



Facultade de Filoloxía  
Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

**Aspects of Jamaican patois through the lyrics  
of dancehall music**

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SOLICITO a aprobación do seguinte título e resumo:

**Título:** ASPECTS OF JAMAICAN PATOIS THROUGH THE LYRICS OF DANCEHALL MUSIC.

**Resumo** [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

The aim of my study is to provide an introductory approach to Jamaican patois and its main characteristics. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, 'patois' refers to "the form of a language spoken by people in a particular area that is different from the standard language of the country". While Jamaican patois is spoken by the majority of the population in Jamaica, Jamaican English (JamE) is mostly used by institutions (cf. Michaelis, Maurer, Haspelmath & Huber 2013). As a point of departure, my project will consist of a theoretical part in which I will offer general information about the social and historical features that characterise Jamaican patois as well as Jamaican English. To this end, I will use a number of bibliographical references (cf. Bartens 2003; Deuber 2014, among others). The second part of the study will be of a more practical nature, and will pay special attention to the analysis of different songs from what is known as 'Dancehall music'. This particular music genre includes in its lyrics many different examples of Jamaican patois, which can be very helpful if one wants to really understand certain aspects of the culture and the society of Jamaica. Moreover, the lyrics of the songs selected for the analysis will be compared and contrasted with their standard (British or American) versions.

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## **1. Introduction**

Language can be considered one of the most powerful tools that human beings have. It is understood as one of our main characteristics and a factor that can mark the difference with other species. However, languages can be taken as heterogeneous, they can change and vary depending on many factors: in terms of sound (phonetics), in terms of structure (grammar), social classes, sexes and even age groups. This may be one of the reasons why there are many varieties of a same language all over the world, with several variations within them. In this essay, we are going to focus on English as a personal election, since not only is it the object of study of my degree, but it has also been a passion of mine since I was a child. More specifically, I personally chose to focus on a variety of English spoken mostly in the Caribbean, Jamaica in particular, which is known as Jamaican English (or JamE). One may ask why I chose to study and analyse precisely this variation, and the reason is quite simple: curiosity. I have been a dancer of dancehall for almost six years, and from the very first moment that I listened to a song from this music genre (which is also, in fact, a culture) I was fascinated by the language they were speaking, without even knowing that it was, as a matter of fact, a variety of English. Taken into account my passion for English, and all the knowledge acquired throughout the four years of my degree, I decided to delve into the notion of language variation, and focus my analysis on an aspect of society that has been developing in the last decades: music.

## 2. An approach to Jamaica and patois

The first part of the essay is of a more theoretical nature, given that it focuses on the history of Jamaica as well as its linguistic and sociolinguistic situation over time, which will provide us with an understanding of the culture of the country and its effect on the language.

### 2.1. Historical overview of Jamaica

Jamaican (often referred to as Jamaican creole or Jamaican patois according to the *Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language*)<sup>1</sup> is mostly spoken in Jamaica, an island part of the Greater Antilles, as well as in diaspora communities such as Canada, the United States of America and even the United Kingdom, where a new variety of Jamaican has appeared under the name of London Jamaican (Sebba, 1993). It is the native tongue of most of the population of the island (almost three million inhabitants)<sup>2</sup> although less than the fifty per cent are monolingual. Jamaicans consider themselves to be bilingual in both Jamaican patois and (Jamaican) English (Farquharson in Michaelis et al. 2013, 81).

To reach a better understanding of Jamaican creole, we will firstly focus on its history and the impact this has had on its language and society. According to the *Jamaican Information Service*,<sup>3</sup> the history of the country is believed to have started 2,500 years ago with the Arawaks (also called Tainos), the original inhabitants coming from South America, who named the land 'Xaymaca', land of wood and water. The Arawaks were

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<sup>1</sup> *Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language* <<https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/jamaican-creole>> [accessed 21/01/2019]

<sup>2</sup> *Worldometers* <<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/jamaica-population/>> [accessed 21/01/2019]

<sup>3</sup> *Jamaica Information Service* <<https://jis.gov.jm/information/jamaican-history/>> [accessed 21/01/2019]

“a mild and simple people by nature” who were said to “led quiet and peaceful lives” until the conquest of the Spaniards led by Christopher Columbus, who discovered the island in 1494. At the time, said territory was known as the West Indies. For linguistic purposes, we will pay special attention to the period ranging from the seventeenth century onwards, when most of the linguistic changes took place.

It is commonly known that the population living in the British Isles used to settle down in other parts of the world, imposing their culture and language to new territories and, therefore, creating new English-speaking communities. This is precisely the case of Jamaica, a country that until the year 1655 was under Spanish control and was later taken by the British army situated in the Caribbean. During the colonial history of Jamaica, the “white population which settled in the island subsequent to the British conquest was drawn principally from Barbados as well as the Leeward Islands, England and Suriname” (Deuber 2014, 28). Sugar plantations were highly important at the time, and due to the amount of labour, the country was in need of slaves, thus marking a drastic growth in the enslaved population. The slaves imported were originally from Africa and, according to Farquharson (in Michaelis et al. 2013, 81) “The earliest Africans imported to Jamaica during the British occupation came via their colonies in the eastern Caribbean (St. Kitts and Nevis, Barbados) and South America (Suriname), and it is likely that these Africans were already in contact with some sort of English-based interlanguage”, a fact that serves as a basis for the linguistic situation of the country.

In the eighteenth century, what was known as the Gold Coast (nowadays Ghana), became one of the main suppliers of African slaves to Jamaica. The language spoken in the Gold Coast at the time was ‘Akan’, from which Jamaican took part of its lexicon. As Farquharson (in Michaelis et al. 2013, 82) explains, “On the side of the lexifier, it appears that Jamaican owns much of its vocabulary to Southwestern dialects of English and

Scottish English”, languages that were established in the territory during the colonisation period. Taking this into account, as Deuber (2014, 25) mentions, “The linguistic history of the Anglophone Caribbean is a history of different constellations of language contact” as a result of slavery and the presence of plantations.

Moreover, even though the seventeenth century was crucial for the appearance of a new language in Jamaica (based on language contact), it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that the language was formally established, “based on reports by Europeans about the language used by (white and black) creoles and enslaved Africans” (Farquharson in Michaelis et al. 2013, 82). Furthermore, centuries later we find a high percentage of migration from the West Indies to the British Isles, which led to the creation of ‘London Jamaican’. As Sebba states in his book (1993, 1):

The Caribbean community in Britain is not a new arrival (...). Caribbeans who have come to Britain from abroad have probably always brought with them their own distinctively Caribbean varieties of language; yet it is only in the last two or three decades that educators and policy makers – and to some extent, the general public – have taken an interest in ‘Black English’ (also called Creole or Patois) in Britain.

The linguistic situation in Britain nowadays would be that of a “well-established Caribbean communities in a dozen or so English cities”, the largest one situated in London, as Sebba (1993, 1) explains.

