Kingston's Dancehall

A Story of Space and Celebration

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From the "limbo" to "Jerry Springer," Jamaican dance moves have mostly been created in Kingston's inner city. With select citizenry and spatiality, dancehall—Jamaica's reggae descendant—is a site of collective memory. To contextualize how this urban lifestyle functions, the author provides a brief historical background to the rise of dancehall during the period between 1986 and 2002. She introduces some of the missing stories of dancehall by examining space and bodily performance. Finally, the author assesses what kind of significance the spatiality, temporality, and embodiment of dancehall holds for Kingston's urban memory.

Keywords: *Kingston; dancehall space; dance venues; dance events; dance acts; urban identities; cultural studies*

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Without the dancehall a wha wi woulda do?

—Buju Banton

Apart from Garth White's (1984) "Urbanization of the Folk: The Merger of the Traditional and the Popular in Jamaican Music" and Norman Stolzoff's (2000) *Wake the Town and Tell the People*, scholarly inquiry into dancehall performance practice and culture has been sparse in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology.

The research presented here comes out of more than 12 years' participation in dancehall and research during 2000-2002 into Kingston's dancehall.[1] My focus is on the dancehall, and the dancer at the center of this phenomenon, as a contradictory and liminal space: one that occupies the margins in terms of social class and yet is a center of national and postcolonial identity.

Using the lens of the development of popular dance and sound systems in Jamaica since the 1950s, this article maps the contemporary period between 1986 and 2002. I visualize "the dance" in a holistic way, with a uniquely urban Jamaican nuance. When someone in Jamaica asks, "Yuh waan go a dance?" (i.e., "Do you want to go to *the dance*?"), an event of a known purpose and character, a space/venue, and particular (movement) acts/actors and relationships are implied. My project reclaims these three missing stories that are underexplored in the current theorization of the practice. I widen previous definitions of dancehall by entering through the sphere of the dance, honing in on types of events, venues, and dance acts and what these say about what is celebrated in the popular space.

What Is Dancehall?

A music? A social movement? A space? A profile? Most people familiar with Jamaica's dancehall might feel the rhythm, hear the "sound system drum" (Brathwaite, 1994, p. 9) sending thousands of reggae-inspired[2] sound wattage from heavy-duty speakers, hear a tune like the Tenor Saw original "Ring the Alarm," with infectious drums, bass line, and a tempo to make you want to "drop legs." The image of the cassette man might come to mind as an economic beneficiary: one who makes his living from the informal reproduction of the latest dancehall mix. Still others will imagine the dance space, the inner city, the dancers, the politics, bodily fashioning, want to hear the "story"—in true Jamaican "pop story gi mi" (tell me the story!!!) style—that must accompany such a music, way of life, and philosophy (Chang & Chen, 1998, p. 4).

Dancehall activity first flourished in Jamaica around the 1950s, and its name derives from the exclusive space, or "halls," in which dance events were held. It tells the story of a people's survival and need for celebration of that survival against forces of imperialism and systems of exclusion through dance, music, and attitude. Dancehall's story is ultimately the choreographing of an identity that critiques aspects of Western domination. It is the latest manifestation on a continuum of New World performance cultures. The slave ship dance or limbo, which appears in the ship logs as early as 1664 (Fabre, 1999) and reemerges in 1994 as a dancehall move, and the plantation dances reported by Waddell (1970, pp. 147, 161-162), for instance, with unique revelry, space, and tensions with the ruling class, are antecedents of contemporary dancehall. Dancehall functions as ritualized memorializing, a memory bank of the old, new, and dy-

namic bodily movements, spaces, performers, and performance aesthetic of the New World and Jamaica in particular. Continuities of performance, masking, philosophies of space, political processes, and fashioning of selfhood exist, and parallels can be drawn.

The distinct and accessible music surpassed the recognition given to the space and cultural practice of dancehall. This is reflected in the scholarship on dancehall (e.g., Chang & Chen, 1998; Cooper 1993, 2000; Skelton, 1995), which reflects engagement of the DJ's verbal artistry and lyrics (including DJs such as Patra, Lady Saw, and Shabba), with attention to social/moralistic tensions over their performances. The wider context of dancehall's social, spatial, and cultural topography remains underexposed when compared with the music.

Since 1985, dancehall has materialized in a variety of distinct dance events, moves, styles, fashion, and so on. Some of these aspects I call "missing dancehall stories" because they have been underexposed by Caribbean anthropology and cultural studies generally. To unearth these missing stories, I conceptualize dancehall life/style as a system that can be disaggregated into the particularity of its space, music, song, dance, fashion, language, art, embodied meanings, performance practice, attitude, politics, economy/industry, and style. And I represent the word *lifestyle* as life/style in this mirror/manner because I wish to emphasize the centrality of style itself. There is a certain way that things manifest in dancehall, a certain way that Caribbean culture generally is stylized (Benítez-Rojo, 1992, p. 23). Most significantly, dancehall style, its quotidian production and consumption, is outside the middle-class status quo and aspirations.

