

“Rudie’s In Court Now”: The Rudeboy and the Role of Popular Vernaculars in the Politicization of Jamaican Music

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, most discussions of Jamaican popular music, its relation to language and its implicit forms of social commentary have concentrated on the emergence of Reggae in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s and the rastafarianization of song lyrics that took place during this period. For instance, Velma Pollard (2000), suggests that the entrance of Rastafarian ideology and its associated “Dread Talk” into the music represents the dissemination of a protest message and a critique of colonialism at a level that had not previously existed. Stephen Davis and Peter Simon (1977) argue in their naïve but enthusiastic journalistic account of the mid-’70s reggae scene that the late ‘60s’ emergence of Rastafarian reggae embodied a profound transformation from an essentially disposable pop form to a vital and dynamic musical attack on the poverty and inequality of Jamaican society and the systems that sustained them. Similarly, in her discussion of the politicization of Reggae, Waters (1985) describes a specific moment in the mid- ‘70s in which the explicitly Rastafarian content of reggae from this period was appropriated for electoral politics by both major parties in Jamaica. While these characterizations of the Rastafarian reggae of the ‘70s are accurate, they tend to overlook the political and social elements of the earlier transformation that occurred during the ‘60s in the movement from Ska to Rocksteady (Reggae’s predecessor forms) and into Reggae itself. In fact, all three genres were highly diverse in content. While commentaries on decolonization and Rastafarian performers were present in the early sixties, love songs and party music persisted throughout the ‘70s. However, it is evident that as the ‘60s progressed, an increased association with and emphasis on forms of political and social commentary was attached to the music, represented not only by the increased presence of individual songs containing such commentary, but also in the circulation of the entire genre and its forms as an embodiment of critique.

This transformation is not only apparent in the lyrical content of the songs, but in their musical forms as well, and more importantly, in their actual use of language. As this essay will demonstrate, an understanding of the lyrical, musical, and linguistic changes that occurred throughout the ‘60s indicates that the transformation of Jamaican popular music into a politicized genre took place earlier than previously thought and prefigured the

rastafarianization of Reggae. Key to this transformation was the creative use of Jamaican vernacular linguistic forms (*dialect* or *patois*, often called Jamaican Creole or JC in the linguistic literature) and the controversial and ambivalent figure of the Rudeboy. Furthermore, this creative use of language and its social meanings within a popular music form was critical not only in the transformation of the music and its associated commentaries, but in the dissemination, intensification, and transformation of the language itself and its implicit relations of power and inequality.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon writes: “In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression.” (1963: 38) However, with the advent of independence, this relationship is not immediately transformed and resolved for the post-colonial subject. Rather, new questions are raised as to the role of the citizen within the newly independent state and how one regards obedience, criminality, and enforcement in light of state apparatuses ostensibly constituted for the native rather than by an external power. The position of law enforcement between the ideological poles of instrument of coercive force and protector of citizens becomes increasingly ambiguous, especially in situations where it is unclear to what degree the post-colonial state has transformed the old relations of power and to what degree it has simply resuscitated them. Even in Jamaica, where the transition to independence was relatively bloodless (or perhaps especially because of this), the ambivalence of post-colonial subjects, particularly the working-classes and poor, towards the police and the criminal justice system is especially evident. An example of this ambivalence at the level of popular discourse is the emergence, in the immediate post-independence period, at a time of increasing political and social disruption, of another ambiguous figure: the character of the “Rudeboy”. It is the Rudeboy, his ambivalent relationship to police and public order on the one hand, his struggle against inequality on the other, and his appearance along with the “rocksteady beat” of 1967 and 68 that presents one of the critical moments in the emergence of a coherent political message within Jamaican popular music. This message becomes increasingly apparent in not only the narrative content of the Rudeboy songs, but in the very language of their lyrics, viz., in the use of vernacular linguistic forms. It is a message of ambivalence with regards to independence, inequality, criminality, and authority: an ambivalence reflecting the persistence of colonial economic relations and systems of authority within independent Jamaica and its ideal of post-colonial liberal bourgeois citizenship.

