DREAD RITES

An Account of Rastafarian Music and Ritual Process In Popular Culture

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ABSTRACT

The Rastafarian movement is a 1930's born Jamaican blend of African and Christian motifs. **Dread Rites** is about the evolution of the Rastafarian ritual, from its West African derived drum rituals to the international popularity of reggae music. My focus is not on the Rastafarian message, but on the ancient traditions of Africa and Christianity, and the modern rituals of popular culture, that the Rastafarian movement draws from in order to deliver and sustain its message. My research is based on a combination of historical review, a survey of contemporary journalistic accounts, and extensive fieldwork interviews with Rastafarian musicians. In addition, I analyze the "gap" in Western societies that Rastafarian ritual and similar types of revitalization movements are responding to. The thesis concludes with an analysis of how, because of this gap, Western cultures have relied on "other" cultures (Native, Third World, Subcultures) to fulfill, at least partially, their own needs for ritual.

RESUME

Le mouvement rastafarian est ne en 1930, du melange Jamaican de motifs Africains et Chretiens. L'evolution du rituel rastafarian est le sujet de **DREAD RITES**. Ce rituel provient des rituels de percussions d'Afrique de l'ouest jusque'a la popularite internationale de la musique reggae. Le centre de mon interet n'est pas le message rastafarian, mais les anciennes traditions d'Afrique et du Christianisme, ainsi que les rituels modernes de la culture populaire que le mouvement rastafrian absorbe pour delivrer et soutenir son message. Ma recherche est basee sur un combinaison d'analyse historique, une etude de rapports journalistiques contemporains, et de nombreuses entrevues avec des musiciens rastafarians. En outre, j'analyse "l'espace" dans les societes occidentales ou reagissent le rituel rastafarian et les mouvements similaire de revitalization. Cette these essaie de voir pourquoi les cultures occidentales sont dependantes d'autres cultures (Autochtones, Tiers-Monde, sous-cultures) pour satisfaire, au moins partiellement, leurs propres besoins dans le domaine du rituel.

"Do you know what society is? Don't complicate it, don't quote a lot of books; think very simply about it and you will see that society is the relationship between you and me and others Human relationship makes society, and our present society is built upon a relationship of acquisitiveness, is it not? Most of us want money, power, property, authority; at one level or another we want position, prestige, and so we have built an acquisitive society As long as we are acquisitive, as long as we want position, prestige, power and all the rest of it, we belong to this society and are therefore dependent on it. But if one does not want any of these things and remain simply what one is with great humility, then one is out of it, one revolts against it and breaks with this society.

Unfortunately, education at present is aimed at making you conform, fit into and adjust yourself to this acquisitive society..."

J. Krishnamurti, **Think On These Things**, 1964: 31

"...the only recognized attribute of divinity is to have light feet..." Valadier in Allison, 1977: 249

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Rastafari is a Jamaican 1930's born Afro-Christian blend of politics, religion, and ritual that emphasizes the African input into Biblical history. Rastafari remained a marginal movement until the mid-Sixties when Rastafarian inspired musicians helped to spread its influence. By the mid-Seventies, with the emergence of reggae, a brand new popular music genre, Rastafari had become a global phenomena.

At the heart of the Rastafari lies a mystical belief in the Oneness of the human soul and the Spirit of the Creator, a belief enacted by a blend of converted Christian hymns and a resurfacing set of African drum rites. While Rastafari's entry into popular culture would threaten its own integrity, the commercial production of Rastafarian music could be totally artificial and/or quite genuine. It is precisely this paradox, this **unresolvable ambivalence**, that sustains the power of popular culture. As for the sustenance of Rastafarian beliefs, this remains a question of the spiritual cleansing of the heart, an evolution, by definition, not accessible by the academic method.

The curiosity that motivates this thesis is how I, in particular, could come to know the spirit of Rastafari while living in North America. Or, in general, how has Rastafari come to be the force that it is. Behind that curiosity lay an interest in the ritual celebrations Rastafari has historically utilized and expanded upon in order to sustain its development. Some of the answers I arrived at were supplied by listening extensively to reggae music and through conversations I had with Rastafarians and Rastafarian musicians living in Canada - Leroy Sibbles, Truths'n'Rites, 20th Century Rebels, Selah, I-Shaka and Young

Uprising Creation, and in the United States - Donald Kinsey, The Killer Bees, The Kushite Raiders, Ras Tesfa, Tony Brown. Other answers were arrived at in a journey back through European history, a journey in which I try to discern through my own healing process when and how the Caucasian peoples of the West lost their community centered healing rituals and practices.

Before I explain in more detail how I will address the Rastafarian movement, I must first describe the three voices (which I have termed the trinity of body, mind, and spirit) that will be employed to portray this multi-faceted journey. The voice of the mind, that which we are the most familiar with, translates in a thesis as a set of theoretical hypotheses supported by historical data. My mentor in this voice is the late Michel Foucault, who, in his deliberately cryptic use of theory and metaphorical language, unveiled Western academia as a continually changing set of paradigms that must make up its own rules and sanctioned forms of censorship as it goes along. Indeed, Foucault had to create his own institution, **The History of the Systems of Western Thought,** to get his point across.

A central point behind Foucault's nonuniform writing style was to indicate the many rich ways, past and present, of perceiving and understanding the world that historical accounts (social science, history, humanities) continue to deny validity. As Foucault demonstrated, one way to communicate these subjugated knowledges is through **their** use of language, not simply the language of the scholar's paradigm. Foucault developed his ever evolving notion of discourse to address this breach, a notion I will implement to account for the

Rastafarian development and transformation of African based oral and magical traditions within literary and scientifically based cultures.

The second voice is that which I've labeled the language of the body. This voice relates to how the body registers and reacts to the world, i.e., movement, street talk, in a way that ensures forms of communication with others. Again, in regards to the context of this thesis, this voice translates as popular forms of jargon that I either have already used or felt compelled to learn in this journey. This project has opened many doors for me. I have become a student and performer of global percussion, including Cuban, Haitian, Rastafarian, Brazilian, West African and Middle Eastern rhythms. I have also been a working entertainment journalist for three years, as well as a D.J. for two radio shows (**Reggae, Soul, and Afro-Pop** - KOTO, Telluride, CO, **African Roots**, KGNU, Boulder,CO.). I currently write weekly copy for a fairly conservative daily (The Santa Fe New Mexican), in fact, the oldest newspaper in the United States. At no time, in any of these jobs, has my use of language been censored or considered inappropriate.

The reason for this is two-fold. The jargons I have adopted relate straight to the people in a way that cloaks their more subversive and charged meanings. Just as jazz and blues musicians made up words to portray the realities their music created and referred to, modern musical sub-cultures (i.e., punk, New Wave, Two-tone) are continually coining new languages to capture their semi-private domains of meaning. Secondly, power structures in the West will allow a certain degree of subversiveness as long as these voices don't threaten to infiltrate positions of higher authority (i.e., military-industrial institutions). This way of "defeating" or, at least, "neutralizing" the "enemy" is

achieved by absorbing them. Again, it is this contradictory but purposeful ambivalence of popular culture that will run as a main current throughout this thesis. Rastafari is, at once, a vitally authentic counter-cultural stream of political/spiritual consciousness and a complete commercial sellout.

The third voice, that of the spirit, the path of the heart, must be addressed within the contexts of the lessons I have learned from fieldwork. Since beginning this project, I have spent hundreds of hours conversing with Rastafarians from all parts of the globe and stations in life. At first, I was filled with the social scientific obsession to document all my conversations. I have stacks of transcribed recorded conversations and many more not transcribed. However, it became increasingly clear that I was wasting my time. Informant after informant told me the same thing, in essence, arriving at the same heart. **Rastafari is about the journey within**, an uncovering and healing of wounds achieved through a realigned understanding of spiritual and historical realities. The more I clung to nailing down an external theoretical framework explaining the global diffusion of Rastafari, the less likely I would be in truly understanding the internal sway and power of this movement.

Anthropology, as I have come to employ it, is about entering and relaying the reality of another. To achieve this with Rastafari, which is a syncretic blend (Christian, African, East Indian) of mystical powers, visions, and techniques, would require that I take on the robes of an initiate. So far I have been discussing the voices that will be used in this thesis while barely touching upon the substantial beliefs and growth of the Rastafarian movement. However, considering the path,

the robes, I have chosen, this is the only way I can proceed. It is not my intention to pit the voices against themselves, but, to the contrary: **I am seeking the healthy integration of body, mind, and spirit**. Each voice will serve to illuminate the others. By themselves, each voice has their limitations. The intellectual, as I had mentioned, has a way of censoring, if not totally denying, the other two voices. Popular forms of jargon can spill over into empty and monotonous forms of defiance. The voice of the heart, without context, can end up sounding like New Age psycho-babble. But, when these voices are honored side-by-side, just as with the balanced integration of body, mind, and spirit, I hope to arrive at and open up for the reader the healing journey that Rastafari is, foremost, about.

The mentor, or I should say, guiding spirit for this third voice is anthropologist turned initiate (and now adept) Carlos Casteneda. Casteneda's work was quickly booted out of "legitimate" anthropological circles for employing "unacceptible" field techniques and writing style, or as imaginative fantasy, or worse, the scribblings of a deluded desert drug offender. Casteneda, however, now having published his seventh book, has tapped into an entire underworld network of Mesoamerican spirits that one day may be recognized as one of the greatest anthropological "oeuvres" ever achieved. Over ten years ago I had my own vision which translated into a 162 page undergraduate honors thesis in Religion entitled **Negotiations For A Heaven On Earth**. The vision addresses the recurrent global emergence of revitalization movements and the common denominators underlying their ritual process: dance-trance, breath control, mantra, visualization, emotional release, and guided group consciousness. The thesis was about the Ghost Dance and Peyote

Religion of the North American Native peoples and their structural similarities to the political/spiritual movements of the Sixties and Seventies broadly categorized as New Age. I am now planning an experiential rewrite of this text that will utilize excerpts from **Dread Rites**.

Seven years after this vision I was coincidentally hired to work on a Native American Youth Project with an apprenticing Navaho medicine man. Spirit Eagle is a practicing member of the Native American Church, the institutional descendent of the Peyote Religion. The day the project was to start, Spirit Eagle's father, a powerfully renown medicine man, died, a telling beginning to our own relationship. Within two years Spirit Eagle brought his apprenticeship to an end, and began conducting medicine circles both on and off the reservation. When I showed Spirit Eagle my undergraduate thesis he was impressed by my passion for the subject, but was extremely humored that I actually thought I knew something about the Peyote Spirit.

The academic method, at least now in the West, is about comparison and contrasting, and seems to necessarily invoke judgement. Spirit is about the opposite, about the wholeness beneath and surpassing the world's multitude of differences and judgements. The mind, while a great servant, makes for a terrible Master. Only in addressing the discomforts and sicknesses of the body, and focusing upon the accumulated hurts of the heart, does this fuller portrait of reality, of Spirit, become known. We, in the West, through our medicines that cure symptoms but cover up the causes, and our cerebral preoccupations that numb us from our psychic pains, have lost touch with spirit. This third voice, though rarely invoked in the text, is always there ready to

remind us of the journey back home. Now, with these three voices in place, this introduction will turn back to the heart of Rastafari.

The central message of Rastafari, a revitalization movement that began in the Kingston ghettos of Jamaica in the 1930's, is this: "suffering is seen first as a means of learning, a regenerative process... We have weighed the kingdoms of Europe. We have weighed the black lackeys of this country (Jamaica). We have weighed all in the balance of justice. They have been found wanting." (Sam Brown, in Owens, 1976: 218). In 1930, the man Ras Tafari, the 111th direct descendant of Makeda and King Solomon, the last rulers of the Israelites, was crowned Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords. Selassie was emperor of Ethiopia until his removal in 1974 by revolutionary armed forces. He was also considered the messiah returned - although **in abstentia** - by this newly founded Jamaican religion. Rastafari, then, is the latest chapter in the story of Black Christianity, which historically has been passed down by the Amharic peoples. In short, Rastafari is a revitalization of Christianity, the currently most popular version of a process that has overwhelmingly characterized peoples subject to European contact and acculturation.

A Rastafarian, an Israelite, an Ethiopian, are synonymous identities, a cosmological union referring to a Biblical lost tribe now found again fleeing Babylon and wandering in the holy desert; a unity made readily apparent in the revelations of a handful - Leonard Howell, Joseph Hibbert, Archibald Dunkely, and Robert Hinds - living in Kingston, Jamaica. Rastas envision themselves as the reincarnated lost tribe of Israelites searching for a path out of Babylon. The Ethiopia Rastafari refers to is, in a mythological sphere, the Biblical land of

Abyssinia, the home of Makeda, the Queen of Sheba. The ingenuity of Rasta is in connecting this mythical mindscape - that much of the world's peoples in their own versions are still affected or infected by - with the web of history.

Historical events play out the myth. This is their nature. I am not referring to myth in its pejorative mode, that is, as a false story or fable. I am referring, rather, to myth as derived from a cultural heritage indicating ways of conceptualizing and participating in the world. Mussolini invades but cannot conquer Selassie's Ethiopia. Babylon, the greed of the Western world, as embodied in the efforts of the Europeans (once ancient tribes themselves) to corral and Christianize its slaves, is again responsible for this evil intrusion. Rastafari is European Christianity **backfiring** (a term denoting a loud bang when an engine suddenly loses power), an overturning and re-investing of Biblical metaphors inspired by the prophecy of Marcus Garvey. Garvey was a Jamaican Black nationalist exiled to Harlem in 1919, and forerunner to the awakening of America's Black consciousness movements. While neither Haile Selassie, nor Garvey, were directly involved with the genesis of the Rastafarian movement, the crowning of Ras Tafari and the philosophy of Marcus Garvey would lend this movement its central motifs.

"Oh God, help the Black man and rescue him from the outrage. We have gradually won our way back into the confidence of the God of Africa and He shall shake the pillars of a corrupt and unjust world and once more restore Africa to her ancient glory... No one knows when the hour of Africa's redemption cometh. It is in the wind. It is coming. One day, like a storm, it will be here... the thing to do is get organized, keep

separated and you will be exploited, you will be robbed, you will be killed. Get organized and you will compel the world to respect you." (Garvey in Cronin, 1955: 93). Rastafari is now achieving, largely through the power and message of the music, what Garvey had planted the seeds for: an international appeal and response.

Rastas continued a marginal and socially repressed existence in Jamaica until the 1950's. The movement's drum rituals, hymns, and chants were learned from burru musicians living in the Kingston area. These were Maroon peoples, originally escaped slave communities, whose communal style of living served as a kind of organizational blueprint for the Rastafarians. The Rastafarian movement fits within the broader context of Caribbean and North American Black cultural experience, a complex syncretism achieved by the transforming of West African oral-musical ritual traditions within the particular beliefs, practices, and restrictions of the kind of life afforded and imposed by New World environs. Hence, rather than a spontaneous combustion unique to Kingston, Jamaica in the 1930's, Rastafari is the continuation of an Afro-Christian expression that has equally characterized the spirituals, the blues, and the history of the Black churches and communities on the American mainland.

As exemplified in the music of Count Ossie and the Mystic Revelation of Rastafari Band, the rhythms and spirit of burru music were combined with a mento/calypso foundation. (Mento is a Jamaican folk form that sounds similar to the calypso of Trinidad and other islands but has its own history.) At the same time, in the late Fifties and early Sixties, Jamaican musicians resisted the transition of American rhythm'n'blues into rock'n'roll, the latter an undigestible sound to the

Caribbean ear. Instead, they turned the beat inside out, taking the primary emphasis off the **on** beat, and playing up the percussive conversation between the bass, drums, and rhythm guitar. Added to this were the sweet soul sounds of New Orleans, as performed by Gospel trios, and then later, the motown sound of more northern urban ghettos. Ska was born.

Meanwhile, musicians who were part of the West Indian migration to Canada, the States, but primarily England, instilled an inter-island and international ska convention. In the mid-Sixties, ska then slowed to a style of music known as rock steady, a **slowing** spurred on by the heat of the Jamaican climate and the need to keep **cool**. In other words, with the heat of the Caribbean summer, the musicians and dancers could not keep up the fast pace of the ska beat. Finally, rock steady intensified into reggae, which the **almightiness** of the late Bob Marley literally broadcast around the world. Marley has since been considered by most Rastas as the third true prophet of their movement.

The unique achievement of reggae is in synthesizing the diverse but complementary sounds of North American and Caribbean popular music, sounds that have been derived from New World Black experience and musicianship. The actual word **reggae** is believed to be derived from a Toots and the Maytals hit (1967) **Do the Reggay**. As Toots Hibbert explained, "Reggae mean comin' from d'people. You know, ever'day thing, like from d'ghetto. **Majority** beat. Regular beat the people use like food down there... We put music to it, make a dance out of it. I would say that reggae mean comin' from d'roots, ghetto music. Means poverty, suffering, and in the end, maybe union with God if you do it right" (Hibbert in Clarke, 1980: 31).

Whereas the roots and development of reggae included much more than the ritual practices and music of Rastafari, it was the early groups such as Marley and the Wailers, Burning Spear, Toots and the Maytals, who turned to the themes, discipline and song of Rasta, and thus gave reggae its central drive. In short, the Rastafarian practices continue to have an independent, and I should add, flourishing development, i.e., the ceremony known as Grounation initiated in 1958 (refer to pgs. 38, 62) and conducted annually. However, the commercial production of reggae music has, at least partially, superceded and assimilated the function of these ritual practices.

The disenchanted White and Black youth of Britain in the late Sixties and throughout the Seventies were the supporters of this production, the Western hemisphere's latest borrowing and co-opting of Black music in order to create a popularly acclaimed sound. The production is stylized, pushed, polished and packaged and then sent across the ocean (to North America and back to Jamaica) to complete the consumption scenario, the final phase of assimilation the music undergoes so as to assure a broad base of support and contact. The Rastafarian musician whose more strident political views and anti-social beliefs (i.e., smoking ganja) were censored by the Jamaican recording industry, would have remained a curiosity confined to Jamaican shores. But, as international concept, through the music, Rasta would sell; a process promoted by the interests and consumers of Western popular culture; a process that dramatically helped to reconstitute the margins of Jamaican society. Rastafari traveled from outlaw status and subversive, clandestine rituals to international heroism and a necessary ingredient for Jamaica's political platform.

Reggae has since become popular around the world, i.e., Mexico, Central and South America, the Middle East, and Japan. Reggae's attractiveness stems both from its musical appeal and the symbolizing of the strife of many Third World peoples. Indeed, the biggest external market for currently produced Jamaican reggae is not North America, nor England, but West Africa. Rasta, symbolically, and now literally, has returned to the mother continent. Rastafari may also be found throughout the English-speaking Caribbean as well as most urban pockets of North America. Rastafarian concept and music has planted roots wherever there is the need to redefine, reclaim, and assert an African cultural identity.

The question I am posing is how can a religion that advocates a defiance of Babylon, that is, of the West's political economy and major ideologies, become a commercial and popular event? How does that event diverge from Rasta's traditional forms and usages, which were, in part, clearly derived from West Africa? What does the musician think about that divergence? The ground I propose to cover, the evolution of Rastafarian music, has already been well-traveled, particularly in a variety of popular books and journalistic forms. My aim is to place that evolution within the broader anthropological concept of ritual process, and point out how that process relates to and/or attempts to negate the social milieu it is embedded in. Not **what** Rasta means, but **how** Rasta means, **how Rasta gets high under Babylon's nose.**

As a vehicle for cultural expressions and a way of life, the religion of Rasta has taken many avenues. As a message, it has one root - **a retelling of African history.** My aim is not to confirm, question, or comprehensively demonstrate this retelling. It is, rather,

to unveil the links that connect this retelling to the kind of expressions it has taken, links that are now rooted in, and/or uprooted by, an international media system, as much as they were previously set in the **dread rites** of a **Jamaican cult of outcasts**. Where and when this threshold is crossed, how it is that Rastafari travels with waves of migration and becomes electronically transmitted, forms the central inquiry of this thesis. I will propose, however, no definitive or conclusive answers to these questions, nor will I presume any insight on what is **authentic** Rasta and what is not. Instead, I hope to uncover the conditions of Rastafari's possibilities, i.e., the way a 6 year old Canadian born Jamaican living on the 19th floor of a high-rise on the outskirts of Toronto, a Trinidadian born Rasta raised since his teens in Montreal, a St. Vincent poet now living in Hamilton - Canada's steel city, or one of America's best reggae bands formed in Austin, Texas, could all become touched by and perform for the movement and light of Jah, Rastafari.

The most notable gap between Rasta and the West is that our God or Gods have vanished, or as Nietzsche inaugurated the 20th Century - **We have killed them** (Nietzsche in Kauffman, 1954: 31) . The sensuous, meditative, or once divine elements of our culture no longer serve towards unifying the binary predicament of body and mind, of nature and culture. Instead, they promote what Max Weber referred to as "sentimental illusions and idolatrous superstitions" (Weber, 1958: 151) Or, in my own words, the disenfranchised residue of the West's religious and mythological underpinnings may now be found surfacing as the commercial bottomline of popular culture. Our pop stars, pick your favorites, Bob Marley, John Lennon, Michael Jackson, Bob Dylan, David

Bowie, Joni Mitchell, Bruce Springsteen, are our new gods, or better yet, our shamans, We feed off of them. They are there to lift us out of our boredom and discontent. Some say to distract or debase our basic character, others say to entertain or enlighten. For certain, they are there to **transform** us.

