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Author(s): RACHEL MOSELEY-WOOD
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The Other Jamaica

Music and the City in Jamaican Film

RACHEL MOSELEY-WOOD

> Welcome to Jamrock, camp whe' di thugs dem camp at
> Two pound a weed inna van back
> —Damian "Junior Gong" Marley, "Welcome to Jamrock"

DAMIAN "JUNIOR GONG" MARLEY'S GRAMMY-WINNING SONG "Welcome to Jamrock"[1] creates a paradigm shift in the representation of place. The song plays on the phrase "Welcome to Jamaica", the greeting traditionally extended to visitors to the island, which is endlessly played upon in the tourism industry. Marley proclaims, "Welcome to Jamrock," substituting the name which Jamaicans at home and in the diaspora affectionately, and sometimes ironically, use to refer to their country. Marley's switch directs our attention to the often gaping discrepancies between the image of Jamaica offered by tourism interests to lure visitors, and the realities experienced by those "on the ground". "Welcome to Jamrock" describes Jamaica in ways that would scare off the most intrepid tourist: in this song Jamaica is envisioned as a site for violent crime, the drug trade, poverty, civil unrest, thuggery and political violence. For public commentator Ian Boyne, the song inserts Marley into "the classic role of prophet who disturbs, afflicts and tortures the comforted with pictures and images not in concert with the vision of the ruling class". The song lives up well to its genre of protest music, Boyne states, "jolting the complacent who would soon forget the other Jamaica".[2]

The notion of "the other Jamaica" invites consideration of the politics of representation. "Welcome to Jamrock" was a controversial song and many Jamaicans, as Boyne reports, objected to Marley's characterisation of the country. The reasons for such protests are complex. Although Marley's version of Jamaica is a shameful one that may not accord with either formal representations of Jamaica or the lived experiences of the upper and middle classes, there

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are few who would deny that at least some aspects of this other Jamaica exist. The success of the song locally – and, significantly, beyond Jamaica's shores – indicated, however, that in the struggle over representation of place, this version of Jamaica, which privileges the perspective of the underclass, those on the margins of society, was gaining a high degree of public attention and therefore some measure of dominance.

The transformative representation of place that occurs in "Welcome to Jamrock" and the controversy that it created speak to the ongoing tension that arises in and around the construction of place as competing points of view struggle for dominance and, further, disturb the idea that the local point of view is a homogenous or unified one. "Welcome to Jamrock", therefore, is a useful point of departure from which to begin exploring these issues in Jamaican cinema. The paradigm shift in the representation of place that occurs in Marley's song is also evident in a number of Jamaican films and is frequently produced in these texts, in part, through the use of popular music. In this essay I comment on the project of reclaiming place in Jamaican fictional film and specifically address a grouping within that body of work – what I refer to as the "city films" – in which the project of reclaiming place is urgent and compelling.[3] I identify the use of popular forms of Jamaican music in this group of films as a key component in the articulation of a local cinematic voice. I argue that although the extensive use of popular music plays an important role in the films' commercial viability in overseas markets, it also endows the films with transformative possibilities, and is fundamental to the construction of perspectives which privilege the experiences of marginalised Jamaicans.

In their early seminal work *The Empire Writes Back,* Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin identify the concern with place and displacement as a major feature of postcolonial literatures. It is here, they suggest, that the special postcolonial crisis of identity comes into being, often expressed as a concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place.[4] In a later publication the authors further explain that the concept of 'place' should not be merely understood as a reference to 'landscape'; rather, they state, "'place' in postcolonial societies is a complex interaction of language, history and environment".[5] In this formulation, language is closely bound up with the concept of place to the extent that "in some sense place *is* language, something in constant flux, a discourse in process".[6]

The pressing concern with the construction of place and the issues that

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place raises about identity and language are explicitly expressed in the Jamaican postcolonial film. One might suppose that because film is dominantly visual, the depiction of place is more immediate and less mediated, thus rendering the quarrel over representation less intense than that which occurs in the literary text. This is not so. Realist film tends to create the illusion of minimal intrusion between the image and the spectator, but the film text is the result of numerous choices made by the filmmaker which help shape the spectator's understanding of – and response to – the film's subjects and their social relations. Place in the realist film, therefore, must also be understood as constructed and mediated. Indeed, it is precisely because the realist film tends to conceal its own artifice that it is so persuasive. Through aesthetic values of verisimilitude, and reliance on stylistic conventions and techniques that create a sense of spatial, temporal and narrative continuity, realist films may assume the weight of authenticity. Rather than call attention to the fictional and subjective nature of the film text, such techniques work to encourage the spectator to equate the images they see on the screen with reality, and the perspective or point of view constructed by the film as "truth".