2. Jamaican Music: Ska and Rocksteady

While the origins of the distinctive beat and rhythmic patterns of Reggae and its predecessors are obscure, by 1959 a distinct sound had emerged and begun to supplant the declining R & B and “Race” music that could be heard from American Gulf Coast radio stations during the ’50s, as well as the Calypso that had been popular throughout the Caribbean. This early form, known as Ska, was first and foremost dance music. Emerging at a time when the only local radio station, the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation (JBC), refused to play current popular music of any origin (Davis and Simon, 1977), and when the costs of a dance band put the live performance of non-religious music out of the reach of most Jamaicans, Ska went hand-in-hand with a minor revolution in the media. For most of the early ’60s, the primary venue for Ska music was the “sound system” party. Emerging in the late ’50s, the sound systems were essentially overpowered P.A. systems that traveled on the backs of trucks throughout the shanties of Kingston and

its surrounding townships. As competition between sound systems developed, the demand for new music, particularly by Jamaican performers, increased.

The movement of sound system operators into small-scale record production and sales saw the sudden emergence of a new site of public discourse, relatively independent of state and external control. This would in time become an increasingly radicalized arena of political debate, voiced in popular terms. Accompanying a reduction in tempo and an increased emphasis on lyrical content, this period saw the appearance of more explicit social commentaries, touching on the political, religious, and increasingly millenarian themes. Given increased significance by the co-presence of the changes in musical structure, these themes would later be associated with the revolutionary overtones and more coherent social critique of Reggae. Central to the commentaries of this period, and to the songs featuring the ambivalent figure of the Rudeboy were representations of language. Characteristic of these representations was a linguistic shift away from more “standard” registers, and the increased presence of non-standard features, particularly those associated with speakers from the expanding urban poor.

For Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), language and meaning are inherently linked to social structure, speech itself being interwoven with “living dialogic threads” through a constant process of transformation and renewal. While Bakhtin privileges the figure of the artist (or in his examples, the novelist) within this conceptualization, we can perhaps expand this category to include anyone involved in the production of a text or the manipulation of “genre”, that is, the established understanding of relationships between language and social phenomena. Bakhtin argues that the artist partakes in a process of representation by which styles of speech are transferred from one genre to another in a way that “violates and renews” established genres (1986: 80, 66). In this way, the novelist, or any producer of texts, participates in the centrifugal processes of language through which the “myth” of language, the fixing of the relationships between language, and social phenomena and the movement towards unitary language (attributed to modern states by Bakhtin), is disrupted through the mobilization of heteroglossia (1981:272, 368-369).

In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin (1984) develops this opposition further in his discussion of the challenge presented by the early novel form to the emerging relationship between the Enlightenment, its ideas about language, and its relationship to the modern Nation-State. For Bakhtin this challenge was manifested through the mobilization of heterogeneous speech, by early novelists, in order to disrupt both the liturgical certainty of medieval Latin and the new national vernaculars of the Enlightenment State. While Bakhtin privileges certain genres, such as “the grotesque” as being especially disruptive, his arguments regarding the late medieval novel center primarily on the creative and disruptive manipulation of insults, curses, market and festival genres, and other popular forms in concert with the “official seriousness” of the languages of Church and State. Furthermore, Bakhtin suggests, the sources of these literary techniques are the popular practices that surround the medieval festival, with their disruptions and inversions of hierarchy, doctrine, and the orders of logic. Essentially, it is the popular practices of heteroglossia and their disruptive potential *vis-à-vis* the language of Medieval hierarchy that, for Bakhtin, represent the animating principle of language. In the case of Jamaican popular music, this mobilization of heteroglossic speech was especially evident in the music of performer/composer/producer Cecil Bustamante Campbell (a.k.a. Prince Buster), particularly in his contributions to the subgenre of the Rudeboy song. This can be understood in terms of Bakhtin’s concepts of centripetal or centralizing processes, but within the assumption of multiple and clashing forces with multiple loci.

