

**“We Know Where We Are From”  
The Politics of Black Culture from Myal to Marley\***

by Sylvia Wynter

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[In the *historical* sense the U.S. was the setting in which the *political* implications of Black Cultures *should* have been worked out.

[Harold Cruse, “The Amilcar Cabral Politico-Cultural Model.” *Black World* (October 1975), p.23, emphasis in original]

The slave ships carried on board not only men, women and children but also their gods, their beliefs and their folklore.

[Roger Bastide, *African Civilizations in the New World*. New York: Harper Torchbook edition, 1971, p. 23]

It was the baggage unlisted in the slave ships’ logs that was to constitute the “radical difference” of the black presence in the New World. In Africa this baggage—gods, beliefs, folklore—had constituted a cultural signifying system, articulated *tribally*. With the Middle Passage diaspora this *cultural signifying system* (articulated tribally) was to be *metamorphosed*, *syncretized* and *rearticulated*. Like the syncretic religious systems that had sprung up, as the end of Classical Antiquity approached, the reconstituted syncretic system of the black Americas was to provide a cultural counter-world to the pervasive dominant world of Western rationality, whether in its Liberal-democratic *cum* capitalist or orthodox Marxist/neo-Marxist statist forms.

I therefore intend to argue in this paper that the sustained ideological conflict between the latter and the many variants of black “cultural nationalism”—a conflict to which Professor Macdonald refers in his pioneering and valuable paper, and of which the latest “clash” between the Democratic Socialist Prime Minister Manley of Jamaica and the Rastafarian reggae singer Bob Marley is an example—is logical at a deep structure level.

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\* Paper presented at the joint meeting of the African Studies Association and the Latin American Studies Association, Houston, TX, November, 1977

I make a distinction between the *surface level* and the *deep structure level* for two reasons. At the surface level, Marxist theory and praxis, as institutionalized by the Communist Party after the widespread social upheavals of the Russian Revolution of 1917, and black nationalism as an overt and increasingly universalized political force, mutually, for a while at least in the twenties, sustained and supported each other. The mass constituency on which black nationalism could always count—at least in times of crisis—provided a recruiting base for Marxist organizers bedeviled by the fact that they remained a sectarian movement in the larger complex of the normatively White and middle class American (i.e., U.S.A.) reality.

On the other hand, Marxist theory which defined “blacks” as an oppressed section of the “proletariat” gave a more “material” and thereby ostensibly more rational underpinning to black nationalism. Hence for a while the varied comings and goings between black nationalist and Communist groupings in the twenties which Harold Cruse has documented.<sup>1</sup>

However at this level of mutual support, there was also a struggle for power. This struggle was waged between different branches of the newly skilled black classes for control of the burgeoning black movement. The more skilled and incorporated into the dominant structure Blacks were, the more they tended to think and operate in the rational mode of Western Marxism. The exposé that Cruse makes of the paper that W.A. Domingo, a black Jamaican, submitted to a Communist group (Whites, largely) warning of the menace and threat that Negroes presented to the radical movement in the United States, is a prime example of this kind of Marxist “rationality.” The reported hesitation of Huey Newton of the Black Panthers to join in the AntiBakke coalition on the grounds that Affirmative Action should not use the social category of *race* but should base itself only on economic categories, is another.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: From Its Origins to the Present*. Publisher New York, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> The point about the reported “hesitation”—the Panthers *did* join the coalition—is that it would represent the Orthodox Party Line, a theoretical line whose “autonomization of the economic” (Baudrillard) is largely responsible for its failure to come to grips, theoretically and practically, with the black experience in the United States. See for the above concept, Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*. Trans. Mark Poster. St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975.

Against these “rational” blacks were the lumpen-skilled, the newly skilled, whose schooling was minimal and paper qualifications non-existent. Because of their lack of overmuch formal Western schooling they were able—and Garvey would be, of course, the outstanding member of this group—to *move in the counter world of the popular cultural signifying system*. They were therefore able, Garvey in particular, to create a global black mass following who were *symbolically* articulated and organized.

It was precisely because of this *symbolic mode of articulation/organization* that Garveyism, after the defeat of Garvey himself, was able to go underground, spreading out in secret subterranean currents all over the black diaspora, including a then colonized Black Africa itself. There, in the underground it hooked into the central cultural traditions that had come into existence in the post-1492 world of the Caribbean and the Americas, both rooting and reinventing themselves in myriad new forms, in the wake of the first slave ships reaching *terra firma*, together with the landing, in chains, of those who had survived the ordeals of the Middle Passage. Garveyism itself had sprung from the cultural seeded of this tradition, as it had evolved over several centuries in the island of Jamaica. It is the “politics” of this tradition—from Myal to Marley—that we shall look at later in this paper. And this tradition, we hope to argue, is itself related to the powerful symbolic counterworld that was reinvented in response to the forced exodus, of the Middle Passage subjects-as-slaves, from Africa, this followed by their enforced diaspora, from the first decades of the sixteenth century onwards in the *slave labor* plantation archipelago, one that was to be instituted as the ultimate periphery of the Western World system, itself, the first such in human history.<sup>3</sup>

Garveyism itself was later to provide, in the above context, the cultural seedbed for later forms of black revolt including those that took apparently, the most “rational forms,” e.g. independence movements in the then still colonized Caribbean territories, as well as in Black

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<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: Academic Press, 1976.

Africa. But in the United States, the antagonism between the Garveyite black nationalists and the Marxist Leninist Blacks was especially fierce and bitter. Harold Cruse has well documented this clash in his landmark book—*The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*. Much of the polemical power of the book comes from Cruse's own rejection of the orthodox Marxist formulations of the thirties and of *its vanguard bearers at the time, the primarily Jewish intellectual class*. Much of the critical power of the book, too, comes from the fact that Cruse's own Marxist formation gave him the methodological tools—Marx's great contribution—to critique Marxism itself as a system.

On the other hand, if the distorted biases of the book reveal the lack of a fully elaborated theoretical basis which could underpin Cruse's proposed project of cultural revolution, many of its insights and strengths come from Cruse's own secular modern version of the black nationalist tradition. Since it is this tradition with its own varying emphasis on *cultural revolution* which has faced American Marxism with concrete questions for which theoretically it had no adequate responses—forcing it either to quest beyond its orthodox limits, as in the theoretically creative case of C.L.R. James, or to hold to sectarian positions, repeating formulaic incantations in order to dismiss as mere petit-bourgeois ideology, the position from which this tradition spoke, yet of which the latter was to be only one aspect.

Cruse discusses in his book the Twenties clash between Garveyism with its mass organization, undoubted fervour, and *Back to Africa* Program, and the Black Marxist Leninists with their implicit Program of Forward to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The conflict expressed itself in two significant slogans—Class First or Race First.

It is these slogans which together emphasize the aspect that I want to primarily explore in this paper, that of cultural identity and self/definition/perception. At this point, I therefore want to risk giving the concept of culture that will inform this paper. Culture is for me, *primarily, the societal machinery with which a particular society or group symbolically codes its co-identifying sense of self, with reference to which, it then acts both individually and collectively upon the world.*

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has pointed out, the links between self-definition/perception and action, as links carried out through what he calls “the symbolic function.”

The symbolic function presents itself as a double movement within the subject; man makes an object of his action, but only to restore to this action in due time its place as a grounding. In this equivocation operating at every instant lies the whole process of a function in which action and knowledge alternate.<sup>4</sup>

He goes on to give two examples of this, the second of which, the historical example most concerns us here:

Phase One, the man who works at the level of production in our society considers himself to rank among the proletariat. Phase Two, in the name of belonging to it he joins a general strike.<sup>5</sup>

Orthodox Marxist theory defined and defines the identity of the black masses as belonging to the identity of the “proletariat”—a universal, international class defined by its relationship of non-ownership to the means of production, and by the wage labour form in which the wealth that it produces is expropriated by the capitalist owners of these means—the bourgeoisie. On the basis of this definition the program of action is clear. The revolutionary task of the proletariat, black and white, is to unite and fight, expropriate the expropriators, nationalize/socialize the means of production, dissolve the system of power based on the category of ownership, and install the dictatorship of the proletariat, presumably both black and white.

Cultural nationalists, on the other hand, defined themselves and perceived themselves as primarily Black or Negro. This self perception is founded on the concrete fact that for a very long time, even when they were exploited along with their fellow white proletariat at the work place, they were relatively more exploited. Indeed, for a long time the white proletariat took an active part in seeing that the black proletariat were relatively more exploited than themselves.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Anthony Wilden. New York: Dell, 1968: 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48.

<sup>6</sup> In his autobiographical Novel, *Black Boy*, Richard Wright recounts the following incident:

Even more centrally, in his overall life situation the black proletariat experience even greater exploitation, social cultural and economic—inferior schools, housing, health care, segregation, back of the bus transportation, etc. In this *life* situation the white proletariat, exploited in the workplace, nevertheless joined and joins the ranks of the bourgeoisie, like them taking Whiteness as his valued property—even lynched the Black to keep in him in his black place.<sup>7</sup>

Thus for the cultural nationalists it was not the primacy of the mode of production nor of the Black's relation of non-ownership to the mode of production that exploited him materially in his workplace, materially and psychically in his life situation. Rather it was/is the societal production and reproduction of its own hierarchical social relations, ones enacting of its own co-identifying "sense of self" in whose terms, the Black was/is exploited both materially and *symbolically* as the Negative Other who grounds the general post-Civil War, post-abolition/Reconstruction American perception of itself as a "White" Nation. Negated in his total life situation as black—his negation also as proletariat was only a part of his overall negation—the black nationalist saw his Slogan as *Race First* and its program one as defined by George Lamming's fictional Trumper in his novel, *In the Castle of My Skin*. A black Barbadian who had emigrated to the United States as a guest farm worker, Trumper tries, on his return home to the Caribbean island of Barbados, itself then still a colony of the British empire, to explain to his boyhood friend G., what being black in America,—as distinct from being a black colonial subject of the British island of Barbados—meant. Trumper explains,

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Hired by a Yankee employer while still in the South, he is supposed to be instructed by two Southern white employees in the "mechanics of grinding and polishing lenses." He does the odd jobs about the place, but as the weeks pass, the two white men make no attempt to teach him. He asks one of the men, Reynolds, to tell him about the work. The following dialogue ensues:

"What are you trying to do, get smart nigger? He asked me.

"No sir," I said.

Wright was baffled. He decided to try the other worker, Pease, instead, reminding him that "the boss said that I was to be given a chance to learn the trade." The following dialogue ensued:

"Nigger, you think you're white, don't you?"

"No sir."

"You're acting almighty like it," he said. Pease shook his fist in my face.

"This is white man's work around here," he said.

Sometimes here (in Barbados) the whites talk about the Negro people. It ain't so in the States...There they simply say the Negroes...and sometimes the nigger or that nigger an so on...'Tis a tremendous difference...One single word makes a tremendous difference, that's why you can never be too sure what a word will do. I'm a nigger or a Negro an all o' us put together is niggers or Negroes. There aint no *man* an there aint no *people*. Just "nigger" an "Negro." An' little as that seem 'tis a tremendous difference. It makes a tremendous difference not to the whites but to the blacks. 'Tis the blacks who get affected by leaving out that word *man* or *people*. That's how we learn the race. This is what a word can do. Now there aint a black man in all America who won't get up and say I'm a negro an I'm proud of it... I'm going to fight for the rights of the Negro and I'll die fighting. That's what any black man in the States will say. *He ain't got time to think 'bout the rights of man or whatever you choose to call it. It's the rights of the Negro 'cause we have gone on using the word the others use for us, and now we're a different kind of creature. But we got to see first and foremost 'bout the rights o' the Negro 'cause it's like any kind of creature to see 'bout itself first. If the rights of man and rights of the negro was the same said thing, 'twould be different, but they ain't 'cause we're a different kind o' creature. That's what a simple little word can do, and 'tis what you going to learn sooner or later.*<sup>8</sup>

It is this difference, *Negro* or *Man*, *Negro* and/or *Proletariat*, a difference of *relative position* within the social "whole," and therefore of the resultant self-definition or program for action, that Professor Macdonald also points to, in his account of the clash between the black Trinidadian activist George Padmore and the Comintern in 1934. Padmore was a communist and occupied a high position in the Comintern. As Editor of the *Negro Worker*, he played the role of agitator/propagandist against the imperial powers, continuing the Leninist strategy of preparing the "colonial reserves" for action should the imperial Liberal democracies attempt to again attack the Soviet Union.

But by 1934 the growing power of Hitler and the threat of the Nazi menace, defined a more powerful enemy from the point of view of the Soviet Union's survival. Padmore who was in Morocco working with the Moroccan liberation movement, was ordered to stop all agitation in the French colonies. This was the price that the Russians had to pay in return for a mutual defense pact with France. From the point of view of the Soviet Union it was an entirely legitimate decision, and Padmore recognized it as such. In addition there was no doubt that the

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<sup>8</sup> George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*. Longmann Caribbean. 1970 edition: 297.

defeat of the Soviet Union would itself entail the delay if not defeat of the then hoped-for global socialist revolution.<sup>9</sup>

But Padmore, as Macdonald puts it, “marched to the cadences of a different drummer.” His primary aim was “black liberation and emancipation from colonial rule.” Like Tito before Titoism and Mao before Maoism, he put his own referent population’s interest first and continued publishing his paper. The infighting was rough. His funds were cut off and he was expelled from the Party, stigmatized as a petty-bourgeois nationalist deviationist.<sup>10</sup>

What we must note here, however, is that Padmore’s choice was not a simple either/or. For long periods the program and goal of the proponents of the dictatorship of the proletariat reinforced and continues to reinforce the program and goal of black liberation and emancipation from colonial rule. The case of Guinea-Bissau, of Angola, Mozambique, of South Africa/Azania makes that clear.

