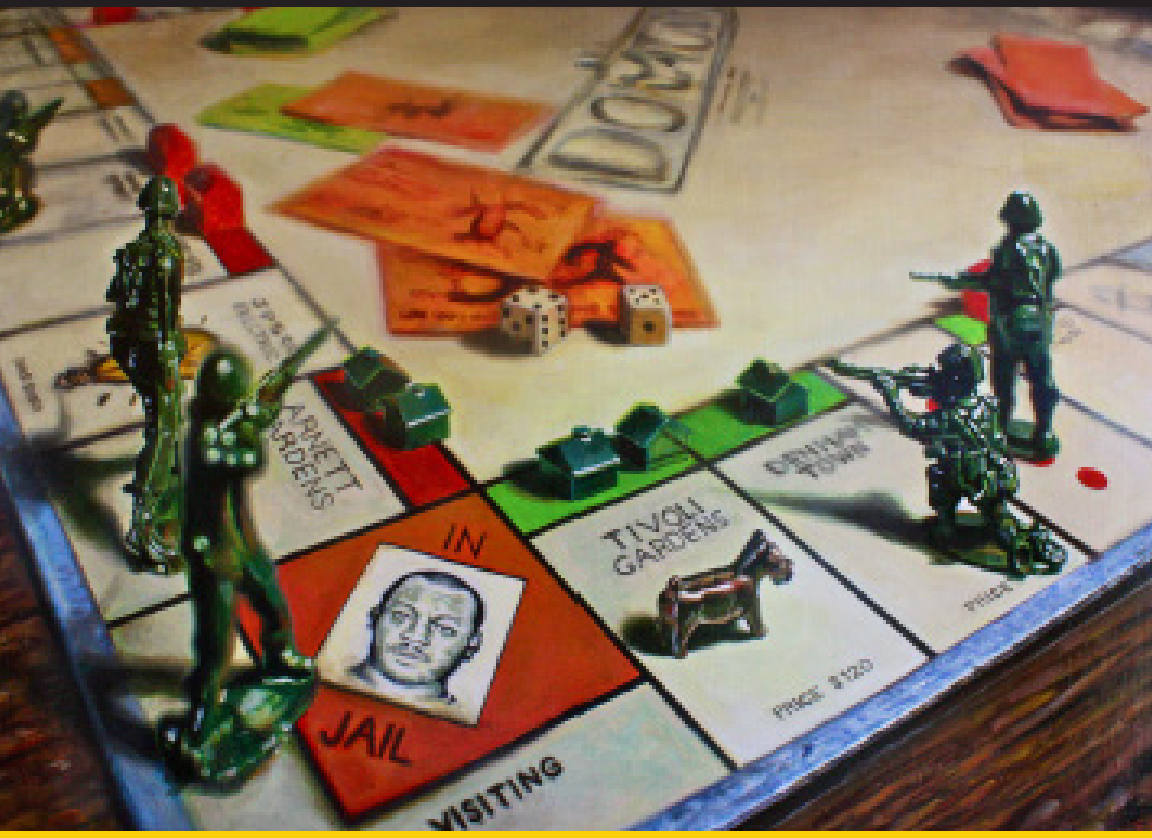
the rule of dons

CRIMINAL LEADERS AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY IN URBAN JAMAICA



Rivke Jaffe

The Rule of Dons

The Rule of Dons

Rivke Jaffe

CRIMINAL LEADERS AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY IN URBAN JAMAICA

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Durham and London 2024

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Dave Rainey
Typeset in Portrait Text, Ogg, and DIN 1451 Std Mittelschrift by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Jaffe, Rivke, author.
Title: The rule of Dons : criminal leaders and political authority in urban Jamaica / Rivke Jaffe.
Other titles: Criminal leaders and political authority in urban Jamaica
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2024. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024003706 (print)
LCCN 2024003707 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478031154 (paperback)
ISBN 9781478026907 (hardcover)
ISBN 9781478060178 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478094319 (ebook other)
Subjects: LCSH: Organized crime—Jamaica. | Organized crime—Political aspects—Jamaica. | Political corruption—Jamaica. | BISAC: SOCIAL SCIENCE / Anthropology / Cultural & Social | SOCIAL SCIENCE / Sociology / Urban
Classification: LCC HV6453.J25 J344 2024 (print) | LCC HV6453.J25 (ebook) | DDC 364.106097291—dc23/eng/20240717
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024003706
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024003707

Cover art: Michael Elliott, *Donopoly: Episode 1*, 2010. Acrylic on canvas.

