"WELCOME TO JAMROCK": RASTAFARIAN POETICS AND POLITICS ON THE STREETS OF KINGSTON

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ABSTRACT
In this essay I reflect on the ways through which Rastafarians have created and transformed Kingston by inhabiting the city with their presence, narratives, and lexicon. The Rastafarian Kingston is built on several semantic and political layers, and the question of toponyms emerged in the most diverse interactions I had with my interlocutors throughout fieldwork. I also reflect on their presence; bodies marked by indexes of belonging to the Rastafarian Movement; the decoration of walls and houses with Rastafarian colors and motifs, and the narratives of events that took place in certain parts of town. Exploring the Rastafarian occupation of Kingston is a way of unpacking how different individuals and collectives reflect upon and act on issues such as social memory, citizenship, belonging, the uses of and access to public spaces, the access to rights and reparation for the cycles of violence to which they have been subjected throughout history.

KEYWORDS
Rastafari; Kingston; toponymy; narratives; politics; poetics.

FIGURE 1
A wall in Half Way Tree.

I. INTRODUCTION

This picture I snapped in 2016 shows a mural with a few seminal figures from the Rastafari Movement. The wall stands in a bustling area of Kingston, where commerce thrives and many public and private services are available. The figure on the left is Mortimo Planno, a historical leader of the Rastafari Movement. His name is written beneath his portrait. The last figure to the right is Emperor Haile Selassie I, portrayed inside a map of the African continent. Africa is marked by the colors of Imperial Ethiopia—red, yellow and green. Marcus Mosiah Garvey is depicted beside Selassie I on top of a red, black and green background—the colors of UNIA. I could not find anyone who could identify the other people depicted in the mural, painted over a background of the same colors.

Rastafari is a political and spiritual movement that emerged in Jamaica in the early 1930s. The history of its origin is well known and began with the coronation of Ras Tafari Makonnen as Emperor of Ethiopia in November of 1930. Upon being crowned, the Ras—a word that means "head" and "prince" in Amharic, the language spoken by the Makonnen family, of the Amhara ethnic group[1]—adopted a new name: Haile Selassie I. The chosen name means "Power of the Trinity"—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

1. There are several languages spoken in Ethiopia. According to the 2007 census, the four most widely spoken languages are Amharic, Oromo, Somali and Tigrinya. For languages, ethnicities and other demographic details on Ethiopia, see Central Statistical Agency (Ethiopia), 2007.

The history of the Makonnen family has been entrenched in biblical poetics since at least the Middle Ages, as reported by Chevannes (1995: 9). Like other Ethiopian noble families, they claim descendance from King Solomon, King David's son who, like his father, ruled the city of Judah according to the biblical mythological tradition. The Ethiopian monarchy emerged from the union of Solomon and Makeda, the Queen of Sheba. Chevannes asserts that "[s]elf consciously, therefore, the new Emperor in appropriating his title 'King of Kings', 'Lord of Lords', 'Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah', was reaffirming the ancient roots of Ethiopian civilization and its independent place in Judeo-Christian traditions" (idem).

Word of the coronation of Haile Selassie I arrived in Jamaica through imported copies of *Time Magazine* and *The Blackman* (a newspaper conceived and directed by the Jamaican Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey[2]). Soon after, several prophets began to appear around Kingston, claiming the name Ras Tafari or Ras Tafarian for themselves.[3] These men proclaimed the African monarch as the reincarnation of the biblical Christ. Christ, in the language of the Rastas, was a living black man who had returned to redeem the chosen people from the hardships imposed by their oppressors. His chosen people, according to Rastafarians, is the African people, divided and spread across the mother continent and the diaspora. This narrative framework, which evokes biblical prophecies and recontextualizes them in a Pan-Africanist perspective, was strongly influenced by the cultural translations of Marcus Garvey's speeches and writings that the Rastafarian prophets put into circulation.

In an article published in *The Black Man* on November 8, 1930, Garvey extols the potential of Haile Selassie I's coronation, a black African monarch, for the development and emancipation of Africa, Africans and African descendants scattered across the diaspora. Below I reproduce the article penned by Garvey in its totality:

> Last Sunday, a great ceremony took place at Addis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia. It was the coronation of the new Emperor of Ethiopia—Ras Tafari. From reports and expectations, the scene was one of great splendour, and will long be remembered by those who were present. Several of the leading nations of Europe sent representatives to the coronation, thereby paying their respects to a rising Negro nation that is destined to play a great part in the future history of the world. Abyssinia is the land of the blacks and we are glad to learn that even though Europeans have been trying to impress the Abyssinians that they are not belonging to the Negro Race, they have learned the retort that they are, and they are proud to be so.

2. For a biography of Marcus Garvey that connects his anti-colonial efforts to the emergence of Pan-Africanism, see the work of Jamaican political scientist Rupert Lewis, 1987.
3. These pioneers of the Rastafari Movement, whom I refer to as prophets, were Leonard Howell, Joseph Hibbert, Archibald Dunkley, Robert Hinds and Ras Napier. For accounts on the beginnings of the Rastafari Movement in Jamaica see Chevannes, 1994 and Barnett, 2018.

> Ras Tafari has traveled to Europe and America and is therefore no stranger to European hypocrisy and methods; he, therefore, must be regarded as a kind of a modern Emperor, and from what we understand and know of him, he intends to introduce modern methods and systems into his country. Already he has started to recruit from different sections of the world competent men in different branches of science to help to develop his country to the position that she should occupy among the other nations of the world.
>
> We do hope that Ras Tafari will live long to carry out his wonderful intentions. From what we have heard and what we do know, he is ready and willing to extend the hand of invitation to any Negro who desires to settle in his kingdom. We know of many who are gone to Abyssinia and who have given good report of the great possibilities there, which they are striving to take advantage of.
>
> The Psalmist prophesied that Princes would come out of Egypt and Ethiopia would stretch forth her hands unto God. We have no doubt that the time is now come. Ethiopia is now really stretching forth her hands. This great kingdom of the East has been hidden for many centuries, but gradually she is rising to take a leading place in the world and it is for us of the Negro race to assist in every way to hold up the hand of Emperor Ras Tafari. (quoted by Hill 1990, 442)

I have chosen to cite the entire article, as Rupert Lewis does when he analyzes it (1998, 145-6),

> because often commentators refer only to the last paragraph and stress the religious, prophetic dimension, that of a prince coming out of Egypt and Ethiopia stretching out its hands to God (Psalm 68:31), at the expense of other aspects of Garvey's thinking. But Garvey addressed many issues: the attempts by Europeans to separate Ethiopia from the rest of Africa, European attendance at the coronation and its impact, the coronation as a symbol of black pride, and, most important, Garvey's expression of hope for a reign based on modernity within the framework of Pan-African solidarity. In Garvey's thinking and work, Ethiopianism functioned in accordance with his strong modernizing Pan-African outlook (Lewis 1998, 146).