By providing an account of the development of the sound systems or mobile discos that are indigenous to Jamaica, Stolzoff (2000) presented dancehall as a culture. He suggested that

> perhaps the human body is where the most significant symbols and practices of dancehall circulate. . . . Through fashion [cycles], 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 jewellery worn . . . have come to signify a subordinate and oppositional position within Jamaica's race-class hierarchy. . . . While dancehall culture is focussed on music and performance, it also has given rise to an aesthetic that transcends the boundaries of music, strictly speaking. . . . There are well established genres of dancehall theatre, cinema, choreography, fashion design, and modeling. (p. 2)

Yet in the strictest sense, Stolzoff (2000) dealt scantily with this suggestion. He left the question of the centrality of dancers, even ethno-choreographers, to dancehall virtually untouched. Juxtaposed with Stolzoff's inattention to the techniques of the body and the space the dance occupies, White (1984, pp. 68-76) gave a compelling history of Jamaica's popular dance institution. He detailed typical dance events of the working class and unemployed, their purpose (such as the homecoming dance that marks a prisoner's reintegration into his community), the patrons, crowd size, food, evolution of dance movement, their influences, and creators from the late 1950s through the late 1970s. His comparative approach juxtaposes these with the entertainment culture of polite society. In this article, I focus on space, dance movement, and events, following from White's work on the subcultural dance.

A CONTEXT: SELECT CITIZENRY, SELECT SPATIALITY

The citizens who inspire, perform, and consume dancehall life/style are dancers such as Bogle, a foremost dance master, and Stacey, crowned dancehall queen (1999) in the annual contest. There are early DJs such as U-Roy, Tappa Zukie, Brigadier Jerry, Tenor Saw, and Yellow Man and today, Elephant Man, Round Head, and Capleton. This section describes aspects of the condition of these citizens' life world.

The social sphere of dancehall performers reveals strong inner-city ties. The inner city has attracted attention from various entities inspiring reports, theses, development plans, paramilitary operations[3] (e.g., Operation Ardent in Harriot, 2000), books and papers (Brodber, 1975; Chevannes, 1981; Gunst, 1995; Levy, 1996; Moore & Johnson, 2000; Phillips, 1981), motion pictures (e.g., *Rude Boy*, 2002; *Third World Cop*, 2000; and *Dancehall Queen,* 1997), political agendas, resettlement schemes, institutions, and novels (for examples of the latter, see Mais, 1974; Patterson, 1964).

The urban condition that defines and organizes the sociocultural sphere of dancehall begins in the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA), with its overcrowding, unemployment, competition, violence, desperation, "tough individualism," and the "vulnerability of identities" (Branche, 1998, pp. 185-187).[4] The KMA is 1% of Jamaica's total area with just less than two fifths of the nation's population.[5] Kingston's inner city within the southern section of the KMA has no clear delimitation, but its estimated population is 230,000 residents occupying approximately 8 square miles of the KMA's 45 square miles. Most of the other 2.27 million citizens of Jamaica are almost unaware of the day-to-day experiences of this select citizenry at the heart of Jamaica's national memory and who define Kingston's urban character. A large number of their dwellings or yards, today concealed behind metal or cardboard fences mostly bordering narrow lanes, maintain the character of "Negro yards" of plantation Jamaica.

The inner city is considered by polite society as the "underworld,"[6] and this is where dancehall life/style is largely generated. Generally speaking, the perception of the "up-town top-ranking" is that everyone living below the KMA's most popular center after Half-Way-Tree and the popular geographical class divide—Cross Roads—are "ghetto" people. The leadership of these communities is seen as being organized around political and other "Dons" otherwise called area leaders; drug-dealing, guns, and ammunition. The spaces occupied by the dancehall have consistently been frequented by police raids to apprehend

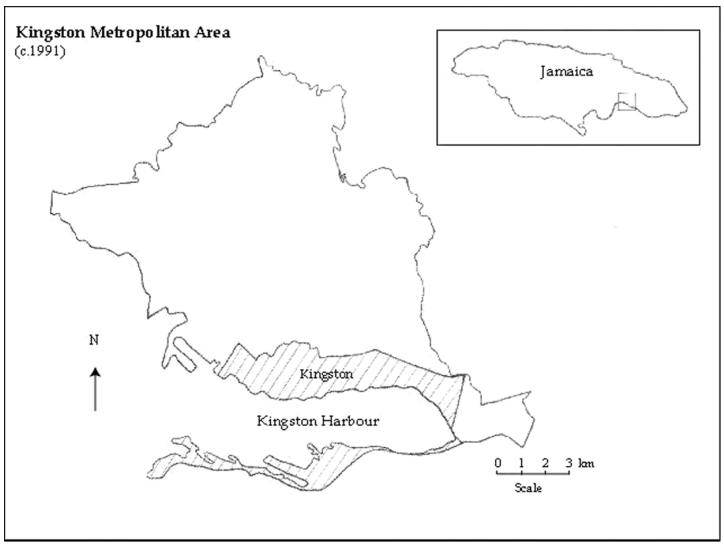

Figure 1. Map of Kingston Metropolitan Area
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Figure 2. Yard on the Corner of Tulip Lane and Bond Street, Kingston
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either criminals thought to hide in dance halls, smokers of marijuana, or recently in the name of the 1996 Noise Abatement Act, to "lock off the sound."