## **2.2. The linguistic situation in Jamaica**

‘Anglophone Caribbean’ (Deuber 2014, 30) is the term used to describe those Caribbean territories in which English is the first language (Jamaica being the most important one). The linguistic situation in the Caribbean “is not linguistically homogeneous” (Sebba 1993, 2). Due to its previous historical or colonial background, we find the coexistence of two languages in the same geographical territory. On the one hand, in Jamaica we find standard English, which is recognised as an official language, used

mainly for educational purposes and present in the country long enough as to influence the language practices of the community. On the other hand, there is also Jamaican creole or patois, the local language of the community, used in everyday social interaction by most of the population in the country. As Sebba (1993, 2) states, the term ‘creole’ refers to “a class of languages which originate through contact between two or more already existing languages”. The origins of creole languages take place in a prior stage called ‘pidgin’, which according to Sebba (1993, 2):

Regular or prolonged contact between two groups who speak mutually unintelligible languages may result in the formation of a pidgin – a language which is nobody’s native language but serves as a means of communication for a limited range of purposes related to the contact situation.

Pidgins are also considered ‘artificial’ in the sense that they “remain simpler than natural languages” and have “less vocabulary, less morphology and fewer syntactic options” (Durrleman-Tame 2008, 11). As time passes, this pidgin develops, its difficulty increases and it becomes more frequent among speakers, therefore becoming the native language and undergoing an evolution towards what we know today as ‘creole’.

As mentioned before, the history of Jamaica has had a great impact on its linguistic situation as well as its social background, and it is clearly shown in the appearance of its own English variety. During the slave trade in the Caribbean, a form of pidgin was used by slaves in Jamaica to communicate among themselves as well as with their captors. This pidgin underwent a process known as ‘creolization’ and transitioned into the first and most basic stages of the creole we are analysing (Sebba 1993, 3).

The term of ‘creole continuum’ or ‘post-creole continuum’ was first introduced in creole studies by DeCamp in 1971 to describe a “situation often arising in creole societies, where a number of ‘lects’ tend to exist” (Durrleman-Tame 2008, 1). As Durrleman-Tame explains, two languages coexisting in the same territory or society oscillate between two extremes: one of the extremes is called the ‘acrolect’, which counts with social prestige

and is often introduced as the ‘local standard’. This acrolect shows ‘superstrate influence’ that makes it a language “spoken by the dominant group at the moment of language contact”. In the case of Jamaica, standard English would be considered the acrolect (the ‘lexifier language’). On the other side of the continuum we have the ‘basilect’, which in opposition to the acrolect, “lacks prestige and manifests most substratum influence. In the case of Jamaican creole, substratum influence refers to influence from West African languages, the native tongues of slaves”. Another way of understanding the term of post-creole continuum (more specifically in Jamaica) would be that of Farquharson (in Michaelis et al. 2013, 82):

The language situation in Jamaica has been described as a Creole continuum (see DeCamp 1971) with a variety of English at one end which is mutually intelligible with metropolitan varieties of English, and at the other end a variety which is historically related to English but differs from it in several marked ways.

In between the two ends of the continuum, emerge varieties that share a combination of some characteristics from both the acrolect and the basilect. These new varieties are known as ‘mesolectal’ and speakers can adjust their speech upwards (towards standard English) or downwards (towards the local creole) in the spectrum of the continuum. The origins of the post-creole continuum go back all the way to the plantation society established in Jamaica in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This society was hierarchical and was known for its structure based on “social status of occupation, privileges” (Sebba 1993, 29) of the individual, as well as “access to the culture of the masters”, thus marking a distinction between classes (a higher class with its own variety, standard English, and a lower class that uses Jamaican patois), in the same way as in society today.

As we have already seen, the situation of English in the Caribbean is highly different from the situation in other English-speaking countries. As Deuber (2014, 2) mentions, “what makes English in the Caribbean even more distinctive is the variation

that arises as a result of the coexistence of Standard English with English-based contact varieties referred to as Creole or, popularly, Patois (Jamaica)". Generally speaking, the majority of the population in Jamaica recognise Jamaican creole as their first language, but that does not stop them from using standard English as well. On the contrary, the minority of the population recognise English as their first language. In other words, as Deuber (2014, 35) explains:

Although in anglophone Caribbean societies like those of Jamaica and Trinidad, the majority of the population speak a form of Creole as their first language, it is important for a study of English in these societies to recognize that there are many people who are equally at ease in English, and a minority for whom English rather than Creole is their first and/or dominant language. This means that while the societies as a whole maintain a certain functional distribution of varieties, there are considerable differences on the individual level in the functional and symbolic values assigned to the language varieties.

It is clear that these varieties are different in many aspects, from phonological to morphological, so it is important to focus our attention on how they are used by the speakers. On the one hand, we find that the local creole is mostly used in private and informal situations as well as everyday interactions, whereas the use of standard English remains in public and formal domains, as well as in work related communication. This distinction regarding the use of the creole is also closely associated with the feeling of 'national identity' of Jamaica, which is clearly shown through the oral tradition of the country, as we will explain later.

In the case of London Jamaican, the term of post-creole continuum serves as an explanation of "the complex linguistic situation in those places where there is a long history of native speakers of British English in contact with speakers of an English-based creole" (Sebba 1993, 28). Sebba (1993, 33) also introduces the term 'code-switching' as a different way to approach the variation that we have been explaining so far:

Code switching is a common type of behaviour among bilinguals in many communities where the use of two or more languages is widespread and stable. It assumes the existence of at least two distinct languages or language varieties. The bilingual individual 'mixes' these languages

or varieties ('codes') by alternating ('switching') between them – sometimes at the boundary between two sentences, but often within a sentence.

### **2.3. The sociolinguistic situation in Jamaica and other diaspora communities**

One of the most important aspects of language has to do with the attitudes that speakers (native and non-native) might show towards them. This has a great impact on society, affecting both the language and the speakers of the community. The two languages coexisting under a diglossic situation in Jamaica (Jamaican English/standard English and Jamaican creole/patois) remain dissimilar, not only linguistically speaking but also socially and attitudinally. As previously explained, there is a division of social classes in Jamaica that correlates with English and patois: the lower status for the latter, the higher for the former. Generally speaking, there is a tendency among speakers to reject the local creole or patois, therefore increasing the negative attitudes towards the language. In some places such as London, it is shown that parents may sometimes have contradictory feelings about their children using the creole, which “may reflect the generally negative view of creole in the West Indies, especially within the education system, coupled with the view that British English is necessary for children to ‘get on’ in Britain in education and in life generally” (Sebba 1993, 78-79). This makes it evident that standard English seems to grant better access to education and to more job offers in the future. Even though some speakers may not find speaking creole problematic (some of them are even proud of it), they do agree that it is more important to use it in public situations such as job interviews, since patois is not well seen in some specific contexts. These attitudes are also perceived in popular culture, e.g. within Rastafarian followers who feel that “they spoke it because they were unable to do ‘better’” (Sebba 1993, 7), but recognising it, at the same time, as a sign of national identity.