As Lewis explains, the strength of Garvey's argument is also in its political tenor: the recognition of the African reign by European governments; the pride that a Black nation inserted in modernity would bring to Blacks all around the world; the possible leadership role of Ethiopia in the world; the possible reception in Ethiopia of Blacks who want to settle there to work for the progress of that nation. Yet one should not lose sight of the biblical poetic framework intertwined with these political aspirations, for it is precisely the connections between the biblical prophecies and Pan-Africanism in Garvey's language that have inspired Rastafarians' criticism and meditations since the 1930s.

Selassie I and Garvey are recurring characters in Rastafarian visual and oral compositions. In 1976, Rastafarian singer-songwriter

Winston Rodney, better known as Burning Spear, released his fourth studio album, entitled *Garvey's Ghost*. Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican who influenced the Black world with his Pan-Africanist movement anchored in the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), had died 36 years earlier[4]. His ideas, however, especially those related to the return to Africa and the appreciation of Blackness, have continued to thrive. First came the Garveyites. Then, in the 1930s, the Rastas emerged, elevating Garvey to the position of a prophet who had announced the time for the redemption of Black people from the diasporic exile. Through a Rastafarian biblical translation, this man, by his deeds and words, became John the Baptist; the revelation of the coronation of Haile Selassie I and his wife, Empress Menen, was attributed to him. Garvey remains alive through the language of Rastafarians, who evoke the Pan-African hero in their liturgical services, in their daily speeches, in the decoration of their bodies—using garments as varied as t-shirts, brooches and scarves printed with Garvey's face and sayings.

1976 also marked one year since the death of Haile Selassie I—an event that none of the Rastafari Orders recognize. The body of the last Ethiopian emperor, after all, was never publicly displayed and no funeral ever took place. Like Garvey, in Kingston, Selassie I lives and is a major actor in Rastafarian memory. This memory—one could call it an afterlife—manifests itself through several channels, such as Burning Spear's album mentioned above.

What follows is an essay on how Kingstonian Rastas perform politics and poetics through their ways of inhabiting the Jamaican capital, with attention to narratives about places and events and to the native toponymy. My aim is to reflect on and with the ways Rastas created and recreated Kingston throughout history by inhabiting the city with their physical presence, their narratives about it and their lexicon. I want to underscore one point: the physical places of Rastafarian Kingston are built on top of several semantic and political layers. The naming and narrativizations of these places are fundamental parts of a metapragmatic process: they *perform* what the words describe. As described by Austin (1962), words have an illocutionary power to not only describe things and contexts, but to also *create* them. By renaming a Kingston landmark with a biblical name, for instance, the Rastas translate their experiences into biblical experiences, as much as they inscribe their experience in the biblical narratives. Let us pause for a moment to consider the question of parallel naming.

Benedict Anderson (2002 [1983]) and Charles Carnegie (2017) reflect on the naming of cities with identical names plus the indicator "New" as signs of

4. For a reflection on the confluences and divergences between Garveyists and Rastas in the early years of the Rastafari Movement, see Lewis 1998.

a sense of being able to live parallel lives in parallel locations afforded by the technologies of the Age of Exploration. It is clear that the authors refer to cities of the so-called New World named after those of the Old World—names such as New Amsterdam, New York and New Zealand. In the case of the Rastas, however, this process of parallel naming, which generally evokes biblical toponymy without using the indicator "New", rather than actualizing a notion of living in a parallel reality, frames the reality experienced by them as an actualization of what the holy texts describe.

Above I referred to the illocutionary power of words and defined them as operators of metapragmatic processes. In doing this, I take into account Webb Keane's (1997, 51) remarks about one of the functions that the recitation of sacred texts might assume: "[r]ather than being construed as accounts of actions that were carried in the past, the words are taken from the reports on and directives for the action they themselves carry out in the moment of speaking." There is a great difference between the recitation of sacred texts and the naming of places, but there are also parallels. The parallel that matters here is precisely the power of the word; its creative force of contextualization that transforms a name into an experience. Calling Jamaica Babylon or Egypt, for example, refers to the experiences of slavery of the chosen people described in the Bible and instigates a reflection on the present conditions of Black people—the chosen people in Rastas' point of view—on the island. On the other hand, the naming of Ethiopia as Zion inscribes in that place the possibility of redemption for the chosen people, who are suffering the hardships of captivity in a foreign land. Here the geographical and cosmological toponymies transform the biblical narratives into lived experiences.

Throughout my fieldwork, Rastafarian toponymies emerged in the most diverse interactions I had with my interlocutors. But the place names, this toponymy of biblical appeal, are not the only signs that embody Rastafarian experiences and memories in the landscape of the Jamaican capital. The decoration of walls, gates, curbs and fences with the colors of imperial Ethiopia; images of Haile Selassie and Marcus Garvey; biblical quotations and song lyrics also compete for the making of the Rastafarian Kingston. And there are, of course, the very Rastafarian bodies that inhabit the city. Some of them dress like Haile Selassie I, following the attire he used in public. They sport khaki-colored military uniforms decorated with medals of a holy war waged against the pagans. Some of these medals depict the emperor's face—often accompanied by one of his sayings—while others feature Garvey's face. They might also take the shape of the letter R. This letter is related to the words Rastafari, Righteous, Redemption, Reparation, Repatriation; important Rastafarian concepts. Other medals, in turn, are shaped like the African continent and feature sayings uttered by or attributed to

Selassie I, Garvey and other prophets—many of them, of course, are biblical quotations. Other Rastas decorate their bodies with Ethiopian garments, such as tunics or T-shirts, trousers or robes, turbans or wool caps. Symbols such as the Lion of Judah and the Egyptian ankh are also popular in the making of Rastafarian bodies.

Naming places, decorating them and reciting their names in narratives are ways of *evoking* stories and memories attached to them—as much as they are ways of *attaching* stories and memories to them. They also connect these stories and memories from the past to the experiences of the present and the expectations of the future. Inhabiting a city also means laughing, weeping and being moved in some way by the stories related to its parts, to its temporalities—to its existence. In Kingston, toponymy is a field of political disputes where the Rastas fight against the specter of British colonialism and the neocolonialism of the Jamaican state by mobilizing biblical and Pan-Africanist poetics.

