehall has become “ragga”.

12. RAGGA.

Ragga began roughly around 1985, when music became digital. It is characterized by an enormous popularity, both at home and abroad, and by a new shift in the lyrics. For the first time after Bob Marley’s death, with ragga Jamaican music reached again popularity all over the world. The latest and more blatant example of a Jamaican ragga artist who enjoys successes all over the planet is the uptown deejay Sean Paul.

Ragga – essentially reggae played entirely (or mostly) using digital instrumentation – has been the most commercially successful Jamaican music since the heyday of Bob Marley. This crossover success has come largely in two waves. The first took place in the early 1990s, when ragga stars such as Shabba Ranks, Chaka Demus & Pliers, Red Dragon, Cobra, Super Cat and Terror Fabulous sold in such large quantities that a new style of pop-ragga – as represented by Snow, C.J. Lewis, Louchie Lou & Michie One – emerged. Then, after a period when Jamaican performers took a lower profile on the international stage, the two inveterate rival deejays Bounty Killer and Beenie Man enjoyed healthy sales in the hip-hop market [...]. But their achievement hardly prepared anyone for what happened in 2003: the phenomenal global chart success of both the dancehall crooner Wayne Wonder and, on a more impressive scale, the ubiquitous deejay Sean Paul.⁹²

The great difference between 1980s dancehall and 1990s ragga is the wider spectrum of influence of the latter. Ragga takes from whatever musical form the material for its songs, and some of its performers have somehow diminished their attacks on women.

Ragga, in addition to its explorability, is also the most populist and catholic of all forms of Jamaican music. Drawing freely from practically every aspect of Jamaican popular culture, including spirituals and hymns, it ranges from rougher-than-rough deejay music to romantic crooning, and has fostered a new generation of cultural wailers.⁹³

Actually, a new generation of Rasta chanters would voice their laments on a ragga base.

⁹¹ The two opinions can be found, among the others, in the books by Carolyn Cooper, *Op. Cit.*, and by Norman C. Stolzoff, *Op. Cit.*, and are partly explored in Chapter 4, which explores the dancehall culture.

⁹² Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.291.

⁹³ *Ibidem.*

The practice of versioning is still in use, though the low cost of digital production of tracks has allowed producers to experiment with new rhythms. However, some performers like to challenge themselves with the re-cut of 1960s and 1970s songs. The borrowings from various sources is still a strong practice:

Today's younger Jamaican producers/performers are borrowing from a wide range of influences. Dominant among these, however, is US hip-hop [...]. The emphasis on new drum beats (invariably influenced by hip-hop), continues to run strong, as does sampling from ever-widening sources – from classical strings to Middle-Eastern music.⁹⁴

Moreover, there has been a return to more “conscious” lyrics. Some deejays, who started their career in the 1980s, with slackness and gun talk, decided in the 1990s to change their themes, and to deal with “reality”, as did the roots reggae singers: problems for the ghetto youth, social problems, suggestions of ways to better society and, by so doing, the life conditions of the ghettos.

A contrasting return to “conscious” lyrical themes, as well as musical motifs, has also been widespread. Here a stronger reliance on old rhythms is more apparent. Three leading ragga deejays, Shabba Ranks, Capleton and Buju Banton turned their backs on slackness and gun lyrics in the late 1990s, in favour of uncompromising “cultural” statements – even if all three have made the occasional return to more carnal matters since then.⁹⁵

Even though the slackness and the gun talk have not disappeared in ragga songs, it has been accompanied by more “serious” themes. Two things make some critics say that the dancehall world is not abusive of women: the fact that female deejays, as much, if not more, slack as their male counterparts, have emerged in the 1990s, and the way women get dressed to go to a dancehall show, a point that is discussed in my analysis of *Dancehall Queen*, which demonstrate that maybe women themselves do not think the lyrics abusive – on the contrary, they see the dancehall as a space where to liberate their sexuality⁹⁶.



15. Women waiting to enter Passa Passa, the downtown, on the road dancehall.

http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/lifestyle/html/20031120T210000-0500_51896_OBS_THE_PASSA_PASSA_PHENOMENON.osp

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p.292.

⁹⁵ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Ibidem*, p.293.

⁹⁶ See Chapter 4: here I discuss both the lyrics and the outfits of the dancehall.

The 1990s, along with the prominence of deejays, saw a rebirth of the figure of the singer. After having been overshadowed for a decade by the “chatters”, some young singers brought back the use of the song, as everybody imagines a song should be.

13. RASTA SINGERS AND CHANTERS.

Some older singers never stopped to sing their roots songs, but many found new inspiration in the 1990s. The great majority of these performers are young, and their cultural themes are inspired by the harsh conditions of life in Jamaica, and by the strict religious rules of a branch of Rastafari, the Bobo Ashanti⁹⁷.

Digital instrumentation was compatible with more traditional values in Jamaican music, including those of the roots era. Gussie [Clarke] produced modern, high-tech counterparts to ‘steppers’ rhythms, and others soon began working along similar lines, building platforms for those who would rather sing about ‘cultural’ concerns than love, rudeboys or the dancehall. This extended the careers of some performers from the previous decade, but more importantly allowed a few younger ‘cultural’ singers to emerge. In the late 1980s, Admiral Tibet and Yami Bolo seemed to be the only fresh ‘conscious’ vocalists being recorded regularly; by the next decade, however, a significant shift had taken place, and a new generation of singers with cultural perspectives emerged. Most prominent were the late Garnett Silk, Luciano and Everton Blender, but in these rootsmen’s footsteps followed such as Jahmali, Ras Shiloh, Daweh Congo, the vocal group Morgan Heritage, Paul Elliott, Jah Cure, Bushman and a host of others.⁹⁸

It must be noted that, as it happened with roots reggae, generally these young singers are Rastafari. In Jamaican music, cultural themes are dealt with by the Rastas, while slackness is voiced by non Rastas. In this way, the music on the island is divided into two (not neatly divided) fields:

Committed ‘cultural’ singers like these, and the longer-established Cocoa Tea, were joined by a new breed of Rastafarian deejays/chanters. Following on from the pioneering Tony Rebel and later converts like Buju Banton and Capleton, these performers – many influenced by the teachings of the Bobo Ashanti elders – have included the popular Sizzla and Anthony B, but also Prezident Brown, Determine and Jah Mason. [...] On one side there’s the bashment artists who chat/sing about topics like girls, guns, new dance moves and the rapid-changing fashions in dancehall apparel over drum-driven hardcore rhythms; and on the other, the new breed of roots and culture proselytisers, often employing fuller rhythms that recall (or are versions of) classics from the 1970s. But this ignores the performers who are comfortable in both areas, as well as those who are committed to recording exclusively ‘conscious’ lyrics, but over either type of rhythm, with a mission to deliver a message in any way that will reach the people who need it.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ For a description of the Bobo Ashanti, see Chapter 5, pp.178-180.

⁹⁸ Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Op. Cit.*, p.355.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*.