Durrleman-Tame (2008, 5) analyses a text taken from the journalist Morris Cargill (2000) in which he describes the vocabulary of creole as ‘primitive jabbering’. He states

that many people define patois as “not a proper language”, which according to him is “nonsense”. However, from Durrleman-Tame’s point of view, what Cargill states is “in fact merely sarcastic, as indeed it only becomes acceptable if the term “language” can be applied to *any* communicative system, “animal” language included”. This way, she suggests that “the closer we get to the deep Creole or “basilect”, i. e., the farther away we get from standard English, the more we slip into what he calls “primitive jabbering””. As we can see, patois can sometimes be described as ‘animal-like’, ‘bad English’ or even ‘broken English’, as both Durrleman-Tame (2008, 5) and Farquharson (2013, 82) state. Deuber (2014, 30) also refers to the sociolinguistic situation in Jamaica (and generally, the Caribbean) as that of “continuity and change” in which there is a “persistence of prejudice against the Creoles, while at the same time positive views on these varieties as unique languages of the societies in question have also been voiced”. As mentioned before, we see the present-day situation in Jamaica regarding linguistic attitudes, as one moving towards the acceptance of the creole or patois while at the same time, trying to avoid terms such as ‘bad’ or ‘broken’ English, which are full of negativism.

On the contrary, focusing on standard English (considered the ‘high class language’ or variety), Farquharson (in Michaelis et al. 2013, 83) states the following:

English is no longer the only language associated with upward social mobility, although the association is still quite strong. However, power and authority continue to be strongly linked to English, chiefly because many of the factors of production are still owned/managed by monolingual English speakers, or English-dominant speakers.

Whereas the use of standard English mainly focused on public domains, education and newspapers, we can gradually see bits of creole in other domains, more specifically oral ones, such as radio and television programmes. This oral tradition is closely linked to the idea of Jamaican creole/patois as a way of spreading and bringing awareness to Jamaican culture, as Deuber (2014, 36) explains:

The problem is partly connected to the fact that there is a continuing tendency in the anglophone Caribbean to fail to acknowledge Standard English as a local variety, as the movement to assert national identity and validate local culture has found its linguistic target in the Creoles.

Language attitudes have also an impact on the education system in Jamaica. The coexistence of two different varieties may result problematic for learners, even though the majority of the population is bilingual in both Jamaican creole and English. Although English is sometimes a prerequisite for future careers, students (the majority creole-dominant speakers) struggle with learning the language due to a lack of practice, and they might even feel under pressure because of the importance that society gives to English. Dagma Deuber (2014, 38) conducted a research in schools of Trinidad and Tobago so as to show the possible problems within the education system, which correlates to that of Jamaica due to its proximity and similar sociolinguistic situations. Taken from her book (quoted from Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education 2003, 2-4), a way of summarising said system and its effects on learners would be the following:

The vast majority of children in our school system speak a dialect that expresses their feelings, thoughts and experiences. The dialect is an organised grammatical system with a vocabulary that is largely drawn from Standard English. The co-existence of two linguistic systems poses problems for learners in our school system.

A similar situation can be found in diaspora communities outside Jamaica (or Trinidad and Tobago), such as England, London in particular. There, as well as in Jamaica, pop culture and the presence of TV, radio chat programmes, music and dance, have helped improve the use of creole in more institutional and public domains. There is a minority of people (teachers and parents among them) who try to promote the use of creole by “discussing its historical background and encouraging the use of Creole in creative writing” (Sebba 1993, 141), or even suggesting the possibility that creole should become a subject taught in schools. Their suggestions provoked confrontations with those who were in favour of not including creole in education.

As a summary, even though there is a prominent percentage of negative attitudes towards Jamaican creole in all domains (both private and public), speakers are still trying to fight for equal conditions between creole and standard English, thus reducing the negativism projected onto the local language and encouraging people to get to know the culture better. However, it seems that a long time is going to take to achieve these attempts.

### **3. An approach to Dancehall culture**

The second part of the essay revolves around the main features of Jamaican patois and how they differ from standard English. Linguistic characteristics will be explained by analysing different dancehall songs so as to fully understand the impact of language on society, and how both music and dance are closely linked to it.

#### **3.1. Overview of music and dance**

Music and dance have been one of the most common and effective ways of showing the national identity of Jamaicans as well as a form of self-defence against the prejudices and misconceptions that surround them. According to the *Jamaica Information Service*,<sup>4</sup> Jamaica is a country rich in different dances with a great variety of music all over the territory. Its heritage in dance and music has its roots in Africa and Europe, a fact that, as explained in the previous part of the essay, is closely linked to the country's history on slavery and colonialism. In the case of dances, they are mostly related to rituals and festivities, ranging from the celebration of Emancipation from slavery (the 'Bruckins'), mourning rituals (the 'Dinki-minki', typical of the parish of St. Mary, in Jamaica) and also performances during Christmas time (the 'Jonkunnu'). Among other

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<sup>4</sup> *Jamaica Information Service* <<https://jis.gov.jm/information/jamaicas-heritage-dance-music/>> [accessed 27/05/2019]

types of dances, we find the 'Burru' (from Clarendon, in Jamaica), 'Ettu' (from Hanover, Jamaica), 'Gerreh', 'Gumbay' (from St. Elizabeth, also in Jamaica), 'Kumina', 'Maypole', 'Myal' (also from St. Elizabeth), 'Quadrille', 'Tambu' and 'Zella'.

Dances were always accompanied by music, therefore, if we focus our attention on Jamaica's heritage in music, we find many different styles that were developed throughout the years. The three most important ones are 'Rastafarian music', 'reggae', and 'dancehall'. The first one has its origins in the Rastafarian movement that took place in Jamaica during the 1930s. The interest of the Rastafarian community in music led to its development over the years, taking inspiration and ideas from less developed types of Jamaican music such as the 'Burru', which as the name indicates, was typical of the Burru dance. The evolution of music also led to the creation of other styles such as reggae, which has bits of Rastafarian music and is known worldwide. This type of music is characterised for expressing a message, either political, religious or even social. Over the years, reggae music has increased both locally and internationally, especially from the 1980s onwards, influenced mainly by Jazz and R&B music.

Focusing now on dancehall, which is my main interest for this essay, it is a culture that emerged in the 1970s and remained through the 1980s and 1990s until now. It is particularly during the decade of the 1990s in which dancehall progressively became the target of stereotypes and prejudices. Furthermore, what we know nowadays as dancehall was, at the beginning, addressed as 'deejay'. Deejays were those in charge of the music and the beats during 'dance sessions' in dance halls, thus marking the origins of dancehall both as a type of music and as a dance.

Moreover, many critics, both natives of Jamaica and foreigners, have expressed their feelings towards the stereotypes and social situation of the country. One of them is Carolyn Cooper, the "chief architect of the Reggae Studies Unit at the University of the

West Indies Mona Campus in Kingston” (Howard, 2017).<sup>5</sup> In her book *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large* (published in 2004) she offers a detailed study of dancehall not only as stereotyped, but as the multifaceted culture that it is as well. Dancehall culture has been labelled as ‘poor’ or ‘ghetto’ music and has been seen as a contributor to Jamaica’s culture of violence. It has also been blamed for using too much ‘slackness’, which has not the same connotations as what appears in the *Cambridge Dictionary*:<sup>6</sup> “the state of being slower or less active than usual”. According to the *Urban Dictionary*,<sup>7</sup> the term refers to “one’s level of sexual looseness or skill”. As a matter of fact, Cooper does not only portray dancehall as a culture of music, but she also focuses on socio-economic and political situations, gender role differences and cultural identification that characterises the wholesome of the culture. As Howard (2017) mentions:

The book ought not to be read solely through the myopic lenses of dancehall culture as a representative only of music, but as a unique cultural blending of complexities rooted to a specific space constructed by the marginalized masses in their own language, dress code, movements, morals and rules seeking no validation from “high” society (as opposed to the so-called “lower” class) since Jamaican culture in a sense has symbolically – if not literally – evolved as a legitimate state within a Nation.