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My research travels far from the traditional path of anthropology. Record albums and sleeves, weekend gigs, afternoon jams and reasoning sessions, popular journalistic works charting the rise and magnetic spread of reggae music are the central source for my **data**. The changing nature of **fieldwork experience** - a globe of native populations on the move - has pushed and expanded anthropology beyond its days of observing rituals in the bush. Where these rituals have broken down or simply ceased to exist, I will claim they have been replaced, at least partially, by what Victor Turner nebulously termed **ritual process** (Turner, 1974). While, indeed, this process may exist only as a result of this analytical exercise, or my own imagination, it is a conceptual tool I will utilize in the quest to understand and portray the international flourishing of Rastafari.

Flipping through the reggae stacks of a Montreal, Boston, Washington, D.C., New York, Vancouver, Austin, London, Paris, Lagos, Tokyo, Kingston, Montego Bay, Berlin, Mexico City, etc., record shop, one can return as close to Rastafarian sound/root meaning, as much as one has the desire and purity of heart to arrive there. Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, reggae's two most reknown drummer and bass studio combo, have been called on to back up, to provide the driving force for Grace Jones (a fusion of New Wave and African rhythm), Diana Ross (along

with Aretha Franklin, the top female motown singer), Joe Cocker (Britain's top rhythm'n'blues artist), and Bob Dylan (America's own countercultural prophet of sorts). In addition, one of the top pop bands of the Eighties has been **The Police**, three White British musicians who have created a reggae sound guaranteed to satisfy a mass audience. Reggae, once an exotic import, is now a part of our own cultural doing.

This is the point. "As at every stage of the black man's colonial history, there emerges a new generation of whites" (and White musicians) "who feel an emotional identification with a particular music-cultural expression of black people. As the mods in the early 60's identified with ska, the Punks today identify with reggae" (Clarke, 1980: 70), both for its musical appeal and expression of environment. **"The threat they pose to the music is that because of the canonization of a particular musical style, e.g., the roots style, that created the initial vehicle for their identification, they become the medium of taste and thus hold the adventurous creator in a position of frustration"** (Clarke, 1980: 72). The same thing that is happening to many Rasta musicians has happened, recurrently, to Black jazz and rhythm'n'blues artists. The music they created is co-opted and diluted. In turn, they are bypassed by the monetary rewards of the market appeal for the music they, foremost, helped to create.

I, too, run the risk of exploiting a Black people's movement and sound that certainly does not need, or want, a White scholar displaying its wares. In the effort to avoid such a charge, where Rasta has most pertained to me is **as a form of liberation**, a way of reevaluating history and expressing that understanding through a variety

of expressive mediums - music, art, dance, poetry, theatre, etc.. The question and challenge of this thesis is whether the social sciences, or any other scholarly discipline, could dare to be such a creative and liberating force.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One, **A Retelling of African History**, is itself divided into four sections. It begins with a brief overview of the meaning and social movements of Ethiopianism and how the first Rastafarians tapped into this heritage. The second section demonstrates how Marcus Garvey applied an Ethiopian conscious social philosophy to the situation of Africans transplanted to the New World, and, in turn, how Rastafarians utilized Garvey's prophecies to help instill their own visionary process. The third section addresses the components of this process itself, and, in particular, how myalism and Eastern cosmologies contributed to the Rastafarian metaphysics. The final section, **Word-Sound-Power**, provides a summary of how Rastafarian consciousness was then evoked in drum and chanting ritual, which, in turn, contributed to the rise of reggae music. I will also indicate how this evolution represents what Victor Turner termed the transition from liminal to liminoid ritual conditions (Turner, 1984: 54-55). The purpose of this chapter is to provide a synopsis of the Rastafarian ritual journey, as well as an abbreviated historical data base from which Chapters Three and Four can draw upon

In Chapter Two, **The Defeating of Magic**, I attempt to portray the gap in Western societies that Rastafari and similar type movements are attempting to fill. A thorough understanding of how the magic of the Hermetic tradition was defeated, beginning with the witch-craze,

accelerated by the infiltration of Protestant ideologies, and then vanquished by the Age of Reason and the coincident rise of State powers, points to the rupture that modern day revitalization movements are responding to. I am not trying to set up a facile dichotomy that suggests that "we" are scientific, and "they" are magical. As the Hermetic tradition demonstrated, it is quite possible for magic and science to be complementarily intertwined. Instead, I am suggesting that due to a prolonged historical series of repressive measures instituted at first on the European continent, Western societies have lost contact with their own magical heritage. Instead, they have grown to rely on the expression of "other" peoples (American Black, Third World, Native, Subcultures) to rekindle their own magical longings. These expressions, however, are filtered through the screen of popular culture so as not to offend or upset the pillars of rationality that Western societies are built on. This chapter, of necessity, will also address the differences between magical and scientific activity.

Chapter Three, **The Genealogy of A Ritual**, will trace the evolution of Rastafarian ritual through Foucaultian lens, that is, how the continual resurfacing of subjugated knowledges paved the wave for Rastafari's international recognition. Divided into three sections, the first, **The Power of the Beat**, will address how Rastafarian drumming and song fits within the context of African and Caribbean healing rituals, and then how Rastafarian music was funnelled into the genre of ska. At the same time, I will outline the historical events that gave Rastafari Jamaican recognition. The second section, **Independence**, reveals how Jamaica's attempt to break free from colonial constraints

affected their popular music industry and the popularity of the Rastafarian movement. The last section, **Reggae and Revitalization**, summarizes the phenomenon of transgression that ritualists/artists must pass through in order to effect a revitalizing impact on modern societies.

The purpose of Chapter Four is to construct a conceptual framework that can equally account for where Rasta came from, where it has gone, and where it might be going. I will begin with a critique of anthropology's revitalization paradigm (Wallace, La Barre). I will then examine certain works of the Birmingham School (**Resistance Through Rituals, Hall: 1975., The Meaning of Style, Hebdige: 1980.**) with particular focus on the kind of transformations Rasta undergoes in a Western industrial urban area. I then propose to sew a theoretical thread connecting the two spheres of indigenous revitalization and subcultural protest that will ultimately render their distinction superfluous. I will utilize Deleuze and Guatteri's notion of **deterritorialization** and Victor Turner's concept of **communitas**. This section will conclude with thoughts on how popular music on a mass scale and New World African ritual and music have historically related to each other.

The epilogue will provide suggestions for further avenues of research upon modern day revitalization movements, rites, and concepts, as well as ideas on how that research might be conducted and written up. I also thought of setting aside in an appendix excerpts from personal interviews and Rastafarian texts (lyrics, poetry, scriptural texts) with accompanying analysis. Denis Constant, author of **Aux Sources Du Reggae** (1982) devotes much of his work to this type of exercise. I

decided, however, that since my focus is on the vehicles of transmission and reception of the Rastafarian message, rather than the message itself (which is highly individualistic), this would detract from the overall intent.

In order to satisfy the requirements of a Masters Thesis I have tried to minimize in my writing that which has been construed as "extraneous style". At times, especially in Chapters Three and Four, I have let voice #2, that of popular jargon, come through in order to accurately depict the "space" Rastafarian music was creating. The Epilogue is written predominantly through voice #3 , to and from the heart.

The traditional intention of the graduate thesis in Western Academics has been to pick out a niche, sometimes the smaller the better, that hasn't been covered, and cover it. The contribution and intention of this thesis is just the opposite. My objective is to "uncover" the global avenues of dissemination which have allowed Rastafari to make the impact it has. In tandem, I have tried to show how the ritual mechanics of Rastafari are linked to a universal process, revitalization, that I believe underlies the sustenance and renewal of all cultures.

CHAPTER 1

A RETELLING OF AFRICAN HISTORY

"I neither go right nor left. I go straight ahead, seen? I can't unite the JLP or the PNP because these are two organizations set up to fight against each other. That is called politics and I'm not into those things. We are talking about Rasta. We black people have a root. We are uniting regardless of whether you are PNP or JLP, regardless of what you are defending. We are talking about our real heritage. We are talking about the real self." (Bob Marley at 1978 Peace Movement Concert designed to quiet the violent feuding between Jamaica's political parties, in Davis, 1983: 196)

"There was no denying the fact that Egypt and Ethiopia were among the earliest and greatest of the ancient civilizations. In Genesis 10:6-2, Mizraism and Cush, the sons of Ham, were said to be the progenitors of the people of Egypt and Ethiopia respectively. By 1860, however, white scholars - particularly the group called the "American school of anthropology" - were loath to surrender ancient Egypt and Ethiopia to black peoples and began to undermine the implications of what seemed so obvious in the Bible and history about the origins of Africa. White Biblical scholars and Egyptologists did not return to the original Hamitic hypothesis, but now insisted that the Hamites must have been a White race, and whatever can be found in African societies that is commendable must be traced to the invasion of the "white Hamites" who ascended the Nile Valley from Europe and Asia Minor to begin the process of civilization in Black Africa."

(Wilmore, 1983: 120)

ETHIOPIANISM

The Rastafarians claimed that the King James version of the Bible, presented to the king in the year 1611 A.D., deliberately reconstructed Ethiopian history as a white civilization; a reconstruction that clearly suited the slave trade mentality of Western Europe.

> "Across the entire world of Christian influence, people have no idea that the Holy Bible says anything pertaining to Black Africa, as the King James translators refused to acknowledge that the Cushite people of the Bible were ancestors of the same Cushites now being enchained. Whereas the King James translators saw black Sudanese Africans in chains and called them Negroes, when they saw black Sudanese Africans sitting on the throne of Egypt they called them Ethiopians" (Dunston, 1974: 23)

Two books introduced into Jamaica in the 1920's served to reverse this tide. One was **The Holy Piby**, or the Black Man's Bible written and published in Newark, New Jersey by a black man named Robert Althy Rogers. Pronouncing Marcus Garvey as the Apostle, the **Holy Piby** became the doctrinal foundation of an African international religious organization with headquarters in Kimberly, South Africa. A Jamaican branch, the Hamatic Church, was established in 1925 by Grace Garrison and Reverand Charles F. Goodridge. A second book, **The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy**, was subsequently published in 1926 by the Reverand Fitz Balantine Pettersburgh. Much of this text would be plagiarized by Leonard Howell, the most outspoken and acknowledged leader of the early Rastafarian movement, in his work **The Promised Key**, published in 1935.

Ethiopianism was a wide and diverse current of African Christianity that swept through Africa, the States, and the Caribbean at

the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th. Some of the movements came about in response to the heroic efforts of modern-day Ethiopia to withstand European invasions, i.e., Italy in 1896 and 1938. Hence, Rastafari's recognition of ancient Ethiopia as a major origin of African civilization, an empire that once extended from the Mediterranean southward to the source of the Nile, is only one of numerous movements and intellectual currents in Africa, North America and the Caribbean, that has arrived at the same conclusion. William Leo Hansberry, a modern day Ethiopianist and forefather of American African studies, dedicated a lifetime of research to show that "1) many of the peoples and cultures of Ancient Egypt originated in equatorial Africa 2) the peoples of Ethiopia vied with the mighty Assyrian Empire for the position of first place among the great organized powers of that age 3) Ghana, Melle, Songhay, Nupe, were larger in size, more effectively organized, and higher in culture than most of the contemporary states of the Anglo-Saxon, the Germanic, and the Slavic regions of Europe 4)...Increased dessication of the Sahara, the introduction of the Mohammedan religion and the Islamic systems of polity, and the establishment of the Arab, Berber, and European systems of slave trading brought on the disintegration of these Negro states and their civilizations" (Hansberrry, 1929, in Harris, 1974: 12).

I am not in the position to confirm or deny these interpretations of history. My aim in sketching out this retelling is to establish a blueprint, an Ethiopianism, that Rastafarians, as well as many other New World Blacks, seized upon in their reading of the Bible. Thus, the founders of Rastafari were not fabricating a doctrine to appease the sufferings of displaced Africans in Jamaica, as the following passage by

G. Watson, a clear exponent of anthropology's "deprivation based" revitalization paradigm, would like us to believe.

> "The cancer of social discontent which manifests iteself in escapist outlets and nativistic fantasy is a social protest which seeks a new set of beliefs to transform a set of failures into a certainty of success, and to provide a new status and hope to replace the old. Their projection into an African heaven has nothing to do with the physical Africa. It is their conscious refusal to accept their harsh "underclass" position, and their determination to get out of the filth in which they live, which lead them to imaginative fantasies."
> (Watson, 1974: 34)

To the contrary, the Rastafarian's "projection" into an African heaven was very much connected to a physical and historical Africa. Nor were these "imaginative fantasies", but rather a direct religious experience in which Ethiopia was recognized as part of their own Biblical inheritance.

Cedric Brooks, a noted Jamaican horn player and a crucial figure in the transition of Rastafarian drum music to a more popular based sound, comments on this inheritance.

> "The Rastafarian regards Ethiopia, physically and spiritually, as his ancestral home in that all other parts of Africa had been colonized at some time, and therefore lost the reality of **Africanness**...Again this relates to the fact that historically speaking all of Africa was at one time regarded as Ethiopia; even from Biblical quotations; these show Ethiopia to be the whole of Africa. Whether one came from West Africa, or from any other part of Africa, he would still come from Ethiopia. There are old maps which show the whole continent of Africa as Ethiopia". (Brooks in Reckford, 1976: 15)

Before Selassie, another prophet arose. He would link this concept of Ethiopia as homeland with the contemporary oppression Black people were suffering. The prophet was Marcus Garvey, although Garvey seemed to have purposefully distanced himself from the Rastafarians, and spoke

critically of Selassie. This did not stop, however, the Rastafarians from heeding Garvey's words.

MARCUS GARVEY

"Now we have started to speak, and I am only a forerunner of an awakened Africa that shall never go back to sleep". "You will see that from the start we tried to dignify our race. If I am to be condemned for that, I am satisfied".

(Garvey in Cronon, 1955: 39, 73)

While Garvey was born in Jamaica in 1887, he traveled to Costa Rica, Panama, and Ecuador in 1910, and then two years later, arrived in London. It was there that Garvey was introduced to the notion of Pan-Africanism. Having seen the oppressed conditions of indigenous peoples in Central and South America, Garvey prepared to make an attack on the history and lingering of colonialist ideals. In 1914, he returned to Jamaica to organize the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) "with the program of uniting all the Negro peoples of the world into one great body to establish a country and government absolutely their own" (Amy Garvey in Wilmore, 1983: 146). Two years later, Garvey left the island again to establish a chapter in Harlem. By 1919, through his publication of the **Negro World**, Garvey had initiated the largest Black American movement this country had ever known.

In so doing, Garvey clearly disdained the reconciliatory attitudes of previous black leaders, i.e., Booker T. Washington, particularly their choice to follow the American doctrine of hard work, frugality, good manners, and in all things moderation. As Garvey stated, "We of the UNIA have studied seriously this question of

nationality among Negroes - this American nationality... and have discovered that it comes for nought when that nationality comes in conflict with the racial idealism of the group that rules" (Garvey, 1922 in Sidran, 1980: 170). My first exposure to Garvey was in riding the subway underneath the ghettos of North Philadelphia in the early 70's, and observing a Black teenager reading his collected works. Garvey helped to implant a consciousness that is still deeply embedded in the thinking and movements of New World Africans today.

When Garvey returned to Jamaica briefly in 1921, "the British had felt sufficiently apprehensive about his potential threat to the colonial status quo to station battle ships in the harbor" (Campbell, 1980: 5). Six years later Garvey returned for good and helped to organize the People's Political Party calling for a minimum wage, guaranteed unemployment, social security, worker's compensation, the expropriation of private lands for public use, land reform, a Jamaican university, and the compulsory improvement of urban areas (Campbell, 1980: 7). Garvey's import was not simply in underscoring the economic deprivation the Jamaican masses were suffering, but in linking this oppression to the same powers colonizing and recoloring the traditions and events of African history.

> "We have great hopes of Abyssinia in the East, the country that has kept her tradition even back to the days of Solomon. Some of our peculiar sociologists when they discuss the intelligence of the Abyssinians try to make out that they are not Negroes, but everybody of ordinary ethnological intelligence knows that the Abyssinians are black people, that is to say, black in the sense of the interpretation of the Negro. They are part of the great African race that is to rise from its handicaps, environments, and difficulties to repossess the Imperial authority that is promised by God himself in the inspiration that Princes shall come out of Egypt and Ethiopia and

> stretch forth their hands" (Garvey, Oct. 25, 1930, in Cronon, 1959: 56).

Garvey wrote these words in a 1930 editorial on the heels of Tafari's crowning and on the eve of Rastafari's emergence.

Garvey was purported to have said "Look to Africa, when a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near". Robert Hill, a prolific Rastafarian scholar, and author of **Leonard Howell and Millenarian Vision in Early Rastafari**, claims that never has there been a record or witness of Garvey having ever said these words. Instead, Hill points to the Jamaicans familiarity with the oft-repeated 31st version of the 68th Psalm, "Princes shall come out of Egypt and Ethiopia and shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (Hill, 1983: 13). Thus, it was but a small leap from the 68th Psalm, the seeds of Rastafarian vision, to the revolutionary mandates of Garvey's Ethiopian conscious social philosophy. As perhaps is already evident, the social scientist can construct the origins of Rastafari - economic deprivation, millenarian vision, alternative Biblical discourse - by whatever causal elements suits his theoretical framework. The point is that Ethiopianism in Jamaica, an inspearable blend of socio-economic, political, and religious vision, was already boiling over by the time the new king arrived.

Sunday, November 2, 1930. "Abuna Kyril, Archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church came forward, and repeating a rite that dated back to the consecration of David by Samuel and Solomon by Nathan and Zadok, he anointed Tafari's brow with oil and crowned him Haile Selassie I, Power of the Holy Trinity, Two Hundred Twenty-Fifth Emperor of the Solomonic Dynasty, Elect of God, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion

of the Tribe of Judah" (White, 1983: 29). A group of men in Kingston and later to be heralded as the founders of Rastafari, took this coronation very seriously, finding verses in Revelation 5: 2-5 to sanction their interest.

> "And no man in heaven, nor in earth,...was able to open the book, neither to look thereupon... And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loosen the seven seals thereof".

And then, in Revelation 19: 16:

> "And he hath on his Vesture and on his thigh a name written: King of Kings, and Lord of Lords".

At the heart of the Rastafarian vision lies an initiatory axiom - the acceptance of the divinity of Haile Selassie I. Although Selassie never accepted this exalted status, the early Rastafarians took this refusal as a further sign of his divinity. "If he does not believe he is god, we know that he is god". The king would never display his divinity for "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased" (Barrett, 1979: 108). The emperor could do no wrong.

The Rastafarian vision was confirmed with the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1936-36, as exemplified in an article written in **Plain Talk** entitled **In Defense of Abyssinia and its History**.

> "I beg to inform you hypocrites (referring to the clergy) that what you have taught us about Jesus is fulfilling in the land of Ethiopia right now: with the said same Romans or so called Italian or Fascist. These are the said people who crucified Jesus 2,000 years ago, and as we read that after 2,000 years, Satan's kingdom shall fall; and righteousness shall prevail in all the earth, as the waters cover the sea, we are not in the time that 2,000 years have expired"(L.F.I. Mantle, in Hill, 1983: 27).

The Rastafarian interpretation of and immersion into Biblical symbols is too rich and complex to reproduce here. (The best work I have discovered on this inner visionary process is by former McGill University student Dennis Forsythe entitled **Rastafari - For The Healing of the Nation,** 1983.) The point is that **time**, the march of history, is considered as an eternal recurring cycle of prophets and prophecies, rather than a linear process of evolution.

The evil tide of Babylon (derived from **Babel,** the name of the first Biblical city which evolved into wickedness) was now considered to be Euro-American civilization. Whereas the British, as Jamaica's colonizers, received the initial brunt of Rasta's wrath, the United States, as the lastest center of the West's imperialistic powers, and Italy, the home of Babylon theology, were also in the direct line of fire.

> "As the head of Christendom, a special place of contempt is reserved for the Pope by Rastas since Christian missions have always been known to attack central articles of African belief. Most notably, this has involved deceiving black people into believing in a White God and thus perpetuating a form of **mental slavery** designed to serve colonial interests by promising blacks equality beyond the grave. In this unholy alliance between Church and State, the Pope has conspired with the Queen of England, the Great Whore of Babylon who would assert her reign in the **final days** according to Biblical prophecy" (Homiak, 1980: 5).

Exodus is now. The suffering Israelites are found to be poor and predominantly working class Caribbean blacks. The Bible, the one text always available, approached not as **tabula rasa** , or simply as moral imperative, but to be studied and pondered upon the way a scholar considers his books: the Bible as the newspaper's daily corollary.

RASTAFARIAN CONSCIOUSNESS

To the Rastafarians, God was not a spirit in the sky, the god of the Western Christian, but a potential consciousness and form of expression that germinated from within. As the Catholic burns incense in the Church, the Rastaman turned to burning the sacred herb (ganja) within his temple, that is, the holy structure of the human body. Because of this extremely individualistic approach, to this day there is no central hierarchial Rastafarian organization. While the early founders of Rasta were to set up loosely structured organizations (Dunkley's King of Kings Missionary Movement, Hibbert's Ethiopian Coptic Faith, Howell's Ethiopian Salvation Society), none were sustaining nor necessary to attend in order to maintain Rastafarian status. As for the smoking of herbs, once again, the Rastas turned to the Bible to confirm their beliefs. In Genesis 1: 29 God gave man "every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of the earth", and in Revelation 27:2, "the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nation".