16. Capleton and Anthony B: two Bobo Shanti singers. <http://www.chicagoreggaefestival.com/Artists.html> and http://www.jamaicans.com/culture/rasta/rasta_sects.shtml

The Bobo singers receive attention and affection from a large part of the audience, because they propose a new, cleaner way of life. They do not present, as the ultimate values of life, drug, wealth, sex and machismo, but moral values that could help the ghetto youths to uplift themselves. They appear on stage with tightly-rolled turbans and flowing robes. The image of the regenerating fire and of the cleanliness of their souls and behaviours have a strong appeal on the audience. They see in these singers' militant lyrics a representation of their situation.

There's no denying the dignity with which both the men and women believers hold themselves, or the intensity of the performers who have embraced the religion, and the manner in which they seem in tune with an increasingly larger minority of the dispossessed Kingston youth. The bottom line has to be that the Bobos provide a more positive answer to their disaffection than a life of crack and/or crime.¹⁰⁰

Jamaican music, as any other genre all over the world, is always evolving. It is very likely that in the next years the trend will change again. At the time of writing (2008), deejays and conscious singers divide among themselves the affection of the audience.

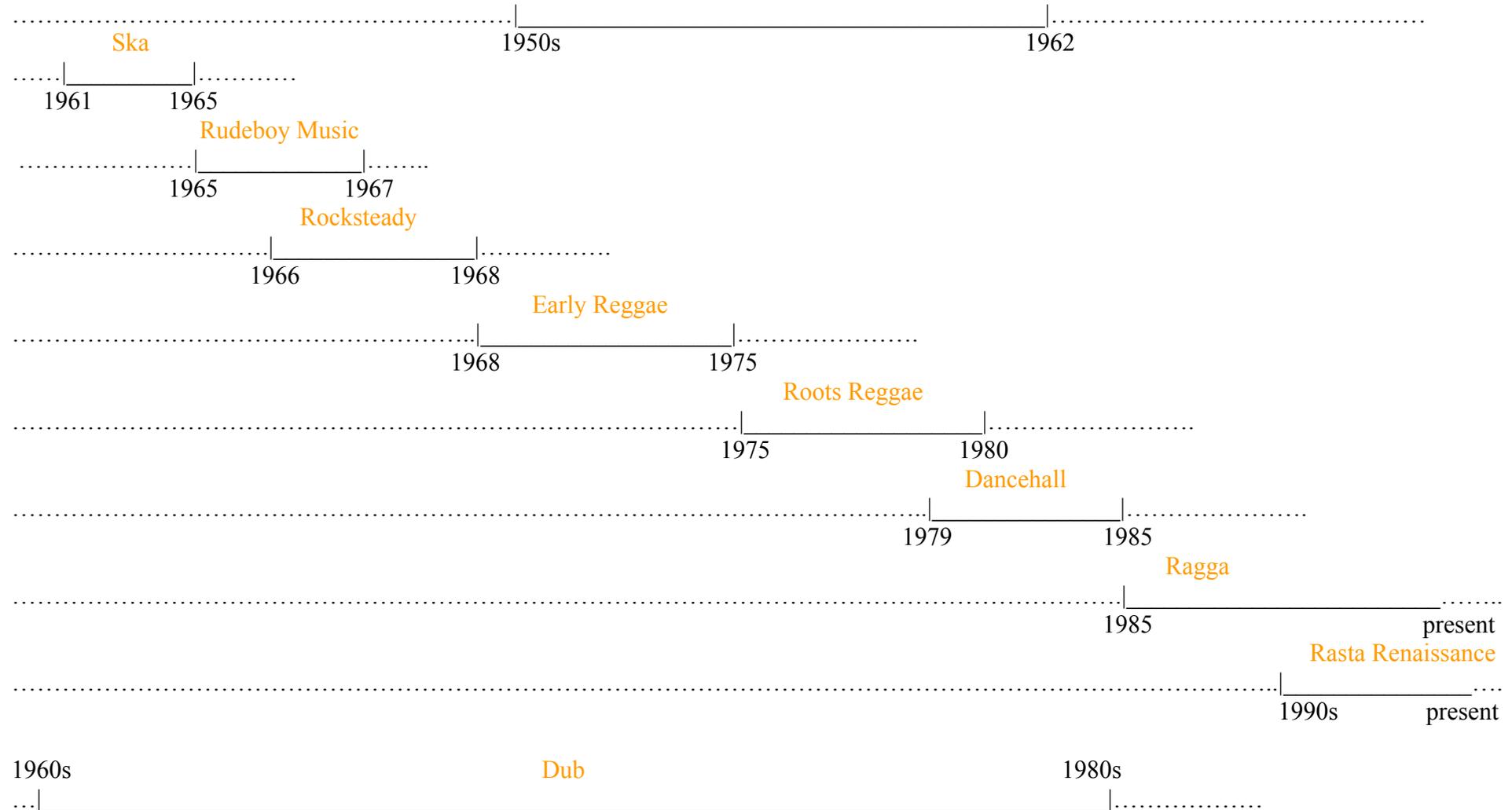
¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p.372.

CHRONOLOGY OF JAMAICAN MUSIC.

This is an outline of the chronological evolution of Jamaican music. The thick line represents the years when the musical trend is at its apogee. The dotted line represent the previous period, when the genre is burgeoning, and the following period, when the genre is fading, but remains influential and performed by enthusiasts.

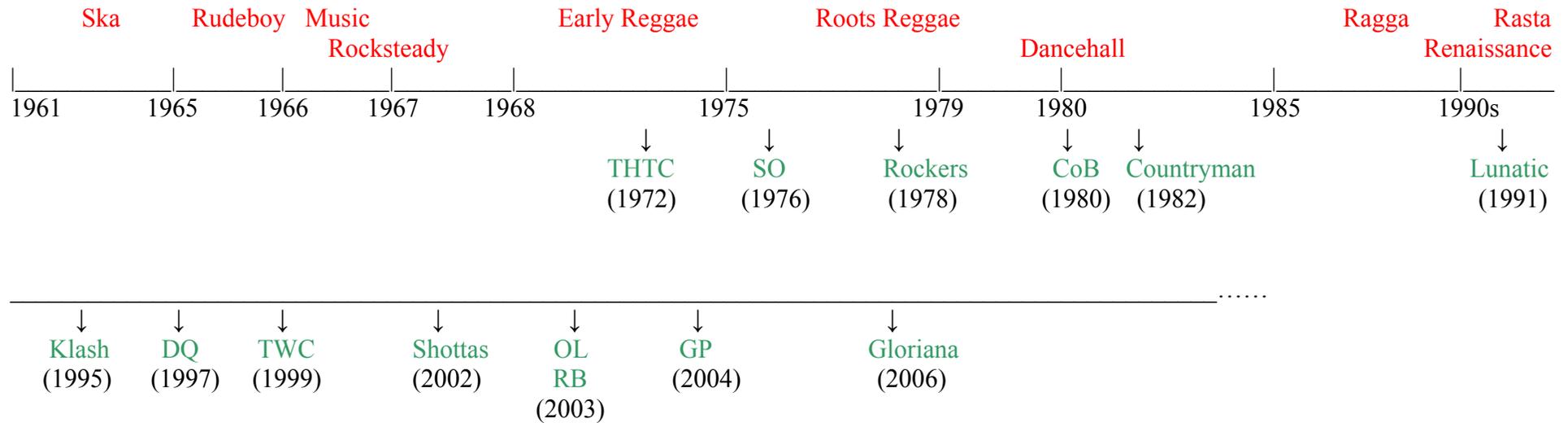
Early influences: African, European,
North American black music
Jonkanoo, religious

Mento & birth of
Sound Systems



CHRONOLOGY OF JAMAICAN FILMS IN RELATION TO MUSICAL TRENDS.