Contrary to expectations, Jamaican independence did not produce widespread prosperity for the country and its new citizens. Rather, it was accompanied by increased unemployment, a contraction of the urban middle class and a large population movement from rural areas to the expanding shanty-towns around West Kingston (Lacey 1977). Furthermore, independence saw a retrenchment of racism (or “shadism,” as it has more recently been called in the context of Jamaica: Bradley, 2000), and the replacement of a white colonial power structure with an “off-white” (so to speak) metropolitan elite. As M.G. Smith (1955) has argued, the operation of this multi-leveled racial system depended as much on sets of linguistic and performative criteria as it did on reference to phenotypic characteristics. Important to the day-to-day operation of this system in the lives of many Jamaicans were criteria of linguistic performance: being poor, from a rural parish, and speaking a non-standard register tended to indicate “Black,” often regardless of actual skin color. Terms such as “Bush” or “Quashi” referred simultaneously to locations, types of speech and types of speaker, typically with pejorative connotations. Similarly, the terms *rough*, *roughneck*, and *rude* not only described the social characteristics associated with a particular type of speech, but indicated the expected activities of speakers within a particular context: Kingston in the mid- ’60s.

Throughout the ’60s, “Rudeboy,” as a social type, referred primarily to groups of young men, ranging from their mid teens to their late twenties who inhabited the areas around West Kingston. The people most often categorized by this term were chiefly unemployed school-leavers and migrants from the country, living hand-to-mouth, taking what work was available or pursuing less legitimate vocations. Ranging from petty street-crime to more organized forms of larceny and even large-scale violence, the activities of this new urban class were a source of concern both within the shanties and on a national level. However, the term itself also carries connotations of transgression, audacity, and economic mobility, not to mention an ability to trump the authority of the police and army. Depending on the context of its use, the term “Rudeboy” (*ruudbuoi* or *ruudbwai*)¹ is alternately a term of contempt or an expression of pride, occasionally both simultaneously, whose use itself marks a particular type of speaker. As noted earlier, this ambivalence surrounding this term mirrors the ambivalence which surrounded the Rudeboy, or “Rudie” (*ruudii*) himself in the mid- to late ’60s.

The term Rudeboy encompassed a form of mobility that did not follow the demands of a performative racial hierarchy. The Rudeboy embodied the possibility of dramatic economic gains without conformity to the linguistic and behavioral criteria of the existing social system. While violence was seen as the primary means of achieving this success, music was seen as another source of rapid economic gain. Bob Marley, The Maytals, and Desmond Dekker were all described as Rudeboy singers at the time. This was partly in reference to songs containing Rudeboy themes, partly in recognition of the singers’ impoverished origins and dramatic success at an unconventional occupation, one that in many ways depended on the maintenance of vernacular language.

¹ Note: Partly for the sake of convention and simplicity, my examples employ the system of transcription originally devised by early researchers of Jamaican Creole (DeCamp & LePage, 1960; Cassidy 1961; Bailey, 1966). However, I have also presented the song texts (see Appendix) in this manner to demonstrate another way in which linguistic boundaries are established. Here we see two texts apparently presented in JC along with their “translations”. In fact, both examples partake, to varying degrees, of several different registers, crossing boundaries implicit in constructs such as the creole continuum and even shifting the boundaries themselves.

However, there existed another and usually more evident face of Rudeboy violence. While the figure of the Rudeboy presented a challenge to official structures of authority in its association with the ganja trade,² and with crimes against the property of the more affluent classes in other parts of Kingston, the majority of victims of crime were the neighbors of the perpetrators themselves. Some of the more successful of the “Rudeboy” musicians (and, it is said, some actual gangsters as well) became increasingly involved in Rastafari, choosing a different means of resistance to the state, but most criminals continued in their established patterns, sustaining the atmosphere of casual violence that surrounded the generalized poverty of the slums. It was through this atmosphere that residents of the shanty-towns understood the ambivalence of the Rudeboy, in the challenge he presented to the colonial system and the potential for violence that surrounded him. With the elections of 1967, this ambivalence took on a new dimension.