This mutual reinforcement is based on the fact that Western Europe’s post-medieval economic system to which we now give the name of capitalism, had been initiated as a world systemic one, in its then founding mercantilist form, on the basis of the also post-medieval political-statal order of the Absolute Monarchy of Western Europe’s then first world empire, that of Spain. It was under the political aegis of empire, therefore, that the model that was to be defining, in Immanuel Wallerstein’s terms, of the mercantilist capitalist economic system as a world-system, that is, a three-tiered interacting model, based on three different modes of labour control—i.e. wage labour in the core areas of the world-system, serf/neo-serf labour in the semi-periphery, and forced slave labour in the periphery—was to be first enacted.<sup>11</sup> While if in its then

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<sup>9</sup> See R.J. Macdonald, *Building Jerusalem: The Construction of a Black Utopian Ideology, 1934-1939* (paper presented at Houston African Studies Association Conference, November 1977).

<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to Professor St. Clair Drake of the Stanford African and Afro-American Studies Program for further information with regard to the inside story of the Padmore/Comintern clash, as well as to his lucid account of the complexity of the choice that Padmore faced.

<sup>11</sup> In his pathbreaking study, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Immanuel Wallerstein, although giving a hegemonically economic interpretation of the origin and reality of the Western world system, nevertheless devotes a chapter to the *political*



post-1492 social matrix New World form, this model had been instituted as that, firstly of the “core” tier of the European settler-archipelago defined by European indentured or wage labor, secondly that of the militarily conquered Caribbean indigenous peoples in their neo-serf (or *encomienda*) labor archipelago, and ultimately, that of the transshipped enslaved Black Africans’ plantation slave labor archipelago, it would be the model’s imperative of maintaining the *relative* relation of degrees of non-coercion and coercion, and/or of inclusion/exclusion, that would be transferred to all areas of the economic world system. This in the wake not only of the West’s further ongoing imperial expansion, and conquest of non-Western peoples, but also to all areas of both Western and Eastern Europe itself, as Wallerstein documents. What would therefore be imperative to the functioning of this model, was that of its being able to ensure, in varying forms, the almost total disposability of the three forms of labor indispensable to its functioning. This as a total disposability whose iconic example, had been that of the semi-periphery indigenous peoples, firstly of the Caribbean, then of the Americas, the majority of whom, torn, after conquest, from their once multiple, auto-centered “senses of the self” and/or respective cultural signifying systems, and instead, now generically classified/homogenized as “Indians” by their conquerors, had to submit to their newly imposed roles. Secondly, that of the periphery’s enslaved peoples of Africa. All of whom, finding themselves enslaved, whether through conquest or through the slave trade, had also found themselves torn (even if originally slaves in Africa), from what had been their also then multiple auto-centered senses of the self (including the quite different, and multiple, meanings of what it was to be a slave<sup>12</sup>), and, instead, all now generically classified/homogenized by their slave traders and slave-owners as “Negroes.”

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aspect of the origin of this world-system. He begins this chapter—titled, “The Absolute Monarchy and Statism”—with the following question: “It is evident that the rise of the Absolute Monarchy in Western Europe is coordinate with the emergence of a European world economy. But is it cause or consequence?” (93).

<sup>12</sup> See for this fundamental difference one which serves to relativize the West’s conception—whether in terms of the Christian-religious or in those of post-medieval, secular-humanism—of slaves/slavery, Suzanne Miers and Igor Koptoff, *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Investigations*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

And although in the case of Catholic, later Counter-Reformation imperial Spain, their imperializing enterprise had been backed by the Papacy, on the basis of the understanding that the latter's Absolute Monarchy would support and facilitate the Catholic Church's Christian evangelizing mission, a struggle was to be waged by several outstanding Catholic missionaries, in the sacred name of their religion, against the Spanish settler's attempt to reduce the indigenous peoples to the status of mere *encomienda* labor—a reduction that was clearly *unjust*, within the terms of Catholicism's Christian theology—with the later imperializing military expansions both of France and England into the Caribbean and the Americas, a transformation, as was to occur, if more totally so in the case of the Reformation/Protestant latter. In that, increasingly, all religious considerations vis a vis Indians and Negroes and their dehumanizing treatment were to be swept aside. While if the successful Haitian slave revolution, itself followed by the Protestant religious movement for the abolition of Negro slavery in both England and the United States, was to lead to the slaves' freedom, their new institutionalized post-slavery role as a secondary form of low wage, lowly skilled *native* labor, was to coincide with the then new Free Trade economic system, of a now, in its now bourgeois configuration, therefore, as such, a fully realized capitalism. Whose goal was now the accelerated industrial development of the productive forces, a goal that would lead it to define itself on the basis of a new *realpolitik* conception of human freedom. Freedom, that is, as one from all traditional ties and their related “senses of the self” which could hinder this homogenizing dynamic.

Consequently, given that its expansion was now dependent on the global scope made possible by the West's continuous imperial and neo-imperial expansion, it was now to continue to transfer to all areas of the world-system, the almost total rationalization of the use of labor power that had been initially implemented in the new-serf *encomienda*, and slave plantation archipelagoes, of the Caribbean and the Americas; thereby coming to reduce all workers-as-workers, to a *common condition of economic powerlessness*. It was to be, therefore, this shared and therefore common experience of ultimate powerlessness that would lead the normal

proletariat (i.e. the “core” working class of Western Europe and Great Britain, together with those of the latter’s settler extensions in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), to its self-perception as such. While in the case of the U.S., it was to be on the basis of this *commonality*, that the proletarian goal—*Where we are going*—and the black goal reinforce and support each other.

But the commonality is one side of the dialectic. Differentiation is the other. Capitalism’s logic, especially in its now fully realized post-nineteenth century form, not only needed a global division of labour, it also needed a globally relative *hierarchization* of labour. While given that the extraction of surplus-value on a global scale needs the mechanism of relatively unequal levels of development, this necessarily calls for the institution, in the West and its colonies for the institution and stable reproduction of societal systems, in the logic of whose *core/semi-periphery/periphery* differentiated functioning, the proletariat itself, became relatively more or less exploited, materially and psychically.

Colonialism—in its nineteenth century form, like Jim Crow legislation in the United States after the end of Negro slavery—was the post-slavery form of the imposition of this hierarchization of, in Marxian terms, the social relations of production. It therefore ensured that the productive system of the colonial countries played the part necessary to the smooth functioning of the “whole” (i.e. world systemic) economic system, thereby enabling the *whole* to respond to the hegemonic ruling class needs of the bourgeoisie: of, at first, the needs, therefore in Wallerstein’s terms, of the *core* countries [Wallerstein 1974]. While since the proletariat of these countries were *nationally* coded, with respect to the “symbolic function” of their “sense of self,” they had come to perceive themselves, once they had been politically enfranchised, as being in bourgeois-specific terms, primarily *national* subjects, in a relation of opposition to other nations, and their respective proletariats. This as a self-perception, which empowered them to be able to share, however unequally, in the proceeds from the relatively greater exploitation of the periphery’s, post-slavery “native labor” proletariat, at the same time as they themselves continue

to be exploited materially and symbolically by their own respective capital accumulating bourgeoisies.<sup>13</sup>

In the colonies and their respective “Mother” countries, the contradiction was expressed as between the politically enfranchised, normative workers at the centre, and the colonized, politically disenfranchised, or “cheap” low wage, lowly skilled native labour in the periphery. The difference was expressed not only materially in the relative difference/size of the historical basket of goods that each obtained in return for the expenditure of their labour power. It was also expressed at the level of the psyche, in the pre-ascribed degrees of relative self-valuation, self-perception, self-worth as human beings, that each category was allowed to have, as the condition of the stable reproduction of the overall world system. And where orthodox Marxism was to see the former as *the* site of political struggle, *given that as an emancipatory theory, it had been developed from the perspective* of the core, from the perspective of the periphery of the ex-slave archipelago of the post-1492 Caribbean and the Americas on the other hand, both aspects of the

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<sup>13</sup> Christian Palloix in his book *The Internationalization of Capital* (Paris, Maspero, 1975), discusses the self-expansion of capital. Robert B. Cohen translated a part of Palloix’s book, which was published as an article in the *Review of Political Economics*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Summer 1977.

In his introduction to Palloix, Cohen writes:

Palloix’s critique is rooted in the realization that the self-expansion of capital can no longer be entirely accomplished within one capitalist formation, since commodities or rather “commodity groups” are only produced at a world level. Thus in today’s economy there is a new mode of accumulation of capital, but also by:

- 1) an international differentiation of the working class through deskilling, differentiation of the labour process, and the differentiation of the production and the reproduction of the values of labor power...

In an unpublished monograph written in 1973, I had pointed out that the Caribbean plantations were the site where forced slave labour was differentiated from “normative” labour in the colonizer countries; and that this relative differentiation was itself necessary to the process of capitalism. It was, of course, Rosa Luxemburg’s original and great insight that capitalism was *imperatively* from the beginning, a world system, even where it itself, was to be, *as a system*, a later form of the mercantilist—i.e. directed by the Absolute state, of which before the rise of the bourgeoisie to ruling class status, in the nineteenth century, capitalism itself, had functioned only as a powerful element in terms of the former. The “unit fallacy” dear to Western Marxists, i.e., the inherent development of capitalism in the West, its Immaculate Conception, is ideological. In the same way that Western bourgeoisie saw their capital, as capital accumulated by their own thrift, so Western Marxists want to claim that the wealth accumulated in the West is the unique product of the Western Proletariat; and is therefore the legitimate inheritance of the West’s socialist heirs. The unit fallacy is widespread. In 1974, however, Immanuel Wallerstein called this fallacy in question with the publication of his seminal study, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974). This as a pathbreaking and definitive study, even where his purely economic interpretation is open to question.

overall struggle are necessarily inextricably linked, with this linkage coming to be expressed in the variant forms of “cultural nationalisms.”

Thus in the case of George Lamming’s character Trumper, his awakening to this new form of struggle, when leaving his British island colony of Barbados—as a colony in which the polar differentiation of the overall hierarchy of the order is enacted between, on the one hand, the English colonizers who, self-classified as “English,” staff the imperial bureaucratic/military administration, together with the “Creole” descendants of the original English settlers and slave-owners (and who, although a minority had continued to exercise financial-economic as well as cultural-educational hegemony) and, on the other, their colonized “native subjects,” the “Negro people”; with this thereby enabling the empirically actualized racial hierarchy to be enacted and to be experienced by both sides *only implicitly*—he arrives in the United States. There to experience a different reality. One in which “there ain’t no *man* and there ain’t no people. Just nigger an’ negro.”

For in the United States, that major region of the ex-slave archipelago, where “core” and “periphery” were to be sited in the same politically independent ex-settler nation-state, the hierarchical status differentiation, had overtly enacted itself in the polar categories of *White/Black, Man/Negro*, at both the intra-worker class level as well as at all others. This given that, in the wake both of the abolition of slavery and the failed attempt at Reconstruction, the social structures of the nation as well as of its overall cultural signification system—in the terms of whose “inner eyes,” as the narrator of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* points out, “we look with our physical eyes upon reality”<sup>14</sup>—had come to depend, for their dynamic articulation, one now incorporating of both the post-Civil War North and South, and stable reproduction, upon a single a priori. That of the invisibility of the *negro* as *man* (indeed as *woman*); in both cases, therefore, with no claim, as members of the same population, to the “Rights of Man,” rights then exclusive

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<sup>14</sup> Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952).

to the White (i.e. European, if optimally, middle class) U.S. population.<sup>15</sup> Hence the logic of Lamming's Trumper's variant of the Black cultural nationalist struggle as one based on his claim to the "Rights o' the Negro" as a "different sort o' creature"; the same logic therefore as that shown by Ralph Ellison by his portrayal of Ras,—in his novel, *The Invisible Man*—as the fictional depiction of the real life Marcus Garvey's own, once powerful and globally widespread variant of the same claim, of its countering "sense of self."<sup>16</sup>

However, in both the Caribbean and the United States, a mutation was to occur. This is that, in the wake respectively of, in the first case, the anti-colonial struggles—which erupted in the British Caribbean colonies in the late thirties, as struggles that were to be themselves initiated, both by the "native"-labour uprisings which took place on the sugar plantation estates, as well as by the marginal "casual" labor in the cities—had led to these colonies gaining of political independence, together with their institutionalization, in primarily bourgeois or middle class terms as new nations on the basis of a now "*national*" (rather than "*native*") "sense of self." While in the case of the second, in the wake of the anti-segregation, Black Civil Rights movement for, *inter alia*, their political enfranchisement, as a population, the success of both struggles were to have parallel outcomes. Seeing that in the latter case, if the outcome was to be the assimilating incorporation of the former peripheral middle class of the Black population into the "core" normative structures of White U.S. middle class society, in its case as well as of the Caribbean's now ex-colonies, a far-reaching paradox was to emerge. This was that a substantial majority of their respective post-slavery, lowly skilled "native labor" and/or "negro labour" workforce were to find themselves, after several centuries, in a no way out situation.