In the following sketch, Jamaican films are inserted (in green, below) along the line of the musical genres (in red), in order to place them in a continuum, and to show which kind of music influenced their soundtracks. All the musical genres present before the making of a film influence or can be found in the soundtrack.



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- Browne C., *Third World Cop*, Jamaica, Palm Pictures and Island Jamaica Films in association with Hawk's Nest Productions, 1999. DVD. Palm Pictures, 2000.
- Crème L., *The Lunatic*, Jamaica, Island Pictures, 1991. VHS. Manga Entertainment, 1992. Based on a novel by Anthony C. Winkler
- Gumbs D., *Rude Boy – The Jamaican Don*, Jamaica/USA (Los Angeles, California), Amsell Entertainment, Ben Outta Shape Productions and 3G Film Productions, 2003. DVD. Lions Gate Home Entertainment, 2003.
- Gumbs T.W., *Gangsta's Paradise*, Jamaica/USA (Los Angeles, California), Ben Outta Shape Productions and 3G Films Productions, 2003. DVD. Mia Video Entertainment Ltd., 2004.
- Henzell P., *The Harder They Come*, Jamaica, International Films Ltd, 1972. DVD. Xenon Pictures Inc., 2006.
- Jobson D., *Countryman*, Jamaica, Onion Pictures Corporation, 1982. DVD. Palm Pictures, 2004.
- Letts D. and Elgood R., *Dancehall Queen*, Jamaica, Onion Pictures Corporation, 1997. DVD. Palm Pictures, 1998.
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- Little-White L., *Children Of Babylon*, Jamaica, Mediamix Productions, 1980.
- Little-White L., *Glory To Gloriana*, Jamaica, Mediamix Productions, 2006. DVD. Jet Star, 2007.
- Parker B., *Klash*, Jamaica/USA, Xenon Entertainment Group, Kingston Pictures in association with Hawk's Nest Productions, 1995, DVD. Xenon Entertainment Group, 1995.
- Rhone T., *Smile Orange*, Jamaica, Knuts Production Limited, 1974. DVD. Island Entertainment, 2004. Based on a play by Trevor Rhone.
- Silvera C., *Shottas*, Jamaica/USA (Miami, Florida), Triumph Films, Destination Films, Lucky Bastard Films Production, 2005, DVD. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2006.

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The author traces a history of the evolving cinematic representations of the city from the 1920s up to the 1990s. What emerges from his analysis is that the city has always been depicted as a reflection of socio-political tensions occurring in real society, thus becoming critique, utopia/dystopia or simply a longing for an imagined past.
- Amen K. R., *Fi Wi Cultural Studies: Film, Culture and Identity*, A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Cultural Studies of the University of the West Indies, Institute of Caribbean Studies, Faculty of Arts and Education, Mona Campus, 2002, unpublished.
The author analyses Jamaican cinema, especially the film *The Harder They Come*, relating it to Jamaican culture. He analyses the narrative dividing it into various subjects, and he connects them to the daily lives of the Jamaicans.
- Amiel V., *Estetica del Montaggio*, translated from French by Angirsani S., Torino, Lindau s.r.l., 2006. Originally published as *Esthétique du montage*, Editions Nathan-Université, 2002.
The author tries to explain the complex reality of the editing work, which is far from being a simple collage of images. He analyses some of the most popular ways of editing through different periods of cinema and for different important directors.
- Ashcroft B., Griffiths G., Tiffin H., *The Empire Writes Back – Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, London and New York, Routledge, 1989.
In the chapter about language (pp.38-77) this book analyses how language is used in post-colonial novels, why non Standard English is used, and above all the meaning that this kind of language assumes in defining post-colonial literature.
- Ashcroft B., Griffiths G., Tiffin H. eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, 2nd edition*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006.
This is a collection of the most important texts in post-colonial theory and criticism, gathered in various and clearly introduced sections. The essays regard literature, but most of the theories and concepts can refer to cinema too.
- Baraka A. (LeRoi Jones), *Il Popolo del Blues. Sociologia degli Afroamericani attraverso il Jazz*, Milano, ShaKe Edizioni, 2007. Originally published as *Blues People. The Negro Experience in White America and the Music that Developed from it*, William Morrow, New York, 1963.

This book not only analyses the blues, its origins and its purposes in African American communities during and after slavery, but it also links it to the very life conditions of those communities as an unavoidable context for its development. Through blues, the author traces a history and a sociology of African Americans from the first slave ship directed to the New World up to these days.

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This is a comprehensive study of reggae music. The authors trace the history of Jamaican music from the early influences and the beginning of ska up to contemporary dancehall and roots reggae renaissance, through the analysis of the various producers and performers who in fact created Jamaican music.

- Barry T., Wood B., and Preusch D., *The Other Side of Paradise: Foreign Control in the Caribbean*, New York, Grove Press, 1984.

This book documents the profound impact on the politics and economics of the Caribbean of the international corporate investment in the region, analysing the close alliance between foreign investment and politics from the earliest colonial slave trade, through US marines occupations, CIA coups, the IMF, up to the Caribbean Basin Initiative and the US invasion of Grenada.

- Benitez-Rojo A., *The Repeating Island. The Caribbean and the Postmodern – Second Edition*, Durham and London, 1996, Duke University Press. Translated by Maraniss J.. Originally published as *La Isla Que Se Repite. El Caribe y la Perspectiva Postmoderna*, Hanover, N.H., USA, Ediciones del Norte, 1989.

The author explores the legacies of colonialism and defines the Caribbean drawing from various sources such as the chaos theory, history, psychoanalysis, literature, and so on. His theory is that, despite the seemingly difference between the Caribbean islands, a pattern of order and similarity exists, and creates a sense of identity common to the whole archipelago.

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This is an overview and an explanation of the major postmodern thinkers. The authors elucidate what postmodernism is through some of its most influential intellectuals, such as Baudrillard, Lacan, Foucault, Lyotard, Jameson and Habermas, among the others.

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In this lecture, Brathwaite explains the development of what he calls “nation language”, a typically Caribbean language born from the encounter of various idioms present in the region which alone can convey Caribbean experiences, as opposed to the imposed Standard English of colonization.