The consciousness which the smoking of herb could produce signified a communion with Jah, the God that rideth upon the heavens and who brought Israel out of bondage. While the precise origin of "Jah" is uncertain, it was used as an abbreviated version of Jehovah. "It has also been suggested that the word "Jah" could have been a phonetic derivation of the Hindu word "Jai". As Forsythe pointed out, "The 36,412 indentured Indians who emigrated to Jamaica between 1845 and 1917 were an important influence on Afro-Jamaican folks who found that many Indian cultural aspects were congenial with theirs" (Forsythe, 1983: 84). At the risk of having already overextended Rastafarian metaphysics into trite aphorisms, I will try to depict the **mystical space** Rasta

enters into. To achieve this, I need to unveil two metaphysical concepts in order to demonstrate the fruits of Rasta's revolutionary (and at the same time, very ancient) visionary process: the influence of Eastern cosmological systems and the historical transmission of myalism accompaniments.

"Who is you? There is no you. There is only I and I. I is you, I is God, God is I. God is you, but there is no you, because you is I, so I and I is God. It's the same God in all of we, I and I" (Rasta in Yawney, 1973: 41). I'n'I is the consciousness that Rastafarian brethren seek, a creative combination of semantic gamemanship and visionary experience. The sound/concept **I** variously refers to Rasta-far-**I**, Selassie **I**, and implies Far-Eye, the spiritual sources of reasoning and meditation that dwell within, but is linked, indeed, sustained by its communion with Jah. Again, Dennis Forsythe explains:

> "I and I simply refers to "me" and my God - one "I" is the little I and the other the Big I. The little I or me refers to the lower self of man, to his body and its ego, that part of him which is born and will die. It is this little I which experiences desires, ambitions, misery, happiness, performs actions and fears death. It is the outer garment of the Big I, an instrument by which the Big I manifests itself on the material plane.... The Big I is the everliving, immortal or "true" self that was never born and can never die. It is the spirit of the soul or pure spirit or vital energy, it is the critical all-seeking "third eye" or third dimension of the universal mind" (Forsythe, 1983: 85).

This business of a **third eye** deserves further explanation.

While the symbols and myths of Rasta are predominantly Christian, it is an East Indian metaphysic, and in particular, the philosophy of Indian mystic Tagore imported by Asian immigrants, that

held influence over the early founders of Rastafarian cosmology. The development of the Rasta belief system bears striking resemblances to the Hindu folding of the full consciousness of the self (Atman) into Brahmin, the divine being of supreme reality. As Mircea Eliade summarizes in an essay on the **Indian Experiences of the Mystic Light**, it is this experience whereby one becomes conscious of the Self (Atman) and penetrates into the very essence of life and the cosmic elements "so that the veil of illusion and ignorance is torn. Suddenly a man is blinded by the Pure Light; he is plunged into being. From a certain point of view one may say that the profane world, the conditional world, is transcended - and that the spirit breaks out on to the absolute plane, which is at once the plane of being and divine" (Eliade, 1958: 133). This experience is sought in Rastafari through **reasoning** or **grounding** with fellow bretheren. In short, reasoning is a highly stylized form of conversation in which bretheren, relying on their wisdom and oratorical skills, would seek a common inspirational base and understanding of Jah. Often assuming the form of a highly charged polemic, reasoning provides a means of attaining insight upon one's self and true purpose in life.

Over time, chanting and drum centered rituals would be added to these reasoning sessions. It was the evolution of these ritual forms that ultimately contributed to reggae, but at their core still lay the aspirations and one heart of I'n'I awareness. In the words of a contemporary Tibetan mystic:

> "Many years ago, according to our legends, all men and women could use the Third Eye. In those days the gods walked upon the earth and mixed with men... Everyone had the ability to travel in the Astral, see by clairvoyance,

> telepathize and levitate... But mankind had visions of replacing the gods and tried to kill them, forgetting that what man could see the gods could see better. As a punishment, the Third Eye of man was closed...There was Babel...But throughout the ages a few people have been born with the ability to see clairvoyantly" (Rampal, 1988: 78,106).

Whether it is Eastern, African, or Christian, or in the case of Rastafari, a combination of the three, there is beyond the corruption and obsessive cult worship, a core religious experience simultaneous in meaning with the evolution of human consciousness.

The objective is not to publicize or promote a previous mythic way of apprehending the world. Instead, my aim is to explore the impact evolutionary leaps in consciousness, and the social movements that engender such changes, have had upon history. The major revision Rasta introduces to Christianity is an elimination of the sacerdotal intermediaries, a distilling of a religion long past its days (with few exceptions) of visionary insight. In the words of Jamaican Rastas, "Christianity is far too profitable an enterprise right now to fold up shop. The business of selling religion is still bringing a return, and men will always be found to accept a coin for preaching about a sky-god." "Yet I'n'I art the spiritual church in I'n'I self. We burn our herbs in our temples, in our structure, for our structure is our church." To admit that God is a spirit without a temple would be tantamount to saying he is a **duppy** or **ghost**, and such would be a blasphemy before the God of the living..." "We does not want a man that comes to speak and preach about Baptism. What we want to know is more about ourself and to rearrange ourselves" (Jamaican Rastamen interviewed in Owens, 1976: 86, 176).

It is the state of I'n'I consciousness that the Rastafarians sought and experienced that Victor Turner defined as **communitas**. Turner refers to this state as not a "fantasy-rejection of structural necessities", but rather, "**the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, violition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbant upon occupying a sequence of social statuses**" (bold mine) (Turner, 1982: 44). As Turner added, "Communitas exists in a kind of "figure-ground" relationship with social structure. The boundaries of each of these - in so far as they constitute explicit or implicit models for human interaction - are defined by contact or comparison with one another..." (Turner, 1982: 50). It is these definitions of communitas which transfer into Rastafarian terms as "a freeing the mind from the **fuckery** of colonialism. It provides the inspiration necessary to transcend alienating structures of thought" (Yawney, **Dread Wasteland**, 1978: 169). It is this cognitive removal, a physiological transformation of mind and body aided by the smoking of herbs and the ritual effects of reasoning, percussive chanting and music, that demystifies and liberates "I" from the false ego consciousness of Babylon's colonial mentality.

Cedric Brooks describes this process as such:

> "People can use the herb in different ways. It induces a euphoric feeling which in the religious connotation helps meditation. But it should not be used in excess - the body can take so much and no more. What the herb does is that it lifts one to a different level of consciousness, and by freeing areas of the mind unrestricted by the physical body or condition; it gives play to the **etheral** or **astral** plane - or whatever you call this higher state of consciousness. It induces concentration and limits the area of distraction... Even in the history of other religious developments - citing the East Indian as an example, some smoke, and some do not smoke. Any unnatural intake contaminates the body, and excess damages the body. One

> must have a very spiritual attitude towards the herb, and prepare oneself for its use" (Brooks in Reckford, 1979: 15).

A report entitled **Ganga and African Consciousness**, and published in the Jamaican **Daily Gleaner**, complements this viewpoint:

> "The individual's usage of **herbs** have the wholesome effect of stimulating and facilitating one's return to **roots** vibrations, to energy source. ...In their desperation and despair, blacks **rebel** by calling upon the powers of herbs which give them a glimpse and taste of original African vibrations and power. Herbs thus constitute a healing force according to Rastafarian Theory and experience. Used in its many forms and with proper understanding it can become a vehicle through which an ancient original power and spirit infuses the body with a primeval source of energy such that the "I" becomes more at one with his ancestral spirit. .. From my observations and studies I have seen enough to be convinced that in such a journey back to one's I-roots, one can retrieve such lost aspects of one's natural system like voice, rhythm, and creativity. Herbs, as used by Rastas help to rekindle African original vibrations by helping to break down the mental and physical stumbling-blocks in our physical unconsciousness. The brown or white skin Rastas are only responding to the African vibrations within their systems and must be judged no differently than other Rastas" (in Forsythe, 1983: 113).

Jamaicans, however, had more than just their memories to recall ancestral vibrations, namely the myalistic traditions.

Myal, a multiple soul concept derived from the African tribes (Ashanti, Congolese, Yoruba, Ibo, Akan, Mandinka) transported to the New World, emerged in 17th century Jamaica as a basis for pan-African cooperation. While essentially a ritual ceremony based on West African methods of spiritual and physical healing, myalism first surfaced among Maroon or escaped slave communities as a means of combating European domination. Central to the ceremony were myal men or men of magical powers, whose mastery of herbs, dream-time experience and the implementing of spirit-possession techniques, were featured strongly.

Simplified, myal denotes the possession of an individual by spirits or duppies that have remained after death. The purpose of the myal ceremony is to establish a consciousness in which the individual "begins to know himself again, and the spirit possessing him becomes less and less pronounced" (Simpson, 1970:168). Combined with **obeah** beliefs, a stronger, more witchcraft oriented spirit than myal, myalism penetrated in a myriad of forms, nearly all Jamaican religious expressions. Providing a syncretic blend of African beliefs and practices, myalism served to counteract the misfortune imposed by the European sorcerers. It should be noted that African sorcery indicates behavior directed against the higher good of the group, rather than the sinful pacts with the devil, or transgressions against God, as the West would interpret its own brand of witchcraft. Thus, the Europeans were considered to be practitioners of black magic, that is, of placing personal goals above the needs of the community. By the end of the 17th century, myalism began to "absorb certain congenial aspects of the Baptist version of Christianity" (Schuler,1979: 68), most notably those experiences, i.e., the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the baptizing immersion rite, that correspond closely to African ancestral ways

Jamaican religion cannot be considered as the continual borrowing from an African heritage. Myalism did not begin, does not persist, as a series of traits that happened to survive, that is, as the residual aftermath of prior formations. Or, in the words of Ralph Ellison, "Can a people live and develop for over three hundred (300) years simply by reacting. Men have made a way of living in caves and upon cliffs, why cannot Negroes have made a life upon the horns of the white man's dilemma?" (Ellison, 1964: 305). It is in the immediate

emotional liaisons with social and economic community and constraints in which the religious emerges - not as compensation, or as museum piece - but as program. Religions subsist and thrive only so far as their themes are performed, that is, its rituals remain **going concerns**.

To give up the old African Gods would mean instant metaphysical and psychological death, a death in America more akin to a pentacostal sleep. But Christianity would run a different course in Jamaica, for reasons that are complex, but most notably due to the comparatively small number of Whites on the islands. Home for the Jamaican plantation owners, the cultivators of sugar (the whiteman's new drug), remained in Europe. The rituals of rebellion, like the movements of revitalization, are invoked to suspend, destroy, overcome and renew the normal time signature of events. The Native Baptist War of 1831-32, a slave rebellion led by preacher Sam Sharp and catalyst for Emancipation five years later, was, foremost, a myalist rather than Christian expression. The Black preachers or myal men had called on their communities "to create the more perfect world the missionaries themselves had promised but had failed to deliver - a state where spiritual salvation matched economic self-sufficiency" (Schuler, 1979: 74).

Due to the illegal nature of its activities, myalistic forms tended to be performed underground, and thus, the difficulty in tracing their evolution. Drumming and dancing, unless performed in an overtly Christian or European context (i.e., Jonkunnu dancing, a combination of British fife and drum and African rhythm), were considered disturbances

of the peace. Any rite resembling witchcraft was deemed a sign of madness. Instead, what the hindsight of history affords us are periodic myalistic eruptions, the greatest being the Great Revival which swept through Jamaica in the 1860's. This rebellion was led by Black preacher Paul Bogle and a fiery mulatto politican name George William Gordon. Gordon, in an address concerning Edward John Eyre, the English governor of Jamaica, states:

> "It does not seem that his Excellency's natural endowments qualify him for the government of this country, I desire to give honour to whom honour is due, and I respect every man in authority; but if a ruler does not sway the sword with justice, he becomes distasteful, and instead of having the love and respect of the people, he becomes despised and hated.
>
> Mr. Speaker: Order! The language of the honourable member cannot be allowed. The honourable gentleman must know that he is out of order.
>
> Mr. Gordon: I regret, Mr. Speaker, that I am out of order, but when every day we witness the mal-administration of the law by the Lt. Governor, we must speak out. You are endeavoring to suppress public opinion, to pen up the expression of public indignation; but I tell you that it will soon burst forth like a flood, and sweep everything before it" (in Barrett, 1977:55).

At issue was the transfer of property ownership and the recognition of just political rights for the landless peasants. It was, however, the language of prophecy in which peasants couched their distress and organized resistance. Myalism is not a political movement. Nor is Rastafari. They are the expansion, elevation and blending of African derived healing rites and powers. Combined with superimposed layers of Christian motif and practice, inevitably these rites and powers would coalesce and attempt to pronounce and effect a grand metaphysical scheme forecasting a new order of existence.

The following is an excerpt from a poster entitled **A Son of Africa** attached to a wharf gate in Lucea, Hanover in 1865:

> "I heard a Voice speaking to me in the year 1864 saying Tell the Sons and Daughters of Africa, that a great deliverance will take place from them from the hand of Oppression; for said the Voice, they are oppressed by Government, by Magistrates, by Proprietors, and by Merchants. And the voice also said, Tell them to call a solemn Assembly and to sanctify themselves for the day of deliverance which will surely take place; but if the people will not hearken, I will bring the Sword into the land to chastise them for their disobedience, and for the inequities which they have committed" (in Schuler, 1979: 74).

The Great Revival was broken the very same year by the Morant Bay tragedy. Bogle and Gordon, along with 1,000 others, were killed by government forces.

The hidden and subversive power that the white colonizers feared was this:

> "The related Bible belief in the power of prophecy and the principle of Re-incarnation are part of the fundamentalist folk tradition held on dearly by African peasants everywhere. In the African folk tradition existing in Jamaica, this power of Clairvoyance is widely acknowledged and is locally referred to as **Moving in the Spirit... Trumping.. Sounding... Travelling in the Spirit, Groaning in the Spirit... Labouring... Talking in tongues**. In the Orient this process is referred to as **Telepathy**. .By **moving in the spirit** it was said that one slave on one Plantation could communicate through the spirit to another of like-mind on another Plantation miles away" (Forsythe, 1983: 55).

These, of course, are states of consciousness that can only be experienced to be believed. For the colonist, the existence of these states generally sparked the emotion of doubt, an emotion that can range from panic in the face of the unknown to a scientifically sober distrust.

After the defeat of the Great Revival, myalism began to splinter. Some of its forms and movements would take on more Christian meanings and rites so as to appease the wary (and weary) landowers and

government officials. "On the more African side of the Afro-Christian continuum was Conuinue, or Kumina, in the middle of the continuum, Pukkumina, and on the more Christian end, Zion Revival" (White, 1983: 29). Rastafari contains traits from all three, either as an invocation or deliberate reversal of the myal idiom. By forming "the core of a strong and self-confident counter-culture, myalism guaranteed that none of the post-slavery period would be accepted passively, but would be fought ritually and publically" (Schuler, 1979: 73). Such are the direct antecedents and seeds of Rastafari.

The following is an account by an original member of Leonard Howell's new Rastafarian sect demonstrating how this visionary process could take place.

> "When he (Howell) came, he told us that Christ was back on the earth. But I couldn't understand it, but after him put it to me several times and I read the Scriptures, I saw that he was coming off the Bible. He told us that Christ was coming back with a new name, Ras Tafari. Gradually I watch his movement and I take it home, I go back, and when he started to teach with the Bible and this same Black supremacy book, I take it home. I had visions in my sleep at night and I said, Oh, you come back with a scornful name that scorn the nation, and the name of Ras Tafari is it" (in Hill, 1983: 33).

The component of the Christian religion that was so attractive to the Rastafarians was also central to Christianity's own formation: the proclamation of a radical renewal of the World. It is this renewal which is implied in the above passage by the notion of **scorn**, a providential punishment of the unjust. This scorn, which traditionally has been the lot of the oppressed, is directed by Pasta towards the oppressive nature of Babylon· in essence, an intense feeling and form of concentration that poses "the question of the withdrawal of political

loyalty from the colonial state and posits in the people a counter-political legitimacy through which they are able to challenge the ideological hegemony of the regime" (Hill, 1971: 34).

WORD-SOUND-POWER

While we in the West have fairly successfully destroyed any regular sense of ritual/dream-time experience, there are eruptive exceptions. The weekend dance-craze blowout, the festive meals and gift-exchanges of late autumn/early winter, and the hallucinogenic glow of Halloween, are our most dramatic examples. Victor Turner defined Western societies as the transition from **liminal** to **liminoid** ritual conditions.

> Whereas, "**liminal phenomena** tend to be collective, concerned with calendrical, biological, social-structural rhythms or with crises in social processes... **liminoid phenomena** may be collective (and when they are so, are often directly derived from liminal antecedents) but are more characteristically individual products though they often have collective or **mass** effects. They are not cyclical, but continuously generated, though in the times and places apart from work settings assigned to **leisure** activities" (Turner, 1982: 54). The difference is that whereas "**liminal phenomena** are centrally integrated into the total social process..., **liminoid phenomena** develop apart from the central economic and political processes, along the margins, in the interfaces and interstices of central and servicing institutions - they are plural, fragmentary, and experimental in character...The liminoid is more like a commodity - indeed, often **is** a commodity, which one selects and pays for - than the liminal, which elicits loyalty and is bound up with one's membership or desired membership in some highly corporate group. One **works** at the liminal, one plays with the liminoid" (Turner, 1982: 55).

The rest of this chapter, indeed, of this manuscript, will be devoted to how, when, where, and why Rastafarian ritual crosses this threshhold.

The Caribbean is culturally and geographically the gateway to Africa. Aided by the missionary flow from the Methodist and Baptist sects of mainland America, the three regions formed a continual triangular passage of cultural diffusion. At the heart of that passage was the sustenance of African derived oral traditions. While remolded at first within slave work songs and clandestine drum rituals, and then recast within Christian liturgical forms, oral traditions (blues, soul, gospel, funk, reggae, disco, mambo, vodun, salsa, merinque, samba, etc.) continue as the primary socializing agent of New World African communities.

In the Southern United States, the hymns authored by choir leader David Sankey and evangelist Dwight Moody in the 1850's, quickly traveled to the Caribbean and contributed to Jamaica's Great Revival in the next decade. The Sankey and Moody hymnals were then carried on by the subsequent Pukkumina and Revivalist groups, many of whom were situated in the same West Kingston neighborhoods as the Rastafarian bretheren. While the Rastas clearly rejected the European orientation of the revivalist groups, they used these "evangelical hymns, and/or their melodies as a base upon which they could build their own new liturgy" (K.B., from **Kongo To Zion** Liner Notes: 1983). Initiated by Leonard Howell, and then followed upon by other Rasta leaders (Joseph Hibbert, Archibald Dunkley), the **spiritual** was the original form Rastafarian ritual would take.

While often accompanied by percussive elements, the polyrhythmic patterns and centrality of drums were noticably absent in Rastafari's first musical traditions. Ironically, it would not be until the late 40's and early 50's, due to the Rastas' increading

contact and merging with other groups practicing kumina and burru drum rites, that their own rituals would reclaim African roots. It is, however, a mistake to suggest that the spirituals, while derived from a Christian idiom, were not African in **feeling, meaning, and form.**

> "The divine liberation of the oppressed from slavery is the central theological concept in the black spiritual. These songs show that black slaves did not believe that human servitude was recognizable with their African past and their knowledge of the Christian gospel. They did not believe that God created Africans to be slaves. Accordingly, they sang of a God who was involved in history - their history - making right what whites had made wrong. The message of liberation in the spirituals is based on the biblical contention that God's righteousness is revealed in his deliverance of the oppressed from the shackles of human bondage" (Cone, 1972: 35).

The spirituals formed a double **entendre**: they served as a means of organizing and assimilating Black communities into imposed Euro-American culture, but simultaneously, retaining perceptual attributes that fall outside of and/or resisted the larger culture they were embedded in.

The evolution of Rastafarian music would continually return to this triangular passage to reinvest and augment its own ritual forms. Whether it be the adopting of American hymnals, the reclaiming of African drum rites, or the inversion of R&B combined with mento, jazz, and New Orleans soul singing, Rasta ritual must be viewed within the wider perspective the role oral tradtions have played for the New World African. It is precisely these traditions that I will employ as the central socio-anthropological tool to analyze Black liberation movements in general, and Rastafari in particular. These traditions must be viewed as a continum, a flowing hybridization of forms that paradoxically surfaced with increasing intensity in each decade of the

20th century as the major source of entertainment for the civilizing white tribes.

At the heart of Jamaican oral traditions and myalistic beliefs was the dance-drum ceremony known as **kumina**. Derived from the Congo-Angola region, kumina came to fruition with the importation of Central African laborers in the 19th century. The word itself is derived from **Two akom** (to be possessed), and **ana** (ancestor), and originated as a possession ceremony for the Ashanti people. In Jamaica, with the homogenization of the African peoples, kumina lost any direct tribal affiliations. "In ceremonies ranging from memorial observances to birth celebrations, from healing rites to holiday festivals, ancestral spirits are invoked to come and take possession of kumina dancers, so that they may partake in the pleasures of the living and offer in exchange the benefit of their powers" (Bilby, From Kongo To Zion Liner Notes: 1983).