During the campaign, both the People’s National Party (PNP) and the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) began to arm street gangs within the poorer neighborhoods of West Kingston, ostensibly to protect their supporters from the strong-arm tactics of the opposition (Lacey, 1977). This self-fulfilling prophecy triggered a pattern of violence and intimidation that has characterized most elections in Jamaica since. Naturally, those most affected by the violence, whether party supporter or bystander, were the residents of the neighborhoods themselves. As guns replaced ratchet-knives and bombings and arson replaced petty theft and burglary, the violence ascribed to the Rudeboy took on a whole new dimension, one that musicians sought to address.

It should be noted that the majority of Jamaican popular songs produced in the ’60s were not sung in a variety of what continuum scholars have described as “basilect” or Jamaican Creole (JC). Rather, most were performed in approximations of what Andrea Sand (1999) would describe as Jamaican English (JE) or even “Educated Jamaican English” (EJE), essentially a close variant of Standard Southern British English (SSBE). Though often of rural or working-class background, and just as often addressing issues of particular concern to the “Black” residents of areas such as West Kingston, the majority of singers did not perform using the highly divergent rural forms described by many early researchers as JC. Instead, most employed grammatical structures close to standard, along with variations at the phonological level producing what might be described as a Jamaican “accent”. These minimal variations seem to have been part of an emerging set of national linguistic standards different from existing prestige registers and distinct from what might be described as the “acrolect” of the colonial period (Mufwene, 1994)³ []. Move this to footnote 2 Standards such as these would have in fact been available to many speakers of differing social positions, but would also have carried indexes of a ‘Brown’, bourgeois identity to which only a minority had access in both a material and a performative sense.

² *Ganja*, a local term for *cannabis sativa*, is not only central to Rastafarian practices but is also popular amongst many of the poorer elements of Jamaican society for both folk remedies and recreational uses. Its associations with the poorer urban and rural classes and government pressure on trafficking contributed to the involvement of urban gangs in networks of *ganja* circulation.

³ Here, with the appearance of phenomena such as parallel acrolects or competing prestige registers, we begin to see the insufficiency of continuum models.

However, while employing what seems to have been a relatively common and conventional base of linguistic forms, many singers and songwriters also employed, to varying degrees, highly divergent features alongside JE. It is evident in the ska and rocksteady songs of this middle period, that many artists employed language in highly diverse ways. Rather than sudden shifts from one clearly defined variant to another, the songs of this period were characterized by the presence of forms that would be defined in the literature as characteristically “basilectal” JC, alongside forms with a greater proximity to standard, as well as forms that fall into neither category. Furthermore, these combinations of diverse forms typically occurred within the same song texts and even the same elements of song structure, but not in any systematic pattern throughout a text or across a corpus of songs that might suggest the emergence of a new “lect” as an autonomous bounded system. Rather than a model of “code switching” or “code mixing” between static, homogenous, and bounded units organized along a linear scale, the manipulation of language within these texts might be better viewed in terms of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s (1985) “acts of identity”.

As with Silverstein’s (1979) example of Indonesian respect language, the ability of speakers to (pragmatically) index particular social roles through language use in context derives from the involvement of language features in a metapragmatic system of (iconic) resemblances which is in turn engaged with ideologies of social differentiation. These ideologies of social difference are often reflected in ideologies of language: systems of belief about the ability of language to represent a social reality or state of affairs. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) assert that “acts of identity” constitute the selection of socially marked linguistic models (that is, linguistic forms or registers that are indexical of a social condition or role) in order to inhabit a particular role or assert solidarity with a particular group (or, by inference, emphasize opposition). It should be noted that the musicians during this period were not simply moving between a standard and divergent forms that were representative of their own backgrounds, nor were they simply inhabiting social roles through language as an expression of solidarity. Rather, many of their songs display a complex understanding, not only of various registers, but of the meanings and ideologies surrounding language in relation to social difference. It is through these understandings, shared by performer and listener, that marked language elements became a means not only to describe a social reality, but to comment on and reshape that reality.