Realist techniques have been used in dominant cinema to construct the Caribbean in ways that support and reflect the perspective of the traveller or the tourist, and encourage the spectator to accept this as "truth". Robert Stam and Louise Spence note that it is not only the content of such films which reflects the colonial relationship. They suggest also that the cinematic and televisual apparatus can constitute a kind of "magic carpet" that flies the spectator around the globe, producing him or her as a subject – an "armchair conquistador" – as inhabitants of the Third World are constructed as objects of spectacle for the First World's voyeuristic gaze.[7] Thus, as Mbye Cham points out, cinema audiences in the region have long been accustomed to seeing the various environments in which they live appropriated by foreign filmmakers, transformed, and then offered back to them as images for their consumption, but in ways that are distancing and alienating.[8] Bruce Paddington's assertion that the Caribbean often functions in foreign productions as a visual backdrop in foreign "films about such themes as voodoo, pirates or drug trafficking"[9] identifies a more recent and disturbing qualitative shift in images of the Caribbean, and Jamaica in particular, that circulate in the global cinematic discourse. While films from previous decades used the Caribbean as an exotic location associated with the pleasures of sun, sea and sex, increasingly, Jamaica

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is being referenced in commercial cinema as a site of danger. Cinematic images from earlier eras of duelling pirates (and more recently in Disney's multi-sequel *Pirates of the Caribbean*)[10] might be more or less contained within a romanticised past, but foreign-made films set in the contemporary Caribbean often locate violent scenarios in a terrifying and threatening present. In the popular cinematic imaginary Jamaica has become a nursery for criminal types: thugs, gunrunners and drug dealers; and dreadlocks have become associated with illegal and criminal activity rather than with the cultural practices of the Rastafari. This shifting trend in cinematic representation has often resulted in the reproduction of stereotypes about black people and violent or criminal behaviour that claim a genesis in colonial ideology.

Stam and Spence state that in response to the distortions of commercial First World cinema, the Third World has attempted to "write its own history, take control of its own cinematic image, speak in its own voice" and combat objectifying discourses with a vision of self and reality as seen "from within".[11] This has certainly been the trend in Jamaica, where the project of reclaiming place is an important concern in post-independence cinema and stems from the intention to construct a perspective that is grounded in local experience. The post-independence fictional films attempt to liberate Jamaica from its previous use in foreign-made films as generic backdrop, constructing it instead as a site that is deeply marked by history and the activities of its residents.

This is not to say, however, that these films are explicitly concerned with the history of enslavement and colonialism, quite the contrary. Unlike their more leftist counterparts in Cuba and Latin America, filmmakers in Jamaica have refrained from direct confrontation with the country's traumatic past.[12] Instead, they tend to be more concerned with exploring how hierarchies of colour and class that originated during slavery, and which persist in contemporary Jamaica, affect current socioeconomic structures and relationships of power. The struggle for survival in adverse social conditions that is experienced by poor black Jamaicans on a daily basis is therefore a common focus and concern in Jamaican films. Social problems such as unemployment, crime and violence are often implicitly contextualised within a history of oppression, so that the spectator is made aware of how the inequity and discrimination of slavery and colonialism continue to reverberate in the present and inform all aspects of life, even the most minute forms of social interaction. The films tend to implicitly evoke colonial history by depicting Jamaica as a place where

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social and economic structures appear to preserve patterns of privilege and authority along lines established under colonialism. Jamaica is, therefore, constructed as a site that bears witness to and is marked by the tensions and conflicts that characterise the developing nation and the postcolonial state. For example, in Trevor Rhone's *Smile Orange*,[13] labour relations in the late-twentieth-century hotel are metaphorically linked to the hierarchical social relationships of the colonial plantation, and tourism is depicted as an industry that offers opportunities for the use of the black male body in ways that are also metaphorically linked to the commercial exchanges and structures of slavery.

In addition, the perspective that these films adopt for the exploration of the tension and conflict in Jamaican society is one which identifies with the experiences of the poor and dispossessed, the black majority. Like "Welcome to Jamrock", Jamaican films create a paradigm shift in the representation of place; they tend not to be concerned with the experiences or perspectives of the elite – those locals who occupy positions of power and authority within Jamaican society. Rather, they focus on those who have been neglected or omitted from formal or official discourses of nationalism, and who occupy marginal or peripheral spaces in society. As such, the protagonists of Jamaican films tend to be the residents of ghetto spaces and others who have rejected or are unable to access traditional modes of social mobility: tricksters, 'sufferers', hustlers and those who live on the fringes of society. By privileging the perspective of those located in peripheral spaces, the films implicitly critique established social hierarchies and the institutions and economic structures in Jamaican society that maintain them. The unequal distribution of wealth, the marshalling of the country's resources to benefit a minority, class and colour codes that preserve the privileges of a small elite, the use of force and other repressive measures by the state and those in positions of power to maintain the status quo, are all features of Jamaican society that are critiqued in Jamaican cinema. Not unexpectedly, therefore, the films privilege the subversive strategies of survival and resistance used by the poor: trickery and deception, oppositional cultural practices, and the use of violence as a means of resistance.