### **3.2. Dancehall songs and lyrics: Homosexuality and ‘slackness’**

Linguistically speaking, it is important to focus our attention on the meaning behind dancehall lyrics, especially taking into account the strong feeling of national identity that defines Jamaicans. As Howard (2017) states:

Cooper views language as “cultural capital”, a means of social mobility. For the DJ in Jamaica, his/her lyrics are typically birthed through hardships, poverty, adversaries and ghetto suffering. Thus, the use of language through lyrics are his/her weapons.

<sup>5</sup> Howard, Dennis. 2017. “Carolyn Cooper, *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large*” in *Volume! The French journal of popular music studies* <<https://journals.openedition.org/volume/5197>> [accessed 27/05/2019]

<sup>6</sup> *Cambridge Dictionary* <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/slackness>> [accessed 27/05/2019]

<sup>7</sup> *Urban Dictionary* <<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=slackness>> [accessed 27/05/2019]

Cooper keeps in mind all the internal problems that the Jamaican society has, and portrays them in a way that most readers can understand. In this part of the essay, we are going to give a brief analysis of different songs that show some common issues of Jamaican society. First of all, we will begin by explaining the controversy surrounding the topic of homosexuality.

Jamaica is a country both politically and religiously conservative, which implies that sexuality is a very “sensitive and contentious issue” (Howard, 2017). Historically speaking, the impact of colonisation has been present throughout the years, affecting current topics such as homosexuality. There is a constant reminder of the idea of ‘the other’, the image of native people seen through the eyes of the colonisers. Locals are told what is right or wrong for them without taking into consideration their social, political or cultural interests. Following this idea, we appreciate a strong homophobic believe in Jamaican society, expressed, for example, in “Chi-Chi Man” by the Jamaican artist T.O.K,<sup>8</sup> which counts with over 12,000 views on YouTube:<sup>9</sup>

<p>Intro: My Crew (My Crew) my dogs (my dogs) Set rules (set rules) set laws (set laws) We represent for <b>di</b> lords of yards <b>A gal</b> alone a feel up my balls</p> <p>Chorus: From <b>dem a par inna chi chi man</b> car Blaze di fire mek we bun dem!</p> <p>Verse 1: If dem bring it to we, full dem up a copper shot Cop a shot rise up <b>every calico</b> go rat tat tat Rat tat tat every chi chi man dem haffi get flat Get flat, me and my niggas ago make a pact Chi chi man fi dead and that’s a fact</p>
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<sup>8</sup>T.O.K. 2001. “Chi Chi Man” from the album *My Crew, My Dawgs*. Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Tok-chi-chi-man-lyrics>> [accessed 28/05/2019]

<sup>9</sup>T.O.K. “Chi Chi Man” on *YouTube* <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v01VZZ\\_7nh4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v01VZZ_7nh4)> [accessed 28/05/2019]

By analysing these lines, we see that Jamaican men refer to themselves as “lords of the yards”, which could be translated or understood as “owners of the homeland”, or more simply, the territory. Here we see men pictured with a misogynistic behaviour, stating that they are the ones that own the land, they are superior and have control over the territory. This idea is emphasized in the following line “A gal alone a feel up my balls”, which states that only females can have sexual intercourse with men, therefore reinforcing the idea of homophobia. Linguistically, in Jamaican patois, as in many other languages, we can distinguish between common and proper nouns (cf. Bartens 2003, 28). In this case, ‘(a) gal’ is a common, countable noun referring to animates, translated into standard English as ‘girl’. Moreover, ‘di’ in “We represent for di lords of yards” is the Islander version of the standard definite article ‘the’.

The following lines belong to part of the chorus and summarize the main idea of the song: “From dem a par inna chi chi man car” pictures two homosexual men in their cars. ‘Dem’ (sometimes ‘dehn’ and ‘dey’) is, according to Bartens (2003, 43), the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, plural and masculine personal pronoun, which coincides in form with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, plural and feminine personal pronoun. ‘A par’, which follows the pronoun, is simply used to emphasize that the two men were, in fact, homosexual (‘chi chi (man)’ is, according to the *Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*,<sup>10</sup> a “derogatory term used to refer to someone who is a homosexual”). On the other hand, ‘inna’ is a contracted form for ‘in the’ that sometimes has the spelling variation of ‘ina’, with only one ‘n’ (*Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*). Furthermore, ‘blaze di fire’ means, in a literal way, ‘ignite the fire’, which in this case is a metaphor for shooting someone. The meaning lying behind these lines is that homosexual men will be shot to death (“mek we bun dem” literally means “we make them burn”) because of their sexuality. The last two

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<sup>10</sup> *Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary* <<http://jamaicanpatwah.com/term/chi-chi/941#.XOwgSIgzblU>> [accessed 28/05/2019]

lines also summarise the purpose of the song by stating that police forces (“Cop”) will, again, shoot (“a shot rise up”) every gay man with their guns (“every calico”, which is a weapon manufacturer of the U.S., according to the webpage *Calico Light Weapon System*)<sup>11</sup>, which reinforces the prejudices of Jamaicans (especially heterosexual men) against gays.

Another derogatory hit that focuses on homosexuality is “Boom Bye Bye”<sup>12</sup> by Buju Banton, which counts with almost 80,000 views on YouTube.<sup>13</sup> At first glance, this song may seem to fit in the genre of reggae rather than dancehall, specially taking into account the song’s year of publication, which is in the early 1990s:

Intro:  
**Batty bwoy** get up and run  
Ah gunshot me head back

Chorus:  
It’s like boom bye bye inna batty bwoy head  
Rude bwoy nah promote no nasty man, **dem haffi** dead  
Boom bye bye inna batty bwoy head  
Rude bwoy **nah promote** no nasty man, dem haffi dead

Verse 1:  
Two man **hitch up on and hug up on and ah lay dung** inna bed  
Hug up one another and ah feel up leg  
Send fi di ‘matic or di uzi instead  
Shoot dem now come mek we shot dem (head/dead)

From the very beginning, we can clearly see how homosexuals are almost constantly being followed by heterosexual men. Taking into account the social

<sup>11</sup> *Calico Light Weapon System* <<https://calicolightweaponsystems.com/>> [accessed 28/05/2019]

<sup>12</sup> Buju Banton. 1993. “Boom Bye Bye” from the album *The Best of the Early Years: 1990-1995*. Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Buju-banton-boom-bye-bye-lyrics>> [accessed 28/05/2019]