For some, it is not easy or even desirable to enter this world, especially the "garrisons" or political strongholds.[7] Some implore you to make sure on approaching some streets that men are visible, because if they are not, it could mean they are inside and armed for attack. Circuitous routes (Levy, 1996, p. 16) are safety strategies employed by dwellers while exiting and entering their areas to avoid "enemy territory." Some of the streets are blocked with barbed wire to signal "no entry zones," and police and army contingents are posted at volatile garrison borders. Residents fear the bark of guns during the conflicts between political factions. A child with a bullet lodged in the head, others sleeping under the house or hiding during conflicts, and a clinically depressed father are not unusual. The metal and cardboard façades that mask rotting homes, hungry and barefooted children, and daughter turned prostitute are some of the signals of the lack of resources these residents struggle to overcome. Among other things, a pervasive "gang geography" and a "geography of violence," "institutionalized warfare with the police, political banditry, and the quieter brutality of being bulldozed or torched out" of homes (Gunst, 1995, p. 65) are part of inner-city Kingston's urban life.

BONDS OF SOLIDARITY

The inner city embodies both destructive and constructive elements. So although the condition of Kingston's urban everyday militates against longevity and high quality of life, there are bonds of solidarity around child rearing, feeding, and other economic spheres. Specifically, the tenement and government yards were the popular lower-class dwellings. They are public housing constructions characterized by communal water and cooking facilities, child rearing, and economic options (Alleyne, 1988, p. 158; Brodber, 1975) and certain other "patterned interactions" (Patterson, 1974, p. 36) that are central to the urban poor.

Dancehall provides a raison d'être for some social groups including youth gangs: "Many gangs of the fifties . . . were centred on owner and/or disc jockey of sound-system dances" (Patterson, 1974, p. 38). Today, these youth gangs manifest in crews or groups formed around fashion, dance moves, music, and so on including Ouch Crew, Scare Dem Crew, and many others. Furthermore, in his report on the low-income population of Kingston, Patterson (1974) submitted that "every Community should have its dance hall and sound-system . . . a regular feature of urban community life"

(p. 175). Although the state has not formally acted on this recommendation, today virtually every inner-city community has its own dance hall(s) and sound system(s). Today, even with the decline of dance activity in the face of violence, sound men set up their sound systems on the streets for the evening's celebrations. The Sound System Association of Jamaica[8] currently has some 150 registered sound systems, and there are countless others operating informally.

Despite the state's neglect of dancehall and reggae culture in general, it continues to benefit economically and spiritually. Outside the obvious financial returns, community leaders, researchers, and dance promoters believe that crime and discontent are down when dancehall is allowed its expressive height.[9] Buju Banton's (1993) popular song "No Respect" suggests this in its lines "A wi a guard unu life an' unu nuh know, when oonu a sleep wi a patrol outa door" (we are guarding your life and you don't know, when you are sleeping we are patrolling outdoors). It is important to note the obvious equation being developed here; as community celebrations around the sound systems proliferate, contentment is up while violence and rivalry are down.

What Does a Mapping of Dancehall Space, Events, and Dance Acts Reveal?

DANCEHALL SPACE

The inner-city space that literally sits at the edge of Kingston's looking glass—Kingston Harbour—houses most of the dance venues that have emerged over the past 50 years. The "subcultural dance" (White, 1984) or "sound system dance" (Stolzoff, 2000) venue represents a cultural system in which the sacred and the secular, politics and economics, merge in celebration.

Figure 3. A View of Kingston Harbour From Port Royal
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The "dance" provides physical, ideological, and spiritual shelter for generations of lower-class Jamaicans, particularly those who grew up around the country's 1962 independence, which marked the maturation of a distinctly Jamaican popular dance and music culture. Since the 1950s, only poor people went to dance halls (B. Goodison, personal communication, April 29, 2002; White, 1984). Today, the patronage extends to other classes, but dancehall remains an inner-city phenomenon resulting from the location of key actors, spaces of operation, and production.

The term *dance hall* emerged from the early venues or "halls" that were used during the 1950s and 1960s (White, 1984, p. 56). A typical venue was uncovered and could

be marginal as a gully bank.[10] Orlando Patterson's 1964 novel *Children of Sisyphus* describes the Dungle, one of Kingston's early garbage-dumping sites that provided livelihood and home to many during the 1950s and 1960s. Residents of the Dungle included Mortimo Planno, Rastafari Elder, and Bob Marley's mentor, who organized dance events there in the 1960s. The Dungle dwellings were destroyed by the Alexander Bustamante–led Jamaica Labour Party in the mid-1960s for the construction of new communities including Tivoli Gardens. A contemporary equivalent is Riverton City in the west southwestern region of the KMA, a similar garbage dump where DJs, dancers, and patrons have resided.

Dance venues are often nomadic, moving from space to space, as one result of unresolved land occupation/ownership issues in the postcolony.[11] Land ownership and, broadly, the power structure set by colonial slave masters did not allocate spaces of residence or entertainment for the majority slave population to freely occupy or own. This has perpetuated slave/master relations within the context of contemporary governments that reproduce the relations of power consistent with colonial rule. Like other spaces, the popular cultural spaces of the postcolony have inherited such relations. Mbembe (2001, p. 102) defines postcolony from his position as a continental African. Among other things, he highlights the particular brands of political institutions that mirror old colonial structures and manifest as "regime[s] of violence" that inscribe their power. Unfortunately, one result of this brand of power is the challenge it poses to African and African diasporal embodiment, performance practice, and memorializing.

The popularity of certain spaces indicates a preference for the outdoors. These are the spaces that have been in contest with law enforcement agencies, which often deem the enterprise to be a disturbance of the peace. Nomadic dance halls such as those convened on street corners are convened without state permission, lease, or other agreement and are appropriated until they outlive their spatial capacity or welcome.