Significantly, the language spoken in these films is Jamaican creole. This not only enhances the authenticity of these stories and indicates that the primary audience is local, it also supports the privileging of a certain point of

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view. Kwame Dawes's comment that the use of creole in *The Harder They Come*[14] was almost miraculous, considering that the film emerged at a time when Jamaica's "elites took pride in its strong Englishness (at least in terms of language)",[15] indicates how language use reflects ideological positions. It would seem that writer/director Perry Henzell, who was a member of the elite, and co-writer, Trevor Rhone, whose origins were in rural Jamaica, used creole in the film out of an understanding of the complexities of both the politics of language use in Jamaica and the central role that language plays in constructing culture.[16] This type of awareness is reflected in many of the other Jamaican films where creole is used rather than Standard English. In particular, *Rockers*[17] employs a mixture of Jamaican creole and dread talk that was active in the 1970s when the film was released and which reflects the influence of the Rastafari.

A handful of Jamaican films might be described as "city films", in that they are set mainly in Kingston, and the urban environment is integral to the narrative. Through their focus on urban spaces, these films – *The Harder They Come, Rockers, Dancehall Queen*,[18] *Third World Cop*,[19] *Better Mus' Come*[20] and *Ghett'a Life*[21] – more completely signal the rejection of the stasis of the romantic or exotic Caribbean island setting. In the city films, the charged images of zinc fences, dilapidated housing and close, overcrowded living spaces stand in sharp contrast to Hollywood's seemingly benign panoramas of palm trees, pristine white sand beaches and lush foliage. Kingston is depicted as a city divided by socioeconomic lines into 'Uptown' where the wealthy live, and 'Downtown' where the poor reside. In these films, this modern Third World city continues to resemble Fanon's description of the colonial state: a world divided into compartments defined by access to resources.[22] In the city films Kingston is defined as a zone of ongoing, perpetually negotiated tension in which the protagonist must confront oppressive forces in order to survive. Violence, in one form or another, is a prominent feature of this harsh landscape. In *Dancehall Queen*, violence, including sexual abuse, is a feature of domestic and community life, while it characterises relationships between the nation-state and its citizens in *Third World Cop*. Two more recent films, *Better Mus' Come* and *Ghett'a Life*, comment on the role of violence in the political life of the country, charting new ground by using cinema to explore the intense rivalry between Jamaica's two major political parties and their use of violence as a strategy to either grasp or maintain parliamentary power. Showing how political rivalry divides com-

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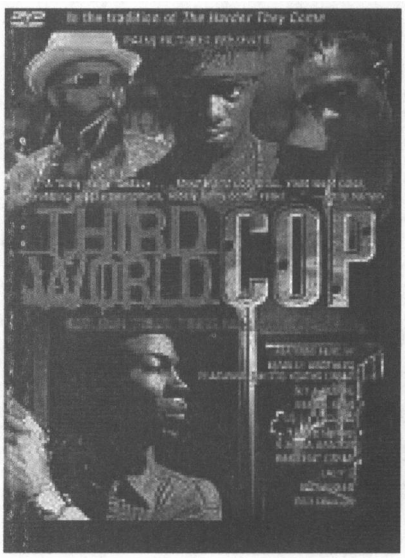

munities, these two films depict Kingston as a literal war zone in which its poorer residents become both the victims and the pawns of the political parties in their ruthless bid for power.

While violence is a concern in these films, life in the city is treated as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Survival for the subjects of these narratives entails far more than simply meeting one's need for safety. It also has to do with the psychological task of carving out a space for oneself in society. Kingston often represents in these films a site of modernity where the disintegration of traditional values and conventions is facilitated by the emergence of a multiplicity of (frequently contesting) discourses. Within this ongoing tension, the modern Jamaican city emerges as a site of ambivalence and duality which seems to promise the fulfilment of dreams and desires, but also threatens the individual with deprivation, failure, anonymity and even death. This scenario is explicit in *The Harder They Come*: Ivan (Jimmy Cliff), the protagonist, makes the archetypal journey from country to town in order to make it as a singer, but when this plan is frustrated he turns to trading in ganja. Eventually gun violence becomes his refuge and the means by which he constructs the final and most notorious expression of self. The idea of a city marked by duality and desire is also important in the action drama *Third World Cop*, and is developed through the protagonist, Capone (Paul Campbell), and the character who is his adversary, Ratty (Mark Danvers). The tension and psychological struggle between Capone, a policeman celebrated for his aggressive, 'hardcore' policing techniques, and Ratty, a gun smuggler and aspiring community don, operate as a didactic element that expresses the old adage: he who lives by the sword dies by the sword. Ratty chooses to pursue power and authority through illegal means and dies a violent death, indicating the illusive nature of the city's promises of power.