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This glossary provides a brief but clear and useful explanation of the terms most often used in contemporary humanistic culture. Among them, there are some of the most popular words, such as deconstructionism or postmodernism, which are constantly used but difficult to explain.

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Taking for granted that the only Jamaican known abroad is Bob Marley, and that he is a model of Jamaican manliness both for Jamaicans and foreigners, the author discusses the stereotypes about Jamaican men, giving them credit. Though sometimes ironic, the book is nonetheless full of prejudices and inaccuracies.

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This book concentrates on photography in the cinema. The author is a director of photography, and he explains all one needs to know about it in order to understand how a good film should look like, and how everything needs to be planned in order to reach a certain result.

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This is a good introduction to the cannabis culture. The author looks at the history of the plant, but also at the laws regulating its consumption over the world, its effect on health, and the business set around it.

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This collection of essays analyses the role, the importance and the meaning of fashion in various contexts, from the very obvious catwalk to photography to cinema and pop music.

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Prof. Bryan traces through seven lectures the history of various events that influenced the creation of Jamaica as it is today. He starts with slavery and racism, then moves to Emancipation and to the politics of the island before 1962, and finally he looks at independence and at society today.

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Wilson Harris is not only a poet and a novelist. This is a comprehensive collection of his non-fiction: essays, interviews and lectures from the 1960s to the end of the 1990s, with a complete bibliography of his work.

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This book offers a concise introduction to the study of a film. It begins with an analysis of how films are put together, and then it examines a number of approaches to film studies over the last half century. There are also overviews of genres, national cinemas, and film movements from all over the world.

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This is an analysis of five Jamaican folk dances, namely Kumina, Dinkie Minie, Quadrille, Bruckin's and Revival. The author explains broadly the history and context of these dances, which are generally related to religions, but she mainly focuses on the steps that are made by the dancers.

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This book collects a series of essays regarding Caribbean cinema. There are analysis of movies made in the Caribbean by Caribbean people. It is not limited to the Anglophone Caribbean, but it looks also at Spanish and French speaking countries.

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This book analyses the birth and the diffusion of languages and styles in pop universe, looking for the various ways by which music gets in touch with daily life and with youth cultures.

- Chapman R. and Rutherford J., *Male Order. Unwrapping Masculinity*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1988.

This is a collection of essays written in the 1980s, which tried to analyze the changes occurring in masculinity, with the promulgation of the so-called “New Man” in all the media. The writers look at various aspects in which masculinity shows its adjustments, such as television, cinema, fashion, advertising and politics.

- Chatman S., *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*, London, Cornell University Press, 1990.

This book offers a possible explanation of how to make a narratological analysis, with special attention to the analysis of films. Some chapters are totally focused on movie analysis, with particular attention to description, argumentation, narrator and point of view.

- Chatman S., *Story and Discourse – Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, London, Cornell University Press, 1978.

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- Chevannes B., *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*, Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1994.

The author traces the origins of Rastafari in Jamaican peasantry, with echoes of Revivalism, the pride of rebellious slaves, and of an African past recovered through Marcus Garvey. He also highlights some characteristics of the movement, and its relationship with the society both at home and abroad.

- Collingwood J., *Bob Marley*, Firenze, Giunti, 2006. Originally published as *Bob Marley – His Musical Legacy*, London, Cassell Illustrated, 2005.

This book is first and foremost a biography of Bob Marley and of the Wailers. Yet it contains also a brief history of Jamaica, with some hindsight in the vibrant music world of the 1960s and 1970s in Kingston.

- Connell R.W., *Masculinities. Second Edition*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, University of California Press, 2005.

The author offers an overview on the issue of masculinity, as it has been imagined and as it is experienced by men from various backgrounds and with differing life styles. Besides psychological and historical explanations, the author also gives some examples taken from various men's groups to illustrate his point.

- Connor S. ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

The book gives an overview of the relationship between postmodernism and various branches of arts, such as literature, cinema, and so on. The authors give an explanation of what happened in these fields with the advent of postmodernity.

- Cook P. and Bernink M. eds., *The cinema book, 2nd edition*, London, British Film Institute, 1999.

This book is an introduction to film studies. It analyses the major topics for understanding a film: the history of cinema, cinema technology, movements in cinema, genre, theoretical frameworks, Third World and Postcolonial cinema, and spectatorship, among the others.

- Cooper C., *Noises in the Blood. Orality, Gender and the 'Vulgar' Body of Jamaican Popular Culture*, Oxford, Macmillan Caribbean, 1993.

Cooper analyses the oral tradition of Jamaica culture, paying special attention to its gender perspective. Among the rest, she focuses her attention on the novelization of *The Harder They Come*, and on the importance of dancehall as a place of liberation for women and as a way of exalting women's sexuality.

- Cooper C., *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture At Large*, New York, N.Y., and Hampshire, England, Palgrave, MacMillan, 2004.

The book offers a series of essays that try to give a different point of view on dancehall music, considered by the majority of the people as "slack" and vulgar. Cooper argues that, instead of vilifying the woman and her body, dancehall glorifies her and gives her a dominant role in society and sexuality.

- Costello J., *Writing A Screenplay*, Harpenden, Herts, The Pocket Essential, 2006.

The book offers a step-by-step guide to writing a script from inception to completion. It is useful to understand how the writing of a script functions, and which factors are involved in creating the story for a film.

- Davis F., *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

The author analyses the role of fashion in contemporary Western world. He thus not specifically looks at the fashion itself, but at the processes involved in it, and the way it affects our lives and it conveys some important meanings about every person who wears clothes.

- Dick B. F., *Anatomy Of Film, Fifth Edition*, Boston and New York, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

This book offers an exhaustive explanation of the structure of a film, of the various interpretations that can be given to a film, of the role of the director, and of the trends of criticism that are used to analyze films. There are also examples of analyses of films.

- Donnelly K.J., *Pop Music in British Cinema*, London, British Film Institute, 2001.

The book analyses how pop music was inserted in British films, and how this practice changed, from the Fifties to the Nineties. Appendix 1 is particularly useful in analyzing musical conventions in films.

- During S. ed., *The Cultural Studies Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993.

The book provides an introduction to the discipline of the Cultural Studies. It presents a selection of influential essays, covering every important Cultural Studies method and theory, with a succinct editor's preface to each.

- Dyer R., *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation. Second Edition*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002.

This is a collection of essays focused on how images are constructed in the media, and the significance they acquire just because of the way they are constructed. Among the others, the subjects faced by the author range from the role of stereotypes and the meaning of words to male sexuality and the representation of whiteness.

- Fanon F., *Black Skins, White Masks*, New York, Grove Press, 1967. Translated by Markmann C.L.. Originally published as *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*, Paris, Edition Du Seuil, 1952.

The seminal book by this author analyses the black psyche in a white world. It is one of the major influence on post colonial literature, looking at how the difficult relationship between different skin colors can pressure the people's life.