Venues have always been raided with some frequency and for varied reasons. For example, it was the occasion of English's birthday bash with the sound system Stone Love on hand for a night of celebration at the frequently used La Roose Restaurant and Nightclub on the edge of the KMA. As the event approached its height at 2:00 a.m. Monday, January 27, 2003, members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force suspected of extorting money for permitting the event under the guise of the Noise Abatement Act opened fire on patrons at the Port Henderson, St. Catherine, nightclub. Five persons including Doreen Prendergast ("Pinkie"), sister of Jamaica's media-proclaimed dancehall queen, Carlene Smith, were victims of gunshot injuries. This is a dance space, a community under siege by an apparatus of the state that speaks to unresolved issues of law, governance, and a history of battles for space and personhood, centered on contradictions in the collective historical Jamaican body manifest in binary oppositions including sacred versus secular, repression versus expression, body versus mind.

The raid, or "locking down the dance," became such a feature of dancehall life that patrons came to expect it and film crews could request one from the police. In a paramilitary operation of the Jamaica Constabulary's anticrime division during 1994, 80 people were detained and 1 arrested for murder and shooting at the Cargill Avenue venue House of Leo. This particular raid was thought to be staged for a British film crew.

Each venue exists within a complex system, mediated by its urban setting. With the division of the KMA along class lines, Cross Roads situated in the south-central region functions as the geographical class divide. This class divide is one of the determining

factors in the patronage and popularity of dance venues as well as the level of interference from the state. Venues can be classified as follows:

1. Clubs such as the Silver Slipper in Cross Roads, the popular nightlife area; Bournemouth Club and Club Havana in the east, all of the 1960s; and the recent Cactus and Mirage (now closed) and Asylum clubs. These venues were the most prestigious in the early years, especially among the middle and upper classes because they boasted big band music, magnificent infrastructure such as sanitary conveniences, decorated dance floors, exquisite lighting, sophisticated equipment, staff, and ambience. Poorer people could not afford to go to those venues, and this is still the case despite the introduction of incentives such as Asylum's "ladies night," which advertises no cover charge for women.
2. Lodge halls became the popular name used for Mutual Benefit or Friendly Society halls including Forrester's Hall, King's Lawn, and the Jamaica Success Club, which were used during the late 1950s and 1960s.
3. Established play out or rented venues above Cross Roads such as the House of Leo, a Cargill Avenue site of the Thursday night Stone Love dance for more than 10 years, existed during the early 1980s and 1990s. Others include Market Place, Constant Spring Road, and Mass Camp, Oxford Road. These venues have more permanent infrastructure than those below.
4. Rented or established play out venues below Cross Roads (or outside the inner-city limits) often affiliated with or initiated by a bar or "cook shop" (food shop) in the area. The more contemporary examples include Joyce's Hot Spot, Admiral Pen Road, Cherry's Bar on Baker's Street in Jones Town, and Dawn's HQ near Cross Roads, which hosted Stone Love during the early 1980s. Others outside the inner-city limits include Jamaica Gates, which hosted the Sunday night Super D dance in Harbour View during the early 1990s, and the Frontline pub on Red Hills Road, which housed the Frontline dance during the late 1980s to early 1990s.
5. Sound system bases include as early as the 1950s Nanny's Hot Spot on Laws Street where Studio One's Clement "Sir Coxsone" Dodd's sound was the resident sound system. Stone Love's base at Burlington Avenue is a current example.
6. Street corners have long been the most popular and available sites. Sources reveal venues such as "corner of Rosemary Lane and Tower Street," or "corner of Dunrobin and Constant Spring Roads," where sound systems played. Dancehall's history and present are replete with such venues.[12] Young, up-and-coming sound systems are likely to play on the street corner for some time until they see the fortune of playing in a more established venue.
7. Gully bank. Interviewees revealed that some of the earliest dance events occurred on gully banks where shanty dwellings were established (personal interviews, March 2002). Long before the Sandy Gully Scheme, a major drainage system, was completed, its banks were decorated by shanties or shacks around which people gathered to experience the music of established or emerging DJs, some of whom lived within these shanties.

There are rules of organization and rites of celebration that govern the use of dancehall space. First, there is an unmarked/unwritten but precise space in which dancing takes place. No one enters this space in the early hours of a dance, and patrons will skirt the space throughout the night until the DJ plays the appropriate or popular tune. Second, there is an observable space occupied by dons, leaders, dancehall diehards, and popular crews. Third, my study of venues reveals a "ram dance" philosophy espoused by patrons and organizers, which recognizes that no space is ever too small to stage a dance: the more persons bursting the seams of the venue, the more successful the event.

Figure 4. A View of a Developed Sandy Gully With More Permanent Structures Occupying Its Banks
Note: This is the Verena Banks area where events are currently held.
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DANCEHALL EVENTS

Dance events always have a name. Their appeal and consequent power converge around this naming, this rite of celebration, which takes the form of the latest dancehall and/or inner-city lingua franca. This is crucial to attracting patrons. Some of these names include "Ol' time something come back again," "Clean up yuh heart an come," "Girl's Dem Bashment," "Bruck out, Bruck out," "Raw and Rough," "Fully Loaded," "Gimme di light," and "Rasta Jamboree," among others. Events are found throughout the calendar year, almost every night, all year round. Dancehall's liturgical calendar is noteworthy simply because it persists regardless of season or state power and presents a challenge to conceptualizations of popular dancehall culture as "carnivalesque" in the Bakhtinian sense.