Since the 1930s, collectives—now called Orders, Houses or Rastafari Mansions—have been formed, dissolved and refashioned in Kingston and other parts of Jamaica. When American sociologist George Eaton Simpson undertook his pioneering fieldwork among Rastas in West Kingston, there were already plenty of collectives in that area alone. In his own words:

> In 1953, there were at least a dozen Ras Tafari groups operating in West Kingston, with memberships ranging from approximately twenty to one hundred and fifty or more. Among these groups were: United Afro-West Indian Federation, United Ethiopian Body, Ethiopian Youth Cosmic Faith, Ethiopian Coptic League, and the African Cultural League. (Simpson 1955a, 133)

Simpson conducted his fieldwork at a time when the Orders of the first epoch were perishing, while two Orders of the second epoch, the Nyahbinghi Order and the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress (EABIC, also known as Bobo Shanti Order), were being formed[5]. The Twelve

5. Jamaican Rastafarian sociologist Michael Barnett, who teaches at the University of the West Indies in Kingston, suggests a periodization of the history of the Rastafari movement into five epochs. According to him, "the first epoch of Rastafari history [stretches] from 1930 to 1948 and [i]s characterized by the first generation of Rastafari leaders, who were in large part inspired to announce the arrival of Black God by the royal coronation of Ras Tafari as HIM Haile Selassie I on November 2, 1930. The second epoch I conceive to stretch from 1948 to 1968 and to be characterized by the second generation of leaders of the movement. This second generation of Rastafari leaders led to the establishment of the major mansions of Rastafari, as well as the wearing of dreadlocks that have now become the signature feature of the movement. The third epoch stretches from 1968 to 1981, and is characterized by the movement's firmly established symbiotic relationship with reggae music. (...) The fourth epoch stretches from 1981 to 2007 and is characterized by Rastafari's waning influence on reggae music as a whole, as well as the death of its key second-generation leaders, who forced the movement to confront a potential existential crisis. The fifth epoch, which begins in September 2007, marks an entry into a new millennium, based on the Ethiopian calendar, and is characterized by a necessary reconfiguration of the major mansions; they are now headed up and directed by councils, as opposed to being guided by charismatic leaders" (Barnett 2018: 23). For a different periodization of the Rastafari Movement, proposed 23 years before the one sketched by Barnett, see Chevannes 1995: 11-15.

Tribes of Israel, another Order which is also associated with the second era of the Movement, was established fifteen years after Simpson completed his fieldwork, in 1968.

The Nyahbinghi Order sprang from a collective named Youth Black Faith, formed in 1949 by young Rastas, among them Bongo Wato, also known like Ras Boanerges. Youth Black Faith was founded in a West Kingston ghetto called Trench Town, a place that still exists today. It was in a *yard*[6] on Ninth Street that Bongo Wato joined two other Rastas, Brothers Taf and Pete, and began to disseminate his ideas and practices related to Rastafari (Chevannes 1994, 152-153). In addition to being a congregational site, the Youth Black Faith headquarters in Trench Town had two important activities: the trade and use of ganja (ibid., 153).

The Bobo Shanti Order has its origins in Trench Town as well. A long history of state violence, though, forced Emmanuel[7] and his followers to wander through different parts of Kingston before settling in Bull Bay. The place where they have settled is known as Bobo Hill and many Bobo Shanti still live there today. In their pilgrimages, the Bobo Shanti were connecting their experiences, Kingston's landscape and the sacred narratives, appealing to a biblical toponymy in the naming of places. "Ackee Walk was Nazareth, where Jesus cometh from", for it was there that Emmanuel announced himself and was proclaimed as the reincarnated Christ;

> Harris street was Galilee, where Jesus went after leaving his native home; Eight Street, Capernaum; and Ninth Street, Bethlehem, for it was there that Jesus, Queen Rachel's son, was born. The settlement in Bull Bay they named Mount Temon, where God is supposed to have come from, according to a passage from Genesis. (Chevannes 1994, 174)

I heard stories about the pilgrimages of Emmanuel and his followers from Bobo Shanti elders on several occasions. The place names that

6. Before proceeding, let me describe what are the *yards*. It is true that many Jamaicans use this word as a synonym for home, in the same way they use the word gates. "Come over mi gates" or "come over mi yard" can be translated as "come to my place". But yards also have another connotation. It refers to peculiar types of housing developed in Kingston since at least the 1960s. They are called tenement yards and rent yards. The rent yards are compounds whose owners rent out space for families or individuals to build their own small houses. In her ethnography of everyday life in two Kingstonian ghettos between the 1970s and 1980s, Diane Austin-Broos described one of the rent yards where she conducted fieldwork as follows: "yards are surrounded by high zinc fences and contain within them a number of rented dwellings constructed of the same material. There are no facilities provided in the yards other than a stand pipe and shared toilet. (...) Between two and five households may be situated on a lot, and residents describe their accommodation as a *yard* because they share common facilities and yard space at the back of the lot" (Austin-Broos 2018 [1984]: 42-43; emphasis in original). The tenement yards consist generally of single buildings "with individual rooms let to a single household" (Clarke 2006: 35).
7. King Emmanuel, also known as Prince Emmanuel and Emmanuel I, was the Bobo Shanti Order founder and supreme leader until his death in 1994.

emerged in these stories were always glossed and connected to the biblical narratives that inspired them. Today the Bobo Shanti call Bobo Hill *Jerusalem*[8].

The last Order formed during the second epoch of the Movement is called the Twelve Tribes of Israel. It was founded by Vernon Carrington, better known as Prophet Gad, in 1968. Prior to founding the Twelve Tribes of Israel, Gad had already explored biblical theology and connected it to Pan-Africanist ideas and practices through his work at the Ethiopia World Federation (EWF)[9]. He developed a philosophy that connects people to one of Israel's Lost Tribes according to their month of birth[10].