This book draws on research funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

This book is dedicated
to the memory of
my mother,
Lexa Jaffe-Klusman (1941–2018), and
to the memory of
"Mama," Gwendolyn Whittaker (1932–2018)

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

As with any research, I am indebted to the many people who helped me over the last fifteen years, during fieldwork and in the course of writing this book. The nature of this specific project, however, is such that some of the most important people must remain anonymous. I am, first and foremost, extremely grateful to the many Kingstonians who were willing to speak so frankly with me about their experiences of donmanship—in particular, the residents of "Brick Town," but also the various politicians, government officials, police officers, businesspeople, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers. I owe special thanks to the man I call "Roger," for introducing me to the neighborhood, and to those I call "Keith," "John," and "Lion," for their friendship throughout the years. For the many different forms of generosity they showed me in the course of conducting this research, I give thanks to Rowano Mullings, Jonathan Greenland, Oswald Kassie, Donnette Zacca, Jason Ramsay, Claudia Hucke, Allison Perkins, Silvia Kouwenberg, Pauletta Chevannes, Abena Chevannes, Amba Chevannes, Horace Levy, and Jevan Brown.

This book grew most directly out of two research projects on crime and political authority funded generously by the Dutch Research Council (NWO, grant nos. 360-45-030 and W01.70.100.001). Leading the project on the popular culture of illegality together with Martijn Oosterbaan was a great joy—I'd do it all over again in a heartbeat. My understanding of crime and the politics of aesthetics benefited immensely from our work with Tracian Meikle and Sterre Gilsing, and later on with Chelsey Kivland, Carly Barbosa Machado, and Cleaver Cunningham. I am, of course, particularly indebted to Tracian, whose in-depth ethnographic fieldwork and keen aesthetic insights on Kingston's memorial murals have closely informed my reading of the visual culture of donmanship, and who generously allowed me to reproduce some of the images of artworks she took in the context of her own research.

My understanding of donmanship was also enhanced by the ability to work as principal investigator on thematically adjacent projects on security assemblages, funded by an NWO Vidi grant and a European Research Council starting grant,

and as coinvestigator with Eveline Dürr and Gareth Jones on a project on tourism in low-income, high crime urban areas funded by NWO, the German Research Foundation (DFG), and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). It was a profound pleasure working across these projects with such wonderful scholars as Alana Osbourne, Carolina Frossard, Erella Grassiani, Francesca Pilo', Francesco Colona, Frank Müller, Lior Volinz, Patrick Weir, Tessa Diphoorn, Thijs Jeursen, Alessandro Angelini, and Barbara Vodopivec. I also found much inspiration in two research networks, one led with Lucy Evans on representations of crime and Jamaica, which connected us to a range of amazing colleagues including Faith Smith, Kim Robinson-Walcott, Michael Bucknor, Donette Francis, Sonjah Stanley-Niaah, and Emiel Martens and another led by Pat Noxolo on Caribbean in/securities with Anyaa Anim-Addo, Ronald Cummings, David Featherstone, Susan Mains, and Kevon Rhiney. The ideas set out in this book also developed during visits as a visiting researcher at the Institute for the Study of the Americas at the University of London, the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies at the University of the West Indies, and the anthropology departments of Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania.

Over the years, I have benefited similarly from the insights, encouragement, and critical engagement of friends and colleagues in and beyond Caribbean studies, anthropology, and geography: amongst many others, David Scott, Brian Meeks, Charles Carnegie, Jovan Scott Lewis, Robert Kinlocke, Nadiya Figueroa, Yonique Campbell, Esther Figueroa, Doreen Gordon, Annie Paul, Diana Thorburn, Amanda Sives, David Howard, Imke Harbers, Julienne Weegels, Rosemarijn Hoefte, Michiel Baud, Kees Koonings, Barbara Hogenboom, Ton Salman, Jolle Demmers, Martijn Koster, Trevor Stack, Maarten Onneweer, Marianne Maeckelbergh, Sabine Luning, Annemarie Samuels, Veronica Davidov, Steffen Jensen, Dennis Rodgers, Laurens Bakker, Kedron Thomas, Cristiana Panella, Thomas Blom Hansen, Ieva Jusionyte, Lucia Michelutti, Thomas Grisaffi, Desmond Enrique Arias, Asher Ghertner, Hudson McFann, Daniel Goldstein, Rowland Atkinson, Simon Parker, Gabriel Feltran, Hebe Verrest, Fenne Pinkster, Wouter van Gent, and Willem Boterman. Barry Chevannes and Anthony Carrigan, both gone too soon, formed my thinking about Jamaica and imagination in important ways.