One in which what had once been their respective post-slavery "native" or "negro" labor, seasonal or semi-jobless subordinate status, as a status to which, before the anti-colonial and Civil Rights struggles they had had to become, however, despairingly, accustomed—indeed the latter

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<sup>15</sup> The Eritrean anthropologist, defines the cultural signifying system, in its then pre-Sixties...

<sup>16</sup> Ellison's novel was first published in 1952 by Random House...

as the then situation, out of, and in response to which, the Rastafarian movement, in its original form, and partly modeling itself on the earlier Garvey movement, had arisen in Jamaica—had taken a different turn. A turn in which, in the case of the now post-colonial ex-British Caribbean colonies, the very processes of modernizing economic development initiated by the new national governments, and in that of the second, the very nature of the incorporation of the Black population, hegemonically, of its middle classes, into a now consumer-driven and, as in the case of the first, increasingly automated, full-fledgedly techno-industrial economic system, had set afoot a new form of intra-worker status differentiation.

One no longer between, in the case of the first, as it had earlier been, between the workers of the “core” countries, and those of the periphery of the world system, and in the case of the second, between the “core” white workers of the nation, and the then largely segregated periphery “negro” workers, but now instead, and increasingly so, more sharply between the internal sectors both of the post-colonial nations and the post-Civil Rights U.S. population. In both cases therefore, between what was to become the minority modernized elite of highly and/or technologically skilled workers, now fully integrated into the normative status of the “core” labor cadres, on the one hand, and on the other, the remainder mass sector of the largely lowly-unskilled “native”/“negro” cum casual labor, school dropout category. All of whom had now come to find themselves redundant in the context both of their national, as well as of the overall world systemic labor market, in an increasingly automated “workplace.” Relegated, thereby, to their criminalized, impoverished “inner city ghettos,” together with the latter’s prison extensions, as a permanent underclass mired in poverty, because now technoindustrially “expendable” as so much human “waste product.”

It was in this post-colonial context, that in the Caribbean, the Rastafarian movement, as its message came to be globally iconized in the Reggae singer Bob Marley, as well as in many others, would initiate a new form of the struggle. One in which the struggle with respect to the “symbolic function”—as now, in their case, the imperatively uncompromising struggle against

their new ultimate negations as so much techno-industrial “refuse”—this by the logic of our present macro-economic system in its now planetarily extended, consumer-driven, and, increasingly *technologically automated* phase—not only remains, inextricably linked to Marxism’s ongoing dedicated struggle, with respect to the, so to speak, material function,” i.e., that is, its relentless struggle against the above’s specific mode of material provisioning which the terms of that “function” now world-systemically dictates. But, in addition, because in Bob Marley and the Rastafarians unique *periphery/underside cum liminally deviant* case, *the* imperative, is necessarily that of the recoding of the “symbolic function,” in now *humanly* revalorizing terms, hegemonically so linked.



## PART TWO

What liberates is the knowledge of who we were, what we became; where we were, whereunto we have been thrown; whereto we speed, wherefrom we are redeemed; what birth is and what rebirth.

[Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963: 45]

During the election campaign last December Michael Manley's campaign slogan was "We know where we are going." Shortly afterwards, Marley wrote Exodus and the Rastafarian brethren believe the song was the appropriate reply to Manley's assertion. "Open your eyes and look within," Marley wrote. "Are you satisfied with the life you are living? We know where we are going. We know where we are from. We're leaving Babylon into our father's land."

[John Bradshaw, "The Reggae Way to Salvation." *The New York Times Magazine*, August 1977].

I have been referring to the conflict between orthodox Marxism and different varieties of cultural nationalism. Let me define the first term. By the term "orthodox Marxism," I mean Marxist thought as it has been officially institutionalized to legitimate and justify, inter alia, the post-colonial rise of a newly ascendant class—the highly educated, highly skilled, bureaucratic-technocratic bourgeoisie whose *raison d'être* lies in State control, and therefore, political hegemony over, if to varying degrees, the economic system. However, the model of orthodoxy, the Soviet Union, had itself undergone a widespread social upheaval in which the traditional hierarchies had been transformed by the actions of the people themselves—an-archically (from below). As a result, the material conditions for a large sector of the broad masses had been almost miraculously improved by the rationalization, based on the nationalization of the economic system, of the apparatus of redistribution now controlled by the Party-State; and therefore by the fact that the moral justification of the new techno-bureaucratic power structure rested on its implicit contract to deliver the material goods to the masses.

In the case of the anti-colonial struggles, which had taken place in the then British imperial Caribbean colonies, however, the overwhelming reality of our then colonized situation, had led to the multifaceted nature of the “native/casual/jobless” labour uprisings and overall social upheavals of the nineteen-thirties, coming to be channeled externally by the majority of each colony’s respective Western educated elites towards the hegemonic goal of mass enfranchisement and political independence as new nation-states. With the result that when variants of orthodox Marxism’s model began to be adopted by some political leaders—this in urgent response to the fact that after political independence, they had come to find themselves/ourselves economically reclassified, and, as such, re-instituted in the structural hierarchies of the Western world economic system of Free Market capitalism, as “underdeveloped” Third World nations—these variant models were being adopted in countries where no popular social revolution, conceptualized and fought for as such, had taken place internally as it had done in the Soviet Union. As a result, such forms, together with their doctrines, were to be implemented in the ex-colonial countries by leaders whose goal was to initiate such revolution from above—*hierarchically*—through bureaucratic electoral coups. This has been the recent case with the Caribbean island of Jamaica from which both Manley and Marley come. Manley has called his diluted variety of orthodox Marxism—*Democratic Socialism*. To the “democratic socialism” of Manley based on his interpretation of the “bible” of orthodox Marxism, Marley opposes Rastafarianism, based, if only partly so, on the Rastafarian “version” or interpretation of the Judeo-Christian Bible.

What is Rastafarianism? It is one of the latest variants of Ethiopianism, a movement which Professor St. Clair Drake analyzes in a recent monograph. He points out the significance of *Ethiopia* for blacks all over the diaspora. In 1896, St. Clair Drake writes, the warriors of, “an indisputably black ruler [of Ethiopia], shattered an Italian invading army in these mountains and sent waves of pride coursing throughout the black world...Menelik II vindicated the race by defeating a white nation on the battle

ground.”<sup>17</sup> In 1930, the descendant of Menelik, Haile Selassie, was crowned King of Ethiopia, his coronation portrait disseminated by newspapers all over the world. His photograph was to play a central role in the *imaginative architecture* of Ras Ta - Farianism.

In the world of the 1930s, the effects of the 1929 depression were beginning to be felt. None felt them more than the shanty town dwellers, the large marginal masses disrupted from the rural areas into the towns, masses who were now redundant to the productive processes of capital, masses who were economically and socially powerless. Even more, in the dominant symbolic order of the Western world system, Blacks occupied a place at the *very bottom of that unequal valuation of social being which was centrally logical to the rational processes* of its economic system of capitalism. To these largely lowly and/or unskilled black masses of the world systemic periphery, negated as *the sons of no one*, and identified as such by the mark of their black skins, the visible (i.e. as imaged in newspapers and journals) evidence of the power and majesty of Haile Selassie was overwhelming. Together with Ethiopia, Haile Selassie with his titles and royal lineage, King of Kings, Elect of God, conquering Lion of Judah, Power of the Holy Trinity, 225<sup>th</sup> Emperor on the throne of the 3000 years line of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba—came to constitute the central cultural unit in that reinvention of the self with which Blacks in the diaspora would continue their subversion of the dominant system which had negated them. Haile Selassie became the Symbolic Father in a counter-Symbolic order.

St. Clair Drake, in his monograph also touched on the Rastafarian phenomenon out of which Marley comes.:

The name of Ethiopia still has the power to move black men. Thousands of Rastafarians in the slums of Jamaica have separated themselves from their fellows and dream of the day when *their* God King, RAS TAFARI Haile Selassie will send his ships to take them home.<sup>18</sup>

I shall use John Bradshaw’s account of the Ras Tafarian cult in the *New York Times* article to give a brief idea of the movement today. Bradshaw writes:

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<sup>17</sup> St. Clair Drake, *The Redemption of Africa and Black Religion*. (Chicago: Third World Press and Atlanta, GA: Institute of the Black World, 1975): 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

For nearly fifty years the Rastafarians have been feared and persecuted in Jamaica. They have been accused of being rabble rousers, layabouts or dealers in the lucrative ganja trade. But what began as a small rural religious cult has now become a *popular movement*. By some estimates, there may be some 20,000 Rastas in Jamaica and nearly as many among the 400,000 Jamaicans in New York City.

Bradshaw goes on to say that the Rastafarian movement was started by Marcus Garvey. This was not *factually* so. But Garvey's movement—the Universal Negro Improvement Association founded in the Twenties is recognized by Rastafarians as the precursor to their movement. And his “Back to Africa” slogan was the precursor matrix of the Rastafarian's constitution of Zion, in the wake of their movement's founding in the early thirties after the appearance of the photograph of Haile Selassie. Hailed as the *living God Jah*—as opposed to the dead God, Jesus—he became the integrating sacred icon for the three men who started the movement with three groups, thereby initiating the *decentralized* structure of Rastafarianism.

The most famous of the three Rastafarian founders was Leonard Howell who paid the price of several years in prison for his refusal to pay “King George's taxes”—Jamaica was then still a British colony. At his trial Howell explained to the judge the reasons for his refusal. Howell argued that he was not King George's subject, as he was the subject of another King, he and his Rastafarian brethren. Hence he told the brethren not to pay taxes on the grounds of *who* they were and he said, “I told them that our King had come to redeem them home to our Motherland, Africa.”

Years before the nationalist movement spearheaded by the middle class would begin in Jamaica, therefore, Howell was here rejecting the political identity coded for him in the cosmos of the British Empire as a “native” subject. To the actual and symbolic elements that articulated the “British Subject” he counterposed a counter-signifying system in which his King and *Africa*, his Motherland, are legitimated as his one ‘true’ God/King, the latter as his “true” symbolic home, and Jamaica—the British colony—delegitimated as “exile in Babylon.” While this latter form of self-reinvention would be itself, only the latest of the overall versions of cultural Pan-Africanism, initiated and sustained by the black popular masses of the post-Middle Passage Caribbean and the Americas.

It is at this point that I would like to make an explicit parallel with the great Gnostic heresies that helped structure the spiritual and imaginative revolutions, including centrally that of Christianity, which were to transform the psychic structures of large masses of people and hasten the end of Classical antiquity together with its long dominant symbolic order.

As Hans Jonas explains:

At the beginning of the Christian era and progressively throughout the two following centuries, the Eastern Mediterranean was in profound spiritual ferment. The genesis of Christianity *itself and the response to its message* are evidence of this ferment but they do not stand alone...In the thought of the manifold Gnostic sects which soon began to spring up everywhere in the wake of the Christian expansion, the spiritual crisis of the age found its boldest expression, and as it were, its extremist representation.<sup>19</sup>

Jonas goes on to point out that the gnosis religion like other religions of its time was a religion of salvation. And one of the central points of comparison for us is his analysis of the word “gnosis” itself.

The name Gnosticism, which has come to serve as collective heading for a manifoldness of sectarian doctrines appearing within and around Christianity during its critical first centuries, is derived from *gnosis*, the Greek word for knowledge. The emphasis on knowledge as the means for the attainment of salvation, or even as the form of salvation itself, and the claim to the possession of this knowledge in one’s own articulate doctrine are common features of the numerous sects in which the Gnostic movement historically expressed itself.<sup>20</sup>

Jonas then goes on to point out how very different the Gnostic type of knowledge was from the idea of *rational theory* in the terms of which Greek philosophy had developed the concept. As he explains:

The ultimate “object” of gnosis is God: its event in the soul transforms the knower himself by making him a partaker in the divine existence (which means more than assimilating him to the divine existence). Thus...the knowledge is not only an instrument of salvation but itself the very form in which the goal of salvation, i.e. ultimate perfection is possessed...here (in this form of knowledge) the subject is “transformed” by the union with a reality that in truth is itself the supreme subject in the situation and strictly speaking never an object at all.<sup>21</sup>

Howell, “knowing” this reality of the Rastafarian God, is transformed as subject, not only politically but far more symbolically. Foucault has pointed out, in this context, the relation between the

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<sup>19</sup> The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginning of Christianity. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963, p. 31

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35.

individual psyche and the overall social/cultural structure. He argues that ethnology and psychology, “have only one point in common, but it is an essential and inevitable one, the one in which they interact at right angles; for the signifying ‘chain’ by which the individual is constituted is perpendicular to the formal system on the basis of which the significations of a culture are constituted.”<sup>22</sup>

What I want us to note here, is the way in which the *rejection* of the dominant formal system and its significations is central to the mechanism of self-transformation—i.e., to the transformation of the signifying chain by which the self is constituted. What we see here at work is a counter-signification of the self/formal system in which elements of the opposed self/formal system still enter, but as elements that are now delegitimated. In being a Rastafarian, the subject of *His King*, Howell is no longer *King George’s subject*. His new identity is constituted by his brotherhood in a group, now constituted as counter-world. The parallels with Garveyism and the Black Muslims of the U.S. are clear.

