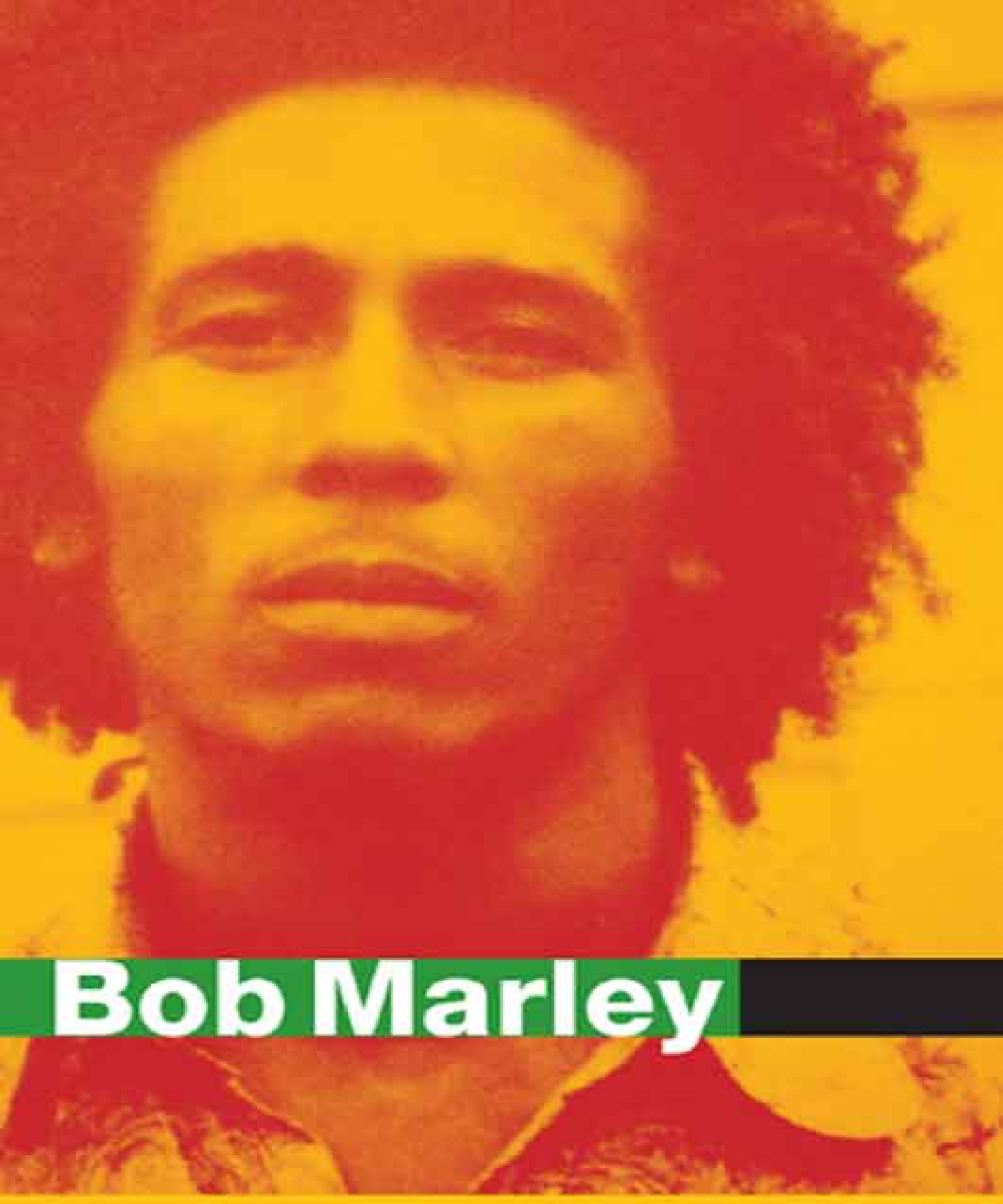

Bob Marley

JASON TOYNBEE

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HERALD OF A POSTCOLONIAL WORLD?