Jamaican musicians in the mid-60s were able to describe complex and variable relationships between themselves, the subjects of their songs, and their audiences through the mobilization of presuppositions about language and social roles in representations of language use in context. Many of the songs with explicit political content from the period of Independence take a relatively unproblematic position *vis-à-vis* the state. In most cases, the language of these songs closely approximates an idealized Jamaican standard, with perhaps one or two divergent elements. The most noticeable of these variations is the lowering of what in rural speech, according to classic basilect studies (Cassidy, 1961; Bailey, 1966), would be a diphthong, into a monophthong. Similarly, in several instances, items in which rural speakers might employ a short vowel are raised to the suggestion of a diphthong. What is especially striking about these transformations is that they appear throughout the popular music of the ’60s regardless of both the degree of presence of other non-standard items and constructions, and the themes of the songs themselves. While it is unclear whether or not these shifts represented ongoing transformations amongst a broad category of speakers at the time, it is certainly possible that such features may have in fact marked difference between the more isolated, rural speakers of early studies and urban speakers, without necessarily moving towards standard or prestige registers. In this sense,

the representations of language in these songs can be seen as assertions of a new urban linguistic identity, one that did not correspond to the ideals of a national middle-class.

For the later songs, particularly those addressing Rudeboy violence, a much greater degree of linguistic divergence is evident, particularly with regards to the lengthening and monophthongization of vowel sounds associated with JC studies and the characteristic speech of rural dwellers. At the same time, the songs of this period also demonstrate the retention of a number of forms corresponding to what has been described as “acrolect,” as well as a number of linguistic innovations fitting into neither category. Furthermore, by the latter half of the decade, this indexical process was made even more distinct by the increased presence of overtly non-standard constructions at the lexical and grammatical levels. At this time, features of this sort were often present to their highest degree within songs commenting on the Rudeboy issue. The degree of variation often corresponded to the degree of ambivalence and ambiguity surrounding the figure of the Rudeboy within the commentaries contained in the songs. While several of the songs of this period in fact take a celebratory stance towards the activities of the Rudeboy, particularly with regards to the challenge he presented to state authority, it is interesting to note that a greater degree of variation is actually present in those songs that take a more critical position on Rudeboy violence. These songs represent a critique of the Rudeboy from a linguistic, and hence social, position that is not the state’s. They become the embodiment of the possibility of an authority outside of the state, an authority whose source is at this point not yet fixed, but one that speaks the language of the people rather than that of the structures of power. No where is this more evident than in the songs of Prince Buster and the figure of Judge Dread.

4. Prince Buster

With the height of his popularity spanning most of the ’60s, Prince Buster was not only one of the most acclaimed Jamaican musicians of his era, but also one of the most prolific. A boxer turned sound system impresario, singer, songwriter, and record producer, his body of work was known as much for its diversity as it was for its sheer scale. This was not simply a diversity of subject or musical form, but rather went beyond that, becoming a diversity of linguistic content as well. Furthermore, this diversity did not simply represent a progressive modification of language towards a standard that paralleled that of his expanding audience. Instead, if anything, the reverse pattern was the case, his use of non-standard linguistic elements increasing with his popularity. However, this was as much a function of topic as it was the result of an expanding base of popularity. Few other artists at this time possessed the command of language and the understanding of its relationship to social phenomena and their inhabitants as Prince Buster. The second half of the decade saw an acceleration of the ongoing movement towards explicit forms of social and political commentary in music. For Prince Buster, whose own work, starting perhaps with his 1962 hit **Madness**, was central to this movement towards politicization, this often meant addressing a particular topic or setting in language appropriate to the people represented.