The dance is not just an event; it is a system of rules and codes, an institution. Women adorn themselves according to the dictates of the current dancehall fashion. Patrons are aware of the latest dance moves, latest songs, debates, and artistes. There are salutations, tributes, and paying of respect. The audience participates in the fundamental themes or moral codes that have been part of the dancehall scene, some from its inception. Some of these include "friendship and love versus animosity," "power and prowess of the rude boy/bad man," "competition and struggle," "sexuality and morality/ethics of the penis and vagina," "celebrating the vagina, women, mother, girls," "celebrating the DJ and/or sound system," "dancing," "the authority and divinity of Rastafari's Haile Selassie and the Christian God," "the essential herb," "colour/class identity," and "relationship between State institutions and the people."[13]

It is not uncommon to hear the selector calling his crowd to respond by showing of hands to, among other liturgical incantations, "from a bwoy nuh badda dan you, han up inna di air" (put your hand in the air if you are the baddest). Similarly, the selector will call for a showing of hands by those who love God, and the audience will respond, after which a song that typifies the sentiment will be played. There is a dynamic relationship between the patrons, selectors' conversations, DJ music, and dance.

Once the event's tone has been set in order, the purpose takes over. Dance events have been characterized by music—how, why, and by whom it is played. Stolzoff (2000) identified two major types of sound system dances: the "sound system clash," a competition between two or more sound systems, and the "juggling" dance, in which sound systems play noncompetitively through such "performance modes" as "jug-

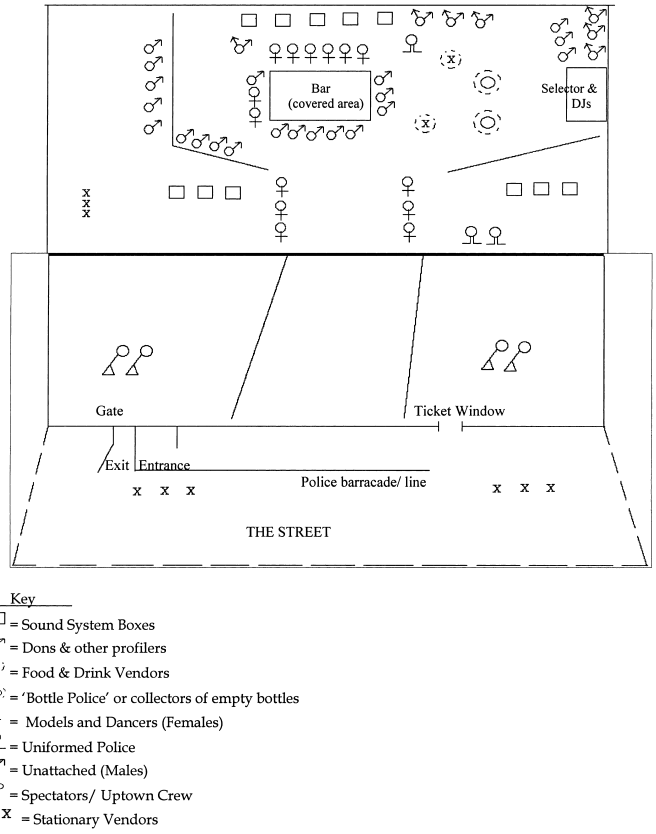

Figure 5. Basic Elements and Floor Plan of a Dancehall Event
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gling," "clashing," "reality," "culture," "sacrifice," and "war" (pp. 194-195). Reyes (1993), on the other hand, identified two types of dance events: the "session" and the "dance" (pp. 42-43). The session is usually hosted by a bar, where admission is free and financial return is from beverage sales. The dance usually happens on a Friday or Saturday, a sound system is contracted, and the event is promoted through advertisement to secure entrance fees. The risk in organizing a dance for profit is higher.

Because most dance events seek to celebrate an aspect of social life, they reveal a great deal about Kingston's cultural life. For example, the Christmas dance, which dates back to the experience of enslaved Africans in Jamaica, is the antecedent of all contemporary dances. Oral accounts of dancehall reveal that people looked toward a Christmas dance with great anticipation as a chance to affirm, or "big up," one's social identity and cultural experience. By the early 1980s, these dance events disappeared, and Marcia Davis, businesswoman of the Frontline Pub, reported that in the late 1980s, her business partner started staging events to bring back the dance spirit that faded with the decline of Christmas events (personal interview, April 2002).

Some major dance events include the following:

1. The Birthday Bash, which is by far the most ceremonial of dances, moves through more stages of ceremony than most other dances to include the cutting of a cake, tributes to the celebrated, and sometimes specially featured artistes. It is a preferred event for not only popular and semipopular dance patrons but for DJs as well.
2. Memorial dances, such as for a Don, include the Jim Brown Memorial Dance, which has been organized for the past 10 years in February, or a Willy Haggart Memorial Dance. This functions as mode of celebration and collective memorializing consistent with performance rituals of the folk. It is important to note that prefuneral and postfuneral ceremonies can take the form of a dance as well.
3. The Anniversary Dance celebrates the anniversary of sound systems such as Stone Love and Fire Links or tenure in a political office. For example, the current leader of the opposition recently celebrated his 40th anniversary as a member of parliament in the West Kingston constituency with a dance.