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polity

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INTRODUCTION

Defeated in the 1990 Peruvian presidential election on a neo-liberal ticket, Mario Vargas Llosa banished himself to Europe and resumed his former career as a writer. Among the pieces of journalism which he began to produce for the Spanish newspaper *El País* was an account of a journey to Jamaica in search of the spirit of Bob Marley (Vargas Llosa 2002). Years ago, he admits in this article, Bob and the Rastas were repugnant to him. His son and some friends had taken up the cult, seduced by 'the picturesque theological syncretisms of the Rastas, their marijuana communions, their horrible dietary laws and matted locks'. Now, though, looking at the squalor and destitution of Trench Town he revises his opinion. Bob's music and faith, it seems, encompass a primitive spirituality which is utterly appropriate in this shanty town. As Vargas Llosa concludes: 'One doesn't have to be religious to realize that without religion, life would be infinitely emptier and grimmer for the poor and downtrodden, and that societies have the religions they require' (p. 56).

What's interesting about the article is the way it shows how even a right-winger like Vargas Llosa can fall in love with Bob Marley. Never mind that he advocated revolution, that he urged poor people to stand up for their rights, this staunch conservative wants to claim him as an icon of saintly and eternal poverty. That points towards a key attribute of Bob's celebrity: its extraordinary breadth. For there *is* surely something of the prophet about Bob which sets him apart from other popular music stars, and enables diverse constituencies to grab him. Partly this has to do with

his sense of mission, an intense drive to make music and in doing so tell the truth about the world. Partly, it comes from his poetic vision, derived in equal measure from the King James Bible and patwa, the creole language of Jamaica.[1] There is also the enigma of his life. Born of a black mother and an absent white father in a colonial island in the Caribbean, he nevertheless became a global superstar. More than twenty-five years after his death, he is still the only such star from the third world. All these factors are important no doubt. But what has been most significant in the creation of a Messianic aura is the systematic repackaging of Bob by the culture industry in the period after his death – the careful selection of 'marketable' traits in the form of tropical beatitude, spliffedout sincerity and so on (Stephens 1998).

Over the course of this book it will be argued that to reduce Bob to the status of third world mystic is both to belittle him and to miss his true significance. There are several aspects to this. First, Bob was indeed an extraordinary performer and songwriter, but his musicianship emerged from the creative networks in which he worked, first in Jamaica and then in the international rock industry. We cannot make sense of Bob without locating him in these musical worlds. That will involve considering the nature of celebrity, creativity and performance as well as the relationship between music and industry. But it also means locating these themes, not to mention Bob himself, in the history of Jamaica and the capitalist world system beyond. Quite apart from the fact that this is the system under which we all live, and therefore that any study of a life ought to consider its impact, there is the crucial point that Bob was a strong opponent of it. He called it Babylon, and devoted the major part of his song writing to attacking it on the grounds of its brutal racism and exploitation.

While close attention is paid to social reality, that does not mean the music itself will be ignored. In fact the aim

here is to understand Bob's music making as a part of social reality. This calls for analysis of music as organized sound, as a cultural form with its own historically changing codes and conventions. One way of doing such analysis would be through conventional musicology, which uses methods derived from the Western classical tradition, chiefly to analyse scores. But the author doesn't have the skills to do this, nor does he think it would be much use to try even if he did.[2] The approach taken instead is a hybrid one. A few musicological concepts are brought in, but also terms from semiotics where the emphasis is on music as something which means. Generally, the aim is to analyse Bob's music in a way that is accessible to people who are not music makers themselves by using plenty of adjectives as well as attending to form.

Some readers may have noted the reference to social reality in the last paragraph. In most academic writing about popular culture reality hardly figures at all. This is because the dominant approach, cultural studies, has been centrally concerned with issues of representation. In other words the problem has been to examine how and why things are expressed in culture.[3] However, the question of what in the social world culture might be *about* is often ignored. Indeed in a strong version of cultural studies there is no existence of the world beyond its representation in language, discourse, genre and so on.

Here, conversely, we approach Bob as a real person, and on the basis that the social world that he inhabited, and in which his work still reverberates today, is a real one.[4] Unfortunately, this formulation is not going to be enough on its own; trying to understand the real Bob will call for rather more reflection on the nature of reality. One reason is that Bob's music, like all cultural practices, is a *part* of social reality as well as being *about* it. Another is that reality is not inert, but rather generative and historical. Stuff changes. Connected to this is the question of structure and agency;

how are human subjects (such as Bob) able to act independently in a social world that is heavily structured by relations of power. These problems mean we will need to set out a theory of realism.