For their feedback on different chapters, or on earlier versions of texts that made their way into this book in a reconfigured form, I am indebted to Wayne Modest, Anouk de Koning, Petrina Dacres, Austin Zeiderman, Nikhil Anand, Dennis Rodgers, Gareth Jones, Miranda Sheild Johansson, Asher Ghertner, Emma Jackson, Hannah Jones, Shamus Khan, Madiha Tahir, Veronica Davidov, Martijn Koster, Fenne Pinkster, Mark Figueroa, Maarten Onneweer, Annemarie Samuels,

and Amanda Sives. For sharing fun times, less fun times, and much chocolate, I am grateful to Richard Ronald.

Within the geography department, I feel so lucky to have been able to share my shoddy first drafts with the talented group of authors and editors who formed a writing group with me, which has included Thijs Jeursen, Tracian Meikle, Carolina Frossard, Alana Osbourne, Francesco Colona, Lior Volinz, Sterre Gilsing, Julian Isenia, Afra Foli, Solène Le Borgne, Jelke Bosma, Ceylin Idel, Dolly Loomans, Carla Huisman, Maria Hagan, Harry Pettit, Tessa Diphoorn, Erella Grassiani, Frank Müller, Francesca Pilo', Patrick Weir, Dorien Zandbergen, Tahire Erman, and Faisal Umar. And everyone should have friends like Anouk de Koning, Hebe Verrest, Eileen Moyer, and Tina Harris with whom to go on writing retreats.

I am also very grateful to Elizabeth Ault, Benjamin Kossak, and James Moore at Duke University Press for their support for this project—it has been such a pleasure working with you. And many thanks to the three anonymous reviewers for their comments and their support.

The support of three people in particular was crucial throughout the years that I have been thinking about donmanship. Anthony Harriott is the type of scholar I can only aspire to be: never less than fully rigorous in his own research and writing but animated by open-ended interdisciplinary conversations, always supportive of younger generations of academics, and with an uncommon empathy and intelligence that he ensures serve society. Deborah Thomas's work and support have been similarly formative. Like so many others, I have benefited greatly from her personal and intellectual generosity, from her many incisive and encouraging peer reviews, and more generally from her scholarship on Jamaica and on political affect—on what sovereignty feels like—which has clearly informed my understanding of dons' political authority. Petrina Dacres has had my back every step of the way. At dancehall parties and streetside pedicures, in Uptown coffee shops and art galleries, engaging in in-depth visual analysis and walking up Mountain Spring, talking, writing, and laughing together—what a privilege and a joy it has been to cross these borders and share these worlds with you in Kingston, New York, and Amsterdam.

And what a blessing to have been embraced by Gwendolyn Whittaker and her family—especially my Jamaican sister Avis and her children Dilon, Javier, Zidane, Savannah, and Skye. While she is probably still wearing green in heaven, the love that Miss Gwen had for her party was surpassed still by the love and care that she showed to her family and her community.

I don't know that this book could have been written without Anouk de Koning, my extraordinarily talented and generous friend. In cafés, on retreats, at your kitchen table, in instant messages, your editorial insight, unwavering encouragement,

and overall loveliness have improved my writing and buoyed my spirits beyond compare.

Conducting this research, as always, I felt the love and support of my parents, Walter and Lexa, and my sisters, Anna and Jenny. I remember my mother's outrage when the Baltimore Police Department's "Officer Friendly" came to teach my kindergarten class that "stranger rhymes with danger." It has been a privilege to have had parents who taught me otherwise—who raised me to question authority, and who imbued me with a sense of safety and security that travels with me to Kingston and beyond.

As a parent myself, I hope to be able to do the same for Teju—who is already so skilled at observing and questioning, but also delighting in this world we live in. None of this would be possible without Wayne Modest, who is always there by my side to provide Teju with that sense of safety, reflection, and wonder. I could not have pursued this research without your critical engagement and loving support. I hope the end result honors our ongoing conversations about difference, inequality, and the extended political and personal project of *samenleven*.