- Fanon F., *The Wretched of the Earth*, London, Penguin Books, 1963. Translated by Farrington C.. Originally published as *Les Damnés de la Terre*, France, François Maspéro Editeur, 1961.

The most important book by one of the authors who have most influenced postcolonial literature and the experiences of black people rebelling to colonial rules. The most interesting aspect of this book is the view on violence that Fanon clearly explains.

- Fernandez Olmos M. and Paravisini-Gebert L., *Creole Religions Of The Caribbean – An Introduction From Vodou And Santería To Obeah And Espiritismo*, New York and London, New York University Press, 2003.

The authors give an introduction to the syncretic religions of the Caribbean, looking particularly at Cuba, Haiti, and Jamaica. As regard the latter, they try to explain what are Obeah, Myal, Revivalism, Kumina, and Rastafari.

- Fernandez Olmos M. and Paravisini-Gebert L. eds., *Healing Cultures. Art and Religion as Curative Practices in the Caribbean and Its Diaspora*, New York, Palgrave, 2001.

This book focuses on the healing practices of the Caribbean, especially those linked to religions and natural healing. Metaphorically, the authors see the arts as a way of healing and/or of transmitting the knowledge of it. They thus include Caribbean cinema in their analysis.

- Fiske J. and Hartley J., *Reading Television*, London and New York, Methuen, 1978.

The book focuses on television. Particularly, chapter 9 is devoted to the analyses of dance, with regard to entertainment programs with dancing audiences or dance competitions.

- Foehr S., *Waking Up in Jamaica*, London, Sanctuary Publishing Limited, 2002. Originally published as *Jamaican Warriors*, London, Sanctuary Publishing, 2000.

This is the author's voyage to Jamaica in search of the roots of reggae music. In his tour around the island, the people he met introduced him to reggae, Rastafari, syncretic religions, Nyabinghi drumming, dancehall and various other aspects of Jamaican culture. The author is fascinated though sometimes approximate and dismissive.

- Foster H. ed., *Postmodern Culture*, London, Pluto Press, 1983.

After having introduced the reader to what postmodernism is, the editor collects a series of essays focusing on various aspects of this phenomenon, such as its relationship with consumer society or its objects of analysis.

- Gilroy P., *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, London, Routledge, 1987.

This book analyses Black Britain and the racism that affected the colored migrants in the 1980s. In chapter 5, Gilroy focuses on the diaspora and the way Jamaican music and Rastafari influenced black communities in England.

- Giroux H.A., *Disturbing Pleasures – Learning Popular Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994.

This book teaches how to approach cultural studies and popular culture. In chapter 4, the author analyses cinema, and particularly how black people are represented and discriminated in contemporary mainstream cinema.

- Glissant E., *Caribbean Discourse – Selected Essays*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, Caraf Books, 1992. Translated and with an introduction by Dash J.M.. Originally published as *Discours Antillais*, Paris, Edition du Seuil, 1981.

This is a collection of heterogeneous ideas on the Caribbean experience: its history, its society, its ways to respond and to find solutions to centuries of colonization of the bodies and minds of the Caribbean people.

- Hall S. ed., *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London – Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1997.

This collection of essays focuses on various aspects of “representation”. Among the various topics, Stuart Hall explores the representation of the “other”, while Sean Nixon faces the theme of the representation of masculinity.

- Harvey D., *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Cambridge MA and Oxford UK, Blackwell Publishers, 1989.

The author tries to trace the origins of postmodernism, linking it primarily to economic conditions and the creation of a new working scheme. He also tries to define broadly what it means to live in a postmodern era, especially through architectural examples.

- Hebdige D., *Cut’n’Mix – Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1987.

This is a book about Caribbean music, with special attention to reggae. The author traces the roots of the music, and he describes the styles and the sense of cultural identity that have developed alongside it wherever it has been played.

- Hebdige D., *Subculture – The Meaning of Style*, London and New York, Routledge, 1979.

This book is an attempt to analyse the various youth protest movements of Britain in the 1970s. Hebdige is concerned with UK’s post war, music centred white working class subcultures.

- Henzell P., *Power Game*, Jamaica, A10A Publication, 1982.

This novel, written by director Henzell, claims to be just a fiction. Yet, in reading it, one realizes that the story is based on Jamaica’s history and social troubles during the 1980s. Actually, the very characters of the novel can be identified with prominent Jamaicans who retained power in that period.

- Heuman G., *The Caribbean*, London, Hodder Arnold, 2006.

The book traces a history of the Caribbean region, from the first settlers to slavery, Emancipation, and independence, exploring in more details some important themes such as racism or the Haitian revolution. The last chapter is devoted to contemporary Caribbean culture such as music, carnival, literature, cinema, arts and sports.

- Howard D., *Kingston. A Cultural and Literary History*, Oxford, Signal Books, and Jamaica, Ian Randle Publishers, 2005.

The first part of the book is devoted to a description of Kingston: Port Royal, Downtown and Uptown. The second part looks at the music born out of the capital's landscape and at the various visions of the city in the arts. Every aspect is accompanied by literary references to the city of Kingston.

- Hill J. and Church Gibson P. eds., *Film Studies: Critical Approaches*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

The book offers a wide spectrum of theoretical and critical approaches with which to start the analysis of a film. Among other subjects faced, there is an interesting section on particular aspects of the film text and one on the film text in its context.

- Hill J. and Church Gibson P. eds., *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998.

This book is a critical volume on the theories, debates, and approaches to the study of film. It presents an overview of the main disciplinary approaches to film studies, an explanation of the main concepts and methods involved in film analysis, a survey of the main issues and debates in the study of film, and critical discussion of key areas.

- Hill J. and Church Gibson P. eds., *World Cinema: Critical Approaches*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

These essays give an overview of international cinema, starting with the European avant-gardes and then looking at Anglophone cinema and World cinema (such as Indian, Chinese, African and so on).

- Ho C.G.T. and Nurse K. eds., *Globalisation, Diaspora and Caribbean Popular Culture*, Kingston, Ian Randle Publishers, 2005.

The book analyses various aspects of Caribbean popular culture. Two chapters, particularly, deal with cinema. The first is by Warner, who interrogates Caribbean cinema and its capacity to remain independent and become influential. The second deals with two filmic versions of the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

- Hylton P., May K. ed., *The Role of Religion in Caribbean History: From Amerindian Shamanism to Rastafarianism*, Washington, Billpops Publications, 2002.

This book analyses the fundamental role religion has had in Caribbean life since its beginnings. It does not only examine syncretic religions such as Vodun or Kumina, but also Established Churches such as Catholicism, Anglicanism and so on, and even religions such as Hinduism and Islam, brought to the Caribbean by the indentured workers in the 19th century.

- Iverem E., *We Gotta Have It. Twenty Years of Seeing Black at the Movies, 1986 – 2006*, New York, Thunder's Mouth Press, 2007.

The author explores the films made after 1986, that is when a "new wave" in black films began with Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It*. She gives a review of every film of this new wave and explores its role in the American and global culture.