4. The Girl's Dance, like that of Roll Out 2002 (bylined "the girl's roll call"), is a dance event dedicated to the girls of dancehall. This type of event ultimately manifests in larger events such as the crowning of a dancehall queen or a sound system's queen, which combines the importance of fashion, dance moves, and attitude in an event totally dedicated to the women of dancehall.
5. The Link-Up Dance includes the British link-up, Washington, DC, New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Canada/Jamaica link-up events. The British link-up is by far the most popular and manifests in a season of events that includes a British pool party, British bus ride, beach party, school uniform party, and the ultimate British dance. The link-up events, inter alia, illustrate the tangible Jamaican diasporic links that still exist within this performance practice. Through the events organized, the type of patrons, and rituals observed, the British dance events have come to epitomize the terms *bashment*, *bling bling*, and *ghetto fabulous*, at which the "nicest" girls, best dancers, most prominent dancehall stars, and most expensive automobiles and beverages are present. These three interrelated terms refer to excitement/exciting event, hyped possessions, and lower-class prosperity, respectively.
6. Celebrations of gangs are an important part of the liturgical calendar. The annual Original Spanglers Dance, celebrating the Spangler's posse, last held on April 26, 2003, is one such event. This event is likely to be a top crowd puller.

THE DANCE ACTS

Movement is central to dancehall's celebratory space, and its dynamism is reflected in the naming of these moves. If one is crowned a dancer—in an event such as the dancehall queen competition or through continued exposure at dance events—one becomes like a god. And, indeed, if you cannot dance, you are a lesser being. Historian and poet Kamau Brathwaite (1973), in his poem "Didn't He Ramble," suggested that "what the heart lacked we supplied with our hips and the art of our shuffle shoes" (p. 22). These "shuffle shoes" became the voices, whips, and means of transgression in a debilitating postcolonial condition, just as the limbo dance was a "ritual of rebirth" (Fabre, 1999) for the enslaved. The dance performance is a necessity for maintaining life.

Dance moves such as "legs," performed by famous dancers such as Pam Pam and Baskin of the early years (White, 1984, p. 72), "Chucky," and "horseman scabby" are antecedents of those presented below. This chronology, although not exhaustive, illustrates the dynamic nature of dance creation and naming in the contemporary period, especially during 1990 to 1994 and from 1999 to the present. It is important to note that there are also dance moves with no name, such as variations of the generic "bubbling," a characteristic rotation of the hips done mostly by women.

Table 1 sets out a preliminary chronology of major dance moves that have surfaced in the dancehall space. The dates shown are approximations of periods of their greatest visibility in songs about them, coupled with their presence in the dance space.

Dance moves have names that tell stories of cross-fertilization and identification with local and sometimes global characters, vibes, phenomena, body parts, and Afro-Jamaican traditional forms. The "Jerry Springer" and "Erkle," for instance, place dancehall within the text of two television characters originating from the United States: one a talk show host and the other a nerd from the series *Family Matters*. Dances can also be classified according to gender. Bogle, a major dancehall dance master, in an interview with Reyes (1993, p. 48), discussing two of his creations, explained that the Bogle dance is for men and the Butterfly is for women.[14]

What is the general character of these dance moves, and in which periods have they been most prolific? It has been suggested that dance moves are fluid or easygoing when

Table 1. Sample of Major Dance Moves

Year	Dance Move
The early years, 1980-1989	Cool an' Deadly, Water Pumpee, Body Move, Shoulder Move, Bounce, One Foot Skank, Stuck, Della Move
1990-1991	Crab, Head Top, Poco Man Jam
1991-1992	Bike Back, Big It Up, Roun' di Worl, Santa Barbara, Bogle
1992-1993	Imitation Bogle, Butterfly, Armstrong
1993-1994	Worl' Dance, Tatti, Soca Bogle, Position, Limbo, Kung Fu
1994-1995	Erkle, Mock di Dread, Body Basics, A Capella
1995-1996	Go Go Wine
1996-1997	Sketel
1997-1998	Mr Bean, Pelpa, The Flip
1998-1999	Jerry Springer
1999-2000	Jerry Springer, Angel, Screechy
2000-2001	L.O.Y. (Lords of Yard), Zip It Up, Log On
2002-2003	Log On, On Line, Drive By, Curfew, Martial Art, Tall Up Tall Up, Higher level, Wave, Pon di River Pon di Bank, Row like a Boat, Parachute, Signal Di Plane, Blaze

social tensions are less (White, 1984). My own research signals that the highpoints of dance creations, events, and spread of dancehall have been low-tension intervals between general elections.

The Butterfly dance reigned supreme in 1992. It depicts, with the hands and spread legs, the life force of a butterfly. It is danced on *pliéi* (knees bent), a characteristic feature of dance movements of Africa and its diaspora, with the feet flat, supporting the dynamic displacement of the hip and shoulder girdles and legs, while the fluid movement of the knees laterally on a horizontal axis imitates the flapping of the butterfly's wings in flight. The dancehall's Butterfly presents not only a dance but also a dancehall philosophy and ethos of freedom, creativity, celebration, struggle, and beauty.