<sup>13</sup> Buju Banton. “Boom Bye Bye” on *YouTube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rw8unVdeaMU>> [accessed 28/05/2019]

background and the history of Jamaica, the lives of gay people are almost always in danger due to their sexual orientation. Here ‘batty’ is the slang version of ‘bum’ (*Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*), whereas ‘bwoy’ stands for the English noun ‘boy’. Both terms together make reference to the type of sexual intercourse that takes place among gays. The overall idea of the song is that “batty bwoy(s)” have to “get up and run” (escape) so as to not get shot and murdered (“It’s like boom bye bye inna batty bwoy head”). The term of ‘rude bwoy’ is a “slang term used to greet a cool friend or to describe a tough guy, a rebel or criminal” (*Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*). In this case, the “rude bwoy(s)” do not accept the lifestyle of gay men, considered “nasty” (“nah promote no nasty man”). According to this dictionary, ‘promote’ here would be a synonym for ‘livity’, which is “the way a person or group of people live”, kind of a lifestyle. Following this idea, it could be understood as if killing homosexuals (“dem haffi dead”) would be normal for the “rude bwoys”. Note here the use of the verb ‘have’ in patois (‘haffi’ and sometimes ‘hafy’), which as Angela Bartens (2003, 91) explains, has the meaning of “strong obligation”, so it can be also understood as if it was an obligation for the ‘rude bwoys’ (heterosexual men) to kill the ‘batty bwoys’ (homosexual men). This idea is repeated in the first verse, which shows the typical lifestyle of a homosexual couple (“Two man hitch up on and hug up on and ah lay dung inna bed”). ‘Hitch up’, as shown in two entries in the *Urban Dictionary*, refers to the sexual act, whereas ‘dung’ here means ‘down’ (to lay down in bed), as the *Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary* shows.

Last but not least, the last line serves again as another example of the consequences that gays have had to face in a homophobic society (“Shoot dem now come mek we shot dem (head/dead)”).

Although homosexuality is an important factor in the society of Jamaica, as well as in dancehall culture, it is not the only inspiration for the creation of songs. Furthermore, another relevant aspect of Jamaican society that is represented in dancehall songs is ‘slackness’ which, as explained before, is characterised by an excessive and explicit sexuality in their lyrics. Both female and male DJs tend to express their feelings (most of the times sexual) towards someone they fancy, and this is also pictured in dancehall as a dance (e.g. *Cambridge Dictionary: twerk/twerking* “to do a style of dancing that involves bending low and moving the bottom and hips”). At first sight, the majority of dancehall songs may seem misogynistic and disrespectful towards women, especially those songs thematically sexual. This idea emerges partly due to the fact that most of the DJs are male, and a low percentage of artists are female. However, if we look further into Jamaican society and how it is reflected in music, we may find that this type of lyrics are, in fact, a way of representing the body of Jamaican women, as the female DJ Siobhan Jones (2015) explains:<sup>14</sup>

The dancehall itself can be thought of as a space of liberation for women who, in other areas of society, may not be celebrated as they should because they do not fit into the typical Eurocentric body type.

If we compare dancehall lyrics with those of other genres such as rap music, we may find that they are, in fact, quite dissimilar. As Jones (2015) also states:

Rarely will you find a dancehall track accusing a woman of being a ‘whore’ (and such like) for expressing their sexuality, which is often found in other genres of music. So no, I feel that in most cases, these types of lyrics are not offensive to women.

To exemplify this, we will analyse two songs, more in particular two performed by both a male and a female singer. The first one is entitled “Pull Up to Mi Bumper”<sup>15</sup> by

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<sup>14</sup> Jones, Siobhan. 2015. “Is dancehall music misogynist? A female DJ explores sexism in the carnival sound: In defence of slackness” in *Huck Magazine* <<https://www.huckmag.com/art-and-culture/music-2/defence-of-dancehall/>> [accessed 29/05/2019]

<sup>15</sup> J. Capri & Konshens. 2013. “Pull Up to Mi Bumper” (single). Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Rvssian-pull-up-to-mi-bumper-lyrics>> [accessed 29/05/2019]

Konshens and J. Capri, a very popular song in dancehall that counts with over 6 million views on YouTube:<sup>16</sup>

Chorus (J. Capri):  
Just pull up to mi **bumper**  
Pull up to mi bumper  
Come inna yo long black limousine  
And just bend **mi** over  
Pull up to mi bumper  
Pop out yo key and shub it inn

Verse 1 (Konshens):  
Mek yo rase up shake up, drop off a bed  
Hey gyal **yuh** a tease mi  
But mi like it  
**Mi** no have no self control **mi cyaan** fight it  
So when yo talk it mek sure yo ready fi  
Skin it out  
Dash it out, go paw yo head

As the song clearly shows, the lyrics are quite explicit and include a lot of references to sexual intercourses. The chorus is sung by the female artist J. Capri, who states her desire to get intimate with the male singer. Here we notice distinctive features of Jamaican patois, such as the use of the personal subject pronoun ‘mi’ for the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular (“And just bend mi over” as well as “Mi no have self control mi cyaan fight it” in the first verse). According to Bartens (2003, 43), this type of personal pronoun can also have other variations such as ‘A’ or ‘Ai’, which should be written with capital letters (following the English model) in contrast with the pronoun ‘mi’. Moreover, we can also notice the repetition of this pronoun in the line “Pull up to mi bumper”, which coincides with the title of the song. In this case, the singer is using an object pronoun, which as Bartens (2003, 47) states “in some lects of Islander, the subject and object pronouns are

<sup>16</sup> J. Capri & Konshens. “Pull Up to Mi Bumper” on *YouTube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RFUEiqUhY4>> [29/05/2019]

identical”. In this same line we find the term ‘bumper’, which means “butt, especially of a female”, as shown in the *Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*.

The first verse is sung by the male artist Konshens. In this case, as well as in the chorus, we find the presence of personal subject and object pronouns: ‘yuh’ stands for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular subject pronoun, sometimes written without the final ‘h’ (‘yu’); we have once again the pronoun ‘mi’ functioning both as a subject and as an object (“but mi like it”, “yuh a tease mi” respectively). Furthermore, ‘kyaan’ (sometimes ‘cyan’) is the Jamaican version of the modal auxiliary English verb ‘cannot’.