Take for example his 1965 hit **Hard Man Fe Dead**. Here, we have a song in which the language of the lyrics corresponds almost exactly to the model of “basilect” (that is, speech patterns associated with the isolated rural peasantry) described by early proponents of the Creole Continuum. Even the title, meaning “hard man to kill,” employs the

characteristic *fi* construction described by Bailey (1966)⁴ while the body of the song is replete with similar features at several levels of structure. The first line of the refrain, for instance, not only employs the construction “lick him down” (strike him down) but also contains the distinctive morphological features *op* and *dung* for “up” and “down” (Cassidy, 1961), considered characteristic of speakers with the least exposure to the mechanisms of standard. This distinction is further emphasized by the complimentary structures of the first two phrases. Similarly, the line *Dem bwail wan pat a chaaklit tea* (“They boiled a pot of chocolate tea”) employs a characteristic monophthong, in *chaaklit*, the item *dem* as a third person plural pronoun (Bailey, 1966), as well as the morphological variant for “boil” (Cassidy, 1961). Additionally, it also contains an unmarked past construction and the article *wan* (“one”) before a singular noun (Bailey, 1966).

It should be noted, however, that this song was not written by someone who would have spoken in this fashion regularly, nor was it primarily intended for an audience consisting of the rural poor. Rather, as can be seen in the lyrics, this song was a parodic representation of language, describing a humorous situation involving rural people at a funeral, while at the same time suggesting both a solidarity of the singer with his subjects and his superiority to them. It is likely that such a song would have found its largest audience amongst the urban popular classes, some of whom would have been of rural origin and most of whom would have been able to understand the language in the song and its various connotations. As well as simply having access to recordings and contexts in which they might be played, it is possible that many listeners in urban areas would have recognized a relationship between themselves and those personified in the song and may have sought to emphasize a distinction between the two. It seems that this attempt to capture rural speech at its most extreme divergence is even responsible for what might be hypercorrection on the part of Prince Buster: in the third verse we hear both the so-called “cockney h” and its Jamaican reverse in the construction *alla hout* (“holler out”); later the presence of *h* is evident at the beginning of both items.

While a number of Prince Buster’s earlier songs conform more closely to an urban “standard”, it is in his commentaries on Rudeboy violence, such as **Rude, Rude, Rudee**, **Too Hot** and **Judge Dread (400 Years)** that the use of non-standard and mixed elements and registers is most evident. It is also here that the simultaneous critique of Rudeboy violence and the state’s efforts to control it reached its most developed form. **Judge Dread (400 Years)** presents the subjection of the Rudeboy to an authority entirely separate from the state. In this a particular emphasis is placed on the figure of the Judge, with Prince Buster abandoning meter and verse structure for a monologue given entirely as the character Judge Dread, punctuated by occasional interactions with his backing musicians as Rudeboys. Through this staging, and particularly through the use of language involved in it, Prince Buster manages to establish simultaneous critiques of both the Rudeboy and state authority, while at the same time suggesting the possibility of a justice emerging from a different source. His character’s title, for instance, carries a dual meaning, not only suggesting a sense of fear and respect, but also employing a term commonly associated with Rastafarians, thus linking this sense of respect to a concrete source. Similarly, in

⁴ This is a highly generalized grammatical element, marked by the particle *fi* in front of the verb, that can represent amongst other things, progressive, causal, infinitive, possessive or desiderative formations. It is often associated with speakers of highly non-standard registers in Jamaica. **Hard Man Fe Dead** represents one of the few songs from this period to employ so distinctive a construction.

taking Ethiopia as a point of origin, he further locates the source of his authority not in England or even the High Courts in Kingston, but in the true kingdom of the Messiah, to which Rastafari looks for the origins of its own authority. This de-centering of judicial power acquires additional dimensions with the sentences handed down to the Rudeboys. Here Judge Dread shows no mercy, living up to his alternate name by reckoning jail time in centuries. Yet both the extreme nature of his penalties and the arbitrary nature in which he runs his hearing additionally serve to ridicule the persistence of colonial methods, in both their arbitrary and paternalistic aspects, within the official judicial system. The addition of five hundred lashes to the sentence of the final Rudeboy serves to re-enforce this particular association.