Dancehall style revolves around and is expressed by the body. In particular, the dancing body embodies dancehall style and becomes a crucial site for articulation for the individual and the group. At the individual level, Dancehall Queen 1999, Stacey (a.k.a. Denise Cumberland), has a definitive style. Her best hour is 5:00 a.m., when she can be seen mounting the ground, a tower of speakers, or a nearby roof. The dance that is normative for a dancehall queen is not the norm for most dancehall patrons or citizens of the middle and upper classes. As Stacey admits, "one has to be real fit to do them" and I would add, shed enough puritanical moral ethic to be able to conceive of what Stacey does as other than "slackness" or vulgarity.[15]

What Statements Can Be Made? Toward a Conclusion

Dancehall life/style exists in the belly of tensions between the seemingly dispassionate upper class and the impassioned[16] lower class, as the latter creatively assert a

sense of a disenfranchised self in postcolonial Jamaica. The reality is that Jamaica's indigenous dancehall culture is denigrated in some quarters. Increasing associations with violence, vulgarity, and moral decay, coupled with dancehall's ban from the homes of some Jamaicans, are proof of the conflicts and contradictions surrounding this performance space. The contradictions manifest in dichotomies such as slackness versus culture, mind versus body, and Africa versus Europe, which contribute substantially to an ailing self-confidence.

Still, for some, dancehall activity reduces potential violence.[17] There is almost tacit knowledge of the fact that "when dance ram, no gun ting nah really gwaan." Dancehall is ultimately a celebration of the selves that occupy and creatively sustain that space. It exposes social ills and offers possible remedies within Jamaican society. With careful study, cultural trends can be foresighted to engineer strategies of engagement for social change. So Bob Marley & The Wailers' "Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)" (1974) captures the sense of frustration, inequality, and injustice that has given rise to forms of creative survivalism through performance at the core of the sacred in Caribbean being. He says,

Dem belly full but we hungry
A hungry mob is an angry mob
A rain a fall but di dirt it tough
A pot a cook but the food no 'nough
Chorus.
You're gonna dance to Jah music, dance
We're gonna dance to Jah music, dance
Forget your troubles and dance
Forget your sorrow and dance
Forget your sickness and dance
Forget your weakness and dance

By the early 1990s, this call to social change reverberated in Buju Banton's (1990) "How the World a Run," which in true DJ style names the distributive injustice of postcolonial society: a sense of the middle and upper classes' continued identification with metropolitan lifestyles of Europe and the United States, as the orchestration of poverty by political bandits ensues. He says,

Though the poor can't afford the knowledge, dem no get none
The rich man 'ave di dollars an' no wan' give wi some
Bragadocious an boasty talk him a fling down
Pure 190 E benz 'im bring down
Sell the mos' crack, cocaine, heroin an' opium
Dem no want see ghetto youth elevate out a di slum
So dem give we all type a things, try turn wi dumb

[Because the poor cannot afford the knowledge, they don't get any
The rich man has the dollars and does not want to give us any
Bragging and boastful talking he does
Only Mercedes 190E cars he imports
Selling the most crack, cocaine, heroin and opium
They don't want to see ghetto youth elevate out of the slum
So they give us all types of things trying to make us dumb]

The consumption of these lyrics in dance halls through bodily movement and around specific themes reveals potent modes of community throughout history, signaling developed forms of commentary, problem solving, and memorializing.

In noting the centrality of Kingston as a national urban capital, the marginality (geopolitically and aesthetically) of dancehall's creative ethos, and its simultaneous centrality to national identity, Browning's (1998) analysis of African diasporic performance cultures vis-à-vis Western culture comes to mind. Using her analysis, to understand dancehall is to appreciate it as a "war zone" as much as a party, with "infectious rhythms" and "contagious dances, often characterized as dangerous" (pp. 1-6). She explains that "the conflation of economic, spiritual, and sexual exchange . . . has allowed for the characterization of Diasporic culture as chaotic or uncontrolled force which can only be countered by military or police violence." (p. 7).

Browning's (1998) point of reference, although not entirely applicable, is part of the profile constructed considering patrons' encounters with police brutality and violence. Dancehall has evolved, maintained itself outside the state apparatus and often in tension with it; its locus of creativity is at once the very marginality of its citizenry. This betwixt and between place, this liminality, is the source of its power.

In some respects, dancehall's dichotomous margin/center habitus or its liminality breeds a psychology of the fantastic among its citizenry, expressing itself in the excess of well-known characteristics of African expression such as "drama" and the "will to adorn" (Neale Hurston, 1999, pp. 293-297), highly publicized prowess, and overinflated selves. The entrance of the video camera has assisted in the transformation of the ordinary into the fantastic through adopting masks more ready for the screen. The "video light" has played a significant role in shining selves into stardom and the celebration of personhood vis-à-vis the urban phenomena of "sufferation," political banditry, "donmanship," and gangs, the constant struggle to articulate identity, as part of the psychoscape.[18]

Some of Jamaica's significant memories of itself are inscribed in the dancehall space, and understanding of local postcolonial spaces, their place and impact within global stories, requires engagement. At this juncture of Jamaica's popular dance culture, what I have contributed is a widening of the definition of dancehall beyond its music to profile aspects of its space and celebratory ethos. In summary, dancehall embodies that celebratory ethos with which existence in Jamaica is now strongly identified. Not to be deterred by any force, this mode of celebration retreats only at certain times to its core locus into what seems like dormancy or decline to the wider "outer city."[19] Its magic is continuously seen in the advertisements on local television and the public light poles of the city or in the varied street dances as spirits soar beyond the larger-than-life issues of the urban everyday. Structured by the urban, a space that is limited, limiting, and marginal yet central to communal, even national, identity, dancehall's identity is contradictory, competitive as it is simultaneously sacred.