Moreover, the second song to be analysed is “Wine & Kotch”<sup>17</sup> by Charly Black and, once again, J. Capri. This is, in fact, one of the most influential songs in dancehall, with almost 54 million views on YouTube: <sup>18</sup>

Chorus (J. Capri):  
When **mi** a bend over, **mi** a wine and kotch  
Foot inna the air mi a wine and kotch  
A other gyal **cyaa** test how mi wine and kotch  
Charly mi know yo love it how mi wine and kotch

Verse 1 (Konshens):  
Me really love when yo wine and kotch  
Position like a W wine and kotch  
Wine up **yo** good body gyal **pon** Charly Black  
You got the grip, grip, grip so come wine and kotch  
Hey gyal a **weh** yo come from **wine fi mi**

The first noticeable feature is the very frequent repetition of the terms ‘wine’ and ‘kotch’, which are also part of the title of the song. According to the *Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*, the verb ‘wine’ refers to “a form of dancing normally done

<sup>17</sup> J. Capri & Charly Black, 2012. “Wine & Kotch” (single). Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Charly-black-whine-and-kotch-raw-lyrics>> [accessed 29/05/2019]

<sup>18</sup> J. Capri & Charly Black. “Wine & Kotch” on *YouTube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKJIIHgy1E0>> [accessed 29/05/2019]

by women, which involves gyrating the mid-section of the body, specifically the waist and hips. This is done in a sexual manner, either fast or slow (...)", whereas the noun 'kotch' is a "popular Jamaican dance done by females which involves movements of the hip, waist and leg in a sexual explicit manner". As we can see from these definitions, the two terms are related to both dance and music, and show the explicit sexuality or 'slackness' that characterises these songs, as well as the culture itself. Linguistically speaking, we identify once again the pronoun 'mi' functioning as a subject pronoun ("When mi a bend over mi a wine and kotch") and as an object pronoun used after prepositions (Bartens 2013, 48), where 'mi' is positioned after 'fi', which stands for the English preposition 'for' ("Wine fi mi"). Moreover, in this case, we see the Jamaican version of the modal auxiliary 'can' ('cyaa' in "A other gyal cyaa test how mi wine and kotch", translated as "Another girl can test how I wine and kotch"). Furthermore, Charly Black sings "Wine up yo good body gyal pon Charly Black". Here we can see two relevant linguistic characteristics: the first one, the use of the object pronoun for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular 'yo', which according to Bartens (2013, 47), "is a relatively rare and acrolectal variant of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular pronoun". Secondly, the use of the English preposition 'on' that in Jamaican/Islander is 'pon' (taken from the *Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*). Lastly, in "Hey gyal a weh yo come from wine fi mi" we identify the relative adverb 'weh' (sometimes written 'we' without the final 'h'), which according to Bartens (2003, 70) "If the antecedent expresses place, time or reason, Islander and English relative clauses can be introduced by the relative adverbs *we*, *wen*, *wy* and *where*, *when*, *why* respectively". Therefore, as we can see in this line of the song, the male singer is asking the female singer where ('weh') she comes from.

However, even though sexuality (and its variations, whether it is homosexuality or 'slackness') is one of the main themes in dancehall culture, there are many other songs

that do not allude to this topic, e.g. songs composed with the main purpose of contributing to the conception of dancehall as a dance. Here we find, for example, the songs “Willie Bounce” and “Pon de River, Pon de Bank” by the Jamaican artist Elephant Man:

<p>“Willie Bounce”<sup>19</sup></p> <p>Bridge:          So, <b>wha’</b> dem a say?          Dance will never die          Although Bogle <b>pass and gone</b>          We still make dem know <b>him dancing</b> live on</p> <p>Chorus:          Everybody just!          Do the bounce, Willie Bounce          Everybody fi a do di Willie Bounce          Do the bounce, Willie Bounce</p>	<p>“Pon de River, Pon de Bank”<sup>20</sup></p> <p>Verse 1:          Pon di River, Pon di Bank          Kick out your shoes because your foot          Dem <b>nuh</b> cramp (<b>Wha’</b> you say?)          Inna di River, Pon di Bank</p>
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Delving deeper into the history of dancehall culture, in the first song we see Bogle being mentioned (born Gerald Levy but also known as Bogle Dancer, Mr Bogle, Father Bogle and Mr Wacky),<sup>21</sup> a Jamaican dancehall choreographer and dancer, considered by many to be the ‘father’ of dancehall and one of the pioneers of this type of dance. Linguistically speaking, in the line “Although Bogle pass and gone” we see how the reference to the past is indicated differently. As Bartens (2003, 80) explains:

According to context, bare Islander dynamic verbs have either present or past meaning. In addition to the general tendency for a dynamic verb to have past reference unless the context demonstrates it to have present reference, a dynamic verb does not have to be marked for past tense if there is a temporal adverb in the sentences which clearly situates the verbal action in the past. Once the action has been situated in the past in a narration, past tense does not have to be specifically marked on each verb.

<sup>19</sup> Elephant Man. 2005. “Willie Bounce” in the album *Strictly the Best Vol 33, Various Artists*. Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Elephant-man-willie-bounce-lyrics>> [accessed 30/05/2019]

<sup>20</sup> Elephant Man. 2007. “Pon de River, Pon de Bank” in the album *Good 2 Go*. Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Elephant-man-pon-de-river-pon-de-bank-lyrics>> [accessed 30/05/2019]

<sup>21</sup> “Bogle (dancer)” in *Wikipedia* <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bogle\\_\(dancer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bogle_(dancer))> [accessed 18/06/2019]

As we can see, to refer to the past, the past participle ‘gone’ is used on the one hand, while a present tense (‘pass’) is used on the other, also to refer to the past (Bogle’s death). Moreover, in this line we can also appreciate how Jamaicans, more specifically those involved in the dancehall culture, keep in mind the image of Bogle and have a strong connection with his legacy to dance. The following line is “We still make them know him dancing live on”, which precisely shows the dancer’s legacy as something that will be present in the culture and will serve as example for future generations. In this line, Elephant Man makes reference to Bogle’s dancing as “him dancing” instead of ‘his dancing’, which would be the standard English version. The use of the possessive pronouns in Jamaican or Islander is quite different from that of English. In the case of possessive pronouns used nominally, Bartens (2003, 53) states that “according to dialectal differences, the Islander 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular is *fi ihn* or *fi him*” instead of ‘his’.

Moreover, in the two songs that we are analysing, we notice the use of the interrogative pronoun ‘wha’ (“So, wha’ dem a say?” in the first song and “(Wha’ you say?)” in the second one). In this case, Bartens (2003, 55) explains that

Interrogative pronouns are closely related to relative pronouns in form. They are used to formulate questions (both direct and indirect in all three languages) where they occupy the position of the item being questioned. Whether an interrogative pronoun is used adjectivally or nominally depends on the sentence function of the item being questioned.

More specifically regarding ‘wha’ (which can sometimes appear written as ‘wa(t)’), Bartens (2003, 56) claims that

Apart from certain contexts (before vowels), *wa(t)* seems to belong to a more acrolectal register of Islander. In addition, the distribution of *we* and *wa* in present-day Islander is in part idiomatic. (...) As far as the adjectivally used personal or non-personal interrogatives are concerned, *which* is used when the choice is to be made from a known set while *what* is used to ask when there is no defined set the choice has to be made from.

Furthermore, in “Pon de River, Pon de Bank”, the interrogative pronoun ‘wha’ and the Islander form of negation ‘nuh’ appear in the same line (“Dem nuh cramp (Wha’

you say?)”). The contracted form of the preposition ‘in’ plus the definite article ‘the’ (“Inna de River, pon de Bank”) is also present in this song. Regarding the negative particle, it can sometimes appear written in the form of ‘noh’ or ‘nah’ (Bartens 2003, 100).

As the songs clearly show, they do not include any controversial issues regarding Jamaican society, since their aim is to transmit and spread the knowledge of dancers and singers to other people.