- Jameson F., *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London and New York, Verso, Duke University Press, 1991.

This is one of the fundamental books about postmodernism. Jameson first explains what he thinks postmodernism is, then he analyses some specific subjects, such as culture, film, architecture and so on, to see how they are affected by the postmodern condition.

- Kamp D. and Levi L., *Dizionario Snob Del Cinema*, a cura di Geraci A., Palermo, Sellerio editore, 2006. Originally published as *The Film Snob's Dictionary*, New York, Broadway Publishing, 2006.

A semi-serious book on what is considered “snob” cinema: directors and films believed to be masterpieces by some, and rubbish by others.

- Katz D., *Solid Foundation. An Oral History of Reggae*, New York and London, Bloomsbury, 2003.

The author traces the history of Jamaican music from the early beginnings to the inauguration of the digital era, through various interviews with the musicians, producers and deejays who created it in the first instance.

- Kempadoo K., *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race, and Sexual Labor*, London and New York, Routledge, 2004.

This book presents an analysis of sex work in the Caribbean. The author traces the kind of sexuality to be found in the region, and the reasons why people become involved in sex work, qualifying also what she means with “sex work”. Then she explores who exploits sex workers, and the role of sex tourism in the region.

- King B. ed., *West Indian Literature, Second Edition*, London and Basingstoke, Macmillan Education Ltd., 1995.

The first part of this book gives a historical survey of Caribbean literature, while the second part looks at some significant West Indian authors. Among these, a chapter is focused on Trevor Rhone and his writings.

- Krzywinska T., *Sex and the Cinema*, London and New York, Wallflower Press, 2006.

The book analyzes how sex has been represented in mainstream cinema, and it is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the formal conventions, the formulas and the contexts of cinematic sex, while the second part deals with some forms of transgression depicted in films, such as adultery, incest, real sex and so on.

- Lehman P. ed., *Defining Cinema*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1997.

After an introduction explaining what is film theory, every chapter of this book is divided into two parts. The first consists of an essay by some of the leading cinema theorists, and the second of an essay on the same theorists. The chapters analyze the works of Eisenstein, Bazin, Kracauer, Burch and Metz.

- Lehman P. ed., *Masculinity. Bodies, Movies, Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, AFI Film Readers Series, 2001.

This collection of essays analyze how masculinity has been represented in popular films. Among other themes, the issues accounted for regard the representation of the naked male body, the “melodramatic penis” of recent films and the homosociality and homophobia hidden in many pictures.

- Lewin O., *Rock It Come Over. The Folk Music of Jamaica*, Kingston, University of the West Indies Press, 2000.

This book analyses some Jamaican musical trends that generally remain out of researches: music that nonetheless, from slavery onwards, influenced contemporary music. At the same time, through music, the author presents some lesser known Jamaican religions, such as Kumina, Maroons, Revival and so on.

- Manuel P. with Bilby K. and Largey M., *Caribbean Currents, Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae – Revised and Expanded Edition*, Kingston, Jamaica, Ian Randle Publishers, 2006.

This is a survey of the major musical trends in the Caribbean region. The authors analyze every island and the music associated with it, explaining its birth, development and function in the society.

- Marzola A. ed., *Englishness. Percorsi nella Cultura Britannica del Novecento*, Roma, Carocci Editore, 1999.

This book traces the changes in English culture throughout the 20th century, from the theories of Eliot through those of Leavis and Williams up to postcolonialism, New Historicism, New Criticism and so on. It is useful because it explains the birth of Cultural Studies in England, with their emphasis on low culture as opposed to high culture.

- Matthews P., *Cannabis Culture, Newly Updated Edition*, London, Bloomsbury, 2003.

The author tries to give an hindsight of the use of cannabis in contemporary Britain and United States especially. He does this through his meetings with dealers, growers, smokers and the like in both countries and in other countries where cannabis is common.

- Morley D. and Robins K., *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*, London and New York, Routledge, 1995.

In the chapter entitled *Under Western Eyes* the author explores how media manipulate our perception of the world, and how, in our mediated world, the representation of the “Other” is still influenced by old-fashioned ideas of the empire.

- Morris M., *Making West Indian Literature*, Kingston, Ian Randle Publishers, 2005.

This book gives a survey of Caribbean literature through the analysis of some of its most important authors and works. Among these, the author includes an interview he made to Trevor Rhone about his life and his writings.

- Moseley-Wood R., *Looking at Women: Representations of Women in Selected Examples of Popular Culture in the Caribbean*, A Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English of the University of the West Indies,

Department of Literatures in English, Faculty of Arts and Education, Mona Campus, 2002, not published.

In her doctoral dissertation, Dr. Moseley-Wood analyzes some Jamaican and Anglo-Jamaican films, with particular attention to the representation of women. She also focuses her attention on the role these films had in the Jamaican context.

- Murrell N.S., Spencer W.D. and McFarlane A.A., *Chanting Down Babylon. The Rastafari Reader*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1998.

This anthology explores Rastafari culture, religion and politics in Jamaica and other parts of the world. The contributors emphasize the ideological and historical context of the movement and the contents of the belief. There is also a chapter focusing on representations of Rastafari in Hollywood and Jamaican films.

- Nettleford R. ed., *Jamaica in Independence – Essays on the Early Years*, Kingston, Heinemann Publishers Limited and London, James Currey Ltd., 1989.

This book takes a critical look at Jamaica's progress since Independence, in the major areas of national life. Traditional topics such as government, politics, economic development and international affairs share prominence with some of the new concerns of nation building like education, sports, culture and arts, the role of women, and science and technology in national development.

- Ohadike D.C., *Sacred Drums of Liberation – Religions and Music of Resistance in Africa and the Diaspora*, Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea, Africa World Press Inc., 2007.

African people and people of African descent have fought slavery, colonialism and exploitation with various means. Among them, religion, music and dance have played a major role. This book analyses them and their function in the African continent, the Caribbean, Brazil and the United States.

- Patton C., *Cinematic Identity – Anatomy of a Problem Film*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Through the analysis of the film *Pinky*, the author argues that the changing acting style in the 1940s reflected the changing attitude of white Americans towards black Americans, both as fellow citizens and as characters on screen.

- Pezzotta A., *La Critica Cinematografica*, Roma, Carocci Editore, 2007.

This book is a reflection on the figure of the cinematographic critic: what he/she does, how he/she reasons, his/her history and position in literature. It is also a suggestion on what to consider about a film if one wants to be a critic.

- Pines J. and Willemsen P. eds., *Questions of Third Cinema*, London, British Film Institute, 1989.

Through a series of essays this book analyses the debate about Third Cinema – its existence, its differentiations, its products and its effectiveness – and offers an analysis of the political problems and aesthetics possibilities of a different kind of film making.

- Ramchand K., *The West Indian Novel And Its Background*, Kingston, Ian Randle Publishers, 2004.

This is an account of the emergence of West Indian literature, with consideration of its social, cultural and political background. The author pays special attention to the language used by Caribbean novelists.