That is the topic of chapter 1, which takes Bob's life as a case study in the multidisciplinary approach known as 'critical realism'. The chapter dips into its philosophical foundations, so readers who do not feel comfortable with social theory might choose to skip it, and move on to chapter 2. Here something like a chronological narrative of Bob's life begins. Still, there *are* good reasons for sticking with the first chapter, not least because Bob himself was a realist, who believed that the world exists independently of our knowing it, and who wanted to change it so that people might be free. Arguably, to try and work out what conditions could validate such beliefs is an important task.

Chapters 2 to 6 are organized chronologically in the sense that key episodes in Bob's life and subsequent celebrity are presented in sequence. But there is also a strong emphasis on themes. As a result, rather than giving a rounded account of his progress through a given period, each chapter explores particular aspects of Bob's life and work, together with the social world in which he was embedded. That makes the book more fragmented than a biography, but perhaps (if it has been done successfully) more illuminating too.

So, chapter 2 focuses on Jamaica, colonialism and resistance to colonialism, and deals with Bob's life from his birth in 1945 up to his early teenage years. It evaluates the significance of the new Jamaican religion, Rastafari. Chapter 3 then examines the reggae conjuncture – that moment in Jamaican history around the pivot point of independence in 1962 when reggae emerges both as a structure of feeling and as a distinct musical form. Bob and his group the Wailers play a central role in the research and development of the new music in this period. Chapter 4 tracks Bob in the

years between 1967 and 1973, examining his ‘translation’ from the collective/competitive Kingston music scene to the new setting of British rock. Attention is paid to the transformation this brings in both mode of production and reception of his work. Chapter 5 deals with the eight years up to his death in 1981, as Bob becomes a global star. Here the focus shifts from his ambiguous involvement in Jamaican politics during the ‘democratic socialist’ experiment of Michael Manley’s PNP (People’s National Party) government, to Bob’s performances as an international rock star in concert. Understanding the performative dimension is key to making sense of his massive global appeal it is argued. Chapter 6 treats the posthumous Bob. What has he come to mean around the world? How far and in what sense might he be considered the herald of a postcolonial world yet to be created?

Mostly, these chapters are written in the sort of passive voice traditionally used in academic work. However, in places, the first person singular ‘I’ form is used. Here (and I need to use that form now) I speak more personally, most often to recall some episode in my life which touches on Bob or reggae music, or sometimes to describe the field trip I made to Jamaica in 2005. These passages are not meant to be more authentic in their representation of reality just because they display the subjectivity of the author. Rather the intention is twofold. First, the ‘I’ form provides a second point of view, an oral historical one, to augment the more dispassionate hidden narrator who recounts most of the book. That in turn enables a degree of ‘triangulation’. By approaching something from two positions perhaps one can show more of its shape – more of its reality. Second, writing in the first person has a shamelessly rhetorical aim, which is to keep readers reading. I hope that strategy works.

[1] Creole languages are hybrids in which African retentions, including syntax, are mixed with European verbal forms. In the Caribbean they are still mainly spoken by the working class and peasantry, the descendants of slaves. ‘Patwa’

is expressed here in a phonetic spelling that is becoming increasingly standardized in Jamaica as patwa begins to assume a written form.

[2] The main problem with relying on traditional musicology is precisely its emphasis on the written score. Reggae music is not produced through the writing of notes on a staff, but rather directly through recording. Thus a score is inevitably a 'thin', post hoc interpretation of the primary, recorded text. That said, scores can be useful in more rounded analysis of popular music. See for example Brackett (1995), Moore (2001), Tagg and Clarida (2003).

[3] For a concise, critical examination of cultural studies see Mulhearn (2000). For a comprehensive discussion by an exponent see Barker (2000).

[4] This should not imply wholesale rejection of cultural studies – far from it. A good deal of use is made in the book of the innovative concepts and methods of analysis developed by people working in that field. It is just that its premises about being in, and knowing, the world are not accepted.

1

HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE BOB MARLEY?

If celebrity depends on amount – the more people who know about you, the more famous you are – then Bob Marley is a very great celebrity indeed. Years after his death in 1981 he is still listened to and passionately admired by millions of people across the world. In fact he is probably the best-known secular figure in the contemporary period. That ‘probably’ is crucial though. For straight away it has to be admitted that we do not have the sort of evidence to make such a claim without qualification.