Introduction

On May 24, 2010, the Jamaican military and police forced their way into Tivoli Gardens, a low-income neighborhood in the capital of Kingston, in an attempt to arrest the country's most powerful "don," Christopher Coke, more commonly known as "Dudus" or "the President." This security operation, which came to be known as the Tivoli Incursion, followed an extradition request from the United States, where Dudus was wanted on drug and arms-trafficking charges. After stalling for over nine months and with apparent reluctance, the Jamaican prime minister, Bruce Golding, had signed the warrant for Dudus's arrest in mid-May. Soon after, armed men in Tivoli Gardens began to barricade the entrances to the neighborhood with roadblocks made of abandoned cars and fridges, wooden pallets, and debris. Meanwhile, hundreds of mostly female residents, dressed in white, marched to Gordon House, the seat of the Jamaican parliament, to protest the decision to extradite their don. They held up signs that read "After God, Dudus comes next" and "Jesus die for us. We will die for Dudus!!!"

A few days later, gunmen apparently affiliated with Dudus attacked four police stations and killed two police officers in an ambush, leading Golding to declare a State of Emergency. The state security forces mounted their counterattack the following day, breaking through the barricades while snipers shot at them from the rooftops of Tivoli's high-rise apartment buildings. During the course of the operation, the security forces killed sixty-nine civilians and detained hundreds more. One soldier died. As soldiers and police combed through the neighborhood over the following days, Dudus remained elusive. A month later, he was captured and extradited to the United States. In 2012, following a guilty plea, he received a twenty-three-year prison sentence, which he is currently serving in a low-security federal correctional institution in New Jersey.

Why would hundreds of citizens march out in support of a criminal leader like Dudus, stating that they were prepared to die for him? Why would a state leader such as Prime Minister Golding jeopardize international relations to protect this

don from criminal prosecution? How did Dudus manage to convince so many people to view him as a legitimate leader, rather than a criminal—how could a don like him persuade others that he had a right to rule, despite his associations with crime and violence? In this book, I argue that dons have become figures of political authority, and I explain what aesthetic, affective, and spatial strategies have enabled them to do so.

A few weeks after the Incursion, but before Dudus's arrest, I made my way down to Tivoli Gardens with two Jamaican colleagues to attend the taping of the national television program *Your Issues Live*. After entering the area through a heavily armed checkpoint, we walked in the direction of the neighborhood's community center, where the live recording was about to start. Several hundred people had gathered there, mostly women and children, many dressed up for the occasion. The police were also noticeably present, with several cars on the premises and uniformed officers visible in the audience. Less than a hundred people had managed to get seats, facing the stage. The rest of us were crowded all around, sweating in the hot lights as we pressed up against each other to catch a glimpse of the action. One woman marched off, announcing that she was going to watch it on television from her home, where she could get a better view. As things got started, Michael Sharpe, the news reader hosting the program, urged everyone to be quiet during the taping, as it was airing live.

Despite the show's title—*your* issues—the audience itself was discouraged from participating. On stage, Sharpe interviewed a series of professionals, mostly familiar talking heads who often featured on such current affairs programs: a police superintendent, the public defender, a psychiatrist, and an urban regeneration consultant. The only two "representatives of the community" were the principal of a neighborhood school and the head of a local state-sponsored youth club.

"Welcome to another edition of *Your Issues Live*," Sharpe began. "We're in Tivoli Gardens for a special program. We want to see how best we can help the people of Tivoli to heal from what took place in the community over the past few weeks, and what has been happening in the community since it was perhaps created." His tone was somber as he gazed into the camera. "It is our mission to help shape the new Tivoli and indeed the new Jamaica. Far too many have died, and it's time for us to turn a new page. We simply cannot continue like this. But before we get into the program, let's take a quick look at *how* we perhaps got into these problems to begin with."

On a large screen that had been erected near the stage, and on television screens across the nation, a prerecorded segment began to air. It provided a historical background to the Tivoli Incursion, describing the long-standing entanglement of electoral politics and organized crime known as "garrison politics." As archival

footage from the 1960s onward began to screen, Damian Marley's 2005 hit "Welcome to Jamrock" played, an ironic take on tourism advertisements that welcomes listeners to a Jamaica marked by poverty and crime.

Welcome to Jamrock
Camp where the thugs them camp at
Two pounds of weed inna van back

The crowd murmured appreciatively at the soundtrack, as the narrator intoned: "Tivoli Gardens has notoriety for being Jamaica's most feared garrison . . ."