Ideas about modernity, tension and ambivalence that inform the construction of the city are supported in these films by the use of Jamaican popular

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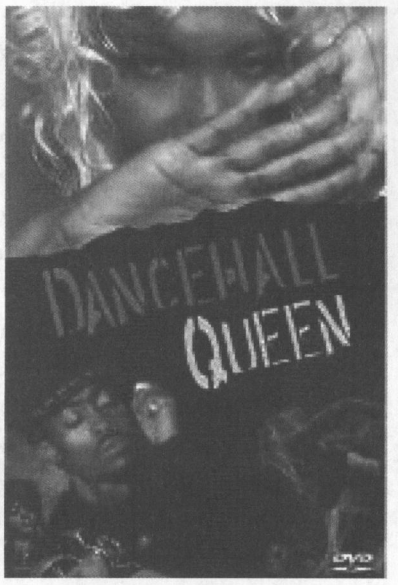

music. Most of the city films are characterised by the extensive use of reggae and/or dancehall soundtracks as well as performances by well known artistes. It is widely known that *The Harder They Come* helped launch the international career of the now veteran reggae singer, Jimmy Cliff, who plays Ivan. In other films, music artistes have minor and/or major roles: dancehall DJ Beenie Man performs and acts in *Dancehall Queen*; his dancehall counterparts Ninja Man, Elephant Man and others have roles in *Third World Cop*; *Rockers* features a cast of reggae singers and musicians who play themselves. The presence in these films of reggae and dancehall artistes points to an important extra-diegetic function of the music: its role in bolstering the commercial viability of the film. In the capital-intensive activity of film production, considerations of market demands and profits are issues of critical importance in the industry. In the Caribbean, where the regional market is small and unable to generate large profits, there is pressure to create films that can cross over into the more lucrative overseas markets. It can certainly be argued that it is good business sense that has driven the use of popular local music in Jamaican cinema. No doubt, Jamaican films' use of reggae and dancehall has played a significant role in their movement through what Dina Iordanova describes as "alternative channels of dissemination"[23] which include "diasporic trails"[24] that link production to consumption across continents. In many instances, therefore, the music artiste's participation in the film is prominent in the film's publicity.

For Jamaican filmmakers, local popular music has functioned as one of the means through which they have negotiated the tension between the pressing commercial requirements of film production, distribution and exhibition, and the possibly competing demands of local audiences for relevance and authenticity. As indigenous popular forms with global reach, both oppositional cultural activity and part of a commoditised exchange, reggae and dancehall have provided Jamaican filmmakers the means through which to communicate in

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a familiar and meaningful way with local audiences about their experiences at home, as well as appeal to audiences abroad, in the diaspora and otherwise. Popular music in Jamaican film might therefore be best described as operating in a multidimensional and multimodal capacity: it plays an important commercial role but it is also structurally, aesthetically and politically significant. As an important formal element of the film text, reggae and dancehall play the expected roles of communicating meaning, creating mood, and expressing the thoughts and feelings of characters. Aesthetically, this music helps define the city films as Jamaican, bringing to these texts a distinctive Jamaican sensibility and quality: a *sound* that creates an immediate connection with the country, and which endows the text with an easily recognised cultural marker that grounds it in a local context. As popular music forms, reggae and dancehall are important oppositional cultural practices and have the potential to intensify the films' counter-hegemonic intentions. Stam and Spence state that the music track can play a crucial role in the establishment of a political point of view and the cultural positioning of the spectator.[25] Both reggae and dancehall have functioned as a mode of expression through which the marginalised articulate their experiences and make their voices heard. Sonjah Stanley Niaah asserts that "dancehall emanated from the poor and continues to receive its creative sustenance from them".[26] Peter Manuel and colleagues propose that it is Jamaican music's counter-hegemonic character that has made it so attractive to communities around the world which have adopted reggae as something deeper than mere entertainment. "Some are moved by its spiritual values, others by its emphasis on pan-African identity or its expression of class consciousness, and yet others by its message of universal liberation," they state.[27] The city films make extensive use of these features of Jamaican popular music, and use reggae and dancehall to orient the spectator towards political positions and perspectives that identify with the plight of the poor and oppressed.