Of course in the west and north of the planet market information does provide some indication of Marley’s celebrity. Take cumulative record sales. In the United States alone 16.5 million of his albums had been sold by 2005. This was enough to put him in joint seventy-second place alongside artists as diverse as Neil Young and Destiny’s Child. Meanwhile the Beatles at the top of the league had achieved 50 million US sales by the same year (RIAA 2005). Another useful index comes in the shape of ‘Forbes Top-Earning Dead Celebrities List’ (Kafka 2005). For 2005 it shows Marley in twelfth position, sandwiched between Irving Berlin and Ray Charles, and some distance behind Elvis Presley at number one. The Forbes list is based on total annual revenue, which includes earnings not just from record sales but also from the exploitation of copyright, licensing deals, merchandising and so on. That makes it a more rounded measure of celebrity than record sales alone. It also reflects international, rather than just US, earnings.[1]

Yet the ‘international’ dimension of these figures from the cultural industries hardly gets at Bob Marley’s standing in the peripheral regions of the world.[2] Here most people listen to him on cassettes, generally copied and distributed outside official music industry channels. No statistics are available for this activity.[3] Nor is there a way to quantify the circulation of images of Marley in the form of posters and drawings, or the spread of stories about him.[4] And we do not have a figure for the number of local musicians who play his songs, or have simply taken him as inspiration in their own musical careers. This suggests that celebrity among the poor is a poor sort of celebrity indeed. To be well known by people without buying power, even in their millions, counts for little in the cultural industries of the core of the world system.

Still, that makes some sort of reckoning even more urgent. Quite simply, being famous has greater social significance when it is *not* registered commercially. Such fame bucks the system, suggesting there are some autonomous tendencies at work. On that basis, and taking into account anecdote and some rather patchy evidence, it seems reasonable to say that in the global south Bob Marley is very famous indeed.[5] When we add this assessment to what we know from the statistical data available in the core of the world system, then a strong argument emerges for Marley being the major global superstar of the present period. Case reasoned, if not quite proven.

The sheer geographical range of Marley’s success is clearly significant. But, as we are starting to see, it also has a peculiar quality. Not only is Bob Marley a big star, he is a third world star, hailing from the small Caribbean island of Jamaica, and then finding an audience and a special resonance across the poorer south of the planet. Crucially, he remains the only figure of this kind. Of course there are other successful artists from the margins, for example in so-called ‘world music’. Produced largely in former colonies,

since the mid-1980s world music has been sold to a middle-class market in the advanced capitalist countries. However, this has remained a small niche, representing only 2 per cent of global recorded music sales. Its stars, like Youssou N'Dour, from Senegal, are correspondingly small in stature. Another international style which originates outside the core of the world system is 'Bollywood', or *filmi*, soundtrack music. *Filmi* is made for the Mumbai film industry, and distributed throughout South Asia and its diaspora via cinema exhibition, and on radio and record. It probably has a larger audience than that for world music. But since they never appear on screen (actors 'lip sync' to the songs), Bollywood singers generally lack the sort of image needed for celebrity.[6] Anyway, even if the audience for the genre is quite large it is also segregated – mainly confined to South Asia and its diaspora.

All this is by way of suggesting that Bob Marley stands alone as a third world superstar. So far, no other music maker coming from a third world country has become a global celebrity. No other artist from anywhere has attracted such a following in the poorer periphery of the capitalist world system. The questions that the present book then tries to answer are, what part did Marley himself play in achieving this unique status? And what has been the meaning of his work in cultural and political terms?

To address these issues the book takes what at first sight looks like a biographical approach. In other words its chapters are organized chronologically so that we follow Marley from his birth in 1945 along the course of a tumultuous life, but also through a momentous historical period; decolonization and its aftermath. The final chapter examines the phenomenon of Bob Marley since his death in 1981. Yet this is by no means a biography in the conventional sense. In a biography the goal is to understand the progress of the subject (most often, an ascent) in terms of her or his own character. In biographies of artists there is

a further quest to find the origins of the artistic work in the life, especially the inner life, of the artist. Of course there is always some element of social background too. Particular aspects will come into focus according to the requirements of the particular episode, providing causes for actions, barriers to be overcome and so on. In the case of Bob Marley, several other writers, notably Stephen Davis (1994) and Timothy White (2000), have already produced biographies along these lines.

The approach adopted in the present study is rather different, though, in that social factors are treated as something primary rather than as background. This is not simply a question of emphasis – though there *is* more sociology here than in a biography. It also has to do with a distinct aim, namely to understand Marley as a social agent and choice-maker, always located within the structure of world capitalism yet by no means completely determined by it.

SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO CELEBRITY AND CREATIVITY

Recent research on celebrity has certainly emphasized the social. Discarding the idea of individual value or talent in the famous, this literature conceives of celebrities as products of a media system which works to construct acclaim (see Gamson 1994). Or, in a slightly different formulation, the celebrity is thought to be an effect of media discourse, as in the case of the television celebrity who, according to David Marshall, 'is configured around conceptions of familiarity' (1997: 119). The emphasis on construction here derives, of course, from a much wider intellectual current which has 'decentred' the individual, and her intentional action. It takes in other disciplines relevant to the project of this book; literary studies, for example, where the notion of the author has been contested since the 1970s, and replaced with a reader-or text-centred approach to literature (Burke 1992).

In its various forms, then, the constructionist perspective challenges the romantic notion of the self-sufficient creator found in artist biographies. The trouble is, in doing so it also manages to avoid engaging with the celebrity as person. The emphasis on institutional and discursive factors effectively blots out the idea that a celebrity might have a part to play in her own making as author, performer or public intellectual. No doubt in the case of sociological work this also has something to do with the basic orientation of social science, where the particular individual has always appeared as an awkward figure.[7] Of course it is a particular individual, Bob Marley, whom we are concerned with here.

Still, one sociological approach does look as though it could provide a framework for the present study. In his analysis of writers and artists in mid-nineteenth-century France, Pierre Bourdieu treats them as agents operating within a specific social arena – the 'field of cultural production' (1993, 1996). Bourdieu is keen to distinguish this perspective from two conventional ways of characterizing art makers. The first is that self-sufficient artist of literary and artistic biographies. Here, Bourdieu suggests, it is assumed that one may find 'the explanatory principle of a work in the author taken in isolation' (1993: 192). Bourdieu's second target is a reductive sociology of culture where, 'understanding the work means understanding the world view of the social group that is supposed to have expressed itself through the artist acting as a sort of medium' (pp. 180–1). In place of these two mistaken perspectives (the first has *no* society, the second *only* society) he offers an alternative formulation. 'The existence of the writer, as fact and as value, is inseparable from the existence of the literary field as an autonomous universe endowed with specific principles of evaluation of practices and works' (pp. 162–3).

What makes this concept of the field of cultural production so useful is the way it draws attention to the

parochial social relations through which art is made. What is at stake, Bourdieu suggests, is a constant struggle for position among artists, generally taking the form of a battle between establishments and avant-gardes. A key aspect is that the cultural field represents the 'economic world reversed' (Bourdieu 1993: 164), such that the aesthetic value of a work is inversely related to its commercial value, and cultural capital trumps economic capital. According to Bourdieu, then, claims for the autonomy of art (art for art's sake) are generated through the competition for status which characterizes the field.

At first glance it is hard to see much art for art's sake in the recording studios of downtown Kingston where Marley produced most of his work. The spirit of fiercely competitive small-time capitalism comes across much more strongly (Stolzoff 2000: 172–92). As Dave Hesmondhalgh (2006) points out, because Bourdieu hardly examines the modern cultural industries we lack insight into how far his terms can be applied to what is by far the greater part of contemporary culture making – including the production of reggae. Yet, as Hesmondhalgh also suggests, certain aspects of Bourdieu's nineteenth-century literary field are actually reproduced in popular culture. One example: in rock music new avant-gardes emerge periodically and struggle against established mainstreams to transform aesthetic values, and therefore also the dominant cohort of artists, in the field. The battle of punk against progressive rock is the classic case (2006: 217). Something similar was also at stake in the emergence of modern jazz, in Bourdieu's terms a form of 'restricted production' by a small 'dominated' group of artists (Bourdieu 1993). Paul Lopes (2000) makes this point. He argues that the bebop revolution represented a successful attempt by disenfranchised musicians, mostly from dance bands, to accumulate cultural capital by donning the mantle of art. Modern jazz, in other words, was a kind of bootstrap avant-garde.

Taking this perspective perhaps we can find parallels in Jamaican popular music after all. From ska early in the 1960s to bashment at the turn of the twentieth century, consecutive musical ‘new waves’ have challenged the conventions of preceding styles.[8] What is interesting, though, is that the same music makers often appear in succeeding waves. Artists can have long careers across several stylistic divides. Bob Marley was typical of such a tendency. Clearly, this is at odds with the model of the avant-garde where a young cohort struggles to topple an establishment, only to replace it at the top of the new order. What’s more, although reggae musicians repudiated economic values this was expressed much more in terms of Rastafarianism than in the discourse of ‘pure art’. Marley was only one among many songwriters to describe the international music industry as ‘Babylon’. Finally, no clear distinction between restricted production (as with an avant-garde) and large-scale music making ever existed in Jamaica. When stylistic change came it swept through the whole scene, rather than being pioneered by a cadre.