The counter-world therefore invents and structures its own symbolic order as a counter to that of the dominant society. The new symbolic order is based, therefore, on the acceptance of certain tenets. Bradshaw summarizes these:

Today, Rastafarians differ among themselves on specific dogma, but generally they believe they are black Hebrews exiled in *Babylon*, the true Israelites, that Haile Selassie is the direct descendant of Solomon and Sheba and that God is *black*. Most white men, they believe have been worshipping a *dead god* and have attempted to teach the blacks to do likewise. They believe that the Bible was distorted by King James 1<sup>st</sup>, the *black race sinned and was punished by God with slavery and conquest. They see Ethiopia as Zion, the Western World as Babylon*. They believe that one day they will be repatriated to Zion and that Armageddon is now. They preach peace, love and reconciliation among the races, but also warn of imminent dread judgment on the downpressors.

As King George’s subject is counterposed by the Rastafarian identity, so is Babylon by Zion. While, as Hans Albert Steger has seminally pointed out, the Gnostic syncretic systems and New World black syncretic systems like vudu, are both systems related to, and arising in opposition to economic systems/symbolic orders based on slavery. As he writes:

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<sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Random House, 1973: 380.

...in both cases it was precisely the slaves who—carrying with them their original religiosity, shatter, or at least begin to question the solid traditional culture of their masters.<sup>23</sup>

He goes on to point out that the concept of the *Kosmos*, the universe, was for the Greeks of the classical epoch, equal in meaning to the plenitude of existence, and was therefore a positively and highly valued element. The cosmos, he argues, was for the classical age a reflection of the *polis*, the original political system now translated into much larger structures. For the Gnosists, this view was turned upside down. As Steger writes:

...*cosmos* comes to be negative, disdained. It is a universe punished oppressed and dominated by transc cosmic powers whom it has rebelled against and whom it has betrayed.<sup>24</sup>

The cosmos has become Babylon. The program then is clear—withdrawal and separation from Babylon, from this cosmos created by inferior powers, which is like a vast prison. But for the Gnosists, man, whilst his body and soul are created by the lower powers, has still within him a spark of the divine spirit which has fallen from the beyond into the cosmos. The lower powers have created the cosmos (Babylon), to keep the spirit captive here. Jonas puts it, “The goal of Gnostic man’s striving is the release of the ‘inner man’ from the bonds of the world (Babylon) and his return to his native land (Zion).”<sup>25</sup> But it is ignorance that entraps him here, ignorance of his origins (*We know where we are from*, sings Marley). In order for him to escape, “...it is necessary that he knows about the transmundane God and about himself, that is, about his divine origin as well as his present situation, and accordingly also about the nature of the world which determines this situation.”<sup>26</sup>

The words of the Marley song quoted by Bradshaw and the famous Gnostic formula coincide. Both “know” of their glorious origins in the Beyond, in Zion; of why they were fallen, of how they have been reborn. Having been reborn they acknowledge their *true self*—as the SONS OF JAH—know what

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<sup>23</sup> Hans Albert Steger, *El transfondo revolucionario del sincretismos criollos. Aspectos sociales de la transformación clandestina de la religion en Afro-America, colonial y post-colonial*. CIDOC, Cuernavaca, Mexico, 1972, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 44

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

their program is. We know where we are going/We know where we are from/who we were, what we became, whereto we speed, wherefrom we are redeemed.

The “knowledge” prescribes the behavior. As Bradshaw summarizes, “They don’t vote, tend to be vegetarians, abhor alcohol, and wear their hair in long uncombed plaits called dreadlocks or ‘Natty Dread.’ The hair is never cut since it is part of the spirit and should neither be combed nor cut off.

Like the Gnosists, the Rastafarians achieve an unyoking from the dominant world and its Symbolic order. The *counter Symbolic Order that they create goes far beyond a simple inversion of terms. Rather there is a displacement, a change of signs.* The long uncombed locks become a sign of the symbolic pact they make with their God. It is this symbolic pact that guarantees their new identity. The basic distinction of this identity is shifted from the binary opposition of black/white. Rather it is between the *heathens* and the Sons of Jah—i.e., those who have awoken from their ignorance, who have come to realize that their life on this earth in Babylon is a life of exile, that they are strangers—“just passing through,” says Marley, that as the Gnosists phrased it, they are aliens here. Their true origin, their true identity—where they are from—is different. Hence their goal—the *where* they are going, is logically different.

Black hair, black skin is revalued as a sign, not an index.<sup>27</sup> One can have a black skin and be an “heathen.” One can have a “white skin” and have a “black” heart; i.e., awoken to a knowledge of self as the Sons of Jah, and as such cease to perceive the self as “white.”

A new Symbolic order and semantic field displaces the hierarchy of the dominant world system (now in its bourgeois configuration) in which “whiteness”—like “noble blood” for the feudal nobles—has come to constitute a mass-privileged self perception. It is this antithetical privilege/dysprivilege of self perception for which, if in religious terms, the Protestants in Belfast—vis a vis the Catholics—and the Catholics in South Boston (white)—vis a vis the blacks—fight. For which Whites lynched Blacks. For

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<sup>27</sup> Roland Barthes, in *S/Z: An Essay*. Trans. R. Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), makes a distinction between the index and the sign. As he writes:

In the past... money “revealed”; it was an index, it furnished a fact, a cause, it had a nature; today it “represents”... it is an equivalent, an exchange, a representation: a sign. (39).



which Bakke supporters claim legal justification. The obdurate Fascist policies of the white Rhodesians and the white South Africans—inevitably in the long run, self-destructive from a purely material point of view,—are driven by the imperative of protecting this privilege, the surplus value of the self which constitutes their very being.

It is this privileged self perception, in its racialized form, this pathology of *whiteness* as the alleged bio-evolutionarily selected/eugenic attribute of the bourgeois norm of being human, to which Marley addresses himself when, as Bradshaw writes:

Marley breaks into “WAR,” a speech of Haile Selassie he set to music. It is like an invocation. “Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned. Everywhere is War,” he chants. “...until the color of a man’s skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes, there will be war, everywhere War,” he sings and all those clean and fresh faced kids who wouldn’t know the difference between an Ingram M-10 and a machete scream and throw their fists in the air.

But Marley’s weapon is his song. Like the gnosist creed, his song begins the widespread subversion of the signifying chain that constitutes our now hegemonically institutionalized normative respective psyches—white and black—functional to the dominant order.

To understand the power of symbolic subversion that is at work here in the Ras Tafari doctrine—and behind this doctrine, in the range of the constituted counter-cultures of the Black Americas—we must understand the role that the White/Black division plays in the Symbolic Order of Western civilization. As Baudrillard points out:

No other culture besides ours has produced the systematic distinction of black and white. And this distinction is not as an afterthought but as a structural element which is reproduced even more dynamically today under the appearances of a flattering liberalism, and the objectification of the black as such *is not that of exploited labour power, but an objectification by the code.*<sup>28</sup>

It is this objectification by the code specific to the matrix of the cultural signifying system of a then imperially expanding Western Europe (if in its then monarchical status configuration) that the seventeenth century Congolese protested against when they told a Spanish Capuchin missionary, “Do not

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<sup>28</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*. Trans M. Poster (New York: Telos Press, 1975): 136. [Emphasis added?]

call us *Negros*, Negroes are slaves. Call us prietos (Black).”<sup>29</sup> The semantic field related to the Congolese social order made a distinction between a black slave (for the Portuguese, *negro/negra*) and being biologically black (*prieto/prieta*, in also Portuguese terminology). In their social order, a slave had a social status and a clearly defined role. *He was not conceptualized as labour power for a mode of production*, because as Baudrillard also points out, the concept *mode of production*, did not exist in societies like those, for whom the Western paradigm of *production* would have been meaningless.<sup>30</sup>

Being black, for the then autocentric Congolese, therefore, one could be a slave, but one could also be, because free-born, a king, an artist, a priest, a warrior, a hunter. One was not circumscribed to one social role—that of being a negro/a slave, i.e., labour-power. However, in the Western semantic field and its corresponding social order, the word “Negro” was to be initiated at the beginning of Western modernity as the brand name for labour power in its *pure commodity* (i.e., *slave*) form. When Marley, therefore, entitles his contemporary song *Exodus*, the power of the symbol comes not only from its biblical association of Exodus with exile, but also from the specific historical event, the actual referent that haunts the New World Black imagination at the deepest levels. This Exodus was the empirical event of the forced Middle Passage Exodus, i.e., the West’s purchase, transportation, and sale of innumerable interchangeable units of labour power from Africa, in order to provide the labour force for the first New World mass production units of the plantation system, based on *negro* (man)/*negra* (woman) slave labor.

The slaves were bought and sold as “piezas”—*pieces*, in a long established rational quantified system which took the norm of productive labour power—a man of about twenty-five, of certain height, good teeth, etc., as a standard of measurement with which to calculate profit and loss, with respect to their largely manual labor, productive value. Two or three teenagers would make up one *pieza*, several old

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<sup>29</sup> P. Antonio de Teruel: *Descripción narrativa de la misión seráfica de los capuchinos y sus progresos en el Reyno de Congo*. (1663-4). Unpublished manuscript in the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, Spain. (MS 3533, 3574).

<sup>30</sup> As Baudrillard writes:

It is not tautological that the concept of history is historical and that the concept of dialectic is dialectical, and that the concept of production is itself produced.... Rather, this simply indicates the explosive, mortal, present form of critical concepts. As soon as they are constituted as universal they cease to be analytical and the religion of meaning begins... There is neither a mode of production nor production in primitive societies... These concepts analyse our own societies, which are ruled by political economy (48-49, emphasis added).

slaves—above forty *who were seen as “refuse” once their productive capacity had lessened with age—* also made up one. *What I want to note here is that the pieza/negro was, at the beginning of modernity, the first and most total example of the reduction of the creative possibilities of human men, women, and children to one single possibility—man/woman/children as material producers. It is this reduction of the human Being from the totality of our possibilities that has come to define the now fully realized, because now bourgeois form of capitalist rationality; while this form of rationality is itself only possible within the terms of the overall paradigm of production.*

As Baudrillard argues, “it was the bourgeois development of productivity itself that enabled the concept of production ‘to appear as man’s movement and generic end.’”<sup>31</sup> In other words, the “*negro/negra*” whether labelled a *Mina negro* and/or *negra* and shipped from the Portuguese factory at Elmina, exactly like a Sears product, at the very origin of our present world-system, or labelled today as a discardable “waste product,” or as the now expendable shanty-town, inner-city ghetto or *favela* “refuse,” is the expression of a historical trajectory, itself one only enactable in the hegemonic context of the central paradigm of production, of whose conceptualization/institution the mechanized intensive labour, from sun-up to sundown, of the original *Mina negro/negra* would have laid the basis.

Baudrillard continues:

In other words, the system of political economy does not produce only the individual as labour power that is sold and exchanged; it produces *the very conception of labour power as the fundamental human potential*. More deeply than the fiction of the individual freely selling his labour power in the Market, the system is rooted in the identification of the individual with his labour power and with *his act of transforming nature according to human ends*. In work, man is not only quantitatively exploited as a productive force by the system of capitalist political economy *but is also metaphysically overdetermined as a producer* by the code of political economy. In the last instance the system rationalizes its power here. And in this Marxism assists the power of capital. It convinces men that they are alienated by the sale of their labour power, thus that they are censoring *the much more radical hypothesis that they might be alienated as labour power, as the inalienable power of creating value by their labour*.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

What Baudrillard develops here is the concept that the worker, white or black, who accepts his definition/identity as “proletariat” is at once circumscribed in his role as *only producer*. The *identity* as *producer* then prescribes the program, *the where to which we are going—and* this goal is to produce. Even when fighting for his/her rights, the proletariat and/or negro/negra legitimated the context and the code by which s/he is defined as proletariat/negro/negra. The Marxian priority of the liberation of the productive forces, therefore, replaces that of the self-liberation of man into his fully realized royal human status. The “new man” of Marxism is to appear *after* the development of the productive forces—the “where we are going” therefore—replaces what would be, alternatively, in Baudrillard’s terms, human self-liberation from their/our alienated self-conception as being merely labor power for the “productive forces” of the economic system. This given that in the context of the latter’s now hegemonic superordinate telos, the promised “new Man” is to appear only *after* the fully realized development of the productive forces; thereby, as both function and effect of the latter’s realization, rather than of his own.

Yet it is precisely their royal human status to which the Rastafarians lay claim when they define themselves as the Sons of Jah; when their symbolic exodus is set in motion out of Babylon—out of the paradigm of production—into their “father’s land.” While they are able to arrive at this far more radical subversion by the very nature of their concrete *non-place*, as an ostensibly “waste-product” or jobless “human refuse” in the increasingly globalized system of production. Nevertheless, for orthodox Marxists, Rastafarianism is merely the ideology of the *Lumpen* Proletariat, this as a category whose only function is the negative one of serving as the “reserve army of labor” whose availability for occasional employment, enables the capitalist employer to put a cap on the wages of the “normal” proletariat.<sup>33</sup> So that, for Western and westernized Marxists, the label *Lumpen* can be used to dismiss the phenomenon of the total *qualitative* exploitation of millions of marginal masses whose labour is now, increasingly, no longer needed, as the productive forces shift to capital intensive (i.e. automated) technology based on a

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<sup>33</sup> Ken Post, in *The Bible as Ideology: Ethiopianism in Jamaica, 1930-1938*, pp. 185-207. After finally predicting the demise of Ethiopianism with the rise of labour union movements and political party activity, Post concludes:

From this point on, Ethiopianism was effectively restricted to its more extreme Rastafarian form, as the ideological expression of the lumpen proletariat, or at least Jamaica’s equivalent, the unemployed and semiemployed inhabitants of the slums of West Kingston and other towns (206).

knowledge economy; and permanent, semi-permanent unemployment becomes institutionalized, massively so, in the world systemic periphery of the now post-colonial Third world nations.