The fusing of the commercial exploitation of popular music with the explicit referencing of its "transformative, counterhegemonic potential"[28] not only occurs in the city films, it is also self-reflexively acknowledged. Indeed, this is one of the signal features of *The Harder They Come* and identifies this film as a defining text in Jamaican fictional cinema, in part because it established an approach to the use of popular music that other Jamaican films have followed. The working-class protagonist of *Dancehall Queen*, Marcia (Audrey

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Reid), gains some measure of economic independence as well as self-esteem and confidence by performing in the dancehall. In *Rockers*, Horsemouth (Leroy Wallace) attempts to launch a record distribution business as an attempt to gain much needed income, but also to strike an ideological blow and undermine the monopoly of large business interests in the music industry. In *Third World Cop*, the staging of music shows and concerts is acknowledged as a means of generating both money and goodwill in the downtown community.

The transformative function of music in the city films operates both broadly and intensely in the project of reclaiming place. In *The Harder They Come*, reggae is irrevocably linked with the construction of the urban landscape and thus with the process of reclaiming Jamaica from the reductive discourses of colonial and mainstream cinema. Set in the post-independence era of the 1970s, the film is grounded in contemporary social issues: the growing concern with the country's failure to deliver the promises of independence and create a more equitable society, as well as urban drift and the resulting problems of poverty, unemployment, and increasing levels of crime in the city. Bev Braune identifies the opening scene's introduction of two defining motifs in the film – quest and collision – that support the representation of Kingston as a town marked by the contradictions of the postcolonial state and by the conflicts and tensions of the passage to modernity.[29] The quest for celebrity and success in the city is introduced on an optimistic note as the song "You Can Get It if You Really Want" introduces Ivan's journey to town on a country bus. Tension builds as the bus moves with increasing speed and recklessness until it almost collides with a large truck travelling in the opposite direction. The near collision of the two vehicles is a metaphor for duality and suggests the clash of opposing forces – a motif which is repeated throughout the narrative in the binaries of country and town, the tension between tradition and modernity, the irony of dream and reality, and the frustration of thwarted desires.

As Ivan's bus approaches the outskirts of the city, the spectator is introduced to a symbolic matrix that draws our attention to the city's seductive dream of wealth. However, as the bus plies its way through the suburbs and into the heart of the town, that is, the area known as downtown Kingston, the environment changes and the spectator is shown the *other* Kingston. Here the city is defined by the crowded streets, the jumble of buildings that seem to compete for space, and the press of anonymous bodies, impersonal and uncaring, as Ivan struggles with his many parcels in the confusion that greets the new

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arrivant. Ivan is confronted by a man whose densely ornamented pushcart reflects an aesthetic that speaks to plurality and polysemy which is in turn underscored by the song "Draw Your Brakes",[30] which plays over the scene. The opening lyrics "Forward and fyaka / Man-akle and den go-saka" are appropriate in their onomatopoeic evocation of chaos, as the noise of the traffic and other street sounds blend with the opening strains of the song to create a sense of the uneasy co-existence of multiple discourses within the city space. Thus Ivan's bus journey to town becomes a metaphor for the movement towards modernity, as the stasis of the countryside is left behind for the change, plurality and contesting perspectives of the modern Third World city.

Music's importance in developing the motif of collision is also seen in the contrast created by the juxtaposition of the insistent emergent music of the modern city – reggae – and the religious music of the church where Ivan seeks refuge from the ravages of city life. The contrast implies the metaphorical collision of two opposing ideologies: the impulse towards resistance evoked by reggae, and the message of acceptance and accommodation espoused by the church. A powerful scene set in the church underscores the function of religion in maintaining the status quo in a social environment marked by inequality. In the scene, the uptempo Pentecostal music encourages the congregation to participate vigorously in the service. Superimposed images (of Ivan and the female lead embracing in the sea) suggest, however, that the congregation's intense response to the music can be understood as a release of sexual tension. The scene directly comments on how religious performance functions to ease repressed desires, but it also infers that the church acts as a kind of safety valve to relieve wider social pressure and dissatisfaction as well as redirect and contain the potentially destructive and transformative energy of the poor.

Also set in the 1970s, *Rockers* too is concerned with the social tensions of the postcolonial city, but emphasises the emergence of new forms of community and cooperation among the urban poor. As the film draws on reggae's message of resistance against various forms of oppression, music is used to evoke a constellation of values that help depict the Kingston ghetto as a site of active political consciousness. Featuring performances of such songs as Gregory Isaacs's "Slave Driver", Burning Spear's "Jah No Dead", Kiddus I's "Graduation in Zion" and others, the film effectively constructs a chant against Babylon. The film also foregrounds the role of the Rastafari in the

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production and performance of reggae, thus further emphasising reggae's rootedness in a tradition of resistance and protest. In its assertion of the influence of Rastafari, both in the ghetto and in the development of reggae, the narrative imbues the urban community with the spiritual and cultural values of Rastafari and at the same time preserves and documents the origins of the music. Avoiding sensational representations of the more disturbing aspects of ghetto life, *Rockers* constructs the Kingston inner city as a site of cooperation where, despite the evident poverty, male relationships are defined by loyalty, nurturing and supportive structures, rather than violence and self-destructive behaviour.