"Lie!!" the woman next to me shouted.

"This image is often scattered across the local and international media as a prototype for Jamaican gangsters and gun-slinging and assault," the recording continued, "but for some residents there's no place like home." Featuring scenes of armed clashes and the sound of gunshots, the segment continued: "It is a situation which reveals the two Jamaicas and the clash of identity that is often debilitating towards fostering unity and progress. When manifested physically the clash has proven deadly, as born out of the confrontations between the security forces and armed thugs in 1997, 2001, and now in 2010. But to understand Tivoli one has to go back to its roots."

Moving back in time, the narrator located these roots in the years following Jamaica's independence in 1962: "Tivoli emerged through the vision of Edward Seaga. Seaga, who was a Member of Parliament and Minister of Development in the 1960s, sought to create a new community out of the decadence that postcolonial neglect and urbanization had thrust on Western Kingston. In the 1960s, the squatter settlement Back-o-Wall was bulldozed and up went Tivoli Gardens. It was a bold and ambitious move, which perhaps would have been successful were it not for political tribalism, which manifested in the 1970s."

The soundtrack shifted to "Political Fiction," a 1970s reggae classic by Half Pint. Its lyrics critiqued the political antagonism that accompanied garrison politics:

Due to political fiction
Man and man gone in a different segregation
We living so near and yet so far
All because of political war

The historical footage moved from images of Seaga in the 1960s to scenes of electoral violence in the 1970s and 1980s while the narrator explained how different low-income communities became embroiled in what was in essence a geopolitical conflict. "It was a war much bigger than the communities, in fact, it was bigger than Jamaica. At the heart of it were two clashing political ideologies, a breed

of socialism backed by the USSR and democracy-slash-capitalism backed by the United States. This was the Cold War, the so-called war between the AK and M-16 and it was being played out in little Jamaica in communities such as Tivoli."

On the screen, the images of politicians were replaced by a number of well-known dons, from communities across Jamaica. "Today, the Cold War has ended, at least in terms of the physical clashes," the narrator continued, "but communities such as Tivoli never quite recovered, they were taken over by the area leaders. These so-called dons converted the poor, often-neglected communities into enclaves for drug and gun running. Whereas in the past they got their guns and money from unscrupulous politicians, today these dons get their money from wealthy drug cartels, who solicit their help to move drugs, guns, and other illegal merchandises through our ports and territorial waters. Many provide security for their communities and are quick to provide other services which the state fails to provide. Christopher 'Dudus' Coke . . ."—the crowd began to cheer "Bap! Bap! Bap!" (mimicking celebratory gunfire), making it hard to hear the rest of the sentence—"is one such don."

Dudus's photograph appeared on screen, and a loud roar of approval went up. Amidst the hubbub, the segment concluded, "It is believed that in order for Jamaica to progress, the state would have to get rid of area leaders such as Dudus and start playing its rightful role as the protector of communities." Hearing these last lines, the audience's response turned to displeasure. "No sir, this is serious!" a woman close to me called out angrily, evidently upset at the suggestion that the road to progress required getting rid of Dudus. Following so closely after a dramatic instance of state violence, the crowd as a whole seemed unconvinced of the Jamaican state's "rightful role" in protecting them.

As the television program returned to its live format, the host, Michael Sharpe, seemed rather taken aback by these reactions. His face, projected onto the screen, was sweaty and he looked nervous. "Thank you. Welcome back!" he said as he tried to resume control of the narrative, sketching a nation that had experienced a shared trauma. "It's interesting you know, twenty-three days ago there was a lot of stuff happening here in Tivoli Gardens, there were barricades that were set up and there were some of us who were inside the barricade and many of us who were outside the barricade, all of us were traumatized." Sharpe returned to the leader at the heart of the crisis: "Tonight, I note with interest that there is a US$20,000 man on the run." Mentioning a recent public opinion poll, he highlighted the support Dudus enjoyed both within and outside Tivoli Gardens: "Two things happened tonight. When the poll came out, and they say, the people in Tivoli Gardens said 'Yay.' A while ago they saw his picture on television and some of them said 'Legend . . .'"

The crowd applauded and shouted in agreement. "Legend! Legend! Yeah!" the woman behind me cried approvingly.