In spite of the above, however, orthodox Marxism still clings to the purely *quantitative* model of exploiting—i.e. the *amount* of surplus value extracted from the wage labourer. It refuses to see that the quantitative exploitation of labour power can have been only accomplished on the basis of a concomitantly *qualitative* change in the social relations of society—and thereby in the self-perception of the members of that society; as the change would have then been able to induce the worker, the peasant, etc., to come to accept himself as members of the “proletariat,” as it had earlier induced the *prieto* to see himself/herself as *negro/negra*, i.e., as productive units whose aim is only to produce. However, a fundamental difference needs to be recognized here. Which is that whilst the core workers, to use Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systemic theory, whose labour power was primarily extracted through the wage-labor form, if in varying modalities, including that of indentured labour in the Euro-settler Caribbean and the Americas—were controlled ideologically in their enclosed self-perception, the plantation periphery workers whose labour power, from the sixteenth century origin of that system, was primarily to be extracted by physical force, had to be *seasoned*. The African had *first to be broken into the acceptance of his/her identity as a born-to-be-a-slave, negro/negra*, i.e., as productive labour and nothing but productive labour.

Frederick Douglass’s account of his breaking in by a professional “nigger-breaker” –the very Christian Mr. Covey, should therefore be taken as the concrete example of the ideological seasoning process by which all members of the “*negro/negra*” sub-proletariat would be brought to accept their reduction from any possibility of “*prieto/prieta*” status, i.e. born as a Black human being, with all its possibilities, to being “*negro/negra*” (being born *to be* a slave, male and female, because born Black) In this account, Douglass shows how the then society, in order to institutionalize the imperative need for the slave’s second sense of self, had kept the slave from learning to read. Yet it was to be his learning to read, Douglass further shows, that started his self-liberation from accepting himself as a *slave-by-nature*. He then shows how, before he *physically* dominated Mr. Covey, in their almost-to-the-death-struggle in

which he had been prepared to die, he had led a brutish, weary, exhausted existence, with all his faculties deadened. In other words, he had been *seasoned*, into being born to be a slave until he initiated, with prepared-to-die rebellious force, his *counter-seasoning* of the self.<sup>34</sup>

In this context, it can be said that Douglass and the other innumerable *piezas* of the plantation archipelago did not only serve the purpose of providing surplus-value through their super-exploited labour-power. Instead, the paradigm of production needed *negros* and *negras* not only to work with, but ideologically to symbolize with; needed the category *negro/negra* not only as empirical facts but as a symbolic cultural unit—that is, as the embodiment of *symbolic death* [Winch, 1963]<sup>35</sup> to Mr. Covey's self-conception, in both individual and group terms, as the incarnation of symbolic *life*, i.e. as *by nature* free men and women, *because* born White. Baudrillard, in discussing the coding of Black/White in Western culture in the same context, points out that:

One can easily verify that it is sustained by a whole arsenal of significations *irreducible to economic and political determinations*... In this doctrinaire confusion there is a mystification of Marxist thought which by *circumscribing the economy as the fundamental determination* allows mental, sexual and cultural structures to operate efficaciously.<sup>36</sup>

**From “acceptable merchandize”/”almost another species” imposed sense of self of the Slave Plantation Cosmos to “Expendable Refuse” in that of the Contemporary Techno-Industrial Cosmos, their Respective “Arsenals of Significations”: Marley, Manley, and the Symbolic Function.**

The functioning of the post-1492, *negro/negra* slave Plantation order or cosmos validates Baudrillard's thesis. For while that order depended for its stable reproduction, as a structure of domination, on the repressive forces of the state in the last instance, this repressive force was aided in the daily run of things by the “mental, sexual, and cultural structures,” new variants of which are still active

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<sup>34</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. (Signet, NY: New American Library, 1968): 66-86.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Winch, “Understanding a Primitive Society.” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1964: 307-24.

<sup>36</sup> Op. cit., p. 136.

in the stable reproduction of today's world. While Edward Long, an English settler and planter-historian of late eighteenth century Jamaica, a man of the Enlightenment, an admirer of Voltaire, whom he quotes in his three-volume history of the island, provides a perfect example of the constitution and elaboration of the "mental, sexual, and cultural structures," of the "arsenal of significations," which, as generated from the West's post-medieval humanist macro-trope of *Natural Reason*, legitimated the overall cosmos of the order by conceptually and empirically coding/institutionalizing the *negro* and *negra* slave as the embodiment of extreme *symbolic death*—the negative Irrational *Other*—to the then norm of English/European free men and women; optimally the then *symbolic life* and its rational norm of being human as incarnated in an English settler/slave-owning planter-historian like Long himself.<sup>37</sup>

In the logic of the Western plantation system, from its post-1492 institution in the Caribbean and the Americas, *negros* and *negras* had therefore been defined/institutionalized as "accepted merchandise" (i.e. *piezas*). However, a legal structure, unique to the plantation's functioning as such an order, had come to provide—within the logic of the latter's overall order-instituting "arsenal of significations"—*freedom* for any admixture of White/Black "blood," which gave origin to someone who was fifteenth-sixteenths *White*; in effect, who was *only* one-sixteenth *Black*. A hierarchy, that is, of *being human*, extended between the two poles of the ostensibly naturally born *free-white*, on the one hand, and *unfree negro* on the other, had therefore been constructed as the basis of the formal system [Foucault, 1973]<sup>38</sup>, perpendicular with which the *signifying* chain of the individual was constituted. The different categories of individual mixtures were then given names ranging from Sambo, at the bottom, to Octoroon, etc., at the top. Thereby with the members of each group being socialized to perceive her/himself, as having a relative privilege of the Self (i.e. of being human), in relation to the grade below him, even though, he himself were relatively underprivileged with respect to the grade above. This given that the constant criterion of being human here, would come to be measured by the degrees of what the planter-historian-

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<sup>37</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica or General Survey of the Ancient and Modern State of that Island etc.* (London, 1774, vol. II).

<sup>38</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1973.

slaveowner, Edward Long, identified as “the pride of amended blood”<sup>39</sup>, i.e. of redemptive White “Blood.”

Body features, hair, lips, skin, became the *signs* of devalued or valued being, each group with respect to their ratios of whiteness, and inverted ratios of blackness. The *pure White* [Long’s terms], even when, as the indentured labourer, worked half to death and reduced to an interchangeable unit of labour power, usually for a period of some seven years, was nevertheless still socialized to see/experience normatively himself as “human” to the extent that he was “white” and thereby juridically, of free status. He could see himself thus—and oversee the harsh effects of his real indentured, semi-servile condition—to the extent that he could compare himself relatively with the Negative Other, who, reduced as a population (men, women, and children), to being atomized units of labour power, concealed from him the reality of his own empirical condition, of his also systemically inferiorized subordination. As a result, because that Negative Other was the *symbolic death* Negro, as embodied in its population, the white worker, identifying with the normative prototype of the symbolic Pure White, had logically manned the frontier to keep the actual concrete Negro Other in his place. Given that the value of *Pure White* was a value only realizable on condition that the cultural (i.e. the Symbolic Order’s) signifying system which legitimated “Whiteness” as a normative attribute, attesting to its bearer’s belonging to the category of *symbolic life* was not threatened by a displacement and inversion of signs—i.e. by the movement of the Black population out of its empirical slave status place; thereby also, out of its signifying *symbolic death* place and signifying function.

Edward Long, develops in this context a part secular-rational, because *natural* and part Christian-Deist *myth-of-origin*, itself allegedly the extrahumanly predetermined respective origins of the categories of both Black and White. Because, according to Long, both categories had their origin in Nature and its Divine Fabricator, both had therefore had their places assigned to them in the Natural Order and therefore, by analogy, the political order, or cosmos, of the Plantation. As he wrote in his *The History of Jamaica*:

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<sup>39</sup> Long, op. cit.



We observe the like gradations of the intellectual faculty from the first rudiments received in the monkey kind, to the more advanced stages in the apes, in the orangutang, *that type of Man and the Guiney Negro*; and ascending from the varieties of the casts of this class to the lighter casts, until we mark *its utmost limits of perfections in the pure white*. Let us not then doubt, but that every member of creation is wisely fitted and adapted to the certain uses and confined within the certain bounds *to which it was ordained* by the Divine Fabricator. The measure of the several orders and varieties of these blacks may be as complete as that of any other race of mortals; filling up that space or degree, beyond which they are not destined to pass; and discriminating them from the rest of men *not in kind but in species*.<sup>40</sup>

The above, therefore, as the “rational” expression of the formal system, the Chain of Being of the Symbolic Order, whose “arsenal of significations” instituting and inducing of the “mental, sexual, and cultural structures,” had enabled the stable functioning of the slave plantation’s order, then still hegemonically mercantilist agricultural paradigm of production; yet as an “arsenal of significations” which, now in *new* post-slavery forms, still encodes the relative self-perception of varying groups within the terms of the paradigm of production, in its also now new, post-slavery, and therefore now purely capitalist/techno-industrial variants.

It is, therefore, from this slave plantation cosmos and its ostensibly also extra-humanly predestined and pre-ordained order—that is, in Long’s terms, by both Nature and its Divine Fabricator—that the syncretic Afro-religious cults were to withdraw; as also, will the later millenarian one of contemporary Rastafarianism, from what has become, as the successor to the slave plantation’s cosmos, the now post-colonial but no less ostensibly also extrahumanly, (i.e. bioevolutionarily) determined, fully globalized contemporary techno-industrial order. This given that the opposing counter-traditions, from Myal to Marley, are ones in whose logic the “mental, sexual, and cultural structures” in the terms of whose “arsenal of significations,” their referent populations, must lawlikely be institutionalized as not-quite-human, is *totally delegitimated*. Thereby, with the hegemonic reality and history of these respective imperial Babylons, all of which successively gave rise to varying forms of the absolute negation of being fully human as it had to do with the Black population, whether as slaves, as “native labor” or now as

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<sup>40</sup> Long Op. cit. Vol ? pp. 374-375, Emphasis added.

unemployable “waste product” labor, are now being seen by the Rastafarians as illusions in which only “heathens” can believe. As Steger points out,

Gnosis and voodoo (and Rastafarianism) are permanent revolutions against the history lived and suffered here and now in this world represented by a domination which does not matter now since they have been metaphysically revealed to be false.<sup>41</sup>

Seeing that, in the analogical case of the millenarian movement of Rastafarianism, the Rastafarian too now knows where he is from; his different origin, predetermines for him, a different destiny from the destiny predestined for him in the cosmos of our contemporary technologically globalized order. Thus Jah guarantees his identity not as *pieza*—interchangeable productive unit—or as *Lumpen*—structurally unemployable, and therefore expendable, because of no “economic value,”—but as the son of the most High, the son of Jah. This sonship guarantees that man will eat bread not by the sweat of his brow but by his sonship. Thus, the provision of his material needs is no longer the end, but rather only a means, a secondary activity which enables man to realize himself, in his true destiny; to partake in divinity, here and now. *It is therefore this radicality of a desire which refuses all limits* that is the central revolutionary impulse of Rastafarianism. Thus, if as Bradshaw writes:

The Rastas say I and I, for *we* and tend to shift I to the front of all important words, such as *Ital* for *natural* and *I-nointed* for *anointed*,

one of Marley’s songs calls on his people to *Inite thyself and Imanity*. The insistence here is on the I, the now royally valued self, negates the long history of being interchangeable (i.e. *pieza*) disposable units. It is an assertion of selfhood in circumstances designed to negate any possibility of such self-assertion.

I would like to refer here to the “clash” between Marley and Manley. To put it, briefly, in context. After 1962 and the granting of political independence to Jamaica by Britain, the successive Two Party national Governments, whether of one party or the other, had continued the modernization plans that had been prescribed for the economy, under the mantra of “development” by either English- or British-educated West Indian liberal economic theorists. The paradoxical but logical result was the

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<sup>41</sup> Op. cit. p. 42.

“growth” of an economy which widened the dispossession of the broad masses, whilst it benefited the category of the middle classes, as a hegemonically secular, Western-educated minority. In the context of the increased material and psychic stresses brought about by the above separation of the interests of the middle classes from those of the increasingly jobless shantytown masses, the Rastafarian movement, formerly restricted to a cult, began to have a widespread impact on the larger society. This, at the same time, as the parallel Black Power movement that had erupted in another part of the ex-slave archipelago of the post-1492 Americas, the U.S., would come to fuse both musically and conceptually, with the Rastafarian’s millenarian symbolism which now exploded in a rich creativity of artistic and musical expression, including the ska and reggae forms. This expression took its point of departure from the long tradition of popular music born out of underground, Afro-New World cult religions which had structured a counter-symbolic order. As, therefore, the society as a whole began to break out of the definitions of the dominant system, and a revolution in consciousness began to take place, the Rastafarian symbols emerged from marginality to find widespread acceptance as the articulation of popular discontent. In this context, the Rastafarian uncombed locks became the symbol of an oppressed identity to the officially prescribed, and normatively bourgeois (i.e. bald-head) identities of the dominant order. It became the symbol of a transformation of self-perception in the context of the great disillusionment that had followed in the wake of political independence, as popular forces, and middle class youth, groped towards the demand for revolutionary change in the increasingly unequal socio-economic order. It was a social order in which, in spite of the new national flag and anthem attesting to our national/political independence, at the level of the globally controlled economic system, some thirty percent of the population was unemployed, a large percentage underemployed and both imprisoned in a shanty-town/ghetto-like existence—the Trench Town of Marley’s songs.