- Rhone T., *Bellas Gate Boy*, Oxford, Macmillan Publishers Limited, Macmillan Caribbean Writers Series, 2008.

This play is an autobiography by Trevor Rhone, written in the form of a monologue. Rhone tells his life starting with his childhood in Bellas Gate up to his college studies in England and his eventual return to Jamaica and the decision to be a professional theatre writer.

- Rhone T., *Smile Orange*, Kingston, Jamaica, Longman Caribbean Writers, 1988, first published in 1971.

This is the play, first staged in 1973, on which the film is based. Both the play and the film were written and directed by the same artist, who wrote a satire on the tourist industry in Jamaica.

- Rogers R. A., *The Holy Piby*, Kingston, Research Associates School Times Publications/Frontline Distribution Int'l Inc. and Headstart Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., 2000. First published in 1924.

This book, known also as “The Blackman’s Bible”, was written by Shepherd Athlyi in an attempt to build a new church. The Holy Piby became one of the foundation writings that influenced the Rastafari movement, in that it incited to look at Ethiopia for the salvation of black people, and it fostered black pride and consciousness.

- Rondolino G., *Storia del Cinema. Nuova Edizione*, Torino, Utet, 2006.

In two volumes the author traces the history of cinema, starting from the Lumière brothers up to contemporary cinema. It also includes a brief glimpse to national cinemas and very recent tendencies.

- Rondolino G. e Tomasi D., *Manuale del Film – Linguaggio, Racconto, Analisi*, Torino, Utet, 1995.

This book analyses the cinematographic language in all its components: from script to story, from the point of view of the camera to that of the characters, from off screen to camera movements, from editing to the relationship between sound and image.

- Ruprecht A. and Taiana C. eds., *The Reordering of Culture: Latin America, The Caribbean and Canada in the Hood*, Canada, Carleton University Press, 1995.

This collection of essays tries to understand the kind of culture existing in the American continent (United States excluded) at the beginning of the 1990s, through the analysis of literature, visual arts and other popular cultures such as music or cartoons.

- Said E.W., *Culture and Imperialism*, London, Vintage Books, 1993.

This is one of the seminal books by Edward Said. He analyses here Western culture to investigate how imperialism insinuates itself in the works of some of the most important writers up to the media coverage of the Gulf War.

- Shohat E. and Stam R., *Unthinking Eurocentrism – Multiculturalism and the Media*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994.

Through various examples, the authors demonstrate how dominant cinema has always communicated, even if covertly, an ideology that sees Europeanism and North Americanism as the norm values, and how non dominant cinemas try to counteract it.

- Siety E., *L'inquadratura – All'Inizio Del Cinema*, translated from French by Greco M., Torino, Lindau s.r.l., 2004. Originally published as *Le Plan. Au commencement du cinéma*, Editions Cahiers du cinéma, 2001.

The shot is the first element to consider in the making of a film. This book is an attempt to define what is a shot and what kind of shots exist in cinema. Then there is a description of how the shots work, and finally there are suggestions for the interpretation of the shots.

- Sim S. ed., *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, New York, Routledge, 1999.

This book collects a series of essays the aim of which is to explain, through specific fields of reference, such as cinema or popular culture, the relationship between the “postmodern condition” and various aspects of culture in contemporary society.

- Sloat S. ed., *Caribbean Dance from Abakuà to Zouk. How Movement Shapes Identity*, Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida, 2002.

This book collects a series of essays that analyze through various approaches the world of Caribbean dance. Each essay tries to focus on the importance each dance, social or ritual, assumes for the community and the individual, and they trace the dances' journey from West Africa to the whole archipelago.

- Smith J., *Gangster Films*, Virgin Films Series, London, Virgin Books, 2004.

The author analyses gangster films through a series of films from the beginning of the genre in the 1930s to the beginning of the new millennium. The analysis ranges from the technical information about the films to quotations from them and a presentation of characters and actors interpreting them.

- Smith V. ed., *Representing Blackness – Issues In Film And Videos*, London, The Athlone Press, 1997.

This is a collection of essays analyzing how black people have been represented both in Hollywood white tradition and in black independent cinema. Some essays also deals with theoretical approaches on what should be thought of when representing black subjects.

- Sobo E. J., *One Blood. The Jamaican Body*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1993.

The author presents an ethnographic research on how Jamaicans perceive their body: how it works, how health is maintained, and how the body becomes expression of cultural ideas about the social and moral order.

- Stam R., *Film Theory: An Introduction*, Malden, MA, Oxford, UK and Victoria, Australia, Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

This is an account of film theory since its beginnings. It starts with silent-era cinema, but also looks at foreign cinema, and contextualizes film theory within larger historical and philosophical currents.

- Stam R. and Miller T. eds., *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, Malden, MA, Oxford, UK and Victoria, Australia, Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

This collection of essays, from the 1960s to the 1990s, revolve around specific subjects, such as the author, the gaze, postmodernism, and so on, to give an understanding of this field of study which often follows schools and allegiances.

- Staples R., *Exploring Black Sexuality*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006.

Black sexuality has always been subjected to stereotypes, since the beginning of slavery. This book tries to explode these myths, giving objective reasons for the development of Black sexuality in the United States since slaves started to be brought there from Africa.

- Stolzoff N. C., *Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2000.

Dancehall is one of the most important aggregative moments for Jamaican youths. Acknowledging this fact, the author delineates a historical and sociological explanation of the “dancehall phenomenon” that creates so many debates in Jamaican (and foreign) society.

- Storey J., *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1996.

This author concentrates on cultural studies and popular culture. In this book, among others, he dedicates two chapters to film and popular music, giving some theories through which to interpret these various fields of popular culture.

- Storey J., *Cultural Theory And Popular Culture, An Introduction – Third Edition*, Harlow, England, Pearson Education Limited, 2001.

This book offers an introduction to popular culture and cultural studies. It presents a survey of competing theories of and various approaches to popular culture, such as structuralism and post-structuralism, marxisms, postmodernism, etc.

- Street S., *Costume and Cinema: Dress Codes in Popular Film*, London and New York, Wallflower Press, Short Cuts Series, 2001.

The author presents an overview of the literature on film costume, and then analyses a few popular films highlighting costume as a key signifier of the texts. It is a good introduction to the field of research on clothes in the cinema, and a useful example of film analysis through this lens.

- Szatmary D.P., *Rockin' in Time. A Social History of Rock-and-Roll. Fifth Edition*, New Jersey, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.

The author presents a history and an analysis of rock music from the early blues to the 21st century hip hop and Nu-Metal. There is also a small section dedicated to reggae and ska.

- Tasker Y., *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993.

The author analyses the 1980s Hollywood action cinema, to understand how masculinity and the male body, especially the one of the bodybuilders (thus the term “musculinity” and the particular reference to Schwarzenegger and Stallone), is represented and what it meant for the critical discourse of that period around masculinity.

- Taylor P., *The Narrative of Liberation. Perspectives on Afro-Caribbean Literature, Popular Culture, and Politics*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1989.