This intention to secure the relationship between the Rastafari, the production of reggae and the reclaiming of the ghetto as a space defined by unity and cooperation, is made clear from the opening sequence. The film begins with a performance of the song "Satta Massagana"[31] by a group of Rastafari musicians in a tightly framed shot of what appears to be a rural location. The performance is deeply spiritual: the song with its referencing of Amharic, its wistful tone and proclaimed longing for "a land far, far away" as well as the use of drums evoke the historical, emotional, spiritual and cultural connection with Africa, and in particular, the Rastafari's desire for repatriation to the Ethiopian homeland. An elder Rastafari with long matted locks (a sign of deep religious faith) moves out of the group towards the camera and speaks directly to the spectator, proclaiming in 'dread talk' a message of peace, love and unity. The scene that follows this introduction places the protagonist, Horsemouth, in the yard of a ghetto community, but "Satta Massagana" continues to play over the change in location with a subtle alteration in instrumentation from drums to brass. Eventually, the camera reveals that what at first seemed to be extra-diegetic music is actually being performed by a group of musicians practising for a gig in a corner of the large yard. The song, therefore, links the spiritual and cultural values of the Rastafari with the ghetto and the urban musicians, even as music is acknowledged as an important component of the economic life of the ghetto. Throughout the playing of the song, the handheld camera follows Horsemouth – in one unbroken shot – as he moves through the urban yard, greeting residents and soliciting donations for a business venture, until he arrives at the circle of musicians, which he joins. Thus this scene, which introduces the spectator to the urban space, emphasises the cohesion of the community and Horsemouth's secure and harmonious posi-

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tioning within it.

Dancehall Queen marks the transition from reggae to dancehall music in Jamaican film. Unlike *Rockers*, where the production of music is suggested as an integral part of the fabric of everyday life in the ghetto, in *Dancehall Queen* the dancehall is constructed as a discrete space within the downtown community, and one which is not necessarily frequented by all its residents. Indeed the plot develops around the protagonist's (initially secret) entry into the dancehall, and her adoption of the aesthetic practices of the dancehall as a disguise. More than likely, this element of secrecy – the sense of dancehall as an underground culture – has to do with the fact that when *Dancehall Queen* was released in 1997, dancehall music and culture did not yet have a conspicuous presence in mainstream media.

Dancehall Queen strikes right at the heart of some of the more heated and controversial debates on dancehall in Jamaica, in particular, the concern with the public expression of female eroticism, and the validation of the dancehall as a transgressive cultural space that promotes pride and self-esteem for members of the lower classes, even as it is denounced as crass and vulgar by members of the middle class and elite. The film charts the growing confidence of Marcia, an informally employed mother of two, as she participates in the erotic performance of the dancehall and gains greater awareness of what Bakare Yusuf refers to as her carnal power over men.[32] In the film, the "shocking-out", x-rated dancehall fashion is more than mere adornment; it is a means of challenging dominant concepts of femininity and female decorum, and an assertion of the female's right to openly express her sexuality. Thus, the film constructs the explicitly erotic dress and dance of the dancehall as subversive aesthetic practices. Carolyn Cooper explains that such forms of "slackness" can be understood as an expression of radical politics: "a contestation of conventional definitions of law and order; an undermining of consensual standards of decency" that "challenges the rigid status quo of social exclusivity and one-sided moral authority valorised by the Jamaican elite".[33] *Dancehall Queen's* images of women dressed in the spectacular fashion of the dancehall, engaged in the performance of erotic dance, signal the use of the body to transform the urban space and the emergence of a new kind of urban aesthetic which defines the Jamaican city in ways that mark a radical departure from formal and conventional sensibilities. Norman Stolzoff sees this phenomenon as the means through which ghetto residents "assert control over the public

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space they occupy" as dancehall fashion spills out onto the streets and declares an oppositional position in Jamaica's race-class hierarchy.[34]

The dancehall is also framed as a counter-hegemonic force through the film's positioning of its creativity and artistry in opposition to oppressive patriarchal authority. This is emphasised in the climactic dancehall queen contest sequence where crosscutting occurs between Marcia's performance and a deadly battle offstage, which she has instigated between her two male adversaries, Larry and Priest. The juxtaposing of these two contests, one a public, pleasurable, creative performance, the other a violent and fatal confrontation conducted in secret, acts as a critique of patriarchal violence. Throughout the film, men use violence and threat to solve their problems so that Marcia and her family are subject to intimidation: from the police, from the neighbourhood badman, and from "Uncle Larry", a family friend who sexually exploits Marcia's teenage daughter. The family's experience in this regard, particularly that of Junior (Marcia's brother) who succumbs to the strain and suffers a breakdown, is representative of the kind of psychological assault and stress that residents of Jamaica's inner city regularly endure. Violence here does not have the potential to liberate, rather it is the tool through which oppressive patriarchal authority is supported and maintained. Thus, this female-centred film celebrates the protagonist's use of cunning and trickery, rather than direct confrontation, to subvert patriarchal dominance. It also constructs the dancehall as a site of creativity and joyful performance that facilitates the ghetto resident's negotiation of the challenges of ghetto life.