It was on the basis of this groundswell of discontent that Michael Manley, son and heir of a former Prime Minister, one of the leaders who had steered the island to political independence in the wake of the anti-colonial struggle, came to power. Bradshaw tells us that “Bob Marley had supported Michael Manley during the 1972 campaign but had since become disenchanted.” For in the 1972 political

campaign, Manley had co-opted not only the formerly apolitical Rastafarians like Marley, but the entire architecture of their symbolism. Supported by a coalition of wealthy merchants, industrialists, large sections of the middle classes as well as the discontented and rebellious popular forces, Manley won an overwhelming victory at the polls. While his electoral campaign was based largely on the *rational manipulation of the symbolic signifying system expropriated from the Rastafarian Movement*.

The branch firm of a large United States advertising agency mounted a campaign in the press, on radio and on television in which Manley was evoked as a secular Messiah in religious terminology. The popular forces were defined as *sufferers*. As *sufferers* they were helpless, needing a Saviour to redeem them from their conditioned fate. Manley adopted the biblical name of Joshua. In photographs distributed throughout the country he was portrayed in a kind of Holy Trinity between Haile Selassie on the one hand and another influential cult leader on the other. Both in the photograph and in the campaign he displayed a rod supposedly handed down to him by Haile Selassie. With his rod Joshua was to smite and defeat his opponent, the leader of the governing party, who was portrayed as Pharaoh, although blacker and of a far lower social origin than Manley. The ten years of Pharaoh's party's rule was portrayed as "exile." The clear implication was that the Messiah had come to redeem his people, to take them "home." The slogan, "Power to the People," was interspersed with the Rastafarian salutation of "Peace and Love." *Love* became a campaign slogan as violence rocked the country. It was an unprecedentedly brilliant piece of political manipulation. Joined to the force and power of the genuine popular discontent it was unbeatable. Reggae musicians composed songs "hailing the man" and Manley swept into power on a wave of a song.

The widespread symbolic manipulation used both in the 1972 and in the later 1976 campaign had a purpose. Manley and the group of skilled technocrats who surrounded him were not interested only in winning an election—they wanted a large scale victory which would serve as the basis for an electoral bureaucratic coup, in which they could, by legally changing the constitution, initiate a revolution from above.

An electoral coup, a bureaucratic revolution, is the very opposite of a popular revolutionary movement.

In the latter the masses move—*an-archically*, from below—out of the place assigned to them in the dominant social order. By the very *act* of they themselves moving out of their assigned place, they transform the social relations of the dominant social order. By their action the barriers and constraints of the former symbolic coding which negatively structured their self-perception are swept away. They explode into creative energy. In the absence of such a self-initiated movement by the people themselves what occurs, however, is a simulation of revolution by the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, whether of the right or the left, or of the in-between of Democratic *Socialism*. In this simulation very little creative change is possible.

By 1976, there was even more widespread popular discontent and disillusionment. The reggae songs became increasingly critical of the new ruling class, that of the skilled technocratic bourgeoisie. Material conditions, bad enough in 1972, had worsened in the context of the world recession, inflated oil prices, and contradictory policies. Hunger, increased joblessness, food shortages, and increasing political and criminal violence undermined the society. The exodus of the wealthy with their money was followed by that of the skilled middle, and lower-middle classes with their skills. Even, also, to the U.S.A. the hub of the exploding popular music industry, by that of some of the Rastafarian reggae singers themselves. The financial and social deterioration of the country began to erode confidence. In the face of this, the rational manipulation of the symbolic function and the strategic use of violence—on both sides, Government and opposition—was to become central to the 1976 campaign. As Bradshaw puts it, hundreds were killed and Jamaica became “a black Belfast.” It was therefore in this climate that Marley—who was scheduled to sing at a concert for the people of Jamaica under Government auspices, was shot up along with some of his fellow musicians. No one died. The shooting seemed designed *not* to kill.

Several versions of the shooting went the rounds. One, the first, was flashed all over the world by the news media. In this version Marley was said to have planned to sing at a concert in support of

Manley. The clear implication was that the opposition had shot him. The political symbolic *mileage* had therefore accrued, in the first place, to the Government Party. So the other Party's version of the story was that the Government itself had staged the coup to win political sympathy and Rastafarian votes. Neither version was ever definitively proved.

In a *New York Times* interview, Marley pointed out that the men who shot him were never caught. Were it the Prime Minister who had been shot, he further argued, they would have been caught. His fellow Rastafarians were certain that the incident was due to *politricks*, while Marley himself felt that it might also have been due to that, or to the jealousy of fellow musicians. The point here is that whether it was the opposition or a staged coup by members of the Government themselves, it was clear that in the Politricks of Babylon, the Rastafarians were, once again, what the black man or woman, the Black majority population, had always been, in the context of the dominant order of the post-1492 slave/ex-slave archipelago, a pawn in the context of the hegemonic interest of other peoples' projects, of *their* "where we are going" telos.

The song Exodus was therefore Marley's declaration of a second withdrawal, this time one not only from Babylon, but from all the varieties of its politics.

Manley's campaign speeches had blamed Jamaica's severely worsened conditions on global-economic factors, on the I.M.F., the machinations of the capitalist clique, of the Opposition, of the sinister CIA, on every other factor but his own policies. And while the global-economic factors as world-systemic ones, were as they continue to be, indeed determinant in the long run, Marley, in his *New York Times* interview, blames, however, the Government and its, so to speak, short run policies.

De Government trample over de people's sweat and tears, comin' down hard. We're oppressed, so we sing oppressed songs and some time people find themselves guilty. And dey can't stand the terrible weight of it. *But Babylon don't want peace. Babylon want power.*

Manley had ended his opening 1976 campaign speech with the words:

We know where we are going. We are creating a new man. We have begun the building of socialist man. We are working. We are working towards the day when there will be no more masters and more servants, but only one together in the Lord.<sup>42</sup>

In his song “Exodus,” Marley replies to Manley. Over against the “new Socialist Man” that is to be built “one day” by the Manley leadership and his new order, Marley legitimates man as he is now, in the flesh, the son of Jah, not waiting for heaven—“We’re tired of your easing kissing game, to die and go to heaven in Jesus name,” as another song has it—nor indeed for Manley’s secular apocalypse in which in order for man to deserve happiness, rather than effecting his own self-liberation, he must be built anew. With the consequence that it is in that space-time of waiting for the apocalyptic day that the new leadership tends to install itself as the new masters. Rather, the Rastafarians “know” they have been guaranteed Paradise and Zion—*now* in the Kingdom of Jah man shall reign. Not the leadership of the Party. With “Exodus,” Marley recaptures the expropriated popular revolt. Himself from the popular shanty-masses, Marley becomes the articulator of the popular revolt articulating itself by itself for itself.

The clash between Manley’s definition of man as the “new Socialist man,” and Marley’s as already the “sons of Jah,” is one based on the fact that Manley’s definition and program for Action—the Where We are going—still operates within the Western-bourgeois paradigm of production; a paradigm which whether in its matrix Liberal capitalist or Marxist, neo-Marxist forms, autonomizes the economic sphere of the overall social order by making either the expansion, or the restructuring of the economic system, the determinant and primary goal of revolution. The autonomization of the economic is, therefore, central to the ideology of the intellectual bureaucratic/cum technocratic skilled class of the bourgeoisie (as distinct from the latter’s capital owning accumulating elites), since it presupposes that the transformation of private property into nationalized State property—the empirical basis of this class’s power—is the *end* of the revolution, the basis therefore as it conceives it, of our human emancipation.

Over against this materialist conception, it is instead, a revolution in the Symbolic Order as prescribed by our present world systemic cultural signifying system, and which then underlies and

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<sup>42</sup> See Michael Manley and Jamaica: *Not for Sale*, with a supp. By C.L.R. James. (San Francisco, Editorial Consultants, Inc., 1977): 24.

prescribes the socio-economic hierarchies of its structures of power, that the Rastafarian millenarian self-redefinition/program articulates. It is in this sense that the deep structure clash between Orthodox Marxisms and the revolutionary aspects—as distinct from its conjoined reactionary possibilities—of the counter-culture of the Black Americas can be defined as the difference between a partial economic revolution and a total cultural (i.e. at once social and cultural), revolution. And here, Jean Baudrillard, writing out of the perspectives of the cultural revolution of May 1968 in France, puts this new telos well:

...the cultural revolution is no longer tied to the economic political revolution. It cuts through the economic, political, and partial revolutionary discourse, and, in a certain rationalizing and mystifying way. A revolution that aims at the totality of life and social relations will be made also and primarily *against the autonomization of the economic*, of which the last “revolutionary” and materialist avatar is the autonomization of the mode of production under the form of a determinant instance. Because today the system has no better strategy than that of the dialectic of political economy, the cultural revolution must make itself *against the economic-political revolution*.<sup>43</sup>

It was therefore from the periphery-perspective of the Western world system, that Harold Cruse had therefore insisted, long before this, on the fact that a total cultural revolution (one implicit in the politics of Black culture) is, and can be, the *only* viable revolution in the complex American (U.S.) system. While, long too before it would find its intellectual formulation, the “politics” of the Black counter culture, not merely in Cruse’s U.S., but more comprehensively, across the range of the slave/ex-slave archipelagos of the Caribbean and of the Americas, had been engaged in this cultural revolution. The former “pieza” could call for no less. This, given as Aimé Césaire said when he resigned from the Communist Party, the black had been doubly negated, both as “proletariat” and, as well, as the only population whose humanity had been totally negated<sup>44</sup>, empirically, symbolically, thereby conceptually.

It is here, therefore, that the particular struggle of the black culture of the Americas—the counter-culture of the “piezas”—takes on universal dimensions. For the rationality of the paradigm of material production—of which the “piezas” on the plantation archipelago were to be the first mass victims—has extended itself globally. The forces of production have therefore, been developed over the past some five

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<sup>43</sup> Op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>44</sup> Aimé Césaire, “Lettre à Maurice Thorez.” Paris: *Présence Africaine* (1957).



hundred years, as never before in human history. Yet never before have such large masses of people experienced themselves as being both *materially* and *psychically dispossessed*. While if it is *for* the materially dispossessed masses that Marley's message articulates an imperative revolution in our present world-systemic structures of social relations, as structures whose everyday reproduction calls for severely unequal levels of the redistribution of wealth, on the one hand, and of poverty on the other, lawlikely leads to a contemporary situation, a situation in which as Marley sings, "Them belly full but we hungry."<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the Rastafarians' material dispossession, urgent as it is, is for them, the result of a larger dispossession, one from full human status, from being free, therefore, to control the symbolic function, to thereby invent/code/invest one's sense of self with meanings that are not prefabricated and imposed by our present world-system's ostensibly universally applicable and determinant paradigm of material (i.e. economic) production.

Hence the fact that it is in the context of sterile aridity of the overwhelming reality to which the latter has led, that even the materially affluent, or, at least, well-fed consumers—as, for example in the case of the youth of the developed world, the psychic dispossession of those who feel themselves helpless pawns—*piezas*—in an order whose very productive rationality can leave no room for their human fulfillment/self-realization, that the radicality of Marley's demand—to love life and live that's all—joins

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<sup>45</sup> Bob Marley and the Wailers, "Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)." *Live!* Tuff Gong/Island, 1975.

Them belly full but we hungry.

A hungry mob is a angry mob.

A rain a-fall but the dirt it tough;

A pot a-cook but the food no 'nough.

You're gonna dance to Jah music, dance.

We're gonna dance to Jah music, dance.

Forget your troubles and dance.

Forget your sorrow and dance.

Forget your sickness and dance.

Forget your weakness and dance.

Cost of living get so high,

Rich and poor, they start a cry.

Now the weak must get strong.

They say, "Oh, what a tribulation."

[...]

A angry mob is a angry mob.

A rain a-fall but the dirt it tough;

A pot a-cook but the food no 'nough...

forces with the conjoined demand for bread, fulfillment, and self-realization rising up from the shanty towns, the inner city ghettos, the *favelas*; from all the lumpen, in fact and spirit.

For this is a new form of the original *piezas* Middle Passage experience which links us all now, therefore, on the basis of a shared commonality of experience in which we all now find ourselves the new nameless, experience ourselves as the undifferentiated statistics of interchangeable producer-consumer units—here to increase the sale of Coca Cola or of Geritol, or alternatively, how to figure in the master plan of a techno-bureaucrat. This given that as the power of the Free-Market economic (USA) and the politico-statal (Soviet Union) processes of decision-making are processes concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, a large majority of mankind begin to experience ourselves as merely consumers; as, therefore, the very negation of the *I*, as “*piezas*” cast adrift,—without any anchor in a realized sense of self—in the contemporary world of Western and Westernized, therefore hegemonically secular, techno-industrial modernity.