The author analyses how Caribbean culture has tried to liberate itself from colonial mental domination. He cites as examples the works of Fanon, Césaire, Lamming and Walcott, and take Vodun religion in Haiti and the character of Anancy in Jamaica as examples of liberating ideologies.

- Thelwell M., *The Harder They Come*, New York, Grove Press, 1980.

This is the novel based on Henzell's film. It tells the story of the Ivan, adding some new details about him and his life in Kingston, and a large section at the beginning describing life in the countryside.

- Thomas D., *Reading Hollywood. Spaces and Meanings in American Film*, London and New York, Wallflower Press, Short Cut Series, 2001.

This book attempts to examine the treatment of space and narrative in some classical Hollywood films. It is an example of how an analysis of sets and locations can be made, and the meaning they add to the plots.

- Thompson A.O., *The Haunting Past. Politics, Economics and Race in Caribbean Life*, Kingston, Ian Randle Publishers and Oxford, James Currey Publishers, 1997.

The book analyses three main factors in the Caribbean development after independence, and tries to show their interconnectedness and their influence on Caribbean people both on an international level and in their daily lives.

- Vanoye F. and Goliot-Lété A., *Introduzione All'Analisi Del Film*, translated by Buzzolan D., Torino, Lindau s.r.l., 2002. Originally published as *Précis d'analyse filmique*, Paris, Editions Nathan, 1992.

This book offers introductory elements to start the analysis of a film: how to understand the various parts composing a film, how to make a first interpretation of these elements, and how to analyze filmic representations which are not feature films. There are also some useful examples of analysis.

- Warner K. Q., *On Location – Cinema And Film In The Anglophone Caribbean*, London and Oxford, MacMillan Education Ltd., 2000.

This book offers an analysis of the movies made in the Anglophone Caribbean. It starts with an overview of some of the Hollywood movies made on location on the islands, and then it proceeds to a study of the movies made in the archipelago by Caribbean people.

- Wayne M., *Political Film. The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, London, Sterling, Virginia, Pluto Press, 2001.

The author explores Third Cinema theory by analyzing its relations with First and Second Cinema. He traces the affinities and the differences between First and Third cinema, and traces a similarity between Second and Third Cinema through the figure of the bandit.

- Williams C. A. (Jah Ahkell), *Rasta, Emperor Haile Selassie and the Rastafarians*, Kingston, Miguel Lorne Publishers, 1999.

This is a brief synthesis of the principles that guide Rastafari, the movement's history, and Emperor Selassie's life and deeds. The beliefs are sustained by the biblical quotations from which they originated.

- Williams D., *Anthropology and the Dance. Ten lectures. Second Edition*, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2004.

The essays contained in the book try to give a comprehensive explanation of the dance phenomenon. The book aims to detail various reasons why people dance, such as religious, emotional, psychological, intellectual, and so on.

- Winkler A. C., *The Lunatic*, Oxford, Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2006, first published in 1987.

This book was first published in 1987 in Jamaica. It was the original idea for the film by the same title. It tells the story of a lunatic who is involved by a German tourist in a relationship which will be difficult for him, and will cause many problems to him and the people around him

- Wynt E. and Cooper C. eds, *Bob Marley: The Man And His Music*, by The Bob Marley Foundation, Kingston, Jamaica, Arawak Publications, 2003.

This is a selection of papers presented at the Conference *Marley's Music: Reggae, Rastafari, and Jamaican Culture* held at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, 5-6 February 1995. Each paper analyses an aspect of Marley's life and works, but also some aspects of Jamaican culture.

- Zips W. ed, *Rastafari: A Universal Philosophy in the Third Millennium*, Kingston, Jamaica, Ian Randle Publishers, 2006.

This is a collection of essays dealing with Rastafari in the new millennium: achievements, changes, and so on. Not only scholars, but also prominent Rastafari face the subject, giving a wide range of interpretations of the movement.

ARTICLES AND ESSAYS.

- Braune B., “You can get it if you really want: viewing *The Harder They Come* again and again after a 1977 interview with director Perry Henzell”, in *Wasafiri*, n° 26 autumn 1997, pp.31-36.

This article makes a quick analysis of the film. It explores the director’s philosophy, his aesthetics, which means he used to sketch both the story and the characters, and finally the importance of the music, especially the song *You Can Get It If You Really Want*.

- Brodber E., *A Study of Yards in the City of Kingston*, Working Paper N°9, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, Jamaica, 1975.

This is a sociological research made at the beginning of the 1970s among people living in the so-called “yards”, to understand how people see them, how they function, and the importance they acquire for the lower strata of the Kingston population living there.

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Estratto per riassunto della tesi di dottorato

L'estratto (max. 1000 battute) deve essere redatto sia in lingua italiana che in lingua inglese e nella lingua straniera eventualmente indicata dal Collegio dei docenti.

L'estratto va firmato e rilegato come ultimo foglio della tesi.

Studente: Ceccato Sabrina

matricola: 955336

Dottorato: Lingue, Culture e Società

Ciclo: 22°

Titolo della tesi¹: Jamaican Culture through Jamaican Cinema.

Abstract:

Jamaican cinema is young and has produced few films, yet my hypothesis is that it has nonetheless created a tradition. In fact, an analysis of the films made on the island show that, after *The Harder They Come*, the first Jamaican film made in 1972, all the later films share with it some common themes and technical features, which were modified and extended with the passing of time but remain traceable to a familiar matrix. Moreover, Jamaican cinema allows the spectator to observe the island's popular culture, since the films are targeted to a non-sophisticated audience and reflect habits and culture. It thus present languages, music, dance, religions, locations, looks and a general sense of masculinity belonging to the "low culture", leaving aside the "high culture" cultivated by the academy. Jamaican cinema is therefore a valuable tool for observing the evolution of popular culture in the island during the last forty years.

Il cinema giamaicano è giovane e ha una produzione ridotta. La mia ipotesi è che, ciononostante, si sia creata una tradizione. Infatti, un'analisi dei film realizzati sull'isola dimostra che tutti i film successivi a *The Harder They Come*, il primo film giamaicano uscito nel 1972, condividano temi e aspetti tecnici che vengono modificati ed ampliati con il passare del tempo ma che rimangono riconducibili a una fonte comune. Inoltre, il cinema giamaicano permette allo spettatore di osservare la cultura popolare dell'isola, poiché i film sono indirizzati a un pubblico poco sofisticato e riflettono i suoi costumi e la sua cultura. Rappresenta perciò lingua, musica, danza, religioni, ambientazioni, apparenze e un generale senso di mascolinità che appartengono alla "cultura bassa", tralasciando la "cultura alta" praticata dall'accademia. Il cinema giamaicano si rivela dunque uno strumento utile per osservare l'evoluzione della cultura popolare dell'isola negli ultimi quarant'anni.

Firma dello studente

¹ Il titolo deve essere quello definitivo, uguale a quello che risulta stampato sulla copertina dell'elaborato consegnato.