Notes

1. This is part of a broader cultural studies project on dancehall currently being conducted by the author exploring dance and celebration in Kingston's dancehall space to unearth some of the "missing stories."

2. An advertisement in the *Reggae Times* for IRIE FM (1996) identifies 18 categories of reggae music. These are international reggae, conscious reggae, classic reggae, hip hop reggae, ska,

reggae, bluebeat, mento, rocksteady, gospel reggae, jazz reggae, reggae philharmonic, reggae rock, rub-a-dub, dancehall, reggae ballads, lover's rock, and dub poetry. This, of course, excludes forms such as samba reggae and other forms more recently identified.

3. Harriot (2000, pp. 85-90) discusses police harassment at dancehall events especially since "Operation Ardent" (the name of a special joint police-military operation of the Jamaica Constabulary Force initiated in October 1992 and also identified in DJ Buju Banton's song of the same name). Harriot discusses paramilitary operations such as gun-toting tactics to fight crime, which ultimately perpetuate some of the ills of violence that they themselves try to combat and of which dancehall patrons have been victims. As in the case of Ardent, they are initiated when the boundaries of acceptable crime levels have been surpassed.

4. See Simpson (1956) for an early contextualization of life in West Kingston (in particular, comprising some of what is generally called inner-city Kingston) and also Clarke (1975) for population trends, social and economic change, and Kingston's exceeded absorptive capacity in terms of housing and employment. Clarke noted that by 1960, one third of residents occupied dilapidated housing.

5. The Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) is defined from as early as 1972 by the Ministry of Mining and Natural Resources, where the KMA is delimited as having a boundary encompassing Palisadoes and Waterfront on the south, Golden Spring on the north, Naggo Head and Gregory Park on the west, and Bull Bay on the east, roughly (p. 1). Based on 1997 postcensus data, the census office within the Statistical Institute of Jamaica identified 100 communities within the KMA. Preliminary data from the 2001 census show that because of the expansion of Portmore in the neighboring parish of St. Catherine, the KMA population is now 577,623.

6. See Gunst's (1995) *Born fi Dead* for insights into this notion and an in-depth look at a sort of geography of gangs, violence, and political "badmanism."

7. See Figueroa and Sives (2002).

8. The association's registrants can be viewed at the Web site www.cyberjam.net/ssaj/sets-index.htm.

9. This is substantiated by data from personal interviews conducted, in particular, with Marcia Hemmings, March 29, 2002, promoter of the Super D dance event, Jamaica Gates, Harbour View, Kingston, and Marcia Davis, April 17, 2002, copromoter of Frontline and Top Line events, Frontline Pub, 110 ¾ Red Hills Road, Kingston 19 and Southdale Plaza, South Avenue, Kingston 10, respectively.

10. This is a paved or unpaved ravine that is natural in origin resulting from persistence of rainfall runoff. With low public amenities, Kingston's memory is replete with incidences of streets becoming extensions to gullies crossing the Liguanea Plain. Due to the convergence of several of these gullies, the Sandy Gully Scheme was a major development of the KMA's drainage system after the 1960s.

11. Used here especially with understanding of Mbembe's (2001) explication of the term, especially his introduction and chapter titled "Aesthetics of Vulgarity."

12. For a detailed inventory of sound systems from the 1950s to present, see Thompson (2002).

13. A similar extract of themes from the music in particular are identified in Cooper (1993). They include songs that celebrate DJing, dance songs that invite participation, songs of social commentary, songs that focus on sexual/gender relations, and songs that confront the slackness/culture dialectic.

14. In an interview with Carlene Smith, the first and most popular dancehall queen (May 5, 2000), she took credit for the development of this dance. Bogle, in an interview on June 7, 2002, stated that he created and popularized the Butterfly.

15. See especially Ajayi-Soyinka (1998, pp. 2-4) for a discussion of the "disembodied body," as the Western opposite of the more holistic verbal/nonverbal communication system in which the body as one such system of communication is valued, even sacred, explaining that to Yorubas, perceiving "the body that dances with spiritual and pious fervour in worshipping God" and that same body dancing "with [or for] sensual pleasure and delight on social and courtship

occasions" evokes no contradiction. She offers that there are far-reaching consequences of the disregard for nonverbal communication, which has its roots in Judeo-Christian traditions.

16. Thanks to a discussion with Abiona Pape, this point appears with far more clarity.

17. H. Gayle, personal communication, April 2002.

18. This comes after the idea I first read in Lipsitz (1994, p. 5) (introduced by Appadurai, 1990), which delimits the importance of reorganizing space beyond the local experience (especially those of urban areas), beyond landscapes to talk about concurrent ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes. So the development of a new vision of the cultural economy of the world based on the active travel of images, techniques, ideas, and capital enables us to occupy different places and spaces simultaneously, rather than one continent or country. Thus, I use this term with the recognition that all inner-city urban settings breed certain conditions that make them more susceptible to instability and varied recreative responses.

19. I first saw this term in Levy (1996).

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