Last but not least, it is particularly interesting to mention the fact that both the terms “Willie Bounce” and “Pon de River, Pon de Bank” are names used to refer to dancehall steps, as it happens with the aforementioned step ‘Kotch’ (from J. Capri and Konshen’s song “Wine & Kotch”), which is also a song title written by a Jamaican duo named RDX.

### **3.3. Influence of dancehall on society and language**

On another note, the steps and songs mentioned above belong to what is known as the ‘Old School’ of dancehall,<sup>22</sup> most of them arising in the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, the impact of dancehall can still be seen today, with the appearance of new artists such as Sean Paul, one of the most popular Jamaican dancehall singers at the moment. The song titled “Temperature” is considered to be one of his greatest hits, composed in the early stages of his career:<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> “Steps and moves: Old School demonstration by famous Outta Collo Squad” in *Wildcat Rudebway Sound* <<http://www.wildcatsound.com/web/index.php/webzine/86-old-school-steps>> [accessed 30/05/2019]

<sup>23</sup> Sean Paul. 2005. “Temperature” in the album *The Trinity*. Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Sean-paul-temperature-lyrics>> [accessed 14/06/2019]

Verse 1:

Mek I see de **gyal dem bruk out 'pon de floor**  
From yuh don't want no worthless performer  
From yuh don't want no man weh can't turn you on

Chorus:

Oh Lord, **gyal**, I got the right tactics to turn you on  
And girl, I wanna be de Papa, you can be de Mom, oh, oh!

Verse 2:

Can't tan **pon** it long, naw eat no yam  
No steam fish, nor no green banana  
**But down in Jamaica**, we give it to **yuh hot like a sauna**

The song portrays the same idea as the previous ones: there is a hint of 'slackness' in "Oh Lord, gyal I got the right tactics to turn you on", although it may not seem as explicit as in other cases. Once again, we have in this line the term 'gyal' referring to 'girl', which appears in the majority of dancehall songs. Moreover, 'gyal' also appears in the first line of the first verse, followed by 'dem'. As Bartens (2003, 30) indicates,

Nominal plurals are formed in different ways in Islander and in English and in Spanish. In Islander, the primary strategy is to postpone the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural pronoun *dehn/dem*. For some speakers, the variant *dehn* expresses the idea of collectivity (...). English and Spanish both use the suffix *-s* (and variants).

Furthermore, we see that the aforementioned expression 'pon de', as in "pon de floor", is equivalent to the preposition 'on' in standard English. In addition, according to the *Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*, the term 'bruk out' refers to a "slang expression used to describe someone who acts unruly or rebellious". Here, it could be understood that the girl is 'misbehaving on the floor', that is, she would actually be dancing while men are paying attention to her. Lastly, if we analyse the last line of the example given, we see how the author mentions his own country, Jamaica ("But down in Jamaica"), while at the same time refers to the sexuality that characterises it ("we give it to yuh hot like a sauna"). Therefore, it could be said that the idea of national identity is crucial for Jamaicans, as it is even mentioned in songs.

Stefflon Don is another artist that has gained popularity in the past three years. As it was mentioned in the first part of this essay, Sebba (1993, 1) explains that, due to the past migrations from the West Indies to the British Isles, London is one of the biggest Jamaican diaspora communities, and Stefflon Don is the perfect example of a female dancehall singer with Jamaican roots but based in London. In February 2019, Sean Paul composed “Shot & Wine”, a song featuring Stefflon Don:<sup>24</sup>

Verse 1:  
Come on back and roll hip **fi mi**  
**Mek mi know, seh** that you into me  
Takin’ it slow and intimate  
(...)  
Can’t forget all you shape and sexy legs  
Baby girl, me a beg, yeah, **yuh nah mek me beg**  
When you do the **ting**, you mash up mi head  
Just imaginin’ you movin’ it in di bed

This song shows many linguistic features of Islander or Jamaican patois that were present in the previous songs, such as the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular subject pronoun ‘yuh’, or the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular object pronoun ‘mi’. The latter is preceded by ‘fi’:

When discussing possessive pronouns, we will see that adjectivally used possessive pronouns are preceded by the preposition *fi* under specific conditions (i.e., after the focusing particle *da*). Nominally used possessive pronouns are always preceded by it. (Bartens 2003, 32)

Moreover, Bartens (2003, 53) also states that “the element *fi* is an obligatory part of the nominally used possessive pronoun in Islander; otherwise, the forms are identical”. Other distinctive features of patois are the verb ‘mek’ and the form of negation ‘nah’. In the case of the former, it is used as a present simple in the line “Baby girl, me a beg, yeah,

<sup>24</sup> Stefflon Don, Sean Paul. 2019. “Shot & Wine” (single). Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Sean-paul-shot-and-wine-lyrics>> [accessed 17/06/2019]

yuh nah mek me beg”, its meaning being ‘make’. Bartens (2003, 75) introduces in her book an explanation of verbs and the verb phrase in Islander as follows:

Islander verbs are usually derived from the infinitive of English verbs, at least as far as dynamic or action verbs are concerned. (...) The main division of Islander verbs is into two groups: dynamic or action verbs vs. stative verbs. Stative verbs include most adjectival predicates (...). A dynamic [is a] verb which can be used transitively as a causative verb (...).

‘Mek’ is taken here as a dynamic verb expressing action. Moreover, it also appears in the line “Mek mi know, seh that you into me” in the present tense followed by the pronoun ‘mi’. ‘Seh’ is another verb belonging to the dynamic group shown in this line. In this case, the verb is translated into English as ‘say’, according to the *Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*.

The second feature that we are going to discuss is the negation particle ‘nah’, which precedes the verb ‘mek’. As mentioned, this negation particle often appears as ‘noh’ or ‘nuh’ and it is “used for emphasis and independent negation” (Bartens 2003, 100).

Once more, the topic of ‘slackness’ is present throughout the song. In the first verse, the singer (Sean Paul) is telling Stefflon Don to roll her hips for him (“roll hip fi mi”) so as to let him know (“mek mi know”) that she is into him (“seh that you into me”). There are obvious and explicit references to sexual intercourse, such as “takin’ it slow and intimate” or “just imaginin’ you movin’ it in di bed”. Furthermore, ‘ting’ in “when you do the ting, you mash up mi head” is a slang term in patois that can be translated into English as ‘thing’, according to the *Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*. Once more, this term is related to sexual intercourse and as a consequence, to the topic of ‘slackness’.