Violence is also a central concern in the action drama *Third World Cop*. In this film, the tendency to construct violence as spectacle, and its ambivalent use to validate certain expressions of masculinity, make this film's representation of the Jamaican city problematic. This narrative draws heavily on Hollywood genres, such as cop movies, in which violence is approved as a means of controlling criminal and undesirable elements. With a plot that develops around the policing of crime in the ghetto, Jamaica is defined in *Third World Cop* by the perceived pathology of its inner city. Like the American 'hood' films, *Third World Cop* depicts the black ghetto male as a threatened species whose opportunities for development and social advancement are severely limited. One of the more interesting aspects of the narrative, as indicated earlier, is the development of the character Ratty. Ratty responds to the adversity and limited opportunities of ghetto life by turning to crime as a livelihood,

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and also as a means of realising his ambitions for leadership in his downtown community. His criticism of practices of discrimination against those who live at undesirable addresses strikes at deep class biases in Jamaican society. The film, however, counteracts identification with Ratty's predicament as a ghetto youth with few opportunities, with the assertion of his willingness to resort to crime and violence, and his refusal to depart from inimical moral codes.

Like *Dancehall Queen*, *Third World Cop* constructs the dancehall as one of the few sites of creativity and lawful economic opportunity in the ghetto. Although the dancehall has less of a presence in *Third World Cop*, it is constructed as an alternative to Ratty's illegal activities, as well as a space where he can realise ambitions for community leadership. The film also suggests that the dancehall can become a vehicle for unity and peace, and constitutes a cultural space where dominant ideologies are contested. The dances that Ratty organises contribute to the defusing of rivalries between opposing gangs and help promote peaceful social interaction between warring communities. Loretta Collins states that in the film the "dancehall serves as the central site of the community – the liminal site where contending sectors of the community meet".[35] She points out as well that "the most trenchant critique of badmanism" in the film "is offered by a sardonic woman's voice in Lady G's song 'Man A Bad Man'".[36] This critique occurs in the film's only dancehall scene when the don's entrance coincides with Lady G singing:

> Bad man fi who?
> Bout yu bad when yu don't have a clue
> Yu musta sick inna yu head
> Bout yu bad but yu no bad inna bed.[37]

Editing and cinematography construct these lyrics as a scathing commentary on the don's authority (and by extension that of other badmen), by ironically remarking on the potential discrepancy between the badman's public pose and private reality. This subversion of the authority of the don or badman takes on larger significance in the context of the film's interrogation of cultural definitions of masculinity that are based on the performance of hypersexuality and violence. This intention to subvert certain expressions of masculinity and dominance creates a fragile counter-discourse to the film's referencing of Hollywood films.

Like "Welcome to Jamrock", the city films attempt to expose *other* Jamaicas.

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The versions of Jamaica sustained in these texts differ dramatically from the static images that have traditionally circulated in mainstream cinema and which define Jamaica as playground and site of leisure for the traveller, or conversely, a site of danger and threat. These films' versions of Jamaica also differ substantially from certain formal or official representations of the country that are generated locally. They may be understood, therefore, as attempts within the ongoing struggle of naming place to privilege the perspectives of the lower-class residents who inhabit the country's urban spaces. In doing so, the city films attempt to engage, as Cham suggests, "the full range of Caribbean experiences".[38] Reggae and dancehall music, forms of cultural expression that have functioned to give voice to the urban poor and which operate within Jamaica as counter-hegemonic forces, are significant elements in these films' attempts to construct place so that it reflects the history and experiences of the black majority. Thus, the postcolonial project of reclaiming place continues as an ongoing process and perpetual struggle that occurs as different perspectives vie for expression and dominance, although the struggle over naming now ensues, perhaps more intensely, among and between the postcolonial citizens, rather than between coloniser and colonised. ■