Although Bobo Shanti, Nyahbinghi and Twelve Tribes of Israel Houses are the most prominent Orders in Kingston and other parts of Jamaica, there are several other active Orders, such as the House of Dread, Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church, Church of His Imperial Majesty and certain Chapters of the Ethiopia World Federation. The existence of different Orders is something that divides the Rastas. Some of my interlocutors showed great tolerance towards the existence of several Orders. A young Rastaman told me, in downtown Kingston, that "in di end wi a fight di same fight, wi just doan agree on a few details". He claimed not to belong to any Order, but considered himself a Nyahbinghi. For him, being a Nyahbinghi "means to fight down di white man and di Black man and di chiney man oppression. Yeah, man! A each and every kind of oppression from each and every man I n I a fight 'gainst! A dat a Nyahbinghi style!" Other Rastas, like Priest Menelik, an elderly Bobo Shanti

8. For an ethnography of the Bobo Shanti see Montlouis 2013.
9. The Ethiopia World Federation is an organization that remains active to this day. It was established in the context of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, which occurred between 1935 and 1939. During this period, troops commanded by Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini invaded Ethiopia and confronted the army of Haile Selassie I. In the second year of the war, Haile Selassie I exiled himself in Bath, England, returning to Addis Ababa only in 1941. During the exile, Selassie received the moral and financial support of several Black communities in the diaspora that came to frame the war as a battle between Europe and Africa; between white colonizers and colonized Black people. As a way of aggregating pro-Ethiopia actions, Selassie I sent an emissary to New York in 1937 to establish the Ethiopia World Federation. The institution started hosting events to promote Ethiopian history and culture and raise funds for the war efforts. In 1939, two years after its establishment in the US, the first branch of the Ethiopia World Federation was established in Kingston by Paul Earlington, a former UNIA activist. After a few years, the stories of the Ethiopia World Federation and the Rastafari Movement in Kingston began to intertwine, with several Rastas frequenting the headquarters of the institution and requesting official affiliation to it. For a history of the Ethiopia World Federation, see Bonacci 2013.
10. Along with this association there is also a rich symbolism that connects people to certain colors, to the focus on certain parts of the body, to zodiacal signs, and to the Hebrew months. For more details on the theology and symbolism of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, see Van Dijk 1988 and Bonacci 2016.

High Priest[11], see the existence of many Orders as a major problem to the Movement:

> Rasta dem split. Nowadays in Jamaica yuh 'ave over twenty Rasta Mansions. No man agree wid di other man, many a dem disrespect Emmanuel I. A dat mek it tuffer fi wi as Rasta, cah wi cyaan channel our efforts towards Repatriation, which is what I n I a deal wid. Strictly Repatriation wi a deal wid.

If from a certain point of view (a native one in this case) differences and dissent are detrimental to the Rastafari Movement, from another one they can be seen as productive, as sources of power and self-reflection. Let us now turn to the scenarios where these dissents between individuals and collectives take place.

II. SEDIMENTS OF HISTORY AND MEMORY: FRAGMENTS OF THE RASTAFARIAN KINGSTON

"Wi troddin 'pon Back o' Wall, man", Ras Cover told me as we zigzagged through the streets of Tivoli Gardens. I asked him when he had started visiting that part of the city. "Since mi was a yute, man. Haha! Long time gone, yuh know?" he said, without slowing his pace. I contemplated the place and the walk of this septuagenarian Rastaman. How many layers of history was he able to see through with his gaze? What kind of experience did he recollect while walking through streets that no longer exist? There he was, pointing at places and telling me where good old Rastas used to live; where they played their drums and cooked food; where he and other dreadlocks had been brutalized by members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force and the Jamaican Defense Force. His utterances were not restricted to speech—the naming of persons, places, the storytelling. By *walking* he was uttering the past and the present of the place into existence. Walking, as Certeau asserts (1984 [1980]), is a way of spatially performing a place.

Ras Cover usually walks holding onto a staff decorated with the colors of Imperial Ethiopia. He does not need it for support; he is in very good health and has a strong body. The staff is part of his performance. It gives the impression that the Rastaman came out of an old biblical movie. Ras Cover is a Black biblical prophet. He sports gray dreadlocks, usually arranged in the shape of a turban on top of his head. His thin, austere face is frame by a beard also matted into dreadlocks. When he

11. The Bobo Shanti hierarchy consists, in ascending order, of Prophets, Priests and High Priests. Women cannot fill hierarchical positions, so they do not receive any of these titles even if they devote their entire life to the Bobo Shanti Order. They can receive, however, the title of Empress. (But see Montlouis 2013: 85.) The prohibition of women taking on hierarchical positions in the Rastafari liturgy is not exclusive to the Bobo Shanti; women are forbidden to fulfill these roles in all Orders. This does not, however, prevent some women - also called Empresses by Rastas from other Orders, or Queens - to reach prominent positions and respect among Rastas, as is the case of Empress Enid Steele, an important voice of the Nyahbinghi Order until her death in 2015.

is not wearing his green, red and yellow tunic, Ras Cover usually wears long trousers and a long-sleeved buttoned down shirt. On that day in Tivoli Garden he was wearing his tunic.

> "Have you ever lived around here?", I asked.
> "No, man. Mi never live deh yah."
> "Where did you live before settling in Portmore?"
> "Well, mi 'ave lived in many different places. Mi born inna Trinity Ville. Yuh know where Trinity Ville is?"
> "I have no idea."
> "It inna St. Thomas Parish, not far from Yallahs. Then mi a move a Morant Bay. Yallahs. Port Morant. And then many different place down inna Portmore mi a live."

Most days Ras Cover hops on a Coaster Bus in Portmore and heads to Kingston. His main network of friends, acquaintances and interlocutors moves, like him, between Kingston and its surroundings; an area that stretches from Spanish Town and Portmore to Port Morant. I had the chance to accompany him on many of his trips. We walked a lot. We would hop on a bus or a fixed-route taxi only when we were traveling long distances, from Downtown to Papine or from Slipe Pen Road to Half Way Tree. All around Jamaica, most of the population relies on fixed-route taxis for commuting. The fare for shorter journeys was JM$100 when I was conducting fieldwork between 2015 and 2016. These vehicles are easily identifiable. If they are on the move, one only has to pay attention to the driver—usually "a man with dollar bills between his fingers shouting", as Marlon James (2014, 115) describes. The shouting calls inform the taxi route. If they are parked waiting for customers, drivers usually rely on a helper who also calls costumers by shouting the routes. When the car is full, with about five passengers in the rear seat, one in the front seat and still another one in the trunk, the helper closes the doors and the taxi departs. He then moves on to help other drivers.

FIGURE 2
Another wall in Half Way Tree.

During our wanderings, Ras Cover introduced me to many other Rastas of all ages. I asked older ones about important places in the history of the Rastafari Movement in and around Kingston. Many iconic places for the Movement are buried under layers of time, cement and state interventions. Colin Clarke (2006, 33) observes that in the early 1960s the Rastafari Movement was circumscribed to two areas of Kingston: "the fringe of the tenements and the periphery of the city, and the heaviest concentrations were found on the foreshore [Road] in West Kingston, at Back o' Wall and in Trench Town". These areas, which have historically concentrated large numbers of Rastas in West Kingston, were completely destroyed and remodeled by the state[12].