Given these rather contradictory indications the question arises of how far we can use Bourdieu’s ‘field of cultural production’. Only to a limited extent must be the answer. Undoubtedly, Bourdieu identifies key aspects of culture making, aspects which seem to be found in many places and styles, including reggae; for example, the importance of concealed stakes and rules, and of struggles over the definition of musical value. Also extremely useful is the concept of the ‘refraction’ of external factors (Bourdieu 1993: 181–2), in our case of Marley’s social origins, through those same stakes, rules and values. For the purposes of this book, then, Bourdieu has merit because he helps us see that reggae music making has a certain autonomy from the wider social relations in which it is embedded.

The trouble lies with the field concept. The way Bourdieu plots the location of artists across negative and positive

axes, and sets up binary relations between movements and forms of capital, involves a strange remove from social reality.[9] Is Bourdieu's field-structure an expression of real social relations, one wonders, or rather a kind of heuristic geometry?[10] For while there is no doubt that he has identified key tendencies, the difficulty is that these are treated at a high level of abstraction. More, relationships between tendencies are mostly understood in terms of identity or opposition. The most important example of this is the relegation of the economy to the status of a negative value against which art is marked as a positive. In effect 'the economic world reversed' becomes the organizing principle of high cultural production.

Important as this may be in nineteenth-century France, as we have just seen in Jamaican popular music (and indeed much popular music everywhere) such a principle simply does not apply. And there is a further problem. The ways in which the economics of production have a material as opposed to discursive impact on symbol making go almost unexplored. It is doubtful whether we can properly understand nineteenth-century French literature and art without political economy. But to try and make sense of reggae and its musicians in this way is impossible. From the start Bob Marley was tied into the music industry, whether as an artisan or, later, as a star-commodity. And that industry, whether at the level of Kingston's small-time hucksters or London's multinational corporations, always exerted its influence on what Marley did, either direct through supervision or arm's length control in the form of recording contracts.

Finally, there is the difficulty of relating field to the process of culture making itself. In a discussion of 'Flaubert's point of view' Bourdieu (1996: 87–91) suggests that the novelist located himself between realist writers on one side and the creators of 'genre literature' on the other. The argument is that Flaubert's strategy as a writer always

emerged from the position he was attempting to take in the field of literary production: not this style, not that form of words, not those themes. As Bourdieu puts it, '[w]hat makes for the radical originality of Flaubert, and what confers on his work its incomparable *value*, is that it makes contact, at least negatively, with the totality of the literary universe in which it is inscribed' (p. 98). The problem with such a formulation is that it turns art making into something completely self-referential, a matter of homology between forms and themes on one side and structure of the field on the other. If we were to carry Bourdieu's method across to Marley and reggae music we would have little sense of the way his songs are about things in the world – power, places, people – or that his vocal style might have significance because of its sensuous performance of the human body.

Listen to the rocksteady seduction of 'Bend Down Low' from 1967, slow and sparsely instrumented, with the Wailers singing falsetto 'ooos' in response to Bob's insinuating tenor lead. Then compare this to the social reportage of 'Hooligan', made just two years earlier. Its frantic, horn-heavy ska beat drives on a vocal from Bob that seems to come straight out of a US rhythm and blues side circa 1959. Finally, check the 1979 track 'So Much Trouble in the World', where synthesizers and a 'one drop' riddim chug along behind Marley's oddly mellow call to the multitude to resist oppression.[11] Not only are these recordings stylistically and thematically diverse, they have quite different publics – from 'Hooligan's' weekend dancehall crowd in Jamaica to the international audience addressed by 'So Much Trouble …', divided by region and class.

The general point to make is that 'field' cannot encompass the web of interconnections at stake here, a web that ties together singer, song and society yet also changes radically over time. Of course we should listen to what Bourdieu says about the specifics of making culture. But we will have to take his often acute observations out of their

abstracted framework (binary opposition, reversed polarity of field, playing out of paradox, etc.), and treat them instead as historical tendencies in the totality of social relations. Such tendencies should be seen as the outcome of causal powers in conjunction, where such powers are attributed to specific levels of social reality. In short, what's being called for is a theory of social structure with ontological and historical depth to it.[12] Crucially, that theory will have to cope with the problem we met earlier of how to understand Bob Marley social actor, located within social structure, yet never wholly determined by it.