A similar but distinctly more secular dance-drum rite known as burru, paralleled the kumina ceremony. Derived from slave work songs, which had their origins in fertility masquerade dances, burru songs became much more attuned to immediate social commentary, satire, and concerns. Whereas, kumina generally remained rooted in religious ceremony, burru was used as a means for celebrating certain holidays and welcoming discharged prisoners back into the community. While kumina playing was based on two drums - the Kbandu and the Playing Cast - and burru three - the Bass, Fundeh, and Repeater- the migration of rural peoples into Kingston led to a fusion and "confusion" of these two interpenetrating forms.

A crucial synthesis was about to occur. The sound and power of African drum rituals were combined with the words and meanings of Rastafari. This synthesis would fuse the Rastafarian adoption of the Christian spiritual with an African ritual base, and take place with the emergence of an additional secret society known as the Nyabingi Order. The word "nyabingi" refers to a purported African organization dedicated to the overthrow of white, colonial domination through racial violence. Brought to the Rastafarian's attention in a **Jamaica Times** article (Dec. 7, 1935), Nyabingi developed into Rastafari's primary sect. Due largely to the influence of percussionist Count Ossie in the late 40's, Nyabingi then developed beyonds its sectarian origins and became synonymous with the Rastafarian ceremony known as **Grounation** or **I-ssemble**. By this time, Rastas had begun to live in communal camps - Back-O-Wall, Dungle, Salt Lane - where the cross-fertilization of kumina and burru drum styles and Rastafarian reasoning sessions reached their height. These camps were very loosely structured patriarchial clans. The heartbeat rhythms of the Nyabingi still remains today at the center of Rastafarian ritual practice.

In the mid-fifties, Ossie's camp became a natural site for struggling young musicians to flock to. As ethnomusicologist Verona Reckford learned in her conversations with Rastas, "It was a time when university intellectuals and handcart pushers, musical novices and virtuoses, holy men and charlatans, men of professions and men of questionable employment, met and interacted under a banner of mutual respect and peace" (Reckford, 1979: 12). Despite constant police harassment. Ossie's camp continued into the early 60's, and became Jamaica's most renown school of music, producing such greats as Tommy

McCook, Roland Alphonso, Cedric Brooks and Donald Drummond. At this time, Ossie helped a young group by the name of the **Folke Brothers** compose and record the song **O Carolina**, a pioneering classic of the ska era. Ossie also formed his own recording group of about 20 musicians known as **The Mystic Revelation of Rastafari**. This group would have a profound influence on **Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus**. In addition, other ska groups were influenced by this gathering of Rastafarian musicians. One of them contained members Bunny Livingstone Wailer, Peter McIntosh, and the late Robert Nesta Marley.

Over ten years later, with the aid of recording agent Chris Blackwell, the Wailers funneled their interests and talents into an international commercial appeal. Their music, at least partially, and their message, centrally, remained faithful to the inspiration of the Nyabingi Order. Whether it be through the amplified trance-inducing states of reggae music, or through "the Word, Sound, and Power of the Nyabingi, the faithful are united with the God-head in mystic telepathy to chant down Babylon, to scourge the earth of wickedness, and to restore the natural order of Creation to its original state of perfection" (Lieb, Churchical Chantes Liner Notes, 1983).

Despite the common affiliation reggae musicians and Rasta ritual drummers held with their Nyabingi origins, a threshhold had been crossed. As Walter Benjamin shrewedly observed, instead of cult and ritual, we now have art and politics.

> "We knock ourselves out to gain respect as an emerging nation raised on hopes and dreams and blessed with skills and diligence, and these fuck-a-bush ghetto rats crawl out of their outhouses and hillside lean-tos to hum a few bars of some gully ditty, and they get sainted, turned into

royalty, **lionized"** (Jamaican politican in White, 1983: 262).

Because of reggae's increasing popularity, Jamaica's two leading political stars of the 60's and 70's, Edward Seaga and Michael Manley, had to exploit their affiliation with the Rasta infiltrated reggae music for all it was worth. Seaga, an ex-producer of slum musicians, and a trained anthropologist, incorporated all the magic he learned in his studies of the revival cults into his political rallies. Seaga is more endearingly known by Rastas as CIAga. Meanwhile, Manley brought back from his visit to Ethiopia a gift from Selassie, a **Rod of Correction**, that peasants and "Rastas turned out by the thousands to kneel and **kiss**, tearfully thanking Michael as if he were Joshua reincarnated" (White, 1983:262). For the 1972 election, Manley's PNP party used a Delroy Wilson reggae tune **Bettuh Must Come** as its official theme song.

This process moved in two opposing directions. As the political parties promoted the music to promote their own interest, the music continued to be banned and censored due to its purported disruptive effect on society and national security. Since the 30's, Jamaican elections have been plagued by violence, which became most pronounced in the 70's. While it still remains unclear how much of the violence was plotted or random, it is clear that the bloodshed was fed by the weaponry and interests of international power groups. During the 1976 election, in the fighting which spread in the shantytowns of Kingston and other cities, at least 300 people were killed. In 1980, "this tenor campaign reached massive proportions. From the beginning of the year until the elections in late October, nearly 900 persons

were killed, many of them by gunmen or police" (Harsch, 1981:19, 26). Like the Jamaican politican, Babylon could no longer afford to ignore reggae's suddenly popular revolutionary flow.

The now famous Rastafarian musicians were awkwardly and dangerously pulled into the political limelight, as exemplified in the highly publicized **peace-love** concerts of the late 60's and 70's. No politics, the promoters said, just music to "keep de lid on till de election" (White, 1983: 287). No politics, just music to help keep the political process intact. On November 25, 1976, ten days before one such peace concert, Bob and Rita Marley, along with other members of their entourage, were fired upon in their home. Although wounded, they went on to perform "a ninety-minute **tour-de-force** opening with **War**:

> "What life has taught me
> I would like to share with
> Those who want to learn
> That until the basic human rights
> Are equally guaranteed to all..
> Everywhere is war"
> (Lyrics derived from a Selassie speech)

> "At the close of his performance, Bob began a ritualistic dance, acting out aspects of the ambush that had almost taken his life. In Ethiopia, from Solomon's time to Selassie's, whenever a brave hunter killed a lion, he was summoned before the emperor to reenact his feat before receiving the pelt as a badge of his courage. Jamaica was witnessing the Rastafarian version of this dance in and out of the path of Death" (White, 1983: 292).

The Rastafarian summonings of African memory had become a charged political event.

Two years later, in the heralded peace concert of April, 1978, Marley commandeered both Seaga and Manley on stage shortly after Peter Tosh had delivered his Rasta notions on peace.

"Right now, Mr. Manley, me wan talk to you personal cos me and you is friends, so you seh... Right now here, not you along, Mr. Seaga too, we would like the members of Parliament must come together to deal with the poor people and the suffering class and the police to know that they brutalize poor people and fe what? A little draw of herb... Learn this, man, this is some little game that Columbus and Henry Morgan and Sir Francis Drake thought to scatter us when they come with the cross round their neck to come check black people... I no seh that my brother is a criminal. Cos when Columbus, Henry Morgan, and Francis Drake come up, dey call dem pirate and put dem in a reading book and give us observation that we must look up and have the life of and the principle of pirates. So the youth dem know fe fire dem guns like Henry Morgan same way... Is just a shitstem lay down to belittle the poor..." (Tosh in Clarke, 1980: 112).

Tosh was beaten on several occasions (1975, five months after the above 1978 concert, in White, 1980: 268, 301) for his outspoken beliefs, and murdered by unknown assailants in the winter of 1988. Marley, dead of cancer in the spring of 1981, left the following words behind on the last cut, **Redemption Song**, of his last personally produced album, **Uprising**, clearly severing his hope and connections with the political sphere.

"...Old pirates yes them rob I
Sold I to the merchant ships...
Minutes after they took I from the Bottomless Pit
By the hand of the Almighty
We forward in this generation, triumphantly...
Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds..."
(in White, 1983: 26-7)

The Defeating of Magic

"...The philosophies and intellectual practices of the Renaissance contradict those very forms of Western humanist rationalism which tend to trace their origin to them This does not mean that Renaissance thought was inferior to our own, still "medieval" It used categories of experience, observation, and experiment but it did so within rather different premises and toward different objects Its knowledges had concerns, spiritual and cultural, that ours do not. Its knowledges and sciences are not mere prototypes of modern thought, led astray by mistaken superstitions To make such a judgement is to conceal a difference in concerns, a disvaluation of the religious and spiritual as central to science and intellectual culture"

(Hirst and Woolley, 1982 232-33)

The scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is now generally agreed, owed more to the new Platonism of the Renaissance, and to the Hermetic mysticism which grew out of it, than to any mere "rationalism" in the modern sense of the word Ficino, with his "natural magic", Paracelsus for all his bombast, Giordano Bruno in spite of his "Egyptian" fantasies, did more to advance the concept and investigation of a regular "Nature" than many a rational sensible, Aristotelean scholar who laughed at their absurdities or shrank from their shocking conclusions It is no accident that "natural magicians" like Agrippa, and "alchemists" like Paracelsus and his disciples were among the enemies of the witch-craze, while those who attacked Platonist philisophy, Hermetic ideas and Paracelsian medicine were also, often, the most stalwart defenders of the same delusion"

(Trevor-Roper, 1969 132)

"...All the power of magic consists in love The work of magic is the attraction of one thing by another in virtue of their natural sympathy The parts of this world, like the members of one animal are united among themselves in the community of a single nature From their communal relationship a common love is born and from this love a common attraction and this is the true magic Thus the lodestone attracts iron, amber straw, brimstone fire, the Sun draws flowers and leaves towards itself, the Moon the seas "

(Marsilio Ficino, Translation of Corpus Hermeticum, 1463, in Easlea, 1980 4)

As Nietzsche forewarned this century, reason is the modern's ruse, the prejudice that "compels us to posit unity, identity, duration, cause, materiality, being..." (Nietzsche, 1889:5). Michel Foucault reformulates this problem in his use of the notion discourse, "not the thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations, that are concealed or revealed in discourses; but those discourses themselves, in their specificity, those discourses as practices obeying certain rules" (Foucault,1972:138). As Hegel informed us, life, the dialectic, is an unending symphony of contradictions. As Foucault appraised the situation, "Discourse is the path from one contradiction to another: if it gives rise to those that can be seen, it is because it obeys that which it hides" (Foucault,1972:141). In my own words, discourses do not seek to resolve contradictions, but rather contradictions are the basis in which discourses emerge.

The traditional path of anthropology has been to isolate the particular and to conclude with thoughts on universal conditions. The same leap is similarly portrayed in the wave of Levi- Straussian structuralism, a leap from the contingencies and contradictions of daily life to the unconscious depths and syntheses of binary oppositions explaining the coherency of the whole. (I've never been sure if these profound abstractions lead us any closer to understanding our fellow humans. Sometimes I think it does just the opposite, but for theoretical purposes this approach will continue.) In the subsequent wave of what can nebulously be called post- structuralist thinkers, or for my

interests, the works of Foucault, the efforts have not been to divulge the integrity of the system. (In this context, **system** is referring to culture at large as inseparable from the interconnectedness of the unconscious that all our minds share.) Instead, Foucault wants to dissolve this "very distinction between surfaces and depths, to show that wherever this distinction arises it is evidence of the play of organized power and that this distinction is itself the most effective weapon that power possesses for hiding its operations" (Sturrock, 1979:82). The objective, then, is to explore discourse "not from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal structures of what they are saying, but from the point of view of the rules that come into play in the very existence of such discourse..."(Foucault,1970:xiv).

Henceforth, this world must be addressed as an essential fiction. At the heart of that fiction is the historical subject whose bearings are fixed by the realm of the symbolic, the silent guidelines of the imagination within which all meanings are constituted. It is that silence that Michel Foucault fills in by this notion of discourse, that is, that realm which precedes all empirical experiences of reality, and yet, is the resevoir of truth and knowledge that allows the subject to speak. However, in this regard, the dimensions of discourse cannot be limited to that which purports to be true, i.e., reason, essences, scientific truths. Discourses, foremost, include those spaces that fall outside the mainstreams of consciousness; spaces which may materialize in time as explicit resistances to those mainstreams. Thus, there is the creation of new discourses, as in the case of Rastafari, molded out of the margins and debris of previous ones.

So that the reader does not become thoroughly confused, what precisely then does Foucault mean by discourse?

> "Discourse ceases to be what it is for the exegetic (critical analysis or interpretation) attitude: an inexhaustible treasure from which one can always draw new, and always unpredictable riches; a providence that has always spoken in advance, and which enables one to hear, when one knows how to listen to retrospective oracles: it appears as an asset - finite, limited, desirable, useful - that has its own rules of appearance, but also its own condition of appropriation and operation; an asset that consequently from the moment of its existence (and not only in its practical applications) poses the question of power, an asset that is, by nature, the object of a struggle"
>
> (Foucault, 1972:120).

The struggle that this thesis is concerned with is one that lies at the heart of the anthropological inquiry: Are the modern systems of scientifically based thought (i.e., secular humanism, democracy, communism) any more valid or effective than more ancient forms of thought and practice (i.e., magic, religion, ritual, spiritual discipline) in minimizing human suffering? Does one direction imply the denial of the other, or can the two co-exist? Magic in West African and Jamaican cultures has included ritual means of healing as the basis for fostering communal solidarity. In the West, magic had its corollary in the divine healing of Christiandom, up until medieval times, and then experienced its final flourishing and decline in the Hermetic traditions.

Hermeticism was revived in the Florentine Renaissance, most notably in Marsilio Ficino's translation (1463) of the **Corpus Hermeticum**. Named after the mythical figure Hermes Trismegestus (meaning thrice-great), and identified by the Greeks with the Egyptian God Thoth, the Hermetic tracts are now believed to have been authored by an anonymous group of Greeks at the beginning of the Christian era

(1000-300 A.D.). They contained a heady mixture of Platonism and Stoicism, along with Jewish and Persian gnostic influences and are introduced here to demonstrate how the rejection of that discipline continues to shape and color our perceptions of magic today.

The final defeating of magic in the West corresponds to the break or rupture introducing the Classical **episteme** Characterizing this break, as well as Foucault's definition of **episteme**, are not the fruits or sudden advancement of knowledge, but rather the creating of a new set of rules in which knowledge subsists. It is here that the experience of language belongs to the same archaeological network as the knowledge of things and nature (Foucault,1974:14)

> "Just as the secret movements of his understanding are manifested by his voice,so it would seem that the herbs speak to the curious physician through their signatures, discovering to him... their inner virtues hidden beneath nature's veil of silence" (Crollius ,1624: 4 in Foucault, 1970: 27).

Thus, "the great metaphor of the book that one opens, that one pores over and reads in order to know nature, is merely the reverse and visible side of another transference, and a much deeper one, which forces language to reside in the world, among the plants, the herbs, the stones, and the animals" (Foucault, 1970: 35).

With the advent of the Classical age, an advent that Foucault rigidly pinpoints at the mid-17th century, the properties of words cease to be a part of the world, and are not to be considered a mark of the signatures, the empirical truths, that nature possesses. Language "withdraws from the midst of beings themselves. The activity of the mind therefore no longer consists in drawing things together, in setting out on a quest for everything that might reveal some sort of kinship,

attraction, or secretly sharing with them, but, on the contrary, in discriminating" (Foucault,1 970: 55-56), that is, in establishing hierarchies of order one step removed from the natural order these hierarchies are designed to represent.

If it were possible then to attribute a clean break that introduced the Classical age, rather than the evolving series of transformations that created this break, the conclusion would be this: the individual is no longer seen as a microcosm, but rather as a self-contained unit, a shift equally represented by the expanding judicial domain defining the standards of civil conduct. James Hillman, author of Re-Visioning Psychology, explains the change that took place.

> "...Fifteenth-century Renaissance thought had flourished partly by means of revived images of personified powers. Astrology, alchemy, and medicine; the allegories of painting and poetry, Latin literature and Greek hermeticism; Orphism and Neoplatonism - all displayed a personified world in nature and psyche...The seventeenth-century world had no place for an imaginal population. That population was damned into demonism which then reached its richest flourishing as a contemporary counterpart to the new science. Both modern science as it was then being formed and modern Christianity as it was then being reformed, required that subjectivities be purged from everywhere and everything except the authorized place of persons: the rational Christian adult. To experience otherwise was heresy and witchcraft"(Hillman, 1976: 4-5).

The point is that it was the witch-craze phenomenon, a period of persecution and prosecution that began in the 16th century and waned by the mid-17th, that defeated the Hermetic traditions and equally engendered the notion of the sovereign individual. This suppression

coincided in time with the final debunking of the belief in spirits and the rise of mechanical thought.

. What must be stressed here is that the machinery which created the witch-craze and defeated Hermeticism (magical thinking), had also spawned the Enlightenment. And yet, while substantially built, the machinery had still not produced its products. Instead, it had already guaranteed its own inbuilt survival, the means, at first, to suppress and defeat all kinds of magic, and then, eliminating the immediate moral obligation of a community through ritual means to take care of its impaired and vagrant members. It was precisely these members that filled up the asylums of 18th century Europe. The Devil, the magician's and witch's purported ally, mechanically ceased to exist, corresponding with the final breakdown of the social network and taboos sustaining Devil beliefs. The road to Enlightenment, this breakdown, thus required more rather than less ideological control over one's personal life; controls substantially administered by the State, but also linked to the effort of these States to conquer foreign lands; a process Foucault termed the tyrannizing formation of globalizing discourses. Modern science, the modern mind, were the by-products of the longest sustained period of terrorism that this globe has ever known. How is it then that the Enlightenment, the age of rational thinking, endeavor, and progress, is also still considered the crowning of individual freedoms?

"Modernity begins with the incredible and ultimately unworkable idea of a being who is sovereign precisely by virtue of being enslaved, a being whose very finitude allows him to take the place of God?" (Dreyfus and Rabinow,1982:32). The world could no longer be rendered redeemable in transcendental refuge. The paradox of the hidden God,

omnisciently present but forever mute, and soon to be completely banished by the majority of the secularized West, coincides with the emergence of the atomized individual; an emergence that affords a more explicit rule-oriented behavior at the expense of diminishing powers.

Just as the priest had been robbed by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation of his powers of performing the miracles of the mass, so the other outstanding physician of the soul, the Hermetic magi, as intermediary link to nature's charms, had been eliminated. Religion takes on a wholly new and reduced meaning. No longer a way of life, which is how Rastafari and much of the non-industrialized world regards it, but a systematization of beliefs, values, and practices. Religion becomes a set of ethical codes designed to fit within the larger codes of society and supports these codes by formalizing and curtailing, rather than embellishing the rituals of being human. Indeed, ritual, moreover, has become a private affair, an idiosyncratic but regular series of gestures and practices - in short, what one does with one's spare time.

The transformation of the self within the divine grace of nature, of God's restless beauty, was replaced with the usurping of religiosity by civic duty. As the body becomes a cog in the mechanically redefined machinations of the Universe, the problems of the soul become the products of disbelief, either a skeptical suspension of God to a postulated afterlife, or a complete suspension of belief within the infinite space this new science was creating. The tragic vision of modern life was no longer what was known, a tragedy previously remedied by a variety of medieval pieties, but that one was unable to know. The notion of the good life, **les divertissements**, the Classical age

introduced, the establishment of art, music, science, literature, philosophy and religion as separate discourses, were based on and sustained by the very alienation this establishing had devised and Rastafari rejects: a linear and segmented rather than a cyclical and recoverable concept of history.

What,then, does this have to do with Rastafarian music? In order to understand revitalization movements one must assess what is being struggled against. The Reformation had succeeded in stripping Christianity of its most formidable magical qualities, and where the Reformation failed, the witchcraze would attempt to complete the task. No longer could divine grace apply to human intervention. The dictates of the Reformation, of the Anglican Church, and the varying dissenting sects were anything but uniform, and yet, the general direction remained the same. Incantations, dancing, maypoles, bagpipes, and fiddle music, seances, gift-exchanges, etc., were either banned or considerably curtailed. Shrines were dismantled and hymns revoked as they were thought "to have been conceived in the character of magic spells" (Thomas,1971:70). Music, indeed, the arts in general, cease to play an integral role in European social organization.

An unprecedented shift had taken place. As Roger Taylor points out in **Art, An Enemy of the People**, "Beauty is no longer thought of in terms of truth (i.e.,the extent to which the work of art reflects or represents the established social structure), but is thought of in terms of the presence or absence of a psychological response" (Taylor,1978:73). One of those responses, that of pleasure, is what the witch prosecutors conceived as definitively invoked by the Devil. Indeed, the original witch-craze doctrine, the Malleus Malificium,

authored by two Dominican monks, was an accusation of women fornicating with the Devil. It was on a similar basis that Europeans saw in the slaves' drumming and dancing the certainty of Devil worship and obscene orgy. Thus, they were banned accordingly. (It is difficult to say which race was more superstitious.) Rastafari, along with a myriad of other Afro-Christian practices, was the re-surfacing from that banishment.