As Prince Buster establishes an atmosphere of ambivalence around his Judge, he simultaneously sets out to disrupt the image of the Rudeboy. Along with the inclusion of acts such as house bombings and the robbing of school children in the list of charges, an air of the ridiculous surrounds each of the Rudies brought before the court. Initially responding with bravado and disrespect, each Rudeboy begins to break down under questioning, often stammering and mumbling in near incomprehensible *patois* (or what is meant to sound like it) as their excuses are summarily rejected by the Judge. Eventually, all are taken from the court sobbing. While even the linguistic abilities of the Rudeboys become sources of ridicule, it should be noted that Judge Dread nevertheless confronts them in their own language, the language of the streets.

Though not incorporating the distinctively rural speech patterns of **Hard Man Fe Dead**, the language in **Judge Dread (400 Years)** situates it just as clearly within the linguistic standards of a particular social location. For instance, one can follow the presence of the “cockney h” and its particularly Jamaican complementary phenomenon, throughout this text, in items such as *ai ham* (“I am”) and *ondred yeas* (“hundred years”) in Judge Dread’s self-introduction, or in the exclamation *osh op* (“hush up”). Additionally, a generalized suppression of dental fricatives in favor of alveolar plosives (*dem* rather than “them”) is evident in several instances. Both phenomena appear in the item “Ethiopia,” where what for standard would be a *th* is manifest as a *t* and an *h* separated by a vowel. At the same time one can hear the more conventional presence of *h* in other instances of the use of the word “hundred,” or in the item *heirbai* (“hereby”). Similarly, while many features, such as the non-agreement between plural markers in the list of charges, suggest forms of speech closer to those rural speakers, items such as *ruudboi* (“Rudeboy”) do not. Here, while the tendency towards a monophthong in the first vowel sound is evident, the morphology of *-bwai* does not follow the standard suggested by Cassidy (1961) and seen in items such as *bwail* (“boil”) in other songs by Prince Buster. Likewise, in the construction *chaaj yu fa kaantemp* (“charge you for contempt”), we see what might be a characteristic *fi* formation, or at the very least a particularly Jamaican use of “for” in place of “with”. However, not only is this particular construction, emphasized by the presence of constructions using “charged with”, (such as in *fa shootin blak piipl* “for shooting black people”), we find what may be a *fi* compliment combined with the gerund form of the verb, where in more rural variants the verb would remain unmarked in such an instance (Bailey, 1966). In this case, the item *fa* may not constitute a *fi* construction, but may simply be a morphological foreshortening of “for”; but inasmuch as in more “basilectal” variants, the *fi* phrase is often employed where a more conventional construction would use “for”, this distinction becomes increasingly difficult to make. Additionally, throughout the song we find both marked and unmarked past formations, often in close formation with each other, or even involving the same root verb. Through the presence of these intermediate forms, a linguistic image is created of a

particular type of individual, an image that not only disrupts the linguistic expectations surrounding the figure of a Judge, but that also attacks the Rudeboy in his own language. Here, a speaker marked with the same linguistic forms as those indexing the social location of the Rudeboy (i.e. poor, Black residents of West Kingston) both replaces colonial authority and sits in judgment representing the real victims of Rudeboy violence.