However, not all songs are related to ‘slackness’. “16 shots”,<sup>25</sup> one of Stefflon Don’s biggest hits with over 90 million views on YouTube,<sup>26</sup> is a case in point:

Chorus:  
No bwoy can diss me or my mother  
Round here ain’t safe, everybody need armour  
16 shots, we go **shotta any bluddah**

Verse 1:  
Yuh **coulda** be **badda** than a Kingstonee  
Diss my mother then your skin start bleed  
(...)  
Baby, **tink** yuh bad, say ya **badder** than she

The main idea in this song is the singer trying to protect her mother from being attacked, but hints of the stereotyped culture of violence that characterises Jamaica can also be found. The line “Round here ain’t safe, everybody need armour” portrays an image of Jamaica as a violent country in which no one is safe, and this is the reason why they need ‘armour’. Also, “16 shots, we go shotta any bluddah” is an accurate representation of that violence: the singer states that she could possibly kill (‘shotta’ as in ‘shot’) any ‘bluddah’. According to the *Urban Dictionary*, the term ‘bluddah’ is one of the many variations of ‘bruddah’, which in patois is written as ‘bredda’ and is translated into English as ‘brother’ (*Jamaican Patwah, Patois and Slang Dictionary*). The following line belongs to the first verse and it shows once again this image of Jamaica as a violent country. “Yuh coulda been badda than a Kingstonee” presents a stereotyped idea of the inhabitants of Kingston, the capital of Jamaica.

<sup>25</sup> Stefflon Don. 2017. “16 Shots” (single). Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Stefflon-don-16-shots-lyrics>> [accessed 16/06/2019]

<sup>26</sup> Stefflon Don. “16 Shots” on *YouTube* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5TIDDx57-0>> [accessed 16/06/2019]

Linguistically speaking, the modal auxiliary ‘coulda’ in patois can also be written as ‘kuda’, meaning ‘could (have)’ in English, as Bartens (2003, 91) states. Theoretically, it is the past form of ‘kyan’ (‘can’ in English), and it means “ability, permission, possibility”.

In the case of adverbs, Bartens (2003, 72) explains that

Like adjectives, adverbs have comparative and superlative forms in all three languages [English, Islander, Spanish]. Most of what has been said about their formation under Adjectives also applies to adverbs, with the important exception that the definite article is not used with the superlative.

In Islander or patois, we can distinguish four different types of adverbs (Bartens 2003, 69):

- Manner: ‘guud’, ‘kwalet’, ‘haply’ (good, quiet, happy), among others.
- Time: ‘yeside’, ‘now’, ‘tumara’, ‘aalwiez’, ‘layta’ (yesterday, now, tomorrow, always and later), among others.
- Place: ‘deh’, ‘nia’, ‘we’ (there, near, where), among others.
- Intensification: ‘raley’, ‘bad’, ‘almos’, ‘very’ (really, bad, almost, very), among others.

According to Bartens (2003, 72), there are some adverbs that retain the irregular form taken from English. Such is the case of ‘bad’, with its comparative and superlative forms ‘wo(r)s’, ‘wo(r)s’ respectively. This adverb (‘bad’) belongs to the adverbs of intensification, and has been found under many different spellings, such as ‘badda’ in “You coulda be badda than a Kingstonee” or ‘badder’ in “Baby tink yuh bad, say ya badder than she”. In the case of ‘badder’, the regular form is adopted in order to create the comparative, and it is applied to an adjective with an irregular form both in the comparative and superlative. At this point, it is relevant to point out a singular aspect

about Jamaican patois, which is the creation of many variations for the same word, such as in the example of ‘badder/badda’ or ‘bredda/bruddah/bluddah’.

As a summary, the analysis of these songs by Sean Paul and Stefflon Don shows that, despite belonging to different countries (Sean Paul being born in Jamaica and Stefflon Don in the United Kingdom, although she has roots in Jamaica), they share the same interests in their music careers. This also emphasises the idea that dancehall can be understood as a culture that connects people.

The influence of these artists helps Jamaican culture and Jamaican patois reach new audiences and get to people that had never been in contact with them before. The dancehall community has expanded quite a lot in the last decade, especially due to the fact that new generations are interested in new forms of art, including new dance styles and music genres. As an example, the female singer Rihanna, who has always been strongly linked to the Caribbean culture, since she was born in Barbados, an island close to Jamaica. Throughout her career, Rihanna has come out with singles that show hints of Jamaican patois:

<p>“Pon de Replay”<sup>27</sup></p> <p>Chorus:          Come, Mr. DJ, song <b>pon de</b> replay          Come, Mr. DJ, won’t you turn the music up?          All the <b>gyal</b> pon the dancefloor wantin’          some more what          Come, Mr. DJ, won’t you turn the music up?</p>	<p>“Rude Boy”<sup>28</sup></p> <p>Chorus:          Come here, <b>rude boy</b>, boy, can you get          it up?          Come here rude boy, boy, is you big          enough?          (...)</p>
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<sup>27</sup> Rihanna. 2005. “Pon de Replay” in the album *Music of the Sun*. Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Rihanna-pon-de-replay-lyrics>> [accessed 17/06/2019]

<sup>28</sup> Rihanna. 2009. “Rude Boy” in the album *Rated R*. Lyrics taken from *Genius* <<https://genius.com/Rihanna-rude-boy-lyrics>> [accessed 17/06/2019]

As can be seen, these two songs incorporate terms of patois or slang that are similar to others that Jamaican artists had already used (e.g the expressions ‘pon de’, ‘rude boy’, which can sometimes appear as ‘bwoy’, or ‘gyal’ instead of ‘girl’).

Lastly, music helps us understand the importance of Jamaican patois and the evolution it has been undergoing for decades. As shown in the last chapter of Carolyn Cooper’s book *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large* (2004), Howard (2017) explains how Cooper focuses on the “cultural dissonance of the two Jamaica’s (uptown/downtown)” and also how she portrays language (patois) “as identity and global commodification of dancehall music”. This takes us back to the first part of the essay in which the sociocultural differences between standard English and patois have been explained. In Howard’s words “Creole or patois is the *lingua franca* of dancehall subverting the standard English language that is the hall marker of the educated in Jamaica”. Not only does this take us to the aforementioned idea of patois being used by the lower classes and standard English used mainly by the higher ones, but it can also be linked to the idea of dancehall as a culture of the lower classes, full of stereotypes and prejudices.

#### **4. Conclusion**

From suffering the consequences of colonization in the seventeenth century to the contact of different languages, which ultimately led, a century later, to the creation of the English variety currently spoken in the country, the history of Jamaica has affected both its society and language. As a matter of fact, the two of them are closely related and, in this case, the linguistic situation of Jamaica (with instances of diglossia and bilingualism) has helped increase negative attitudes towards its population.

As a conclusion, music and dance are regarded as two of the most important ways of expressing resistance against said negative attitudes towards patois, both socially and linguistically speaking. It is at this point when, in the last three decades, the culture of dancehall has helped in the fight against stereotypes within the community, which is usually referred to as the culture of violence. More specifically, it is through the lyrics of different songs (such as T.O.K's "Chi-Chi Man" or Konshens and J. Capri's "Pull Up to Mi Bumper", among others) that we can see two main features of Jamaican society, one being the strong rejection towards homosexuality, and the other one the recognition and acceptance of the Caribbean female body type and its sexuality.

Finally, I consider that the ideas presented here should be taken as a point of departure for future studies on linguistic variation, once we have been able to see how the historical background of the country may affect the attitudes of both foreigners and locals towards Jamaica and its population. Each linguistic variety has its own characteristics and is used to reflect the uniqueness of a culture such as dancehall, as stereotyped and as strongly criticised as it may seem.

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