As noted above, it was in this area of the Jamaican capital that American sociologist George Eaton Simpson conducted his pioneering fieldwork. His research gave rise to the first academic papers on the Rastafari Movement, both published in 1955 (Simpson 1955a and 1955b). In 1960, Roy Augier, Marcus Garfield Smith and Rex Nettleford—a historian, an anthropologist and a sociologist, dancer and choreographer, all of whom were from Jamaica and linked to the University of The West Indies (UWI)—conducted research on the Rastafari Movement (Smith, Augier and Nettleford 1967a [1960] and 1967b [1960]).[13] The report resulting from this project should have informed public policies of the expectations and desires of the Rastas who lived in Kingston. To the contrary, three years after the publication, the Jamaican government demolished the most densely populated areas by Rastas[14].

In 1963, Public Works Department bulldozers and employees, following orders from Edward Seaga, a Member of Parliament for West Kingston, tore Back o' Wall down. After dismantling the community, apartment buildings and low-cost houses were erected and distributed to supporters of the Jamaican Labor Party. The area was then renamed Tivoli Gardens. An important voice from the Rastafarian Movement, Ras I-rice I-ons, told Homiak (1995, 170) that "'Egypt' [Back o' Wall] was a serious

12. For a history of the political and geographic transformations of Kingston see, Robotham 2003, Clarke 2006 and Carnegie 2017.
13. I must note, however, that Smith undertook fieldwork in Wareika Hills, also in Kingston, but not in the western part of the city.
14. Jan van Dijk (1995) points out that in the years leading up to Jamaican Independence from the United Kingdom there has been an escalation of state violence against Rastas. One of the reasons for the burgeoning repression, according to Thomas (2011), was the strong criticism by Rastafarians against the nationalist project of the brown elite. I must add, however, that physical and symbolic violence directed at various Rastafarian individuals and collectives have continued after independence.

gaddering dem time. Yuh see, Egypt was like a court where reasoning[15] and chanting is 'round the clock". Note the name by which the Rasta refers to Back o' Wall: Egypt, the place where Jehovah's chosen people lived in misery during their first captivity described in Hebrew mythology.

Ras Cover introduced me to some elders who lived in Back o' Wall until the early 1960s. One of them has become a close friend and an important interlocutor in the research that resulted in this essay. Bongo Trevor, or Ras Gabre Selassie— as he prefers to be called[16]—was a victim of state-sponsored violence; he was one of the many people who, along with their families, were expelled from the area where Back o' Wall existed. He told me the story more than once. Today he no longer lives in West Kingston, but in another part of Downtown Kingston where political ghettos thrive[17]. His stories and memories about the destruction of Back o' Wall are interwoven with his life trajectory:

15. Rastafarians have a praxis known as *reasoning*. In the literature of Rastafari, reasoning if often described as a ritual practice. This is because reasoning is a fundamental part of Rastafarian liturgy and the speech behavior of the participants in the liturgical occasions is notoriously marked. They evoke Bible verses and images; use the Shakespearean language present in the King James Version of the scriptures; and cite key quotes uttered by Selassie I and Garvey. Chevannes (1994) defined reasonings precisely as rituals where the emphasis is on oral performance; a performance that enhances the social dramas experienced. John Homiak (1995) defines reasoning as a speech event where Rastafarian culture and history emerge. These are moments in which a style of symbolic language is mobilized in order to create meanings; where the present is poetically and politically connected to the past and to the future. Through reasonings, everyday events are linked to biblical events. During reasonings, the words of Selassie I, translated as prophecies, are put in dialogue with experienced situations. The word *reasoning*, as it is used in Western literature, usually refers to cognitive processes. As a native Rastafari concept, however, "a reasoning is not only a thought process, it is also the materialization of this process in a conversation or a debate. A reasoning is indeed the name given to a conversation through which a Rastafarian makes a point" (Montlouis, 2013: 10). Homiak (1999:96) argues that "[i]t would be misleading to present reasoning as a disembodied intellectual and 'bloodless' activity"; that it is a practice in which "words and thoughts are impassioned."

16. An essay that deals with toponymy and history should not ignore a personal name preference; especially when this personal name refers to physical and symbolic places. Ras Gabre Selassie was baptized as Trevor Campbell in his early days. This name, however, was given to him by a Catholic priest before the Jamaican society. When the Ethiopia Orthodox Church was established in Kingston, though, Bongo Trevor and many other Rastas decided to approach the Abuna (the highest authority in that institution's hierarchy) and request to be baptized in that church - the church to which Selassie I belonged. This time Trevor was baptized with an Ethiopian name. The process of adopting this new name was part of what Bongo understands as a set of acts that favor an Ethiopian patriotism. "Suh Trevor Campbell a mi Babylon name, yuh understand? Hmm. Mi Ethiopian name a Gabre Selassie."

17. The political ghettos I am referring to are known in Jamaica as garrison communities. The name refers to the paramilitary presence in these communities. These neighborhoods are controlled by one of the two ruling political parties, the People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP). In these communities, the overwhelming majority of residents vote for the party that financed the housing scheme— either because of political sympathy or the imposition of community leaders linked to the parties. Weapons, financial and material resources are redistributed to the community through such leaders. For more on the garrison communities see, among others, Sives, 2002; Bogues, 2006; and Jaffe, 2001, 2012a and 2012b.

> "Dem a burn people dem tatu and dem a bulldoze di place. Dem a set mi tatu a fyah too. Mi babymother was pregnant of Walatta. Yuh memba Walatta?"[18]
> "Yes, I do remember her. She's your eldest daughter."
> "Yes, man. She a fi mi eldest dawta. Mi babymother was pregnant of Wallata when dem a set wi tatu a fyah. Wi 'ave lost everyting. And wi had fi move inna room down deh so [pointing to the road] inna ms. Chin board'ouse cah wi cyaan aford fi rent a yard, yuh understand?"
> "Tough times."
> "Yes, man! A tuff-tuff time!"
> "So where have the Rastas who used to live in Back o' Wall moved to?"
> "Many a dem a move inna di countryside, some bredren a move fi other parts of town. Some a dem a brutalized and dead."

Meandering through the streets, corners, alleys and buildings of Tivoli Gardens with Ras Cover and listening to his and other elders' narratives about past events and processes, I experienced another time and place. The place that now houses the political garrison once housed a Rastafarian enclave. This other Place, Back o' Wall, haunts Tivoli Gardens with its memorialized presence. Its afterlife stretches forth, for instance, in Ras Cover's gesture of pointing a finger to a place and describing the past. The pointing finger was accompanied first by silence and the elder's fixed stare. Then the Rastaman's words revived Back o' Wall:

> "Coo deh. Ras Trent did live wid him queen and him pickney dem ova deh. Him madda did live next door."
> "Was she a Rasta too?"
> "Yeah, man."