St. Clair Drake has analyzed the process by which in the context of the original Middle Passage, the individual/tribal African slave was to be, on arrival in the New World expropriated of the former cultural signifying system whose symbolic coding had formerly constituted him, even where a slave, as a “human” rather than as not a merely “biological” being. As he writes:

...whatever the fate of an African was to be after he had become part of plantation society in the initial stages of enslavement, all shared a common experience. At home in Africa, Kofi not only had a name that was of symbolic significance to him, but also had an unambiguous group identity, and was respected as an individual. To make a plantation-mass slave of Kofi, he had first of all to be transformed into “a worthless nigger,” “a heathen black.”<sup>46</sup>

It is therefore over against this process of *reduction to nigger*, thereby, to ultimately *non-human* status, that we must attempt to *grasp the revolutionary significance of that counter-invention of the self*—which I see as the *central and universally applicable strategy of the “politics of black culture.”*

Already, on board the slaveship the *piezas* had begun to translate the former age group tie of traditional African societies into another symbolic relation—and *man* becomes *human*, Lacan points out,

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<sup>46</sup> Op. cit, p. 16.

the moment he enters into a symbolic relation.<sup>47</sup> They, therefore, called themselves *shipmates*—“we who went through the experience of the Middle Passage together.” Then, once landed on the earth of the New World, they transformed the place from which they had come—Guinea/Africa—into a symbolic entity. Guinea/Africa became the parallel of the Gnostic’s Beyond—*The True Origin*. The place, the antithesis of the Dante’s Inferno in which they find themselves now, from *where they were from*. The here and now was exile. The dream of the return became central. A seventeenth century account of black slaves in Jamaica attests to this dream. Describing what he calls “their death lamentations and funerals,” the Rev. John Taylor tells us; “When these slaves die they make a great adoo at their burial...carry the corpse to the grave in a mournful manner...” At the grave they placed the corpse in the grave and with it; “Cassada bread, roasted fowles, sugar, rum, tobacco and with fire to light his pipe with all...”

This is done, as the slaves explained to Taylor; “In order to sustain him on his journey beyond the Pleasant Hills in their own country, whither they say he is now going to live at rest.” After they had placed the food in the grave, Taylor writes, “They fill up the grave and eat and drink thereon, singing in their own language very dolefully, adjuring, informing the dead corpse by kissing the ground, to acquaint their father, mother, husbands and other relations of their present condition, slavery, as he passeth through their country towards the Pleasant Mountains, which message they bellow out to the dead corpse in a doleful song.”

Here began the spirituals, the blues, the culture of exile, the aesthetic/symbolic rearticulation of the self, over against its *pieza* negation by the logic of the slave plantation order. This self, through the ritual observance, now “knew where it was from,” and knew that it had a destiny other than that of being a mere producer of surplus value; since *its* destiny, the where it was going, was quite other than the destiny allowed it in the plantation slave labor archipelago’s master plan. Thus Taylor tells us that the slaves he spoke to were quite certain of the soul’s “redemption after death which they say is beyond the

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<sup>47</sup> Op. cit., p.40

Pleasant Mountains of their own country where, after death, such which lived well shall go to and there in the full enjoyment of all things shall be eternally happy.”

From Taylor, too, we learn how the former symbolic relationships of tribal African cultures were to be eventually transmuted into a new role, articulated into a culture whose central purpose was both the symbolic subversion of, and the concrete rebellion against, the dominant social order. The reinvention of the self, and with it the control of Lacan’s symbolic function, was articulated in the ritual of the funeral. The ritual itself transshipped the *macro-symbol of the Earth* as the base, at once material and symbolic,—one that had been instituting of traditional African/Guinean communities—as a counter-community to that of the slave-plantation system.

As Taylor tells us:

These Negroes have a great Veneration for the Earth by which they swear and bind themselves to punctual obedience and performance—and if you bind them to secrecy by kissing of the earth then all the tortures that can be inflicted on them can never make them confess or discover it, which is the reason they always are obstinate in their rebellions without tears or confessing the designs of their Confederates, for if they kiss the Earth it is to them a solemn and certain Oath by which they swear.

The symbolic pact, an oath sworn to not by *slaves*, but by men initiated into a symbolic relationship, is coded by a Symbolic Order alien to that of the plantation. The oath bound each man not only to each other, but to the whole world of their ancestors; and behind them to the gods who guaranteed their counter-identity, their non-*pieza* condition. And this identity was also legitimated by the “*existence*” of Guinea, as one’s true, because an empirical origin, now ritually converted into what would become in the course of time, a trans-tribal symbolic Origin.

Taylor tells us of four rebellions that took place in the latter part of the seventeenth century in Jamaica. After the rebels were crushed, they “were all put to death—*some burnt, some roasted, some torn to pieces with dogs, others cut in pieces* alive, and their Head and Quarters planted on poles as a terror to others.” But the power of the oath sworn was such that, “nevertheless for all this torture they remained so obstinate that whilst they were burning, roasting etc., they continued singing and laughing,

not one of them seemed to shed a tear or beg for mercy, ...and by no torture would they ever confess the design or who was concerned therein. And so their torment seemed in vain.”<sup>48</sup>

C.L.R. James has pointed out the central role that the religion of vudu and the oath sworn at the vudu rituals played in the successful revolution in Haiti. Writing in the eighteenth century, Edward Long warned of the dangerous thrust of the Myal cult—the Jamaican equivalent of vudu—and described, if not fully recognizing it as such, the ritual ceremony in which the “initiate,” after having died to his old self (as slave), is reconstituted as a “new” man.<sup>49</sup> This “new man” not only believed himself invulnerable to the white man’s bullets, i.e., to his power, but as Taylor, and later, Long shows, were prepared to die in collective defense of this new self. For like vudu, Myal was the reinvented syncretic, somewhat Afro-Christian, system of beliefs, in which the Creole slaves, distant now from Africa, reinterpreted the rituals, reinvented the traditional gods in new forms. But in vudu as in early (i.e. still hegemonically African-centered) Myal, Africa, Guinea, the place left behind was invoked in ritual through the techniques of religious ecstasy which breached the iron walls of exile, transmuted the Beyond into the *now* of the ritual itself.

Later Africa, Guinea, the place left behind, would become Heaven, as elements of Christian symbolism were drawn into the old framework, in the context of the rise of varying forms of a syncretic Afro-Christianity.<sup>50</sup> But this Heaven was freighted with all the old symbolic power. Herein lies the force and passion of the spirituals. Singing of the sweet chariot coming to take them home, the slaves claimed

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<sup>48</sup> Taylor, John. (MS.) Multum in parvo or parvum in multo (Taylor’s second part of the “historic of his life and travels in America. Containing a full geographical description of the Island of Jamaica...”). Quarto vol. 236 written pages.

<sup>49</sup> C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*. New York, 1963; first published in 1938.

<sup>50</sup> “The most sensible among them”—i.e., the Creole slaves, born in the island and therefore already ‘seasoned’ as distinct from the “imported “Africans” who in the eighteenth century, differently from the early nineteenth, led most of the rebellions—fear the supernatural powers of the African *obeah man* or pretended conjurers often ascribing those mortal effects to magic, which are only the operations of some poisonous juice or preparation dexterously administered by these villains...

Nor long since, some of these execrable wretches in Jamaica introduced what they called the *Myal dance*, and established a kind of society, *into which they invited all they could*. The lure hung out, was that every Negroe, *initiated into the Myal society*, would be invulnerable by the white man; and although they might in appearance, be slain, the obeahman could...restore the body to life” (Long, op. cit.: Vol. II, 416).

their true origin, as a population, denoted the present order as a vale of tears, delegitimated its principalities and powers.

While if in the rituals it was the techniques of possession which breached the iron walls of the prison of their everyday slave plantation existence, black music, from the spirituals to the blues to jazz and all its variants, and now to Marley and Reggae, secularized the formerly spiritual religious ecstasy, displaced it into an aesthetic space, where it made the ultimate revolutionary demand, *the demand for happiness/fulfillment now*. One that we know is possible, since it is “known”—partaken of during the aesthetic experiencing of the song. As Marley sings—

Move, move, move, movement of Jah people  
Jah come to break down downpression, rule equality  
wipe away transgression  
and set the captive free  
Exodus, movement of Jah people  
Exodus, movement of Jah people,<sup>51</sup>

—exile itself is made absent.

To all who partake in the song—and Bradshaw’s description of a Marley concert with the shouted responses of the audience, denotes the intensity of shared communication between the singer and his co-partakers—the world outside the song, the so-called objective reality is delegitimated as that of Babylon, the non-real world, the world of Babylon’s capitalistic illusions that must be burnt. It is not they, the poor, the materially and psychically dispossessed—nor, indeed, their, although well fed, no less psychically dispossessed audience, by their reduction to being mere consumers,—who are “wrong” but Babylon. Everything will be alright once they who are made to feel themselves “wrong,” “see the light.” The keyword is *see*. One sees the light. One does not as in Orthodox Christianity “*hear the word*” which must be obeyed.<sup>52</sup> Rather in the heresies of the popular black cultures of the Americas one sees, participates in Godhood. For the walls of iron which imprison men, are not only external walls. They are the far more imprisoning walls of the structured psyche that the audience brings with them from their

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<sup>51</sup> Bob Marley and the Wailers, “Exodus.” *Exodus*. Tuff Gong/Island, 1977.

<sup>52</sup> Hans Albert Steger, op. cit. p. 36.

Babylonian lives. This given that the very structure of the unconscious articulated on the basis of the formal system—one from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, legitimating of the Western and Westernized upper bourgeoisies, as the ruling stratum—is necessarily so instituted and legitimated only by means of what Baudrillard genially identified as [that of the formal system's] “arsenal of significations,” its correlated “mental, sexual, and cultural structures.” With both, in turn, thereby serving to induce the normative individual and collective behaviours, indispensable to the dynamic enactment and stable reproduction of our present, hegemonically secular, world-systemic order. An “arsenal of signification” therefore, in whose now techno-industrial automated terms, the innumerable variants of the global archipelago of Marley's shanty-town jobless, must lawlikely be both materially and psychically dispossessed.

Hence genial aspect of the Rastafarians' recoding of the formal system's concept, *oppression*, as that of their existentially lived phenomenological concept of “downpression.” This given that “downpression,” is a one also no less experienced—if in their case only at the level of their psychic dispossession, being no less experienced—by the usually job-holding, therefore well-fed, reasonably affluent members of the Rastafarian singers' audiences. Yet who, in their everyday lives, must also find themselves being, on the one hand, made into interchangeable units or cogs in the now corporate system of economic production, and on the other, if no less so, into an also interchangeable functional unit of that system. That is, socialized to be the docile consumers, whose ever increasing “wants,” as induced by the ad industry, are now centrally indispensable to the overall functioning of the global economic system.

It is therefore precisely the “walls of iron” of the present “mental, sexual, and cultural structures,” ones determinant of our normative psyches, and thereby of the usual run of our behaviors, that the pulsating rhythms the Rastafarian reggae songs, together with the taut direct words/sentences of the oral Jamaican Afro-English in which the songs are composed—i.e. as for example, Marley's “Dem (them) belly full/but we hungry/The pot a fire (in the fire)/but the food no nough (not enough)—together function to powerfully subvert. To bring crashing down, at the level of the psyche, individual and collective, all such walls. Thereby, untuning, unstringing the respective interacting dynamics of their

institutionally imposed structures, and, together with them, our present normally, existentially experienced hegemonic quantified sense of time as labour time. Time, that is, linearly, rigidly channeled towards the productive purely material (i.e. economic) finality, of our present techno-industrial order of things.

Pamela O’Gorman describes the sharply opposed sense of time of the reggae song. It has, she writes,

no beginning, no middle and no end. The peremptory upbeat of the traps which seldom varies from song to song, is less an introduction than the articulation of a flow that never seems to have stopped. There is no climax, there is no end. The music merely fades out into the continuum of which it seems to be an unending part. Like the Blues, which shares with it these same characteristics, it lies outside the post-Renaissance sense of time and in this, it is essential non-European.<sup>53</sup>

The subversion of our present hegemonic socially conditioned psychic structure, therefore occurs through the mechanism of the music which makes present the experience of a concept of freedom, *an-archic* in its true sense—that is, freedom *for* the realization of selfhood, the negation of serving an imposed end, the end of the dominant order of Babylon, the return to the “father’s land,” the return from *negro* to *prieto*, from cog to creative agent, therefore to the now autonomously created sense of the self, *its* determinant recoding of the symbolic function.

The principle of the aesthetic structuring of the music itself, is therefore symbolic of a “free” structuring of a human psyche which can be concomitant with freedom from the *downpression* both of the dominant system, and of its unconscious. So that, as the techniques of ecstasy of religions like vudu and Myal had opened the path to a parallel experience of freedom which one *knows* because one *partakes* in it—so the aesthetic experience makes known a freedom articulated by a popular tradition, which transcends and goes beyond the telos of the liberation of the productive forces, a telos conceptualized *as* freedom within both the Liberal democratic capitalist and the Marxian-statist paradigms of production.