USING CRITICAL REALISM TO UNDERSTAND BOB

Critical realism (CR) is surely the strongest contender for doing this sort of work (Archer 1995; Bhaskar 1979; Collier 1994). What is its approach? To begin with, CR posits social structure as 'systems of human relations among social positions' (Porpora 1998: 343–5). Marxism, where system is mode of production and social positions are classes, is the most thoroughly developed version of such a theory. But one can also conceive of patriarchy and racial exclusion in this way (p. 343). Over the course of the book we will consider all three of these relational structures.

Of course Bourdieu's field theory is relational too. However the difference between it and the CR approach lies in the latter's characterization of social reality not only as relational, but also deep. What we experience (the empirical domain) is a subset of all the events that occur, but which may not be experienced (the actual domain). Experiences and events are in turn the product of generative mechanisms (the domain of the real (Collier 1994: 42–5). This last plays a crucial part in CR ontology. Although they cannot be observed empirically, generative mechanisms are not mere heuristic devices or other means of understanding the world. They are *of* the world, having real causal powers

which may or may not be actualized at any given moment. What's more, generative mechanisms are themselves stratified in the sense that first physical, and then biological mechanisms, provide the basis for social mechanisms,[13] while within the stratum of the social some structures provide a basis for others (Collier 1998).

The notion of basis is crucial for CR. It indicates a 'without which not' condition. So, reggae music could not exist without the capitalist mode of production in Jamaica (however underdeveloped) which generated a working class capable of buying tickets for the dancehall and, later, records from the shops. From this basic level of mode of production and class relations, higher-level social mechanisms emerged. We might consider some of those that Bourdieu includes in his field of cultural production, for instance a system of competition for status among reggae artists. There is also a higher economic level above the basic structure of the capitalist mode of production, namely the music business in Jamaica with its own particular organization and imperatives. Semiotic mechanisms, especially that of musical structure, operate at a higher level still. It is this structure that generates new reggae practices and texts. Musical structure depends on the social structures just mentioned, but also on biological and physical mechanisms lower down in stratified reality – the hearing, touch, motor and cognitive functions of human beings; and below these, the physical sound making (and receiving) mechanism of the vibrating surface in air.

Upward causality is not monolithic however. Lower-level structures constrain and influence higher ones, but they do not fully determine them. Crucial here is the notion of *emergence*, that is to say the limited autonomy of higher-level strata in relation to lower ones (Bhaskar 1979: 124–5). For instance the social depends on the biological embodiment of human beings, yet exists as a distinct level of reality with its own tendencies. The autonomy at stake

here derives from the way elements from the lower level may be configured at the higher one, so that a new entity is formed with powers that are proper to it (Elder-Vass 2005). Emergence, we might say, is relational too. Often emergence is associated with the ‘acting back’ of higher upon lower levels. So, in the case of singing, psycho-semiotic mechanisms, emergent from the neurological processes of the brain, direct the larynx to produce meaningful sound. What makes the concept of emergence particularly important for CR is that it repudiates reduction, that characteristic move of positivism which would collapse higher levels of being into lower ones. In the context of this book, emergence enables us to treat music making as a relatively autonomous structure, though one which is always shaped and constrained by the powers of other mechanisms beneath it.

The vertical stratification of reality we have been examining is only part of the CR conspectus though. Shaping and constraining is also the product of the horizontal conjunction of generative mechanisms (Collier 1998: 271). In some cases the powers of a particular mechanism will cancel out or overshadow the powers of another. In other cases mechanisms will work conjointly in a positive way. These conjunctural principles help to explain the anomaly of the sound system in Jamaica. The sound system, or simply ‘sound’, is the key institution in the political economy of music in Jamaica. A portable apparatus consisting of large speaker cabinets, amplifiers and turntables, it is used for the playback of records at dancehalls and open-air ‘lawns’ (Stolzoff 2000: 41–114). Sound system operation has traditionally been the pivotal entrepreneurial function in Jamaican music, crucial not only for the dissemination of music, but also for the commissioning of new work. Yet nothing like the sound system appears in other societies with popular music