Notes

1. Damian "Junior Gong" Marley, "Welcome to Jamrock", Compact Disc, Tuff Gong/Universal, 9885698, 2005. "Welcome to Jamrock" earned Marley the 2005 Grammy Award for Best Urban/Alternative Performance. The album of the same name won the 2005 Grammy for Best Reggae Album.
2. Ian Boyne, "'Welcome to Jamrock' – A Phenomenon", *Gleaner*, 2 October 2005, http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20051002/focus/focus1.html (accessed 1 October 2013).
3. Space does not permit the necessarily complex discussion of what constitutes a Jamaican film. I have defined as Jamaican, films which are locally produced, shot on location in Jamaica, and have significant Jamaican creative input. There is one exception: although *Rockers* was not locally produced, was directed by a non-Jamaican and shot by a foreign crew, I consider it Jamaican. The dynamic input and participation of the film's all-Jamaican cast present a strong argument for its inclusion in the category.
4. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989; London: Routledge, 1994), 8–9.

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5. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., "Place: Introduction", in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1995; London: Routledge, 2001), 391.
6. Ibid.
7. Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism and Representation: An Introduction", in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 238.
8. Mbye Cham, "Introduction: Shape and Shaping of Caribbean Cinema", in *Ex-Iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema,* ed. Mbye Cham (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992), 2.
9. Bruce Paddington, "Caribbean Cinema: Historical Formation, Issues of Identity and Film Practices", *Sargasso* 2 (2003–2004): 107.
10. *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl,* dir. Gore Verbinski (Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Pictures, 2003), film.
11. Stam and Spence, "Colonialism", 240–41.
12. Some qualification of the statement is necessary. *Better Mus' Come* can be described as a historical film, but is concerned with more recent traumatic events, that is, developments in the 1970s when gun violence became a widespread feature of politics in Jamaica.
13. *Smile Orange*, dir. Trevor Rhone (Kingston: Knuts, 1978), film.
14. *The Harder They Come,* dir. Perry Henzell (1972; Santa Monica, CA: Xenon Pictures and International Films, 2006), DVD.
15. Kwame Dawes, *Natural Mysticism: Towards a New Reggae Aesthetics* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 1999), 28.
16. In "*The Harder They Come*: Rougher Version", *Small Axe* 13 (2003), Loretta Collins argues that Rhone may be largely responsible for the film's intensive use of the Jamaican urban vernacular.
17. *Rockers,* dir. Ted Bafaloukos (1978; Blue Sun Film Company, MVD Music Video Distributors, 1979), DVD.
18. *Dancehall Queen*, dir. Rick Elgood and Don Letts (1997; Palm Pictures and Hawk's Nest Productions, 2000), DVD.
19. *Third World Cop,* dir. Chris Browne (1999; Palm Pictures, 2000), DVD.
20. *Better Mus' Come*, dir. Storm Saulter (Kingston: Firefly Films, 2010), film.
21. *Ghett'a Life,* dir. Chris Browne (Kingston: Jamrock Films, 2011), film. At the time of writing, neither *Better Mus' Come* nor *Ghett'a Life* were available on DVD. Rather than run the risk of faulty recollection from a limited number of viewings during their respective theatrical runs, I have made limited reference to these films.
22. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965; London: Penguin, 2001), 29.
23. Dina Iordanova, "Rise of the Fringe: Global Cinema's Long Tail", in *Cinema at the Periphery,* ed. Dina Iordanova et al. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 24.

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24. Ibid., 32.
25. Stam and Spence, "Colonialism", 247.
26. Sonjah Stanley Niaah, *Dancehall: From Slave Ship to Ghetto* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), 1.
27. Peter Manuel, with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey, *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2006), 177.
28. Norman Stolzoff, *Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 227.
29. Bev Braune, "'You Can Get It if You Really Want': Viewing *The Harder They Come* after a 1977 Interview with Director Perry Henzell", *Wasafiri* 26 (Autumn 1977): 31–36, esp. 33.
30. Scotty, "Draw Your Brakes", *The Harder They Come*, DVD.
31. The Abyssinians with Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus, "Satta Massagana", *Rockers,* DVD.
32. Bibi Bakare Yusuf, "Fanon Can't Dance: Antiphonies of the Gaze in *Dancehall Queen*" (paper presented as part of the Reggae Studies Unit Film Seminar Series, University of the West Indies, Mona, 3 March 1999).
33. Carolyn Cooper, *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3–4.
34. Stolzoff, *Wake the Town*, 2.
35. Loretta Collins, "'The Watchman of the City': Societal Vigilance, Gun Violence, and the Vigilante in Dancehall-based Black British Popular Fiction and Jamaican Film", in *Caribbean Literature in a Global Context*, ed. Funso Aiyejina et al. (San Juan, Trinidad and Tobago: Lexicon Trinidad, 2006), 239.
36. Ibid., 237.
37. Lady G, "Man a Bad Man", *Third World Cop*, DVD.
38. Cham, "Introduction", 6.

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