The use of music as an anthropological tool can now be seen. The kind of thinking that created the romantic notion of the artist as something distanced and differentiated from the culture within which it is produced, also alters the role oral traditions play within the transmission of Euro-American culture. While music for the displaced African continued to play its central role as a primary socializing agent, for the Euro-American it becomes a source of intellectual reflection and entertainment. Paradoxically, reggae music would try to fulfill both roles, or as Leroy Sibbles (formerly of the Heptones, one of the early and formidable reggae trios) commented in an interview, "Every fact of life is being explained true in the music. That's why it is Jah music that come to teach as well as entertain." Rastafarian music stems from an oral tradition that not only acts as that group's barometer and pressure valve, but also contains the seeds for social adaptation, change, and revolution. The music must then be dealt with as three levels of discourse: 1)the central role drumming has played in African culture and Rastafari's Nyabingi ritual; 2) the way music has come to be channelled in the West in mass popular form; 3) the combination of these two discourses to create a third - the hybrid form reggae has become.

The reason for applying the seemingly esoteric but actually quite down-to-earth Foucaultian theory of discourse stems from the needs to establish a ground in order to talk about oral culture. Rastafarian music, for most of its listeners, is often received only as a finished product, veiling the rich streams of Black culture and consciousness from which it stems. This is a hangover from our own Western literary and aesthetic traditions: the work of art as refined pieces, framed and bartered over. In contrast, in the traditions of African oral culture, it is the musician and not the music "which is the document. He is the information itself. The impact of stored information is transmitted not through records or archives, but through the human response to life" (Sidran,1971:xiv). This, then, is the only possible value of intellectually analyzing oral culture. Not how and what the music means, but how the meaning is variously composed and disseminated in relation to the cultural life -the institutions, the private and public domains of social organizations and convictions - in which the music is engendered. Thus, it is not the technical aspects of the music I will analyze (as this, for the most part, is not how Rasta music is mastered). Rather, I will enter and examine the environment within which the music reproduces, transforms, and/or subverts that environment in order to sustain and make viable an African derived and time honored oral culture.

Let me put it another way. In the words of Ben Sidran, a commercially renown jazz singer and author of **Black Talk**, "Semantics,symbolic logic and psycho-analysis are all means of refining or bypassing speech to get at meaning. But black music is a form of oral communication which itself bypasses formal analysis to communicate some

kind of empirical meaning, and beyond that, some form of emotional truth. To write about such a form of communication is often to reduce it to nothing very meaningful" (Sidran,1971:xx). In the attempt to avoid this trap, my aim is not to describe or portray in prolonged detail the evolution of musical forms. Instead, I have turned to the music as discourse, the conditions and constraints in which it has evolved - in short, the underlying assumptions that have produced the music and serve to counteract the values and repressive elements of Western society.

The Western intellectual tradition, via Descartes, has made a point of separating consciousness from bodies. This is in distinct contrast to the African tradition of spirit possession, which in the New World found a rebirth in the rise of the Black Christian Church. Indeed, spirit possession (the psychological/physiological components of which will be discussed in the next chapter) indicated the manifestation of the Holy Ghost and was generated through music. The spirit will not descend without song. Nor, is possession, for all its hysterical quality, undisciplined. For the musician, it represents the ability to perform at the peak of emotional involvement. This ecstatic twist to Christianity provided for the New World African an acceptable context in which to throw off all kinds of social and ideological tyranny. White culture was assimilated by an employment of its forms, but often the inner meanings of its contents were drastically altered. Most significantly, Black radicalism would serve as a faithful adjunct to Black Christianity.

The retention of oral culture signifies the retention of accompanying perceptual attributes, which lies at the base of subcultural divergences. While the notion of subculture has been

predominantly applied by 20th century social scientists to youth or marginal movements, African culture in the New World has always subsisted as a type of subculture. Music signified the empowering of the transported and dissipated African culture, a process of communication and expression indistinguishable from the formation of community. The type of regimes which these subcultures had to survive within determined the particular nature and direction the music would take.

In the United States, as opposed to the Caribbean and Brasil, drumming traditions were virtually extinguished. American Blacks, however, continued to employ African rhythmic devices in their field and work songs. The same inflections emerged in the music of the Black Church, i.e., the Black preacher as vocal performer and the accompanying call and response vocal choirs. As several accomplished blues players have informed me, the blues man came along and changed the words from God and Jesus to Oh Baby, but the same line of orally passed down culture was being held. Eventually it was this religiously produced sound, the gospel trio, that via New Orleans radio attracted the attention of early ska performers. The percussive traits of the Caribbean and the vocal techniques of the States, splintered by the slave trade, came back together in the form of reggae music.

The essential difference between African and European musical idioms is the relationship between listener and performer. The concept of a soloist was foreign to West African culture. While there were masters, every musician was considered equally crucial to the produced sound. As Sidran noted, "The new black individualism, spun-off from the church and exemplified by the soloist, was unlike traditional Western individualism in that it did not proceed from the chain of inference

established through Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. Oral cultures do not begin from the assumption of the separation of man from man, nor of man from the environment at large..." (Sidran, 1971: 26). African music employs rhythm as a way of providing a description of experience, and not just a means of keeping time, a way of stating and ameliorating social and physical tensions. As will be reviewed in the next chapter, the rhythmic advances from mento to ska to rock-steady to reggae signified corresponding social transformations.

Another difference between Western and African music is the lack of notation and obsession with particular technique, reflecting the obvious differences between oral and literary based cultures. As Simon Frith characterized Black music in the States,"Sound and beat are felt rather than interpreted via a sound of conventions"(Frith,1981:19). Sidran adds, "Whereas Western musicians are recognized for their ability to conform to and master traditional techniques, black musicians are highly regarded for their ability to invent personal techniques and to project personal sounds" (Sidran,1971:14). Most modern popular music is an amalgamation of both cultural orientations, a continuum stretching from the African side of things (reggae, Brazilian batucada) to the most European (marching bands).

While oral culture was central to American Black communities throughout their history, Black music never entered mainstream consciousness until "it was sold over the counter on an international scale through predominantly white imitations" (Sidran, 1971: xxii). The very selling of the music, of course, would change it. In contrast to European music, African song depended on the immediacy of communication, the bodily apprehension of rhythms, that melody and harmony are then

layered over. It is the immediacy of performance that structures the song, rather than the structure of the song taking precedent and shaping the performance.

From the outset, "recording companies (1920's) developed separate popular records and race records. The former were available in white communities, the latter in black ghettos"(Sidran, 1971: 68) The music was simply too hot for white audiences to tolerate. The concept of hot music was coined by Black jazzmen shortly after the turn of the century, referring to African survivals in Black American music. It refers to "singing and playing which generates excitement and emotional intensity by using a whole range of Negro techniques· complex rhythms, hypnotic beat, chopped notes, dirty tones and dissonances, blues inflections and an intense taut delivery" (MacGregor,1983:92.) Whether it be soul, funk, jazz, blues, or reggae, the heat remains.

Over time, competent White musicians mingled with the Black and learned how to feel and play hot music. Thus, it is important to recognize blackness on a musical plane as a cultural rather than racial condition. In many ways, Afro-American culture is allowing the West to reclaim some of the magic it has lost. Unfortunately, this reclaiming is often done at the expense of the musicians themselves The struggle of the Black American jazz players parallels that of the reggae musicians Both have been vastly underpaid and unrecognized compared to the predominantly White musicians who have appropriated their music Both have had to reroute their thinking to arrive at the music. Fortunately, for those who care to listen, the music explains all of this

> "Like Ornette Coleman, who developed along with his musical innovations an elaborate conception

> of social love, John Coltrane could attribute his musical development , in part, to his spiritual awakening. In a period of less than a year, he had kicked his heroin habit and become involved with music as as instrument which can create the initial thought patterns that can change the thinking of people . The result was a highly spiritual social philosophy based on the potential of black music to alter social orientations and value structures" (Sidran,1971:140).

As horn player Archie Shepp commented, "Jazz is a music itself born out of oppression, born out of the enslavement of my people" (Shepp in Kofsky,1970:140). Such is the core of the ritual journey I am about to embark on.

The Genealogy Of A Ritual

"In order to understand the nature of the human in a given epoch, one needs a historical analysis of the chief spiritual forces that cause man to become what he is, one needs a genealogy that will unearth the buried presuppositions and the hidden alternatives that frame a particular era's humanity". (Pangler, 1983: 50)

"The inevitable tension that arises between Jamaican reggae, the roots, and its gradual immersion in international commercial structures after Marley's success, is neatly complemented by the mixture of natural and artificial sounds that echo one another in the dub process".
(Chambers, 1985 174)

"Facts? About Jamaica? Aha' I love when the country people say there are no facts in Jamaica. It sounds so poetic and spooky, but they're absolutely right, of course. Because there really aren't any, when you think of it Not a one". (Chris Blackwell, Reggae Producer in White, 1983· 1)

THE POWER OF THE BEAT

The magic of Rastafarian music, another era, or simply another space, may not be accessible by our present eyes, ears, and bodies. Magic retreats from the abstract categories forged by anthropological inquiry. Magic is, foremost, a way of thinking and participating in the world, i e , Rasta's I'n'I consciousness. As magic is not empirically verifiable, the aim here is not to continue anthropology's comparative analysis of magic and scientific practices, an analysis that seems to have driven us no closer to a clearer definition of either. The attempt rather is to apprehend how we, ourselves, the budding anthropologist and the reader, wrestle with magic, how it is that such developing notions as revelation, rhythm, and redemption, magic's coordinate points, may inundate our daily lives - in particular, how magic in modern times has become a meaningful commodity.

This chapter will provide two perspectives with which to observe the evolution of the Rastafarian ritual. One comes from the historical consequences of visionary experiences, i e., the East's mastering of the body's chakra energy fields, the West's mystery schools, the global powers and practices of the third eye. The other perspective has been derived from the late Michel Foucault. With the aid of Foucault's vision, I will attempt to attain, at once, a localized perception of Rasta's growth, along with an understanding of its global impacts and contributors. With these two instruments, the visionary and the

intellectual, I hope to blend together a singular understanding of the motivating forces forging the growth of Rasta song.

Foucault spoke of the historical event as "not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it..."(Foucault,1971:154-55) These events occur "by means of a shift at the margin between apparent reality and the space beyond reality, between the visible and the hidden, the familiar and the strange" (Lemart and Gilian,1982:41). To record that shift Foucault conducts genealogical research directed towards a resurrection of local, popular and disqualified knowledges This research "sets out to reveal the historicity of those qualities and properties which have formerly been considered ahistorical (e.g.,feelings, sentiment, morality, ideals, the physiology of the body): it focuses on the discredited, the lowly, on the neglected periods, forms and events; it shortens its vision to those things nearest to it - the body, the nervous system., it unearths the periods of decadence; and it celebrates the perspectivity of knowledge" (Smart,1983:77).

The genealogy of dread rites will begin where many third eye traditions have also found their natural beginnings: the beating of the drum. Skin on skin. The sound of the air around the sound Holding onto the simplicity and intensity of the groove. Snap Pushing on into the next awaiting gaps Picking out the hidden rhythm. Respecting the space the additional silence, the syncopated noise, creates "A rhythm which cuts and defines another rhythm must leave room for the other rhythm to be heard clearly, and the African drummer concerns himself as much with

the notes he does not play as with the accents he delivers" (Chernoff,1979:60). Snap. Pushing the rhythm further. The masters are in charge here. Again, concentrating on simply holding onto that groove. And then, perhaps, the same energy running up the spine. Moving to the beat, or adding on to it, creating a meditative bubble of sound and motion. The striking hands may feel like they're riding on velvet clouds. New, deeper, richer, tones emerge from the drums. The drums, their gods, begin to speak. Solos are popping. Snap. Skin on skin. Focus. An extra-ordinary group clarity may result.

The use of the rhythms and instruments of the Burru peoples, known also as Cumina drumming, living in West Kingston, was not a happenstance occurrence. As Verona Reckford learned in her discussions with Count Ossie on the origins of Rasta drum and reasoning sessions, "They focused on African retentions in Jamaica and the significance of the drum as a medium of expression in African culture. Burru drumming was reasoned as one of the few undiluted African forms still alive during the late forties So, Burru was adopted" (Reckford,1976:9-10). With Rasta lyric and song, now combined with and augmented by the magic of African drumming, an intensity of awareness developed in these initial sessions that over time, Jamaica, and later, the world, would be compelled to respond to.

Why in the reasoning sessions of a few brethren located in the shantytown neighborhoods of West Kingston did such an intensity emerge? Controlled trance-possession is the neurophysiological state in which the Gods are summoned, obeyed, succumb to; a state of emptying the mind and then refilling it with ritual information. A fervor, a frenzy, that can be as light as a slight trance, a tingling, or a slip into

unconsciousness. Trance-possession is a cathartic surfacing and release, a leap of consciousness that can happen in a variety of ways and speeds. It will affect more intensely the most unstable, and thus, is directed by the already initiated, strongest, and wisest personalities of the group. Throughout Africa, and now in the Caribbean summoning of African gods, the drummers are the central core of this select group. "In effect, the drummer must integrate the social situation into his music,and the situation itself can make the music different." (Chernoff,1979:68).

"The beat becomes a focus, and then finally a replacement for the ego's will. As the rhythm is internalized, it becomes the coordinating center" (Zeusse,1979: 196). Traditionally, African rhythms are constructed around the dancers, that is, they are polyrhythms surrounding a hidden rhythm that the dancer's body is attuned to and absorbed by. "A true master must time his utterances to replenish the dancer's physical and aesthetic energy at the right psychological moment" (Cudjoe in Chernoff,1979:66). Most important is building tension into a rhythm. Tension may seem an odd choice of words, but the purpose of rhythm (which is, after all, as potent as any drug) is to literally embody these tensions (social, physical, mental), and then transform that energy into something cleansing and celebratory. Although rarely recognized as such, our weekly jaunts to the dance floor are the modern day version of ancient practices with tremendous therapeutic value. More specifically, this tension is produced by providing counterrhythms, that is playing a pattern that actually falls on the other side of a rhythm (like the ummmm-chik skank of the reggae rhythm guitar), and lends it a wholeness. In more intensive settings such as voodoo, trance is

deliberately induced by breaks in the rhythm known as possession strokes.

"And yet the power and presence of rhythm is in no way unconscious: on the contrary it intensifies into consciousness, fills and obsesses consciousness... Rhythm interests life in spite of itself, but not by offering it utility or meaning; it effects a deconceptualization of reality" (Lingus in Allison, 1977: 50). In other words, rhythmic signals reach and activate parts of the central nervous system inaccessible by non-rhythmic stimuli, a bypassing of the discursive faculties. As a percussionist one does not learn the criss-cross currents of African rhythms by reading patterns of notes (although this is possible), but rather by feeling the gaps in the rhythm and knowing precisely where your part fits into it. Possession can then catapult the unwary into unconscious fits, as characterized by voodoo or Pentecostal sects. Like the aftermath of a seizure, the short circuiting of the nervous system allows the subject a relaxed recovery. However, the brain can prevent unconsciousness by willful concentration, a deliberate combating or circumventing of phantoms and hallucinations - the unwanted residue of one's thinking process. Rasta calls this exercise "a circumcision of the heart". Such a high state of equilibrium can come about when the desire to behave, think, and feel a certain way, i.e, the quest for political and spiritual integrity and renewal, becomes the primary determinant of behavior. Such is the intensity of Rastafari.

Communal consciousness, or what Turner more broadly defined as **communitas** (1974), travels beyond mere self-assurances, beyond seemingly utopic restorations of hope and group/self identities.

Communitas travels into that hinterland where power and knowledge services its constraints, where metaphysics, morality, art, science, and its technologizing offspring are all products of this will to flight. This does not imply some notion of a transcendent sphere oppressed peoples escape to. Instead, this sphere collapses into the reordering of reality itself.

Go on and get yourself a vision. Nurture that vision. Understand its heritage. The ceremonial smoking of herbs, the orchestrating of drums, the reasoning among brethren, were the prime catalysts instigating the Rastafarian visionary process to take place.

> "Well, I come outside and I hear a voice seh ta I, "What is your Order?' I thought it was a reporter (speaking), but den I realize it was heaven speaking. I seh, 'My Order is de Nyabingi Order -- which mean death to white imperialism and assassination ta de black olive! De black olive is da black man dat has a white mind and is an oppressor ta de poor."
> (Mobuta in Homiak, 1980: 20)

This is a vision Mobuta, a Rastaman, received in 1936 while leading a contingent of brethren to the House of Parliament demanding that the government take action to initiate repatriation to Africa. The unconscious can emerge collectively. Leonard Howell understood that collectivity of power, and with it, formed the Pinnacle commune in St. Catherine in 1940. Fourteen years later the settlement was destroyed by the police, allowing the ritually trained Rastas to return to the ghettos of West Kingston. The results were combustible.

Rasta was now riding the crest of a wave, the migration of African culture to the Caribbean, and then beginning in the late 50's, an additional and crucial migration that would take the spirit of Jah to

England, North America, and inevitably back to Africa. Along that wave Rasta joined many other New World African healing techniques -Voodoo, Obeah, Shango, the North American spirituals, etc.. These different healing rituals are variations of a theme. They helped to instill a fervor and provide the context in which to combat all kinds of tyranny, a fervor that Rasta formalized by the political events of long lost brothers and sisters battling the same colonial enemies far across the sea: the Nyabingi warriors of Uganda and the Italian-Ethiopian conflict.

Horace Campbell, author of **Rastafari: culture of resistance**, explains the effect the international awareness of Rasta's spokesmen had on the movement.

> "The colonial state was in no doubt about the threat posed to it by the first Rastafari. Leonard Howell, Archibald Dunkley and Joseph Hibbert, early preachers of the movement, were Jamaican workers who had all worked overseas (Howell had fought for the British against the Ashanti)...Howell was incarcerated for two years for selling pictures of Haile Selassie. After all, therewas only one monarch in Jamaica, and the planters were terrified by a cultural leader who identified with the anti-colonial movement of Kigezi,Uganda - the Nyabingi - and called for death to Black and White oppressors.
>
> (Campbell, 1980: 78)

As a result of the Italian-Ethiopian conflicts, Rasta's vision had become attuned to the contemporary struggles and symbols of Africa. They found lurking in that vision an order, the Nyabingi, which quickly blended with the initial Rasta drum and reasoning sessions. The Nyabingi, or simply Bingi, and the Grounation ceremony, became synonymous terms.

The more resistance Rastafari received, the more Rastas became strengthened in their faith. Babylon was proving itself to be the evil force that Rasta portrayed them as.

> "The jailing of Howell was the first serious attempt to crush identification with Africa. Howell and Dunkley were both subsequently sentenced to imprisonment in mental institutions for their continuing cultural resistance. To declare Howell insane was the colonial answer to the black consciousness of Rastafari. To compoundthis insanity, the men began to wear their hair like the Masai warriors of East Africa and called themselves locksmen or Nyamen"(Campbell,1980:8)

The dreadlock Rastaman,the wrath and fury of Rasta now symbolized by flying locks, was about to be etched into the consciousness of Jamaican society. Through the rest of the 1950's the pressures built. Jamaica could no longer contain its discontents. The poor as well as the professionally trained fled to the U.S. and Canada, but the majority, nearly a quarter million, (Clarke,1980: 70) left for the mother colony. It is difficult to say how big the Rasta movement had become, as there was no Church (other than the body), no formal hierarchial structure

In 1955, Haile Selassie, Rasta's propnet **in absentia,** granted 500 acres of land, through the New York City based Ethiopian World Federation, to Black peoples of the West. Two important events, reversals, marked the decade, launching Rastafari into the more visible contours of Jamaican,and now, inextricably, international awareness. The one was the holding of the first Grounation ceremony in 1958 publicizing "the little known rituals" of Rastafari, a convention held every year since. "Some 200 cultists of both sexes from all over the island have assembled at Back-O-Wall headquarters since April 1..." On March 24, when the police decided to disperse them, "a leader of the

group with his hands raised issued this warning: touch not the Lord's anointed..."(Barrett, 1977: 92-93). They were moved, nevertheless, and eight years later the settlement was destroyed in the government's scrape-the-earth campaign

The other significant event was the repatriation movement: "Ethiopia' Yes' England' No' Let my people go' " (Barrett,1977·90), as inspired by Selassie's gift and then its aborted Oct. 5,1959 attempt directed, or rather misdirected, by Reverend Claudius Henry. Henry began by distributing thousands of cards with the following invitation:

> "Pioneering Israel's scattered children of African Origin,'back home to Africa'...Holder of this Certificate is requested to visit the Headquarters at 18 Rosalie Avenue. Please reserve the certificate for removal. No passport will be necessary for those returning to Africa... " (in Barrett,1977: 97)

Consequently, as the Daily Gleaner of October 7 reported:

> "Hundreds with no place to go lingered at 78 Rosalie Avenue, among these were women and children.Many left for their homes, but others were ashamed to go home because they had sold their houses and lands (in Barrett,1977: 97).

Not sure what to make of the fiasco, the government raided Henry's premises 8 months later, asserting that the pastor had turned revolutionary and was preparing for guerilla strategies "The mounting panic was reflected in a Sunday Guardian article (1 May 1960) headlined Jamaicans Live In Fear Of Rasta Men, in which the movement's membership was estimated at 6,000" (Cashmore,1979: 31). Whether or not the reports were true or not seems secondary. Rasta was beginning to make waves. "At the request of the leading Rasta brethren, Dr. Arthur Lewis, head of the University of the West Indies, authorized three of his best scholars to study the doctrines and special conditions of the Rastafarians and to

make recommendations to the premier of Jamaica on their behalf" (Barrett, 1977: 99). Although the oppression of the brethren continued, the report fulfilled its duties. It neutralized Rasta and made conciliatory efforts to incorporate the movement into the mainstream

To many Henry was nothing more than a crazed crackpot, but it was precisely his revolutionary antics that caused the Jamaican intellectuals to rethink their position. As Rex Nettleford, an author of the 1960 report commented ten years later, "The Rastafarian movement as a whole forced the middle and upper strata to rethink their conception of the multiracial base of Jamaican nationalism and at long last to accept the African. ...The burden of acceptance is upon society, not upon the brethren" (Nettleford, 1972: 157). Of course, much of that acceptance would be mere lip-service so as not to offend the powers that be. Rastafari was filling an ideological vacuum: a reclamation of cultural identity.