The “politics” of black culture has, therefore, as its function, the symbolic subversion, therefore the deconstruction, of the signifying chain with which the “old” individual, beginning, in its case, with the

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<sup>53</sup> Pamela O’Gorman, in *Jamaica Journal: A quarterly of the Institute of Jamaica*, 1972. Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies.



nameless *pieza*, is constituted. To do this and to deconstruct and subvert the cultural signifying system of the dominant order, was/is one and the same dialectical process. Seeing that, the deconstruction of the assigned “self” in its assigned “place” begins when, in the structure of the unconscious the symbols of the dominant order are subverted: control of the code is undermined. At the moment when the dominant order is counter-coded as Babylon, with all of the power and force of its Biblical reference, not only verbally but also aesthetically-musically negated, as the place of exile from which the new Exodus must begin, the listeners, black and white alike—now black and white *only* in the difference of skin, no longer in terms of the binary opposition of the symbolic order which sustains these categories—is made to vanish. All now feel their psychic *downpression*, their alien “namelessness” in the aridity and barrenness of empirical reality, as one determined by the telos of productive finality, disappear. The latter’s Symbolic Father, together with the bourgeois psyche to which He gives rise, is dethroned.

Over against the dethroned Father, his negated symbolic order, a new order which is a non-order asserts itself. It is a non-order because the new Symbolic Father has no power in this world. He is a symbol of nonpower which is nevertheless, not powerless. *Against* the downpressor, he is powerful beyond compare. He is powerful symbolically, musically, aesthetically.

For the sons of Jah are coterminous with the father. As brothers they participate with him in both fatherhood and sonhood, negating a power relation between them, or, even its possibility. While the song lasts therefore, all structures of power, all time is absent, made not to exist. In the aesthetic space created, the partakers experience *Zion*. *When it ends the memory remains constituting a radical desire for the realization in real life of this happiness*. Until the desire is fulfilled in this world, therefore, the movement of Exodus exists as the radical negation of anything less.

“The concept of God,” Horkheimer writes, “was for a long time the place where the idea was kept alive that there are *other norms besides those to which nature and society give expression in their operations*. Dissatisfaction with earthly destiny is the strongest motive. If justice resides with God then it is not to be found in the same measure in the world.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*. Trans. O’Connell & others (New York, 1972): 129.

The power of the Rastafarians' critique of our this-worldly destiny lies in the fact that it is symbolic, that it inhabits its own space outside the trammels of the "real" world. So that, if as Horkheimer points out that "The more Christianity brought God's rule into harmony with events in the world, the more the meaning of religion became perverted," nevertheless, when the actual Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown by a coup, killed, and his place taken by a Marxist regime, Marley and the other Rastafarians had refused to take cognizance of, in order to adjust their self-liberating faith, to a mere "event in the world," the world of Babylon. Assailed on all sides, they had their responses ready. As Marley tells it: "Many people, dey scoffers, many people say to me; 'Backside, you god dead! How he can dead? How can God die, man?'" For what the Rastafarians, through Marley here take on, is our present deep-seated materialist superstition, its secular belief in the impossibility of any referent for humans but a supposedly non-symbolic, and thereby, ostensibly "objective" one. As Umberto Eco writes:

What then is the meaning of a term? From the semiotic point of view it can only be a cultural unit...Recognition of the presence of these cultural units...involves understanding language as a social phenomenon. If I declare that there are two natures in Christ, the human and the divine, and one person, a logician or scientist might observe to me that this string of sign-vehicles has neither extension (condition of truth) or referent (concrete object to which it refers)—and it could be defined as lacking meaning and therefore as a pseudo statement. *But they will never succeed in explaining why whole groups of people have fought for centuries over a statement of this kind or its denial.* Evidently this happened because the expression contained precise contents which existed as cultural units within a civilization.

Seeing that once such units have been brought into imaginative existence, they

become the support for connotative development and *opened up a whole range of semantic reactions that directly affected behaviour.*<sup>55</sup>

Jah lives for Marley and his audience because the imperative conditions for his *signification*—and therefore his existence—exists. He exists as the demand for justice of the systemically made jobless marginal millions reduced to *subhuman* status materially; and for those other millions reduced to another form of subhuman status, the secular denial of any symbolic significance to their existence. Jah lives as

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<sup>55</sup> Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976): 68. Emphasis added.

the unwavering accusation against the rational cosmos not only of the once seemingly extrahumanly determined (i.e. by Edward Long's Nature and its Divine Fabricator) obligatory order of the slave plantation system, but also against that (the rational cosmos) also of our *present*—no less extrahumanly, because, ostensibly, bio-evolutionarily determined, therefore no less obligatorily, by the of our present world systemic capitalist economic ordering of things. This whether in its original Liberal democratic Free Market private ownership matrix bourgeois form or in its later Marxian Party-State ownership, contestatory, no less, if differently bourgeois, variant. It is therefore against both that for I-man, Jah lives as the unwavering assurance that although now predetermined to be, according to the logic of the first, members of the expendable underclass of the shanty-town, innercity ghettos, each with their prison extensions (and as such, the analogue of the latter's version of the gulag archipelago), there can be no doubt as to the triumphant reality of their imaginatively reinvented—outside the terms of the formal system—and performatively enacted, new sense of self as the sons of someone, the Most High.

Since with that assurance, Jah also lives as the certified prophetic prediction that in the kingdom of Jah, I-man shall reign, None will reign in his name. Pass it on! Pass on the good news! That is what the reggae songs do. They are the prophecy of Jah made flesh in words and music and rhythm, thereby concretely weighted with millenarian hope. This at the same time as they structure states of feeling which, ineluctably—as the *Gnosist heresies had done in the context of the rise of Christianity in a then still hegemonically pagan Roman empire*—push toward an analogical transformative mutation of contemporary Babylon's real surrounding world. Yet, there is a paradox here. One central both to the Gnosist heresies as well as those which have fueled the politics of the counter dynamics of the black Americas. This is that *the power of the black religious counter-culture of Rastafarianism in its now, with Marley, hegemonic musically-aesthetic doctrinal form, lies precisely in its symbolic negativity, thus its politics is a politics that can never be realized except in that symbolic world—ZION—in which with all structures of power having been overturned, not only the “autonomization of the economic sphere” but also the also ostensibly autonomous, separate concept of politics,—necessarily politricks—will have been made obsolescent and meaningless.*

Thus the fact, that the strength of its “politics” lies in the total critique it is able to make of all secular Jerusalems, of all secular Messiahs. *Seeing that the cultural seedbed from which it arises is one which is objectively revolutionary only from the liminally deviant point of view, of a specific transhistorical category;*—of one for which, revolution, and correlatedly, freedom as autonomy, can only mean the bringing to an immediate end, of their institutionalized material and psychic dispossession as such a category. One that the shanty-towns of the Rastafarians, like that of their *pieza-as-negro/negra* slave and “*native*,” have now been institutionally made to re-embodiment; if in transumptively new contemporary, post-colonial terms.

This liminally deviant category was first identified as a universally applicable one by the anthropologist Asmaron Legesse, as one that is systematically made to function in all human societies as “the conceptual ‘antithesis’” to the “structured community” to which it both belongs, and not belongs, at one and the same time. Seeing that, as Legesse further notes, it is only “by reference to this category” that the “structured community” both “defines and understands itself.” It is therefore here that we can grasp the reality of what Legesse also emphasizes as the “injustice inherent in structure.”<sup>56</sup> In that, as he shows, it is only through the mediation of the negative mirroring provided by the liminally deviant category or person, that the community can be structured (by, in Baudrillard’s terms, its “arsenal of significations”) to phenomenologically experience themselves as an inter-altruistic-kin-recognizing, collectivity.

With this, thereby imperatively calling, in all cases, for that *insider/outsider* category to be imperatively and securely institutionalized in its pre-ascribed role, as the negative antithesis whose represented *abnormal* and/or pathological *difference* is then made to invertedly generate, the specific mode of *similarity* or of *Sameness*, defining of that community’s now co-identifying shared “sense of self” as all being *equally*, the “normal” subjects of their specific societal order. With their members, therefore, all now being able—this whatever the sharp caste/class inequalities of the divisions between

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<sup>56</sup> Asmarom Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*. New York: Free Press, 1993: 271.

them, with respect to the inequalities of power, wealth, social status, educational and/or skills-acquisition opportunities, etc.—to both experience and performatively enact themselves as collectively being of/belonging to, *the same kind*.

Consequently, given the Rastafarians' existentially lived experience as the liminally deviant or pariah category, one now indispensable to the functioning both of our contemporary world system's, economically, techno-industrial societal order as well as those of its magma of nation-state sub-units, the religio-aesthetic doctrinal force of their millenarian counter-politics can be seen to lie in the latter's projection of, and demand for, a world freed from all pre-ascribed "structures of powers"; with that, an end thereby being put to their institutionalized dispossession as such a category. As such a dispossession, therefore, one which functions to adapt Marx's incisive formulation, in its specific Rastafarian case, both a "particular wrong," as well as in all such other transsocietal, transhistorical, indeed trans-Western cases also, a "general wrong"; a wrong hitherto indispensable to the instituting of all human societies.

In this context, therefore, given the far-reaching implications of the projected emancipatory telos of the Rastafarians' millenarian counter-politics, this entails a correlatedly strong injunction. One which prescribes that as the Rastafarian protagonists of this millenarian counter-politics, their members must at all times, be *not only prepared to refuse, to negate any* new structures of power that a this-worldly Messiah may seek to institute, ostensibly in their name, but also, to turn their backs on all those—some including their own members—who would seek to make their counter-politics into a function of this world's *politricks*. Since once this millenarian counter-politics allows itself to be co-opted into that of this world, as Duvalier of Haiti did with vudu, and Manley (if only briefly) with elements of Rastafarianism, it becomes destructively dystopian. Given that, by subverting its true function, it deserts the symbolic mode in which it articulates *its* emancipatory telos, for the rational world in which such a telos is necessarily betrayed.

With the song "Exodus," Marley, therefore, does not only challenge Manley's alternative Democratic-socialist emancipatory telos, *its* "where we are going." In doing so, he returns the Rastafarian movement to its true, prophetically redemptive, role: this given the liminally deviant nature of its part/not-

part, insider/outsider ultimate, underside status, one indispensable to the instituting of our now post-colonial world-systemic order..<sup>57</sup>

It is therefore from the contemporary periphery-form of this part/not-part, insider/outsider perspective, that Bob Marley and the Rastafarians articulate their critique, directed now primarily against the capitalistic Babylonian illusions of the Liberal democratic, capital accumulating, privately propertied upper bourgeois elite, but also against the no less bourgeois “power illusions of the New Class of the skilled/technocratic/bureaucratic bourgeoisie<sup>58</sup>—whether Democratic socialist or orthodoxly Marxist. For, in both cases, this critique, verbal/music, ethical/aesthetic is based on the insistence that I-man, as the Son of Jah, has an *inherited* right—not one that he has to “earn”—to being not only able to secure the material conditions of his existence, but also and above all, to be able to realize himself spiritually/creatively here on earth. But that even when the first “right” has been met, the priority of the realization of the second over the first, for the Rastafarians, should never in any way be reversed, as indeed it must be within the terms of our present paradigm of production in its Old Class/New Class, but in both cases, hegemonically economistic, therefore bourgeois, terms. Will not permit them, above all,

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<sup>57</sup> As Asmaron Legesse concludes, it is only this liminal category (whether person or group) who, by implication, in attempting to step out of its preassigned role in the “obligatory order” of all human societies, is able “to *remind us that we need not forever remain prisoners of our prescriptions.*” In Baudrillard’s related terms, our “arsenal of significations,” together with “the mental, sexual, and cultural structures” whose iron walls. Such arsenals function to stably institute/reproduce. Seeing that in so doing, this category is able to “generate *conscious* change, by exposing *all the injustices inherent in structure.*” Legesse, op. cit.: 271.

<sup>58</sup> The counter-doctrinal imperative of these rights as inherited ones, common to all, is put forward by Marley in his 1974 song “So Jah Seh.” *Natty Dread*. Tuff Gong/Island, 1974:

So Jah seh,  
Not one of my seeds,  
Shall sit on the sidewalk  
And beg bread [...]  
Inite oneself and love Imanity  
[...]  
Ye are the sheep of my pasture  
So verily, thou shall be very well  
[...]  
And down here in the ghetto  
And down here we suffer  
I and I a hang on in there  
And I and I, I nah leggo [...]  
I'm going to prepare a place  
That where I am thou shall abide  
So Jah seh

given their self-ascribed sonship status to Jah, to replace His/their emancipatory telos with that of the latter's materially redemptive telos. Not as long as they continue to perceive their imaginatively reinvented sense of self, as the only such self coterminous with Jah, His reigning in His kingdom.

Marley and the counter-culture of the ex-slave archipelago of the Black Americas, as disseminated globally—if paradoxically so, by the productive finality and “reasons of profitability” of the bourgeoisie’s now globalized *Western and Westernized* Free Market capitalist economic system—by its reggae songs, do not talk *about* the revolution in the psyche, in the counter-symbolic order which recodes *Imanity* in its now fully human status. Rather it is this new self-perception, together with the new states of feeling to which the songs give rise, that will make inevitable the transformation of our present material order, of the now seemingly unchallengeable objective reality of its autonomized economic system and its paradigm of production, whether enacted in its Free Market, capitalist, or Party-Statist forms.

For already in that rhythmic-musical, verbal-aesthetic space in which the songs exist, and the revolution in the symbolic order, and in the psyche, is immanently enacted, Jah *is*. And I-man—no longer the paradigm of production’s logically expendable techno-industrial “refuse”—in his royal sonship status, *lives*.

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The African and Afro-American  
Studies Program  
Stanford University  
Stanford, CA  
October, 1977