In 1966, after a month of intense conflict between the citizens of West Kingston, the Constabulary and the National Forces, the low-cost houses on Foreshore Road and adjacent areas, which were other Rastafarian enclaves, were also destroyed. About 800 shacks were destroyed and the squatters were expelled (Lacey 1977, 90). Two years earlier, in 1964, the US oil company Exxon had bought a large plot of land in the region and built a refinery on the site. The refinery operated under Exxon until 1982, when it was sold to the Jamaican government and converted into a public company under the name Petrojam. The refinery is still operational.

Ras Sam Brown, one of the main characters in the history of the Rastafarian Movement in Kingston, lived on Foreshore Road when the houses were destroyed. Brown— who unsuccessfully ran for parliament in 1961—was a source of fascination for academics in the 1960s and 1970s, especially Leonard Barrett, Colin Clarke and Rex Nettleford.

18. Once again, the chosen name is Ethiopian: the word walatta means "daughter" in Amharic, and is used as a compound name to indicate filiation. Walatta Petros, for example, a saint of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, had this name because she was the "Daughter of Peter". But the choice of the name Walatta by Bongo evokes the history of the Ethiopian throne as well: the baptismal name of Empress Menen Asfaw, Selassie I's wife, was Walatta Giyorgis.

Leonard Barrett's classic book, *The Rastafarians* (1997 [1977]), is based largely on the sociologist's 1968 interviews with Brown. In a review of the revised edition of *The Rastafarians*, published in 1988, Chevannes (1992) underscores the central role of Brown in Barrett's argument. For him, because the revised edition was based on fieldwork undertaken over twenty years earlier—the original book is the product of Barrett's doctoral dissertation, defended in 1968—the book "suffers from a kind of time warp: an excessive reliance on the author's earlier source, namely Sam Brown" (Chevannes 1992, 243).

Brown is one of the main characters in two field journals of British geographer Colin Clarke (2016) as well. These journals resulted from two periods of fieldwork in Kingston; undertaken in 1961 and 1968. For Clarke, the Rasta was a Marxist "in his political-theological crusade against Babylon" (ibid ., 18). His experience with Brown and other actors of radical Black politics in Kingston led him to contact the British Colonial Office in order to report what he had heard and witnessed amidst them (ibid ., 13-15)[19].

Let us return, however, to the physical transformations in West Kingston. Foreshore Road, an important artery that connects Downtown and West Kingston to the nearby town of Portmore, was renamed Marcus Garvey Drive. After the destruction and evictions of Back o' Wall and Foreshore Road, some of the Rastas who remained in the capital moved into areas that surround Downtown. The Rastafarian occupation of Downtown is more recent and followed the process of abandonment of that region by the city's social and financial elite. It took place during the 1970s, when the elite began to move towards the recently founded area of New Kingston. Colin Clarke points out that New Kingston

> gradually acquired a variety of government and private offices, banks, travel agents, hotels, and a few high-quality shops and restaurants. New Kingston, with its car-parking facilities, was soon regarded as a secure place by the middle class, and rapidly acquired many of the high-rise characteristics of the central business district (Clarke 2006, 57).[20]

Downtown Kingston—now a stronghold of political, economic and racial ghettos—was designed as a center for commercial activity, public and private services and distinction long before New Kingston gained form and fame. I mention *distinction* because of the institutions located in that area: the Urban Development Corporation, established in 1968;

19. For a critique of Clarke's political stance and his occasional exaggerated or questionable interpretations, see Gray 2017. Rex Nettleford also interviewed Sam Brown in the early 1960s; he shared his impressions in an interview he gave to David Scott (2006).
20. For more reflections on the founding process of New Kingston, see the texts by Jamaican anthropologists Don Robotham 2003 and Charles Carnegie 2017.

the Jamaica Stock Exchange, founded in 1969; and the National Gallery of Jamaica, inaugurated in 1974. The Institute of Jamaica, founded in 1879 by Sir Anthony Musgrave, then Governor of Jamaica, is also in Downtown Kingston and promotes the arts, sciences and literature. Ward Theatre, since its foundation in 1912, is the main stage for performing arts in the capital. It was at this establishment that Alexander Bustamante introduced the Jamaican Labor Party to the public in 1943, after founding the political party that same year.

In a passage from *A brief History of Seven Killings*, Marlon James (2014) depicts the experience of a poor Black young man as he walks through the streets of Downtown Kingston in the second half of the 1970s. The scene occurs in 1976 and Bam-Bam, a fifteen-year-old boy, reflects on the opulence of one of Downtown Kingston's busiest streets, King Street:

> you follow a man in a suit down King Street, where poor people never go and watch him throw away a sandwich, chicken, you smell it and wonder how people can be so rich that they use chicken for just to put between so-so bread, and you pass the garbage and see it, still in the foil, and still fresh, not brown with the other garbage and no fly on it yet and you think maybe, and you think yes and you think you have to, just to see what chicken taste [sic] like with no bone. (James 2014, 9-10)

James also reflects on two other important points through this character. The first is the fact that Downtown Kingston was considered "uptown" in the past. The second concerns the occupation of that space, that part of the capital, by certain types of people and bodies. First Bam-Bam says that King Street is a street "where poor people never go" (ibid., 10). He then reflects on police violence directed at the Black and poor bodies who ventured to walk through Downtown streets among the "decent" population:

> boy like me can't walk downtown for long before we get pounce [sic] on by Babylon. Police only have to see that me don't have no shoes before he say what the bloodcloth you nasty naiggers [sic] doing 'round decent people, and give me two choices. Run and he give chase into one of the lanes that cut through the city so that he can shoot me in the private. Plenty shots in the magazine so at least one bullet must hit. Or stand down and get beat up right in front of decent people, him swinging the baton and knocking out my side teeth and cracking my temple so that I can never hear good out of that ear again and saying let that be a lesson to never take you dutty [sic], stinking, ghetto self uptown again (ibid.).

When I questioned my interlocutors about their experiences of wandering and roaming around Kingston and its surroundings, many narratives of abuses by the state and civil society emerged. Violence against Rastafarian individuals and collectives is a recurrent theme in

the literature on the Movement. Roger Mais (2006 [1954]) and Jan Van Dijk (1995), among others,[21] narrate the abuses suffered by Rastas in the first decades of the Movement. Owens (1976) has also denounced the violence suffered by his Rastafarian interlocutors in the 1970s. Recently, however, this picture has changed. One still finds, of course, people who disapprove and reject the Rastafarian *livities* and their philosophies. Nonetheless, a large part of the population recognizes the value of Rastafarian experiences and struggles for building a more just society, a society that respects the rights of individuals and collectives. For many sectors of Jamaican civil society, Rastafarians' historical experiences are regarded as processes of struggle for citizenship and the appreciation of Blackness and Africanity.