The economic and social forces that contributed to the migration of Caribbean people around the world also fed the fires of Rastafari. The Jamaican peasantry and labor force were always a peoples dispossessed of their own lands. In short, where the plantation system was halted with the emancipation of slaves, it was quickly regenerated by the capitalist's machinery. Due to the fluctuating nature of the machine, its peaks and valleys, certain times in history would be particularly acute and harsh for the landless or subsistent peasant. As Beckford and Witter point out in **Small Garden...Bitter Weed**, "The deteriorating economic situation of peasants and rural proletariat was instrumental in promoting rapid rates of rural-urban migration and of external migration" (Beckford and Witter,1980: 69). An international

community of urban dwellers was in the forming, a community that would combine the musical tastes of the modern Western world with the rhythms of a transplanted Africa. It would change, indeed, help fully create , an international music scene.

As always, the struggles and resistance of the New World African appears in an intensely cultural form. A profound cultural/musical fusion was about to occur Its three main streams contained·1) music of the Mento/Calypso variety, the former a combination of calypso fused with Latin-American influences producing a distinctively Jamaican sound 2) the fusion of Rasta drumming, singing, recitation of poetry, reading of Psalms, and the Bible, exemplified in the recordings of the late Count Ossie and his jazz influenced **Mystic Revelation of Rastafari Band** (Ossie helped established the Rastafarian connection with burru drummers back in the Forties.) 3)the Afro-American genres and mushrooming of rhythm'n'blues broadcast via short-wave radio from the American South, i e.,the gospel New Orleans sound, the soul sounds - James Brown, Otis Redding - of Miami's WINZ station. (Miami is presently a hotbed for reggae musicians.)

> "R&B emerged out of the traditional Blues (usually stated in the twelve-bar format), a music that emerged as a result of the drift from rural Southern America to the urban north. The different urban conditions and new experiences were reflected in the music, giving rise to R&B, and later Soul and Disco"(Clarke, 1980: 59), (a sound that would later prepare White audiences for reggae's funky drawback beat). "...The similar rural/urban migration in Jamaica and America (leaving the plantations/farms to go and live in slums and continued poverty in the city) caused Jamaicans to identify with Afro-American music ..Once the R&B was superseded by rock'n'roll, Jamaicans ceased to identify with it, and were forced to form their own version of

R&B for local consumption."
(Clarke, 1980: 60)

Ska, the name given to the high-pace off-beat scratching chinka sound of the rhythm guitar, was born.

The rhythm of ska was produced by a unique blending of an inverted R&B shuffle rhythm, with a particular guitar pattern of the Mento, and a syncopated bass. The change was simple but profound Each measure was opened up for a rhythmic conversation, rather than just the push ahead steam of the 4/4 boogie beat. In particular, Jamaican musicians accentuated the afterbeat of the standard 1-2-3-4 beat so that the "piano or rhythm guitar emphasized the **and** of one-and-two-and-three-and-four" (Johnson, 1978: 49) As it was now the off-beat receiving primary emphasis, the dancer would be called on to supply the main beat That is why, for the uninitiated Westerner, dancing to this music may seem difficult. We tend to move to the beat rather than letting our body fill in the gaps. Opening up freedom in the measure also left room for the entry of African percussive currents, as exemplified by Rasta drumming. In essence, a more African version of R&B had been developed

The purpose of Foucault's genealogical analysis is to turn away from the spectacular to the discredited. The aim is not to produce a singularity of events, a common thread that history charts its course upon. The aim, rather, is to achieve an awareness of the cultural complexity/contingency and human fragility/dignity of historical events to which the social sciences have traditionally hoped to attribute a stability. This for Foucault is how descent is traced in a genealogy, an analysis that begins with the imminence of regionalized contexts, and foremost, the articulation of the body. In Foucault's words, "The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the

rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it is poisoned by foods or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it conducts resistances.

To the Jamaican public, ska was first known as a dance. Olive Lewin, a black woman and head of the folklore division for the Prime Minister's office, described the evolution of reggae in the following terms "Reggae came out of Revival through ska. Ska represented a conscious effort to shake off the European influence in Jamaican popular music. So the musicians went to what they knew best, which was Revival. If you go to a Revival Thanksgiving table (i.e., an Afro-Christian ritual feast), you will find that a lot of the movements there are what ska came from. Young people used to see these and feel that their grannies were dancing like the ska. But it was really their dance, the ska, was founded on their grannies' movement" (Lewin in Johnson, 1983: 48) It is in the freedom and resistance created in the privacy of one own's dance, that ska, and ultimately reggae, had its primary effect.

INDEPENDENCE

In 1962, Jamaica won its formal independence from Great Britain. The effects were, at once, superficial and transforming. The Jamaican government was now deliberatly promoting indigenous music over foreign imports in the attempt to forge a new cultural identity. But they would not take the next logical step that many of the musicians did: to base that identity upon an African heritage rather than a continual allegiance to Western regimes of thought and power. In 1963 the Skatalites came together. It contained some of Jamaica's finest jazz and R&B musicians, many of whom had been schooled in the philosophy and techniques of Ossie's Rastafarian camp. While the Skatalites were known

as the bad boys from Alpha (the West Kingston boarding school that many of them had attended), a tradition had been set. Jamaica's favorite dance band was largely based on the commitment of select musicians to a Rastafarian awareness.

As in the case of "African musical idioms, one aspect of the musician's specialization involves insight into deep issues and the consequent fulfillment of certain moral roles which our society delegates to other professions. Musicians are often the guardians of esoteric knowledge; in less formal contexts,it is their duty to lend the power of music to the support of civil behavior" (Chernoff, 1979. 71) In Jamaica this role would take a new twist with the emergence of the sound system D.J.. Sound systems are essentially mobile outdoors discotheques that first emerged in Jamaica's 50's with the fading of big band music. While the music originally riding these systems was predominantly American R&B, the collection of bodies pulsating on the street to a common beat was much more African in ambience than American With the onset of rock'n'roll, the D.J.'s were the most responsible for introducing the ska beat. As Count Machouki explained, an early artist of toasting who helped elevate the status of D J. to culture hero, "A D.J was a man who was responsible for conduct and behavior We used the music as a message to control the hearts and minds of the people - we didn't realize then that word is power, and the words that we used really could control people. Eventually I found that I could play all Jamaican recordings, strictly no foreign recordings, strictly Jamaican" (Machouki in Johnson, 1984: 70). By the mid-60's the two most popular D.J.'s of the next generation of toasters, U-Roy and Big Youth, were deeply committed Rastafarians. Like the gap in the criss-crossing of

African rhythms, there was a cultural pocket in Jamaica now ready to be filled. When Bob Marley swept the musical world in the Seventies, it was as though he appeared out of nowhere. But it was these roots, the fusion of Rasta philosophy and ska music, where Marley's vision was formed.

A pressure period, 1965-66, had set upon Jamaica. Despite independence, nothing had fundamentally changed in Jamaica's economic infrastructure. With the complete razing of a Rastafarian holdout, the Back-O-Wall ghetto in West Kingston, a fierce tension began to brew. Rude boys, the Jamaican equivalent of American ghetto tough guys, were recruited by both major political parties for goon-squad politics; an orchestrated terrorism that has plagued every election since. Concerned by the frenzy, musicians and toasters alike slowed the beat down to a throbbing pulse. Marley explained the situation as "a change from the older musicians to the younger, hungrier ones." Always conscious of the accomplishments of his Northern black brothers and musicians Marley added, "People like I, we loves James Brown and we dip into the American bag. We don't want to stand around playing and singing that ska beat anymore. The younger musicians, dem have a different beat. It was rock steady . " (Marley in Davis, 1983: 68).

As ska rhythms slowed down, "paradoxically the tension increased, and the body was now responding to an inner rhythmic drive. The tension of the external society was internalized by the dancer and expressed physically. Thus in Rock Steady, the dancer could remain on his spot of the earth, shake his shoulders, make pounding motions with his arms and hands (at an invisible enemy, an anonymous force)..." (Clarke, 1980: 81) All the ingredients of reggae were now present: the DJ displaying

the music's jewels, the dancer shimmering within those jewels, and the judgement/wrath of Rasta providing the central drive. The electronic production of the Jamaican song does not deviate from prior, seemingly more pure, ritual usages. Instead, this production fulfills the requirements of ritual. The sound system (often set up in remote spooky environs and yet where the powerful auras of amplified sound could now permeate) becomes the community's axis mundi. The DJ is called on to fulfill the ancient requirements of storyteller, entertainer, and magician "Africans use music and the other arts to articulate and objectify their philosophical and moral systems, systems which they do not abstract but which they build into the music-making situation itself..."(Chernoff, 1979: 37). Such was the liberating process going on in Jamaican popular music and its newly found social philosophy.

The original emergence and impact of reggae was derived from the sound systems, from their electronic manipulation and orchestration of sounds and styles (as opposed to traditional rock'n'roll which operates at full blast). As Dick Hebdige, author of **Subculture: The Meaning of Style**, explained.

> "The sound system, perhaps more than any other institution, was the site at which blackness could be most thoroughly explored, most clearly and uncompromisingly expressed. To a community hemmed in on all sides by discrimination, hostility, suspicion and black incomprehension, the sound system came to represent, particularly for the young, a precious inner sanctum, uncontaminated by alien influences." (Hebdige, 1980: 34)

If the distinction between high culture and low culture may be permanently disregarded, i e , recordings as ingenuine copies of real

events, it is still the contextual consumption of the music that points to what the music is saying, not simply what the music has said. This is not to say that live and recorded performances are alike, but that the DJ/sound system event blends the magic of both.

Out of some of the rude boy social formations and romanticized gangster identities, there emerged a new awakening. A similar wave would transform the heavily Caribbean populated black communities of the London area. In 1967 the Wailers, (at this point Marley, Tosh and Bunny Wailer), began to grow dreadlocks, becoming the first visibly outspoken Rastafarian group. The Wailer's leap in conviction put them at odds with Jamaica's leading producer, Coxsone Dodd. Becoming attuned to the social consciousness movements, particularly Black Power, sweeping the globe in 1968, the Wailers left Coxsone and attempted to form their own label. Bob Marley, in particular, put himself under the influence of Mortimer Planno, a leading Rastafarian elder in West Kingston. It is there where Marley began to regularly attend the herb, drum, and reasoning groundation meditation sessions.

The tracing of Marley's career is emblematic of the course reggae would take (just as the biographies of Elvis and The Beatles best explain the meteoric rise of rock). One missing ingredient, an additional alliance, would fuse the Caribbean Rasta with their London and slowly emerging North American brethren. The social revolutionaries of different races and continents, many of them young and daring, were speaking out. From the States, Malcolm X, H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichal, from the Caribbean, a Guyanese professor named Walter Rodney, began to coordinate the African side of this expression. Rasta brethren and Marxist intellectuals were paying attention to one another. Garvey's

prophecy, the quest for all displaced Africans to renourish and reclaim their Africanness, married with radical political strategies, was coming into fruition.

The year 1968 seems to have been a turning point for much of the Western world. The intellectual-proletariat crisis in France was paralleled by a similar tension and dialogue between Jamaican rude boys and University students. For Foucault, this crisis prompted the awakening that

> "in spite of his claims, the intellectual is really incapable of dealing with the complexity of a society taken in its totality; he is hopelessly lost in the face of certain social upheavals - occasions when the inadequacy of his systems is particularly glaring. Such an inadequacy was amply demonstrated in May 1968 when, according to Foucault, the intellectual discovered that 'the masses no longer need him to gain knowledge: they know perfectly well, without illusion; they know far better than he and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves' (Foucault,1977: 207). What the people know constitutes what Foucault calls 'historical' or 'fragmentary' knowledges. These knowledges arise in an unsystematic, uphazard manner and are not tied to any official systems of knowledge - precisely the systems maintained by the intellectuals, who have thus accepted the role of agents of established interests." (Racevskis, 1983: 126)

The intellectuals, at least those humbled by their knowledge, found themselves dethroned and yet closer (in proximity if not in mind or spirit) to the objects they were studying.

Klaus de Albuquerque explains this fusion in terms of Jamaican awarenesses.

> "University students with leftist leanings have discovered that uneducated Rastas are capable of a more insightful analysis of social problems than their lecturers." Whereas,"middle class young Jamaicans caught up in the still rampant

> white bias find Rastafarianism a perfect antidote, the rude boys (outcasts themselves) are attracted by the Rastafarian's total rejection of society,their egalitarianism, and their apocalyptic visions." (de Albequerque, 1977: 320)

And, not surprisingly, music would be the bonding element.

Within ten years the Rastafarian movement had been transformed from a group of religious outcasts to an ideology entering upon all walks of life. In 1968, when returning from a speech made at McGill University in Montreal, Walter Rodney was banned from Jamaica. Rodney wrote the following words, which were later to be published in **Grounations With My Brothers**, "The racial question is out in the open, in spite of all the efforts to maintain the taboos surrounding it. The Rastafari Brethren have been joined on this question by large numbers of other black people - many of them influenced by the struggle and example of Marcus Garvey" (Rodney,1969:72). Rasta was now penetrating the middle class where young, fiery intellectuals, such as Rodney, lay waiting. International exposure, via the channel of the music industry, of this process was just around the bend.

Jimmy Cliff. Joe Higgs. Delroy Wilson. Jimmy Riley. And then, on their heels, picking up their licks in an era of musicians united by a common struggle: The Heptones, Burning Spear, Toots and the Maytals, the Wailers, Lee Perry. Jamaica's urban working class, bulging now with youths moved in from the countryside, had found a voice. As Linton Kwesi Johnson, England's most renown dub poet, commented, "The musicians entered a common stream of consciousness, and what they created was an invitation to the listeners to be entered into the consciousness" (Johnson,1976: 589). Ironically, it would be an arm of Babylon, the

recording industry and broadcast media, that would faithfully ensure an enduring life for reggae music.

In 1967 Leslie Kong produced the Maytals hit, **Do the Reggay**, where it is conjectured the word was originally coined. A year later Kong produced Desmond Dekker's catchy tune **The Israelites** Although few understood the Rastafarian implications of the song, it "topped the best selling record charts in June 1969 and went on to sell 5 million copies" (Cashmore, 1979: 105). In 1969 Jimmy Cliff recorded his world-wide hit **Wonderful World, Beautiful People** (while empathetic to Rasta, Cliff is actually a devout Muslim). In the same year Kong recorded many of Cliff's songs for a new film, **The Harder They Come**, that Cliff would star in. In the 70's this film became an international cult classic. The combination of the Trenchtown experience and the struggle of the Third World soothsayer musician made for tremendous cinematic appeal. Kong, who was now Jamaica's leading producer, also released **The Best of the Wailers**. Bunny Wailer had threatened Kong that if the album was released, he would die as the best of the Wailers was obviously yet to come. A year later, at age 30, Kong died of a massive heart attack, making room for a prophetic coupling that would set the stage for reggae's entry into the pop world. An already established American soul singer named Johnny Nash, and his producer Danny Sims, had moved to Kingston, Jamaica, to search out a new sound. Indigenous Jamaican music that fell heavy on Western pop ears was about to undergo a further transformation. In the tiny country of England, where rock also took off, is where this explosion would take place

The line between nativistic cult and urban sub-culture suddenly vanishes. The Wailers, very conscious of the potential expansion of

their audience, signed up with the Nashs/Sims team. Together they produced the album **I Can See Clearly Now,** containing four Marley tunes. By the time the first England tour was over promoting their album, the Wailers were more popular than Nash. Meanwhile, the Wailers continued to produce their patented sound for Lee "Scratch" Perry back in Jamaica. It was during these sessions that they recorded the heavily Rastafarian laden songs **Duppy Conquerer, Small Axe, Trenchtown Rock,** that would win over the hearts of native Jamaicans. But whereas Nash found success in the States, the Wailers did not, and thus were ready to find another outlet for their growing ambitions. It was at this point that Marley contacted Chris Blackwell, the son of a wealthy Jamaican landowner, and founder of Island records. Blackwell had produced such well known rock groups as Traffic, King Crimson, Jethro Tull, and Emerson, Lake, and Palmer. Ironically, as a youth, the highbred Blackwell was rescued after a boating accident on a stranded Jamaican beach by a group of Rastafarians. Nurturing him back to health, Blackwell became sympathetic to their cause.

Island Records released **Catch A Fire** in 1972. The implications of its release, the addition of "a new top with layers of rock guitar and synthesizers" to the bottom heavy Jamaican riddem tracks would still take a few years to cut into the market. But, as Linton Kwesi Johnson, explained the album, "A whole new style of Jamaican music has come into being. It has a different character, a different sound...what I can only describe as International Reggae. It incorporates elements from popular music, internationally: rock and soul, blues and funk. These elements facilitated a breakthrough on the international market."(Johnson in Davis, 1983: 109). And yet, the Wailers refused to release the foreign

version of **Catch A Fire** at home in an effort not to alienate their roots fans.

Anthropologically speaking, the rest is history. In 1975, Rolling Stone Magazine, the top rock periodical, awarded the Wailer's **Natty Dread** the album of the year. In 1976, Bob Marley asked Donald Kinsey, an American Black blues artist to join the band. As Kinsey remarked, "It was my heavy blues roots. I was able to jell with them because reggae is a deep, deep feeling and has a lot in common with blues. I felt like I fit right in" (Kinsey in Davis, 1983:163). All kinds of bridges were being crossed. Reggae had found a Western audience, but, other than the immigrant communities, not where one would expect it to be. Rather than Black militants, it was essentially middle-class white youths who consumed the new counter-cultural music.

The non-acceptance of reggae music by Black Americans has been highly exaggerated by the press. Black Americans had their own spiritual roots and musical histories, and thus, unlike the white counter-culture advocates, were not eager to search for or accept an outside influence for their own directions. However, the toasting traditions of the Jamaican D.J.s would have a significant impact on the rise of rap in New York City ghettos. While reggae has already risen and fallen as a pop music phenomena, it continues to penetrate Black and Third World communities. In the years to come, reggae's greatest sustaining force will be the continual unity of African expression around the globe. The irony is that given reggae's preoccupation with Jamaican roots, it has also created the avenues for its own expansion, appropriation by others, and inevitable dilution.

Why did reggae create such a wide appeal? Rather than layering other popular musical sounds onto its own root forms, the Jamaican song incorporates those layers, the appeal of rock, of funk, within its evolution, a multi-dimensional expansion. The most prominent growth of the Sixties and Seventies has been the changing emphases, conversations, between the bass riddims and the percussion tracks (embodied par excellence in the works of Jamaica's premier studio duo, Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar), along with the rise of dub. "Dub is a kaleidoscopic musical montage which takes sounds originally intended as interlocking parts of another arrangement and using them as raw material converts them into new and different sounds; then in its own rhythm and format, it continually reshuffles these new sounds into unusual juxtaposition. In Jamaica there is an acute awareness of the riddem as the inner message of the music and a distinct value placed on it. Dub is therefore the natural result of a Jamaican cultural tendency in music, a fondness for bass, evolving over the years into an entire musical art form and dominion of its own. It is also a clearing of space, a removal of familiar barriers and divisions" (Ehrich in Davis and Simon, 1982:106).

As DJ's spoke, chanted and sang their way into celebrity status over the sound system (a rite that took the form of the Blues Dance in Britain, the converting of an abandoned apartment into a simulated night club, a new church, the preacher as sound man), dub converted the recording studio into a musical instrument. Together,the sound system phenomena combined with dub, decentralized the power of the recording industry. Sounds could be locally manipulated (although it is still very much a power play who would touch the dials) to attend to community

needs, a manipulation augmented by dub that could make 60's psychedelia seem anemic. As the power of electronic rituals expanded, the mesmerizing plot of reggae's evolution thickened. While reggae as a musical genre was reaching out for more commercial acceptance, a pop sound, a core of the music always remained mindful of its roots in rebellion.

Like the jazz solo, the long instrumental tracks of dub created an internal sensation that only the devoted listener could appreciate. In short, dub took the trance-inducing effects of the music to a deeper level. As Horace Campbell explained : "The move from reggae to dub and rockers developed a unique musical force; the dub versions innovated a non-verbal form of communication reminiscent of the drumming of the slaves. Rockers and dub encapsulated a form of communication which said their levels of downpression were too dread to be spoken about" (Campbell, 1980: 17).

Over a decade later, as rock'n'roll has seized the minds of America's last few generations, reggae has given contemporary voice and international exposure to an entire generation of Jamaican culture. Reggae is achieving what rock'n'roll set out to do: strike a common humanistic chord, articulating discontent, celebrating life, and becoming a multi-million dollar industry. As a M.C. at the 1986 Sunsplash commented, "Respect is due and who is due must come through..." In addition to its radical roots sound, the latest most popular form of reggae has been what Jamaicans call "dance-hall stylee". As exemplified by the immensely popular D.J. toasting of Yellowman, dance-hall music revolves around a tight rapport with the crowd. A cross between a comedian and storyteller, the toaster allows humor, dirty

stories, and an irresistible dance groove to set up a bond. Like the commercial music now pouring out of Africa, i.e., Nigerian juju, South African township jive, or the world-beat movement emanating out of San Francisco, reggae aims to break down barriers - economic, social, musical - so as to point out that behind the smokescreen of political conflicts and stress-laden thoughts, there lies an undulating beat, a pulse, a positive vibration... Reggae is turning the public pop performance into a healing ritual from whence it came.