In this way, we see the critique of the Rudeboy at its most developed. Through the disruption of understandings about the relationship between language and social position, this genre presented a challenge to the Rudeboy without invoking and affirming the authority of the state. Instead, many of the songs of this period celebrated the Rudeboys' attack on established systems of authority, while at the same time warning of the possible danger and social disruption resulting from the Rudeboys' activities. In many of the examples given, the Rudeboy is presented as a figure of bravado and audacity, while at the same time he is made to look tragic or even ridiculous. This critique reaches the height of its complexity in **Judge Dread (400 Years)** with the simultaneous establishment of this ambivalence towards the Rudeboy through language, and the mirroring of this ambivalence with regards to the performative standards of authority. This mimetic irony is embodied in the figure of Judge Dread, a persona that is simultaneously fearsome, with an authority derived from a more authentic source than that of the state, and at the same time absurd in his parody of the arbitrary methods of the state judiciary. Key to the development of a critique of this nature is the artists' manipulation of language and its social components.

5. Conclusion

As outlined above, the Rudeboy genre, employing a strategy of heteroglossia, developed into an effective and simultaneous critique of street violence and state authority. By incorporating more explicit commentaries into what was essentially a dance genre, songwriters of this period, including Prince Buster, managed to disrupt and transform it, paving the way for the heavily politicized genre of Reggae. This occurred not only through the thematic content of lyrics, but also through the language in which such commentaries were embodied. Through the dislocation and transformation of expectations regarding the language of the Rudeboy and the source of their critique, many performers were able to not only illuminate the relationships surrounding language, hierarchy, and authority, but to transform them as well. In a similar sense to the transformation of "T" and "V" pronoun use in English described by Silverstein (1979)⁵, these performers were able to effect changes not only at the level of genre, but within the language itself, participating in the ongoing entry of vernacular forms into Jamaican "Standard" through dissemination of both linguistic elements and knowledge about their social relationships through a form of mass media. This seems to have been in part the property of an "ethno-metapragmatics" (Silverstein, 1979), a linguistic ideology held, circulated, and mobilized by speakers themselves. Whether, as Bakhtin might suggest, this manipulation of relationships between language and social types is a particular property of "the author" as a distinct type of speaker, remains to be seen.

⁵ Using the example of T and V second person pronouns in European languages, Silverstein (1979, 1996) demonstrates ways in which the mobilization of competing linguistic ideologies may also transform patterns of language use along with the social phenomena they are thought to embody. Such is the case with his example of the linguistic aspects of Quaker egalitarianism and the responses it inspired.

In addition, the critiques formulated by these Jamaican writers were presented to a broad and diverse audience through the characteristically “mixed” nature of the linguistic features mobilized in the song. As we have seen, rather than representing a continuum model that posits a plurality of minute, autonomous linguistic variants, each one associated with a particular social category, Creoles, like all linguistic systems, consist of features and systems held in relationships to social phenomena that are highly mutable and constantly subject to transformation. Not only do the Rudeboy songs present examples of processes through which such transformations occur, they also demonstrate how such processes might be directed towards as large a body of participants as possible. To follow the logic of Gal and Irvine’s (2000) “fractal recursivity”, a song that in continuum terminology contains features representative of a “mesolectal” variant may in fact simultaneously employ markers of multiple registers indexing multiple types of speaker, which furthermore may have different degrees of significance to different speakers. Furthermore, one might argue that rather than being an exception to language, Creoles can be understood as representative of the state of all languages, in practice, as they are animated by speakers: mutable, multi-registered, and subject to intermediate forms and multiple, competing interpretations.

While Trudgill (1986) has argued that mass media may provide insufficient exposure to distinctive linguistic features to demonstrate correct usage of new or imported registers, this position ignores the role played by various media in disseminating and clarifying not only those features that are particularly salient, but more importantly the values and relationships implicit in those certain highly salient items. Ultimately, in Jamaica, this process led to a linguistic standard for popular music that allowed for a high degree of presence of vernacular features, creating a condition of possibility for the later introduction of the explicitly Rastafarian ideologies of language that accompanied Rastafarian political messages within the music.

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