Many people greeted Ras Cover during our wanderings through Downtown Kingston. Most of these people did not know him. "Up! Up! Up, Lion!" "Big up yuhself, Rastaman!" "Respect, binghiman!" The elder remained impassive. At times he would not even acknowledge the greetings. At others he would raise his staff and reply with a "Highly I!" or a "Yeah, man. More fyah!" Such scenes, where people of varying ages greet Rastas on the street, are in stark contrast with the episodes of physical and verbal violence described in the literature on the Rastafari Movement. Public displays of respect and appreciation by non-Rastas aimed at Rastas in everyday situations show how Jamaican society's view on Rastas have changed over time. This transformation, of course, became a subject of dialogues with Ras Cover and other interlocutors. Notwithstanding, it does not mean that the violence of the past is completely erased from Rasta lives and memories. Many of my interlocutors have stated, for example, that terms spent in prison for possession or sale of ganja have had a strong impact on their lives. Many of these men were arrested after being denounced by neighbors or people who spotted them dealing with marijuana. In prison, many of them had their dreads and beards cut off, suffered other types of physical and psychological torture and received death threats. Some Rastas told me that the prison officers, knowing that they were following the I-tal diet, only offered them food with meat and salt in it. The officer would often provide pork—which is highly prized in Jamaica, but strongly forbidden in the I-tal diet, inspired by the Book of Leviticus[22].

21. See, e. g., Nettleford 1998 (1970); Chevannes 1994; Homiak 1995; and Thomas 2011.
22. The I-tal diet is an important part of the Rastafarian movement. It consists of a politics of consuming only live food, i. e., food that comes from the earth and is not processed. Preference is given to products planted by the consumer or purchased directly from a farmer. Organic vegetables—grown without the aid of agrochemicals—are the most prized. Consumption of meat is prohibited. On the I-tal diet, see Homiak 1995, Dickerson 2004 and Jaffe 2010.

Ras Natty I, who served two years in prison for ganja possession between 2012 and 2014, has told me that

> Babylon a try fi break yuh physically, morally and spiritually, bredrin. Dem a feed yuh pork when dem know seh yuh a vegetarian. Dem a put yuh in a cell wid fifteen other bredrin suh dat yuh can only stand, cah dem want fi 'ear yuh beg fi lie dung. Suh yuh feet dem a get swollen and hurt, hurt, hurt. Dem a terrorist mi seh!

Many of these men were, at the time of their imprisonment, the sole providers for their families. Their arrests have further compromised the already precarious financial situation of their households. When Bongo Trevor was convicted for ganja possession his children were small. His wife looked after them while he supported the family financially with the income from his carpentry work. With his first arrest, in 1972, the workshop he had set up with much effort a few years after being evicted from Back o' Wall went bankrupt. These are the kind of memories that, when brought to life through narratives, make the smiles disappear from the Rastamen faces. Their foreheads inevitably furrow, their words harden, their gestures become harsh. Pain becomes present and embodied. I must add that while nowadays there is a certain sympathy for Rastas and their Movement, there are also some Christians and Muslims who continue to regard Rastafari as a blasphemy and a cult of fanatics whose theological premises are illogical.

Ras Cover was neither the first nor the only Rasta whom I witnessed being greeted in public by non-Rastas. The first time I witnessed such an act I was walking with Ras Wolie Yesus, an octogenarian with dreadlocks, on Orange Street in Downtown Kingston. We had met earlier at the bus stop across William Grants Park. The Rastaman had arrived from Portmore, where he went to visit one of his sons, on a JUTC bus. We had talked about visiting Bongo Trevor in a previous phone call. Our intention was to reason, drink some rum, roast some breadfruit and cook ackee with tofu in the elder's yard.

Ras Wolie had agreed to show me some of Downtown's important places for him before heading to Bongo's yard. From the bus stop we headed to King Street and took a side street. He had worked in a joinery shop on that street in the 1960s before becoming a freelance joiner. Despite the fact that he already sported dreadlocks and a long beard at that time, he claimed to move through that part of the city without any fear.

FIGURE 3
Outside a Rastaman's yard in Allman Town.

We stopped opposite his old working address, leaning against the wall of a store. The building's marquee protected us from the sun. While Ras Wolie made a spliff for himself, I went into the shop to buy us some cold drinks. I returned with two soda bottles and handed one to Ras Wolie as we resumed our conversation. I asked him if in the past he had felt unsafe as he moved through those streets. The Rasta frowned and gently shook his head in denial as he took a sip of his grapefruit-flavored Schweppes. "No, man," he replied. He stared at me for a few seconds, took a draw from his spliff and then continued:

> Mi neva 'fraid fi trod pon dese streets. Cah His Imperial Majesty a walk wid I, yuh 'ear? Mi know seh dem a brutalize Rastaman dem all around town and Downtown a nuh different. Suh when walk mi a walk pon dis yah part a town mi a keep Selassie I pon mi mind and 'eart and Babylon dem cyaan touch mi, yuh undastand? Cah mi walk wid His Majesty. Yeah, man! A nuh bloodclaat Babylon cyaan touch mi!

When Ras Wolie finished smoking, we proceeded with the walk. He kept pointing to several places, recalling stories and people. When we went down Orange Street, he showed me the former locations of Augustus Pablo's old studio and other places that exist today only in memory. He pointed to alleys, streets, corners, sidewalks and buildings where Rastas used to meet for reasoning and smoking ganja—despite police repression and civil society's surveillance. Still on Orange Street, we

stopped in front of another retail shop owned by a Burmese couple.[23] Ras Wolie began to tell the story of a police raid on Rastas who were gathered at that very place many decades ago. He was holding a little bit of ganja in one hand. With his other one he alternated between crushing the weed and pointing to the places where the Rastas stood and the direction from where the police vehicle came forty years before that sunny afternoon. While he was describing the scene, somebody called him: "Yo, Lion! Big up yuhself, seen? Keep dat fyah burning, man! Up! Up everytime, king!" The greeting came from a very young man who, accompanied by others, was drinking white rum mixed with energy drink and smoking ganja in front of another wholesale across the street. Ras Wolie had one of his arms outstretched and his index finger pointed to the South and to past events. Hearing the greeting, without retracting his arm or changing his position, the elder turned his head in the youth's direction and replied "Love! Love! Love, mi yute!" and then went on with his narrative.