While the popularity of reggae music has begun to plateau, like rock'n'roll, it will never decrease. It cannot. Like rock, reggae is a roots music containing a resevoir of history (slavery, colonialism, capitalism, ritual release) and sounds (drumming, chanting, hymns, mento, R&B, motown, rock'n'roll) that can always be dipped into to revitalize its energies. Jamaican politicians had no choice but to quickly exploit reggae's broad-base appeal. As ex-Prime Minister Michael Manley explained, "Reggae musicians reflect public attitudes more accurately than a political machine. A reggae song has a tremendous effect on the pace of political change" (Manley in DeVoss, 1976: 66). My interest has not been to trace out the increasing dialogue of Jamaican political and musical machinery, but to explore the cultural grounds that establishes this link.

The strictly roots segment of reggae persisted. Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus took over where Count Ossie left off. They recreated a Nyabingi sound with tactful additions of electronic instrumentation. But the center would not hold. Cedric Brooks, a noted Jamaican roots musician, commented on the changes that Marley's success had created. "His is a very positive approach, but there are dangers that because of

the international exposure (and the success of which he is so deserving), the music will come in for a bit of dilution. As was the case with a number of our Caribbean and Latin neighbors such as Cuba with cha-cha-cha, Brasil with bossa-nova, Trinidad with calypso, the music was watered down to suit the understanding and acceptance of those who didn't share the same experiences, particularly that of the African in the New World" (Brooks in Reckford,1976: 15). Reggae had become Americanized.

Remaining at the heart of popular reggae is its smooth and soulful vocal harmonies, a trait shared with American soul and funk. At reggae's second American sunsplash tour (1986, Santa Fe, New Mexico), three of the four acts were vocal trios that had been heavily influenced by the motown sound. With the exception of the more modern Black Uhuru,the Mighty Diamonds, Judy Mowatt, and Leroy Sibbles had been established performers since the Sixties. While there will always be a tension between the roots left and the commercial right, the central message of the music is guaranteed by the smooth vocal track speaking directly to the people.

Reggae and Revitalization

The genealogy, this tracing out of historical events, will stop here. While reggae's greatest impact, socially and musically is still to come, i.e., the continued symbiotic growth of reggae and Afro-pop, the further effects of Rastafari on Caribbean politics, my objective has been to indicate in anthropological terms the evolutionary growth of reggae culture. Currently, the most popular international exponent of reggae is Alpha Blondy, a charismatic Ivory Coast performer who sings

fluently in four languages and is produced in Paris. As Victor Turner had suggested, revitalization movements are often based on the re-creation and elevation of initiation rites so as to appeal for and effect massive societal change. Rastafarian ritual began as the reappropriation of drum and chanting sessions primarily derived from West African fertility rituals. While that ritual later developed into the full-blown electronic scunds of reggae, the Rasta sway of the music continues to invoke a return to a theocratic order, to that day of judgement when the true Christian shall overcome. At the same time, Rastafari demands a radical overturning of self, an overturning that corresponds with the revolutionary defeat of Babylon, or of Babylon simply defeating itself; the reign of Western culture that has reduced the trance/redemptive conclusions of ritual, i.e., smoking marijuana, to an at leisure occurence, a mere plaything.

The purpose of infusing revitalization process with Foucault's genealogical approach is as follows. Traditional revitalization theory portrays Rastafarian culture as an adaptive, though sometimes combative, response to the centralized hierarchies of power and knowledge. In Foucaultian terms, Rastafari is the perpetuating of subjugated knowledges, at the margins, but not as the result, of these centralized domains. These knowledges, rather than being that which a particular person or individual forges ahead with, is, instead, a vehicle that waits us. Our ability to recognize and utilize that vehicle is mediated by the constraints these other domains of centralized powers (academic, governmental, economic) impose on us. The question for the individual is what type of disciplines and levels of commitment will release him from such constraints. The human experience can never be more than a struggle

among epistemological constructs, that is, how we can come to most authentically know the world. That struggle, whether it involves intellectual, spiritual or aesthetic truths, will attempt to establish experientially verifiable values by the methods - ritual, magic, science, art, politics - all cultures have developed so that we may better know and govern ourselves.

Afro-American and Jamaican popular music followed an inverse course. As the former became more despiritualized, the latter borrowed segments of the former, most prominently, the vocal techniques of gospel, and then motown, to regain its spiritual dimension. If rhythm'n'blues is the river rock'n'roll and Jamaican music dipped into, then gospel is the source of that river. Lawrence Levine, author of **Black Culture and Black Consciousness**, comments on the transformation that occurred to gospel music, "While the message of black gospel music manifested the dissolution of the traditional sacred world and a high degree of acculturation to a modern religious consciousness," or lack of, "its style and performance were being revitalized by an intensified connection with the roots of traditional Afro- American religion and the sound and styles of the 20th Century secular music of the black community. This apparent paradox has not been a simple one-dimensional process of switching allegiances or identities or life-styles. It has been a complex process of shifting emphases and reaffirmations" (Levine, 1977: 189). Rasta musicians were able to affirm what most rock'n'roll artists disavowed or quietly ignored: the sacred dimensions and history of their composite music.

There is no central truth, no pristine or isolatable space in which Rastafarian music unfolded. There are only , as Foucault explored,

permutations layered upon permutations, the will to truth as ceaseless transgression upon its ideal possibilities. This is not to sap the power of Rasta, but rather, to the contrary, to recognize the Dionysian movements, the powers of ritual, that have created Rasta's boundaries. This, for Nietzsche and Foucault, is the most one can expect, "the still silent and groping apparition of a form of thought in which the interrogation of the limit replaces the search for totality and the act of transgression replaces the movement of contradictions" (Foucault, 1972: 19). Herein lies the music's soothing appeal and tragic dimension Myth and ideology, I believe, can be approached in the same vein. "The scales of truth are only balanced by an act of violence in which the asymmetry of the space of power and knowledge is contorted into the image of a writhing serenity" (Lemart and Gilian, 1982: 85). Myths are deceptive, but they do not deceive. Herein, lies their essence. They embody our innermost altruistic desires, as fragmented and fractured as those may be, and holds them up to the boldest light of possibilities It is the sheer nobility of this effort that Nietszche converts into joy, a will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the sacrifice of its highest type, a dimension Foucault more reverently commits to further reverie, a poetic silence, and that Rastafari embodies in the career of Bob Marley.

Timothy White, a journalist and author of **Catch A Fire - The Life of Bob Marley** (1983), explains this phenomenon of transgression.

> "...Perhaps what is most amazing about Marley's rise to fame is how little his fans around the globe needed to know about the thematic undercurrents in his music, the different levels on which his message was delivered, and the

> roles Rastafarianism and traditional Jamaican culture played in all of this... That so many around the world would adore Marley's records and revere him as a revolutionary Rasta firebrand while never entirely comprehending the complexity of his message made his people love and cherish him all the more. Throughout the Third World, Bob Marley was viewed as a modern myalman who had the will and the means - literally and figuratively - to repel evil. He was, as he himself claimed, a duppy conqueror" (White, 1983:23-25).

The standards of magic and communitas, the mechanisms of once isolated ritual communities, break down. The remains are pressed onto discs and distributed in the marketplace. The sheer superficiality of commodities disguises the depth and weight of their formation.

Revitalization, the resurrection of disqualified knowledges, is not limited to revitalization movements. Revitalization permeates all territorial formations of power. In Foucault's words," Power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations..."(Foucault, 1979: 27). Knowledge is not, as according to Marxist lore, the superstructural end-product of power, the ideological icing atop the social-historical cake. Knowledge, as is revitalization, is a question of and fight for power. These concepts cannot be untangled.

At its greatest intensity, revitalization synapses with the ingredients of possession - suffering, trauma, the Devil's work - becoming conscious of its truncated state. Ultimately, with guided ritual, this intensity can lead to deliverance. As Deleuze stated, it is these "states of experience that, at a certain point, must not be translated into representations or fantasies, must not be transmitted by

legal, contractual, or institutional codes, must not be exchanged or bartered away, but, on the contrary, must be seen as a dynamic flux that carries us away even further... These states of experience are what underlie all formations of societal codes, (or in Foucault's terms, power/knowledge), what escapes all formations, and is what the formations themselves seek to translate, convert, and mint anew" (Deleuze in Allison, 1977: 146). This, then, is the power of the music, a power that cannot be explained without or separated from the knowledges of its regionalized ritual contexts. Whereas philosophic, theologic, or theoretical constructs are the pronouncements of the insufficiencies of current realities, ritual immediately discharges those realities, and then, reappropriates them in their fullness.

REVOLUTION AS STYLE

"I am making it known to all that reggae is vain, dead, a commercial machination of the white world's money-making system". (Edward Emmanual, self-proclaimed Prince and organizer of 1958 Back-O-Wall convention, in White, 1983: 73)

Its a punky, reggae party. The Wailers will be there, The Slits, the Feelgoods, and the Clash. Rejected by society, treated with impunity, protected by their dignity". (Bob Marley, **Punky Reggae Party**, 1976 in Davis and Simon, 1982: 53)

" ..A lot of youths are calling themselves Rasta without knowing the implications of what they're saying and what it means to be rasta. They become Rastas not in the way people became Rastas in Jamaica from the '30s to the 50s even, but they become Rastas in the same way that European kids became hippies as a consequence of listening to rock music... Rasta has become the ideology of reggae music. It's very misleading". (Linton Kwesi Johnson, well-known dub poet, born in Jamaica in 1952 and moved to Britain at the age of 11, in Davis and Simon, 1982: 164)

Rasta, carried by the music, cuts loose from originating contexts, falling upon every facet of the social spectrum: radical revolutionary, reactionary religionist, left, right, center - **decentered**. "There is an oscillation between the reactionary paranoic overcharges and the subterranean, schizophrenic, and revolutionary overcharges. Moreover, one no longer quite knows how it goes on one side or the other: the two ambiguous poles of delirium, their transformations, the way in which an archaism or folklore in a given set of circumstances can suddenly become charged with a dangerous progressive value. How things turn fascist or revolutionary is the problem of the universal delirium about which everyone is silent" (Deleuze and Guatteri, 1972: 263). It is this silence I am trying to find an articulate response to.

These are contradictions, but this is the way things go, the way the economic order performs its subjugation of peoples. As Antonio Gramsci stated, "The ruling bloc's power to speak in the name of **people**, the **nation**, **humanity**, and so on is a precondition of the founding of its own state and the guarantee of survival" (Gramsci, 1971 78). The ruling bloc I'll be discussing in this chapter will be that of the pop music industry.

I first heard reggae music around 1975. The album was entitled **War Inna Babylon** by Max Romeo and the Upsetters and masterminded by Lee Perry. I didn't exactly know why at the time but I found the sound and ambience of the music irresistibly attractive. Reggae, like jazz, leaves room for continual improvisation. By adding a percussive dimension to each instrument, reggae clears out a space in which to improvise over the standard 4/4 beat, and introduces the more intricate

African 6/8 backbeat. Combined with the socially relevant themes that frequently accompanied the music, reggae fulfilled the Sixties dreams of freedom from the tyranny of government, economic, and academic institutions that the 70's so successfully deflated. Whether I intended to or not, I became part of a subculture.

At the heart of revitalization theory as outlined by Anthony Wallace (Wallace: 1983) is a tripartite structure: 1) the people-prophet identification and coinciding transformative break 2) the subsequent systematization of revitalized energies into creed and mandate 3) the reabsorption and routinization of the movement into everyday life. Pervading these structures are the fevers of exaltation, the psychological, emotional and spiritual breaking of the chains of oppression

At this point, I would like to take the liberty of combining Victor Turner's notion of **communitas** with the definition of the **social field** as provided by the new wave of French social theorists (Deleuze, Lyotard, Guattari, Baudrillard, Donzolet). "Far from being a flight outside the social, or from being Utopian or even ideological", **these movements and passions of communitas** "actually constitute the social field, tracing its shapes and borders, its entire state of becoming" (Deleuze, 1983: 9). In the words of Donzolet: " The social is not society understood as a set of material and moral conditions that characterize a form of consolidation. It would appear to be rather the set of means which allow social life to escape material pressures and politico-moral uncertainties" (Donzolet in Smart, 1983: xxvi). In my own words, the social is the constant employment of forms of communitas that attempts to flee society, and yet, foremost, helps to

keep it in tact. In their essence, societies survive in spite of themselves.

The point is that revitalization, rather than confined to cultic expressions, is an incessant and universal process, a process smoothly encapsulated in Western industrial states by the notion of subculture. Poetically speaking, this process takes place in the margins, the space in the body where history is left to wander in the wilderness, where, as if in a dream, we were to join together and share something precious beyond the confines of law, contract, or institution. It is a period of communal drift that Deleuze and Guattari created the nine syllable word (forgive me) to describe and account for: **deterritorialization**. This drift, however, is always reterritorialized, the legitimate spaces (i.e., the frenzy instilled by live rock concerts) public rituals are called on to establish for the body. As jungle camouflage garb becomes **in** , reggae becomes a disco affair. As Simon Frith, author of **Sound Effects - Youth,Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n'Roll,** acutely remarked, "The long playing record has transplanted ritual from temple or theater into any place where two or three may gather" (Frith, 1981:80). The magic, far from eliminated, is simply transformed further, or as they say in the music industry, the beat goes on.

The merging of the notion of subculture and revitalization is perfectly illustrated in England's mid-Seventies where the genealogy of the last chapter left off. Once again, Frith states the historical conjunction that took place, "The punk vanguard itself was most inspired by reggae musicians because reggae seemed to suggest a quite different way of musical being. It opened up questions of space and time in which musical choice - stood in stark contrast to the thoughtlessness of

rock'n'roll... the music itself - its lack of hierarchy of analysis; it didn't express something else, some prior reality, but was the structure for experience, for musicians and audience alike" (Frith, 1981: 163).

A ritualized set of meanings engendered in the streets of Kingston and Jamaican jungles finds its way- via record shops and radio air waves - to the concrete jungles of North America and Europe. Awaiting were disenchanted, vigorous and intensively listening youths, just as a quarter of a century earlier a different generation had seized the rhythm'n'blues of the American Black communities. Despite the lapse of time the interests were alike: to create and satisfy their own personal/communal desires and dreams.

Behind the packaging and success stories of popular Western music lies the collective experience and expressions of the New World African. Nor, might I add, is this a phenomenon limited to the 20th century and the emergence of the recording industry and broadcast media. In 1845, a writer from the Knickerbock Magazine, expressed the following: "Who are our true rulers? The Negro to be sure. Do they not set the fashion, and give laws to the public taste? Let one of them, in the swamps of Carolina, compose a new song, and it no sooner reaches the ear of a white amateur, than it is written down, amended (that is, almost spoilt), printed, and then put upon a course of rapid dissemination to cease only with the utmost bounds of Anglo-Saxondom, perhaps with the world Meanwhile, the poor author digs away with his hoe, utterly ignorant of his greatness." (in Parker: 1975).

In its beginnings, rock'n'roll attempted to be the consensus and conscience of a generation. Indeed, rock music arose as "a blast of rebellious truth in a music scene characterized by sentimentality,

cliche and escapism" (MacGregor, 1983:92) Rock was, like reggae is more consistently now, "a mass produced music that carries a critique of its own **authentic audience** " (Frith, 1981:4). However, when rock began to lose that initial Woodstock aura , just as its adherents lost their innocence, much of rock simply became a sojourn to find a sound with mass commercial appeal. In the same way, when Vietnam ended, many protestors floundered for a new focus, i.e., security. Indeed, this is a major reason why rock seemed to go on the decline in the 70's, as it had threatened to lose its collective voice. And, of course, the beat was sagging.

Although New World Africans and Euro-Americans rarely share the same cultural upbringing and orientation, they can share the same musical appreciation and aspirations. The thrill of the popular music is the avenues it gives us to refuse the mundane, if not oppressive norms of daily existence. Such is also a standard anthropological definition of ritual. The problem is when this refusal is funnelled into the mundane, i.e., the monotony of AM radio. And so the music requires novel infusions to sustain its cutting edge; infusions that are predominantly derived from the music of Black communities. (The Europeans' most poignant refusals of the mundane are more often literary.) Thus, two of the most popular groups of the 80's, **The Police** and **The Talking Heads**, became such because of their borrowing of reggae, soul, and African idioms.

This is the danger. Through the consistent transformation of indigenous forms into commercial ventures, a transformation from communality and spontaneity to a formalizing of techniques and modes, the music serves more as a kind of detached art form and source of

entertainment than a vital social function. Or, as Charlie Parker more stridently stated in **Pop Song - The Manipulated Ritual** : "The whole of the pop-song industry is based on the exploitation of folklore, of grass-roots musical and poetic forms, and in the process of that exploitation, destroying their original social function and draining them of any meaning other than the induced self-gratification of an audience (and money pouring into the till!)" (Parker, 1980:165).

This is the paradox the professional Rastafarian musician producing reggae for Western consumption must face. The music, the message, in order to circulate, must be rooted in the very system of production it denounces. (So what else is new?) The Rastafarian, to remain firm in his faith, must then make decisions (decisions based on that elusive quality known as integrity) regarding the degree and manner in which he will forfeit some of that message in order to guarantee it a greater mass appeal. Fortunately, like the punk rocker, the Rastas have the tricks of their own subculture to get that message across.

Liberation is a packed word, an overthrow and subsequent renewal of authority on the political plane, a liquidation of frustration and repression on a personal and psychological one. Historically, liberation and salvation have coincided, although in most modern-day liberation movements, salvation is cloaked in the heaven-on-earth mythologies of a projected socialist state. Revolution is, foremost, a struggle for the power to establish social truths (i.e., equal distribution of profits, freedom of expression). Where revolution through guerilla warfare is not possible, i.e., where another set of guerillas are firmly in control, then we witness a kind of symbolic warfare, a revolution of style.

Subculture is the challenging, on a symbolic plane, of the inevitability, the **naturalness**, of historically handed down class and gender stereotypes. That the brazen breaking of rules is confused with an absence of rules sustains a subculture's very objective. Its style is derived (the opposition would say contrived) from a mocking of styles already put forth. (Shortly cropped hair, wearing a leather tie and suitcoat, were very punk. Now, of course, leather ties are mass produced and short hair is **in** again.) The Birmingham school (i.e., John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, Dick Hebdige), as encapsulated in **Resistance Through Ritual - Youth Subcultures in Postwar Britain** (Hall: 1975), construct rather convoluted theoretical paradigms to explain this keen sense of the obvious. As soon as a counter-culture begins to take their activities, values and appearances at face value, then they become transformed into their opposite. The new forms become rooted in the productive base of the system itself. Indeed, the system functions well by appearing not to function well - it absorbs its enemies.

Let me put it another way. The subcultural break, its choices on how to do so, are by no means random, but are articulated in coherent fashion; a system of codes and corresponding events supporting the efficacy of such codes. The power to disturb depends on a recognition of taboo, the deviation from order stemming, foremost, on making this order evident. Long hair, for a spell, provided such a symbolic juncture. Not to do as the Romans do meant, quite simply, the Romans were up to no good. Now that the Rastaman wears a similar costume, his long and natty dread, augments a similar intention - although its message more powerfully stated along racial and class lines.

Unity is created by the very power to rupture. But the most disruptive elements, needless to say, are the most recognizable, and hence, the most **mediaized**, the most likely to be forged into explanatory accounts by dominating ideologies. Rastafari becomes packaged, a commodity, and indeed, in this form, combined with the swiftness of international symbolic trade, the most adhered to revitalization project to date. That which was designed to shock later on, but soon enough, alters the criteria of convention. Just as **New Wave** becomes a Bloomingdale's version of punk, Bob Marley, whose dissident popularity threatened politicians around the globe and at home, dies presumably of natural causes (cancer) his nation's hero.

This, of course, has been the way its been for the Black American musician all along. Roger Taylor, in **Art - An Enemy of the People**, explained the origins of Black jazz as a "project of not meaning what one was saying, and at the same time implying an undermining meaning which one did not say. This was a way of **getting back at white society** without getting destroyed for it, as the Black musician hardly derives his main satisfaction by giving that society its musical kicks" (Taylor, 1978:136). The New World African musician as a professional performer has played out the mythological role of the trickster, a matter of dissembling (df. - to hide under a false appearance) white conventions to suggest , and at the same time, conceal biting truths. This is perfectly illustrated by the early days of Duke Ellington who had two books of musical scores - one for White audiences and the other for Black - waiting until society at large was ready to accept **his** music. Or, Black minstrels made up in Black face imitating the White minstrels made up in Black face who were imitating Black

musicians. This, then, is the allure and deception of African culture in the New World, a wearing of European forms transmitting non-European values.

