

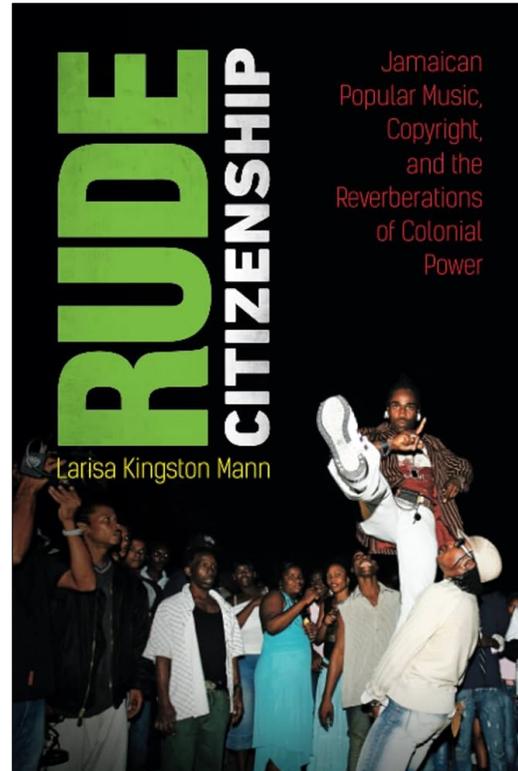
Larisa Kingston Mann, **Rude Citizenship: Jamaican Popular Music, Copyright, and the Reverberations of Colonial Power**, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022, 228 pp., 29.95 (paperback).

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Though living in poverty and deprivation at the margins of society, disadvantaged populations always find ways to negotiate and resist the social structures that exploit and marginalize them. Resistance is not necessarily expressed through open, collective protest. Many engage with everyday forms of resistance that are characterized by small and subtle acts, such as foot-dragging, gossip, feigned ignorance, and petty crimes, to pursue a limited level of practiced freedom and autonomy (Scott, 2008). In her new book, **Rude Citizenship: Jamaican Popular Music, Copyright, and the Reverberations of Colonial Power**, Larisa Kingston Mann adds musical practices to this list of everyday forms of resistance. Specifically, she explores how poor and Black Jamaicans collectively created and distributed music on the street and within urban poor communities in ways that contradicted the framework of copyright law. In doing so, these ethnically and socioeconomically disadvantaged music practitioners and audiences redefined originality and ownership on their own terms, thereby negotiating with and challenging colonial ideologies of property and creativity.



The book starts with a clear introduction to the social, cultural, and legal contexts of Jamaican popular music. As a postcolonial and developing society, Jamaica is composed of a few White elites and a large population of poor and Black, with no sizable middle class. The creators and audience of Jamaican popular music are dominated by the country's underclass, whose tastes and values are often denounced by the upper class as vulgar and morally problematic, according to the colonial power structures that remain in power after Jamaican independence. Nonetheless, Jamaican popular music has been disproportionately prosperous in the domestic economy and influential in the global music industry. Without relying on copyright law, the music sector has not just evolved into a pillar industry of Jamaica but has also nurtured numerous ancillary economic activities such as selling drinks to participants in street dances and collecting empty beverage cans after musical events through which residents of impoverished neighborhoods can make a living. Despite being scorned by the Jamaican upper class, some genres of Jamaican popular music played a significant role in shaping the musical, cultural, and political landscape beyond Jamaica. As the most salient example, reggae has attracted audiences from around the world and has particularly inspired the development of U.S. hip-hop culture.

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What sustains the continuous vitality of Jamaican popular music when its local creators neglect and sometimes intentionally act against copyright law, a legal framework intended to protect the rights of creators and encourage creativity? Mann provides an in-depth and nuanced answer to this question based on tracing the historical trajectories (chapter 1), exploring the lived experience (chapter 2), and examining the musical and textual content of Jamaican popular music (chapter 3). It must be noted that Jamaican copyright law was implemented by the colonizer and has not undergone significant changes since Jamaican independence. Even though the law was updated in the 1990s when Jamaica joined the World Trade Organization, it was still not designed to accommodate the needs of disadvantaged populations. Mann argues that notions such as “originality” and “authorship” imply a colonial and rigid way of looking at property and creativity. For example, copyright laws mostly allocate rewards to individuals who can encapsulate their creativity into a fixed artifact. The more this artifact is detached from its cultural origins, the more likely it will be considered original under the law. However, such an assumption does not coincide with the traditions of Jamaican music making, where community-based live performance, the improvisational reuse of musical recordings, and public recognition form the cornerstone, rather than secondary factors, of the creative process.

The failure of copyright law to address real-world issues and the disdain from the upper class generate an “exilic space” for poor and Black Jamaicans to operate relatively on their own, asserting their rights as “authors” and deciding what is “original.” It first means that in the absence of copyright law, Jamaican music practitioners—comprised of instrumentalists, vocalists, DJs, soundmen, engineers, dancers, and models—make profits based on an alternative reputational economy. Compared to placing hope on uncertain royalties in the future, they work on enhancing their reputation so that they can be hired to perform elsewhere and receive cash payments for the time they spend in studios or at live performances. Second, it also indicates that living beyond the reach of institutions of power sometimes produces opportunities for disadvantaged populations. Some of them strategically take advantage of being marginalized, building local authority according to their own understandings, pursuing a certain level of cultural autonomy, and ritually challenging classed and raced inequality. For example, when the state and those in power criticize poor Jamaicans for their “rude” and uncivilized manners, poor and Black Jamaicans proudly embrace the “rudeboy” identity and portray it as a heroic and threatening figure in their collective music works.

Mann’s discussion of Jamaican popular music is inspiring for readers in different ways. For policymakers and law scholars, the empirical experiences of Jamaican music practitioners are valuable for reflecting on the limitations of current intellectual property law and how the legal framework can be improved and customized to meet the demands of non-White and non-middle-class communities. The methodological approach of this book sets an excellent example for media scholars and cultural anthropologists to unpack the social implications of popular culture from a multidimensional perspective. By simultaneously taking history, real-world experiences, and the musicological and textual features of the products of popular culture into consideration, she successfully situates Jamaican popular music rooted in its complicated social condition as a dynamically changing practice. For readers with an interest in understanding how inequality and marginality have been reconfigured in today’s postcolonial world, a few concepts—especially citizenship and sovereignty—that grow out of her grounded analysis of Jamaican popular music help rethink what autonomy means and how it can be achieved by ethnically and

socioeconomically disadvantaged populations. According to her, citizenship and sovereignty should not be limited to understanding one's relationship with ruling institutions such as a state. Such an interpretation only reinforces the colonial basis of national boundaries and the existing racial and class-based inequality. These notions are better used to indicate the ability to "assert one's rights over one's own experience and body independent or even against the demands of the state" (p. 10), so that we may better understand autonomy from the perspective of oppressed and colonized communities.

Additionally, the book is thought-provoking and raises questions for future investigation regarding how disadvantaged populations from Jamaica and other postcolonial societies resist existing power imbalances by engaging with musical practices to flourish. As suggested by Gayatri Spivak (1988), the subalterns are highly heterogeneous, and they are not necessarily united by one shared identity or collective act to resist domination from both the colonizers and local elites. Therefore, the gender, racial, generational, religious, and regional differences within the Jamaican underclass and whether these mechanisms of social differentiation impact their musical practices and pursuits of autonomy require further unpacking.

References

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