III. CONCLUSION: "JAH JAH CITY, JAH JAH TOWN!"

By moving through, settling in and reflecting on the city of Kingston, several Rastafarian individuals and collectives have altered more than the geography, demography and sociology of the Jamaican capital. Rastas have altered the historical, poetic, and political perceptions of the city as well. The politics and poetics of naming places is one of the ways through which Rastas alter and frame the Kingstonian experience. Rastafarian toponymy, with its evocations of biblical names, narratives, and places, interweaves memories, poetics and politics of the black experience in Kingston. As Keith Basso (1988, 101) points out, when people talk about a landscape or place, "whenever they name it, or classify it, or evaluate it, or move to tell stories about it—they unthinkingly represent it in ways that are compatible with shared understandings of how, in the fullest sense, they know themselves to occupy it." The processes of place naming and the stories linked to these names have an illocutionary force. Here I return to the notion of Austin (1962): words that articulate toponymies not only describe places, they also create them in parallel to the description. Ways of naming countries, cities and places in general, as well as their assigned names, also tell stories. Names and naming are ways to create relationships and to reflect on and with them. According to Keith Basso,

23. Many of the small retail shops in Kingston, called wholesale, are owned by Chinese and Burmese families. In Jamaica, Asians and their descendants are generally referred to as Ms. and Mr. Chin, regardless of their nationality. Many of them, especially the Chinese, arrived in Jamaica as indentured servants shortly after the legal abolition of slavery in 1838. On this chapter of Jamaican history, see Schuler 1980.

> Landscapes are available in symbolic terms as well, and so, chiefly through the manifold agencies of speech, they can be "detached" from their fixed spatial moorings and transformed into instruments of thought and vehicles of purposive behavior. Thus transformed, landscapes and places that fill them become tools for the imagination. (Basso 1988, 102)

By wandering through cityscapes, one learns to "think and act 'with' them as well as about and upon them, and to weave them with spoken words into the very foundations of social life" (ibid.). In the case of the Rastafarian Movement, the mobilization of biblical names for labeling places in Jamaica connects the Rastafarian experiences to the narratives of the holy book. They frame the Rastafarian experiences with the themes of captivity in a foreign land, the struggle of the chosen people to return to their Promised Land, the belonging to Africa. These themes, in turn, are mobilized in order to refashion the past, the present and the future; they articulate memories, expectations, demands and needs.

But there is also dissent on toponymy within the Rastafarian Movement, and to illustrate that I would like to compare two very distinct stances towards place-naming and its political implications. The first position is based on the notion that Jamaica is not an inherently bad place and argues that the association of Jamaica with Babylon, land of captivity, does not have a physical relationship. The relationship lies in the political, social and economic structures—slavery, racism, and their aftermath—to which black people were subjected in that place. This idea has been crafted through decades of reasoning and indicates that the name *Jamaica* is phonetically and prophetically connected to the Creator's name, will, and eternal power: *Jah-mek-yah*. In this perspective, *Jah Make Here*, the experience of black people in Jamaica is connected to the Creator's higher purposes. During my fieldwork I heard from several interlocutors that it is possible to live in Jamaica *in an African way*; that it is possible to be an Ethiopian-Jamaican; that the Rastafarian Movement gained strength and body on the Caribbean island because Jah wanted the revolution of his chosen people to begin there.

The second position is a criticism of the first one. I once raised the subject of Jamaica as *Jah-mek-yah* among Bobo Shantis in Bull Bay. We were in a High Priest's quarters, where three young Priests were preparing an evening meal while two elderly High Priests were separating and cataloging medicinal leaves and roots. A young Priest began his objection:

FIGURE 4
Young Rastaman selling his arts and crafts beside an I-tal *Rastaurant* (Photo by Akemi "Sue" Suzuki. R. I. P.)

> My Lord! It is most naturally dat Jah created everyting, including dis yah likkle island dem a call Jamaica. Dis island, however, is not di place weh wi belong. Wi belong in Ethiopia, Africa, and dat is why I n I a deal strictly wid Repatriation, yuh 'ear?

"My Lord!" I said, "I understand that. And at the same time, I hear from seriously zealous Rasta brethren that you can live as an African in Jamaica and Repatriate yourself spiritually." One of the High Priests, a very old man, cracked a smile and closed his notebook. A black turban covered his very long dreadlocks, a sign of his long walk in the Rastafarian Movement.

> My Lord, mek mi tell yuh a story. When di people from Israel was brought to Egypt, some a dem a start imitate di Egyptian dem in their habits. Dem a drink like di Egyptian dem. Dem a eat like di Egyptian dem. Dem a get used to life in Egypt and dem a start fi like dem wicked ways. So dem a become like di Egyptian dem. And dat is why wi nuh mix wid dem, yuh understand?"
> "My Lord!", I said, "I had not thought from that angle."
> "My Lord! If dem really wanted Repatriation dem would a come and separate from Egypt and live deh yah pon Jerusalem until di time of Repatriation come", said the High Priest.

With this reflection on a dissent that articulates toponymy and the Return to Africa, I close this essay. One of my objectives was to show how the toponymy, the occupation of spaces and the narratives associated with them are fundamental parts of the poetics and politics of making sense. The Rastas who inhabited Kingston and other parts of Jamaica have connected biblical nomenclatures and stories to the landscape, intertwining the events and promises of the holy book with the places

they inhabit, their experiences, desires and expectations. These expectations, desires, and experiences are also targets of dissent and indications of differentiation among Rastas, and inspire different stances and practices towards places, their names and the narratives associated with their meanings.

Kingston is a town where the displacement of a large number of people due to state violence is closely linked to the history of the two main national political parties, the PNP and the JLP. The favoritism practiced during the distribution of houses, food, sanitary products and leisure items so prevalent in Jamaican history affects the lives of real people like Bongo. His shack was burned down with his scarce belongings inside when Back o' Wall was demolished to make way for Tivoli Gardens, a housing project funded by the JLP to benefit its constituents only. Events like this give rise to the connection of biblical narratives with the experience lived in Jamaica, as when the experience of a Rastaman living in the ghetto under the yoke of a violent government is compared to the experience of an Israelite living in Egypt under the rule of the Pharaoh or in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. The themes in these stories, however, are not confined to captivity: they also promise and actualize redemption. When the Rastas link these biblical narratives to their experiences, they are not just representing reality in a poetic way. They are mobilizing a poetic style of reflecting on violence, oppression and life conditions, and also on aspirations, desires and possibilities of emancipation.

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