The transition of traditional Rasta music, the Nyabingi ritual, to the ever expanding reggae sound, is accomplished by introducing foreign forms - the Gospel trio, the blues preacher, the rock lead guitar, the synthesized drum set. The continuation of African oral tradition is afforded through the appropriation of increasingly secularized techniques. Thus, the music establishes the vast potential of a white consumer appreciative audience, and yet contains a deeper set of hidden, or at least, partially hidden meanings. This is once again, as Deleuze and Guatteri indicated, a deterritorialization, an alternative and subcultural pocket of meaning that is developed in a simultaneous claim of mainstream forms. Disbelievers in the merit, or even the authenticity of popular culture, miss the subtleties new pop forms may represent. While it is true these forms are the furthering of capitalist machinery cranking out its products, the producers and consumers of these products need not necessarily abide by the rules and values of this machinery. It is precisely this tension, the constant infusion of new forms, that allows the machinery to totter along and that preserves the status quo. Of course, should a new form prove to be too explosive and subversive, that is when the heavy hand of regulation, censoring, or more coercive measures take over. The need for these measures is particularly acute along the rawer edges of Babylon, i.e., the Pink Floyd album **The Wall** with children singing the playground chant "We don't need no education" was banned in South Africa, and yet became a best seller throughout Europe and the States.

The professional musicians are faced with the problem then, not of selling out, but of selling **in** . They are faced with the choice of cloaking their material, i.e., the self-effacing and mocking manner of the punks, as exemplified in the Clash song **Charlie Don't Surf** , in order to liberate themselves from the aesthetic/political limitations of the pop industry. In the case of Rasta, this cloaking is aided by the thick symbology and patois of their Caribbean heritage. The producers of popular music exemplify the razor's edge of this process, of introducing exciting and sometimes dangerous sounds (as everyone wants to hear the latest sound) at the risk of losing the inherently conservative sensibilities of the mass listening audience. Just as Black jazz musicians quickly created White converts, so did reggae. It began in Britain with the racially mixed bands (The Specials, UB-40) of the two-tone ska-new wave sound. As UB-40 claimed, "We grew up with the music."

Rico, a White reggae horn player and an avowed Rasta, put the situation this way. "Reggae is protest formed out of suffering. The music is from the way of life, something one feels. You vibrate it back to those who oppress you. What I was playing was what I felt. I played hardships out of the horn" (from personal interviews). As Dr. Basil Wilson stated in an article aptly entitled **The Dialectics of Reggae** , "The beauty here then and certainly a paradox, that despite the anti-colonial, anti-imperialisitic leanings, the music is so all-encompassing that even those of European extraction obtain a special delight in singing along and have their consciousness raised (Wilson, 1983:19).

Where Third World indigenous revitalization movements and Western subcultures meet and meld is as **defiance**, as a disinheritance of imposed notions of the sacred. In Western democracies the sacred has

become synonymous with consensus, the styles of living that have been deemed the most appropriate. This defiance may infect those spaces, the family, schools, media, the array of institutions where people must work, where a society's normative values are assembled and codified. Such values are not transmuted through an explicit and doctrinaire presentation of **ruling ideas** , but rather through what Althusser termed a **teeth-gritting harmony** (Althusser in Hebdige,1980: 33). Cultural resistances to this harmony exemplify the noise of the system, and in order to be heard, in effect, must be noisier. And so, styles of dissonance and chaos are picked up and nurtured. Indeed, reggae is proud of its defiance, its minor chords, heavily textured harmonies, and complicated rhythms - although not as complicated as they seem, but an inversion of what Western popular music has trained us to expect. The structure of reggae music, its accents, are on the offbeats rather than the on, as characterized in the straight ahead 4/4 beats of rock'n'roll, disco, and most pop music. The ambience is a pulling back, a withdrawal and release from the rule-bound, time-gagged, goal oriented norms of Western consciousness. Thus, the Rasta connection with the metabolic slow-down effects of ganja, instead of the amphetamine, cocaine, speed-crazed, **I can't get enough** metabolism of rock. Despite their highly publicized intake of drugs, I don't yet know of a reggae musician that has died of rock'n'roll old age.

The point at which noise becomes a coherent assemblage of sound, is socially determined, as much a project of the listener as the performer, a social pact. This pact, once codified into a movement of resistance, should not be assumed to occupy one central locus of protest, as Marx wanted the proletariat of the world to coalesce against

the powers that be Instead, as is the core of Michel Foucault's work, "There are a multiplicities of resistances which are constantly shifting and regrouping, and a binary division constitutes merely one possible and exceptional form." (Smart, 1983:90).

Power is, foremost, productive. It produces reality through its rituals of truth. While the production in turn produces domains of exclusion, concealment, and/or repression, at no time are those domains found without resistances - although history may have a tough time locating, assessing, or even acknowledging these resistances. Indeed, "the very existence of power relations presupposes forms of resistance, not as an external effect of consequence of the exercise of power, but as an inherent feature of the power relation" (Smart, 1983:90). Out of this see-saw battle emerges novel productions and formations of power, which in the case of revitalization and subcultures find their quintessential forms.

Power is most effective and tolerable when its operations go undetected, when in fact it is possible for individuals to console themselves with the idea of pockets of freedom. This is how the West has furthered its own sense of freedom, equating and mistaking a permissive society, the indulgences of consumer capitalism, for a liberated one. "Capitalism deculturalizes peoples, dehistoricizes their inscriptions, repeats them anywhere at all as long as they are marketable...you can produce and consume everything, exchange, work, or inscribe anything anyway you want if it comes through, if it flows, if it is metamorphizable. The only untouchable axiom bears on the condition of metamorphis and transfer: exchange value" (Lyotard, 1972: 19).

In the paradigm of Deleuze and Guatteri, "What civilized modern societies deterritorialize with one hand, they reterritorialize with the other. The consequences are often artificial, residual, archaisms; but they are archaisms having a perfectly current function, our modern way of inventing pseudo-codes or jargons" (Deleuze and Guatteri, 1972:263). Such are the consequences upheld and nurtured by the schizophrenia of popular culture. Buy their music because we need it, but keep the expression in line. Force **them** into positions of further extremes, new fortresses, other wildernesses, and fill the center with a commodity that will threaten some, that will comfort and heal others, and that will surely sell.

In early May of 1981 I flew to Montego Bay, Jamaica to commission a Rastafarian elder to make two burru style drums, and to attend Bob Marley's funeral. Marley was part of an organization named "The Twelve Tribes of Israel" in which he was crowned Brother Joseph. The church-like organization began in the late 60's by a Rasta juice cart and sacred herb vendor named Vernice Carrington. It was hierarchial and pyramidical in structure, and stressed at its base Selassie's urge to read a chapter of the Bible a day. Apprehended with a clean conscience, the Bible would supply a path, a course of action and way of thinking, through the maze of civilization's unfolding. The organization was exclusive, containing various famous musicians, although its doors, by principle, were open to others, i.e., White people. There are now chapters in London and across North America, including Montreal and Toronto. The Montreal chapter met every Sunday at 6 p.m., in addition to seasonal celebrations, several of which I attended. Other brethren claim the Twelve Tribes counters the original individualistic, democratic

spirit of Rasta. Indeed, Twelve Tribes represents the uncertain expansion of Rasta into an institutionalizing phase - something like ganja reasoning sessions go to Sunday school.

Marley was buried by a state funeral. His body began in a Kingston ceremony and then was driven around the island for all to witness. All schools and businesses were closed. His body finally arrived at Nine Mile, a small village in the hills of the parish of St. Ann and Marley's birthplace. There I sat on a hill of Rastas, waiting, listening to, absorbing the process of Marley's funeral broadcast to all over Jamaica's ubiquitous sound system: the constant chatter of the radio commentators, the reggae interludes frequently playing Marley's acoustic **Redemption Song** , the commercial breaks, the State helicopters swarming overhead. The only other visible White people were a few women who had joined Rasta clans, the people of the international press, and Edward Seaga, the prime minister of an island that is over 90% Black. Seaga's address was cut short, indeed, he was ushered off the stage by what I later learned to be higher members of the Twelve tribes. The ceremony, as has been the legacy and sustenance of the Rastafarian tradition, was completed behind the Master's back.

"Today there is a reversal of the downbeat and the upbeat: one begins to foresee that ordinary life, humans, in their banality, could well not be the insignificant side of history - better: that withdrawing into the private could well be a **direct defiance of the political**, a form of actively resisting political manipulation" (Baudrilllard, 1983:39). It is in the domain of the private, that space and time the Westerner calls **leisure** in which the most virile strains of resistance are developed; strains that are not limited to Third World

environs, but may find an equal potentiality in, let's say, suburban garage bands, inner city street corner gatherings, or the solitude of any artist.

In lieu of British culture and its extension into colonial Jamaica, these resistances took many voices and forms, i.e., from underground Maroon rites to overtly organized rebellion. But they never truly affected British culture until that opposition took place on their own land. While Britain in the 70's was the spawning ground of the international ska and reggae sound, it also witnessed its ugliest domestic clashes, a violence that continues to simmer. It was also at this time that Britain experienced the unprecedented joining of Black and White in the **Rock Against Racism** concerts.

As indicated in Chapter Two, Rastafari is symptomatic of a larger global process, a series of transformations that began with a disruption on the European land mass whereby its tribes were compelled to visit and conquer other continents. Culminating with the Enlightenment, this process was partially accomplished by defeating traditions of European magic, leaving a void in the West; a void that gave impetus to all kinds of resistances. The Enlightenment's methodologies of reason have always spurred on subterranean streams, which in the West resurfaced as the Romantic movement of the 19th Century, or in such figures as Isaac Newton, who was compelled to hide his vast alchemical writings. Elsewhere, these resistances arose as the revitalization movements of conquered cultures, i.e., the liberation theology movements of Central America, the Ghost Dance and Peyote Religions of North America.

Rastafari is portrayed, especially through the media, as a political, potentially subversive, resistance movement, because that is

where it has the most visible impact. However, at any time, Rastafari is capable of returning to the sources, the nourishment, from whence it came. At this time, the voices of the heart and the body have entered, not to conquer the mind, but simply to quiet its inner chatter. Jah. Rastafari A vision. A spiritual wave. A political mandate. A fad, of sorts, spanning the earth's continents and spurred on by the pop record industry. Any or all of the above, Rasta has become the most internationally traveled and acknowledged contemporary African religion. And yet, Rasta can only truly speak to the solitary heart. True liberation, afterall, is still an affair with aloneness; an alonessness that, paradoxically, opens up the greatest communion one could hope to experience. Jah. Rastafari. One Heart, One Mind, One Love...

Epilogue - Healing Thyself

"Learning to see, as I understand it, is almost what, unphilosophically speaking, is called a strong will: the essential feature is precisely not to "will" - to be able to suspend decision". (Nietzsche in Kaufman, 1954: 62)

"Some mon just deal wit' information. An' some mon, him deal wit' the concept of truth. An' den some mon deal wit' magic. Information flow aroun'ya, an' truth flow right at ya. But magic, it flow through ya". (Nernelly, a Jamaican Bush Doctor, in White, 1983: 1)

"To open the heart in hell is to enter the love that goes beyond conditions. It is an entering into the underlying reality, the essential connectedness that exists between liking and disliking, beyond pleasure and pain". (Levine, 1987: 246, **Healing Into Life and Death**)

What I have learned most from this project is that **Babylon**, the global gathering of greed, violence, and insecurity, in addition to its force pressing down from outside, is, foremost, **within** us. We are each the world that is asking for repair. The primary function of ritual is to lead us into and remind us of our own healing. And yet, the healing work itself is a very individual matter. Each has their own quotient of injury and conflict to work out. Rituals also have a way of quickly calcifying, especially when the practitioners lose sight of their original heart and intentions. Thus, the demand, especially in this age, for developing new rituals, or investing and combining previous ones with fresh inspiration.

Rastafari represents a huge leap of consciousness from the colonially handed down brands of Christianity. Rasta returns the temple of worship **to the body**. Redemption prayer, healing work, ritual catharsis, form complementary, if not often identical means of conducting this worship. The body asks to be cleared of the stress, the wounds, that history, whether of the family or community, has inflicted. The healing is a slow, enduring one, literally, an undoing of centuries.

Along the way there are many traps. The new religion can easily be twisted and ravaged to fit within the confines of the old paradigm. New addictions (marijuana, self-righteousness) crop up, replacing the old ones (alcohol, self-denial, self-deprecation) in the false spirit of seeking the truth. Rastafari is not exempt from these addictions. While derived from ancient systems of thought and practice, it is itself a very young movement, and has many growing pains to work through. In the

course of my fieldwork I have met many a **jive** Rastafarian, individuals who wear all the exterior Rasta symbols correctly, but still manifest the same patriarchal intolerance and impatience.

Healing is, foremost, a lesson in awareness, acceptance, and surrender. The awareness lies in being willing to see the ugly parts of oneself. The acceptance involves a type of attitude that doesn't resist this awareness, for as the discipline of psychology has taught us, the more we resist something, the larger it looms. And finally, surrender is supplied by a faith and intimate knowledge of God, a humility and clear lit intention that one is able to **let go** of this pervasive internal **dis-ease** to a higher, invisible, more powerful stream of energy.

The problem, as I understand it, is that we in the modern world, particularly in the West, have forgotten how to truly heal ourselves. We are still convinced that the enemy is **out there**. This doesn't mean that there aren't very real and powerful evil forces at work in the world (To quote an old 60's slogan,"Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you) . It is rather that only through the work of healing and loving oneself, from within, can one release the power that external forces hold. And, although this work comes from a loving space - the work, in itself, need not always be loving, i.e., civil disobedience, emotional discharge therapy. This was the primary message of Dr. Martin Luther King, whose great success in the movement of civil rights can be attributed to a Christian saying: **Love Thy Enemy**, a love that was nurtured by King's own personal contact with and faith in a Christian God; a militant and yet nonviolent love demanding change that the higher self of each and every person on this planet is endowed with and capable of. Buddhists and Hindus in the East have for

centuries emphasized the mantra **Om Mani Padne Hum**, meaning **the jewel inside the lotus pedal of the heart**. No matter how malicious, ill, or depraved, we all possess means of access to this jewel.

It may seem as though I have traveled in this epilogue far from the preceding text, but if you will recall in Chapter Two I stated, "The struggle that this thesis is concerned with is whether the modern systems of scientifically based thought are any more valid or effective than more ancient forms of thought and practice in minimizing human suffering". I must now address that question in terms of my own scientific discipline, anthropology, and share what the reader might construe as self-indulgent confessions. If so, so be it. The history of anthropology has been a taking rather than a giving relationship. Just as most archaeologists do not seem to have any ethical qualms digging up sacred grounds (as an archaeologist professor told me,"We have rights too."), so are cultural anthropologists able to extract the structures and make-up of a people's life as somehow more important than that life itself. It is precisely this obsessive drive to rationalize and compartmentalize all cultures in terms and paradigms acceptable to ourselves,to our colleagues and authority figures,that blinds us to the inner secrets of those cultures.

"Thus has it ever been with anthropologists. In believing they could find the key to man's behavior, they have, like the Churches,become ultimately certain that they represent ultimate truth"(Deloria,1976:103). These are the words of a Native American scholar whose understanding of the impact of anthropology exceeds our own. Ironically, it is the rapid and compact evolution of our culture

that has led to our blurring of vision. Mythology and ritual have been replaced by reason and method, but also a wholly profane practice of life which is accompanied moreover by shallow little compensating myths

One of these myths is the notion of causality and linear progress pervading Western science since the rise of mechanical thought. (The new physics, of course, has thrown a wrench into that machine.) If we can't produce a reasonable explanation,then we're on the way to producing one If there's a dilemma, then it must stem from the lack of data, or of refined technique, but not from the data itself. Indeed, the whole of social science is based on the solid conviction that there are meaningful and discursive answers to be had to our questions. The awareness of our own historical epoch becomes synonymous with the crisis characterizing the forced entry of **native**, **folk**, and **marginal** expressions into the mainstream marketing of reality; an epoch supported by the profound illusion that the intellectual pursuit of knowledge can enter into this crisis, not only to know it as it **is**, but to adopt for one's efforts, morally supreme causes.

Actually, it is generally only the intellectual who reduces the concept of the world into the problem of meaning and self-congratulatory politics - as opposed to, let's say, sin, love, suffering, aesthetic harmony - but the predicament remains fundamentally the same. The social scientist is no more able to grasp the totality and unknowns of social movements then, once again, let's say,the artist, musician, or a keenly observant street vendor. Anthropology is a journey, and like any other journey, another way of mind throwing the world together in the heroic efforts to live and describe it. Anthropology, like the rest of science, must be added to the list of myths these journeys venture into. As just

another myth, but somehow more sacred because it is our own, the activity we call science is what passes for a natural philosophy in a culture and era that has collectively lost its sense of communally vital mythic experience.

The greatest apprehension I had in initiating and conducting my fieldwork was what business did I, a White intellectual, have in intruding upon the lives of peoples whose basic philosophy was fundamentally opposed to the culture I was raised in and the type of institution I am writing for. Afterall, academia, its core of power, where the money flows, is but an arm of the corporate and government structure. It is this underlying sense of guilt, and the attempt to overcome it, while rarely discussed in anthropological literature, which I feel lies at the heart of anthropology's compulsion to document the history and plight of the world's people and to dictate a corresponding course of action.

This is why the theoretical orientation of this thesis is based on the work of non-anthropologist Michel Foucault and anthropologist turned actor Victor Turner (refer to **From Ritual to Theatre,** 1982). Foucault's theories are a constant critique of their own making. Each new work builds on top of the prior ones at the same time as it "undoes" them, an ongoing commentary on the futility of permanent theoretical structures. While Turner's early work fulfills traditional anthropological concerns, his lifetime of work concluded with an immersion into ritual experience and the theatrical invoking of this type of intense emotional release. Knowledge of true and enduring value is experiential, an organic evolution to and from the heart.

And yet, we have forgotten how to see and act with the heart. It is not that we lack compassion, or that intention, but that we have stuffed our feelings for so long without appropriate release, we have become numb to what our bodies and dreams are feeling and trying to tell us. And rather than open up this numbness, the pandora's box the heart has become, we are quick to travel up or down, to the head or the genitals, to seek resolution for our problems and needs. The greatest example of this is the modern's initial and still most sought after form of emotional healing: Freudian based psychotherapy. Some of us have become masters at talking about our problems, the sexual origins and manifestations, but have we been able to change their fundamental energy? Is or can coming out of denial be more than confession?

During the course of my work I painfully discovered my intellectual prowess and piling up of knowledge to have far surpassed my own healing and co-incident development of spiritual discipline; a dangerous gap that, as I have been discussing, equally plagues the Western world. While the exalted, some might say quaint notion of spirituality was fairly well debunked by the Enlightenment era (what an ironic use of that word), in the modern era much of this void has been replaced by the thirst for popular music, and, of course, our obsession with romantic love. It may seem an odd time to bring up the subject of love, but that which we seek in the forms of popular entertainment, a central issue in this thesis, is identical to the motivation underlying the romantic quest. **We are seeking a wholeness**. And yet, these externals, whether it be the securing of an intimate partner, or our favorite work, play, and worship hobbies, at best, can only facilitate the journey within. When not directed in this manner, these externals

may simply become another set of co-dependent props designed to maintain the superficial appearance of our stability and sanity.

Against all odds, Rasta, perhaps unprecedented in terms of classically defined revitalization movements, stretches into a sixth decade. "By denying to death the prepossessive place it had held for so long, the Rastafarians have forced their people to put aside their death wish and to consider life as the invincible force which it really is. The Rasta's ability to endure patiently is due in part to their conviction that they already possess within themselves the seeds of fulfillment, the revelation of future events" (Owens, 1976: 79). And so, we are entering a **new age**, the unprecedented surfacing and sharing of the globe's esoteric traditions. While what is the most vital about peoples' lives is also the most cherished and least likely to be shared with outsiders, native peoples around the world have been having rainbow visions. It is time for those people who feel the anguish of the earth just as vividly as they feel their own to join together. As the Mayan calender indicated, we are entering the possibilities of a new era (the last one started exactly the year Cortez landed in Mexico), an era in which the hope and work is to acknowledge and then let go of the past in favor of the meditation upon and inspiration of the present.

Despite these new tools, they are only tools: we, as a species, must learn how to utilize them. As North Americans, the enslaver of the African and the conqueror/executioner of the Native American, we have, inadvertently taken on their souls. Our unconscious must answer to this history. And, just as our major entertainment, popular music, is derived from the New World African experience, so does the American landscape remain etched with the memory of a people who valued it for other than

as an exploitable resource and recreational playland. For the last five years, the top reggae acts in the world have traveled and played for the Hopi peoples in the central highlands of Arizona at minimal expense. Having attended a few of these shows, they have launched me on the next phase of my journey: healing sessions with a Navaho peyote shaman.

The quest for healing is ultimately a question and struggle of coming into one's own power. The greatest trap, particular for New Age espousing Westerners, is that as we do begin to discover our power, we continue to think of ourselves, the ego, as its source. Thus, the overbearing tendency to proselytize our spiritual gains rather than just be with them. As Native American spirituality counsels us, we need to learn how to acknowledge and tap greater forces - **mother earth** and **father sky** - than the human ego to heal and nurture ourselves. (It is as though native cosmology implicitly realized that mom and dad and community could never crack up to what they're supposed to be.) My objective is to produce a work **Negotiations For A Heaven On Earth - A Journey Into African and Native American Earth Healing Rites Amidst The Prospects of A New Age**. My motivation is to continue the healing journey that **Dread Rites** is the result of, a healing of the self synonymous in aspiration with a healing of the earth.

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