"Legend . . ." Sharpe went on, "or runner. Legend or runner?" "*Legend!*" the crowd answered as one. "Legendary runner! No runner nuh deh yah," no runners here, my neighbor corrected Sharpe. "Presi live!" a man next to her called out, using the don's other popular title. "President to the world!" another man chimed in.

How does a don like Dudus become a legend?

Outsiders frequently use labels such as "drug kingpin" or "vicious predator" to describe these men. Yet locally they do not only or primarily inspire fear, but also respect, trust, and even love. The most powerful ones are known as "heroes," or indeed "legends," to the Jamaican poor. In many of Jamaica's underprivileged urban neighborhoods, residents see dons as legitimate rulers.

Dons are often important actors in the transnational drugs and arms trade. And they do play a major role in perpetuating Jamaica's high rates of violent crime. In fact, their reputation for violence and business savvy contributes to the mystique that surrounds the persona of many dons. Yet they are also key governance actors within marginalized urban areas: they provide impoverished residents with access to security, conflict resolution, and various forms of welfare. This governance role is facilitated in part through their own resources, and in part through their long-standing connections to Jamaica's two main political parties, the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP). While dons' authority derives to some extent from their reputation as outlaws, their strategic engagement with state institutions, from electoral politics to the police, is equally important.

How can we understand the political authority that these neighborhood leaders, most of whom are linked to criminal organizations, enjoy?[1] How do they achieve and consolidate a position of power not only or primarily through violent means, but through aesthetic, affective, and spatial forms of persuasion?

In this book, drawing on over a decade of ethnographic research in Kingston, I explain how dons' power—that is, their ability to get others to obey them—comes to be viewed as legitimate not only by many low-income residents, but also by other political and economic leaders. Once political power is perceived as legitimate, it becomes political *authority*. Where media reports often assume that donmanship involves a reign of terror, my research suggests that their rule relies much more on consensus and consent than on coercion. This book analyzes the various ways that dons actively seek to claim authority and the conditions under which their claims are recognized, both by those who live in the territories over which they rule and by other rulers.

In so doing, I develop a conceptualization of political authority as shaped both in and beyond the state. The authority of men such as dons, I suggest, lies precisely

in their ability to combine an embodied, personified form of leadership with a close yet ambivalent relationship to state institutions. Their form of authority operates through a complex choreography with state institutions and ideals that involves balancing an autocratic form of rule with an established democratic order. In so doing, dons draw on deeply felt experiences of social and political exclusion—many residents feel that they live in a nation controlled by elites, who regard the urban poor with a mix of contempt and fear. Dons' physical and social proximity to these residents allows them to assume a type of political leadership that may feel more "representative" than the formal electoral system.

With the analysis of donmanship I set out in this book, I seek to develop an understanding of how autocratic, violent rulers may be entangled with democratic systems. This manifestation of political authority extends beyond the specific Jamaican phenomenon of donmanship. It displays similarities with forms of extralegal rule in cities across the world, from Brazilian *comandos* and the Haitian *baz* to Italian *capos* and South Asia's Mafia Raj.[2] These examples might seem to suggest that these political formations are restricted to postcolonial states such as Jamaica, or as indicative of "failed states" or "disjunctive democracies." Yet this type of authority can be recognized in a broad range of political contexts, including "established" or "well-functioning" democracies. I draw on the case of Jamaica's dons to highlight how such leaders convince citizens to embrace them, both through their ability to embody the figure of the antiestablishment outlaw *and* through their engagement with established state institutions. The "strongman" character who utilizes state institutions even as he destabilizes them is found not only in notionally informal, or local, power struggles. The appeal of this style of leadership is also evident within representative politics at the national level, as the popularity of elected leaders from Trump and Bolsonaro to Putin and Orbán has attested.

BEYOND "TWO JAMAICAS"

In seeking to identify the factors that had led to the Tivoli Incursion, Michael Sharpe's *Your Issues Live* drew on a familiar narrative, sketching a "clash of identity" between "two Jamaicas" that hampered the nation's progress and that manifested itself in armed violence between criminals and the security forces. This idea of a clash—in which two distinct cultural fragments or parallel orders are pitted against each other—has been dominant in attempts to explain donmanship and comparable political formations. The "two Jamaicas" framework is useful in that it highlights entrenched social inequalities and spatial segregation; these types of divisions do feed the distrust and disappointment expressed by marginalized "Downtown" residents toward "Uptown" politicians. However, in suggesting that

dons derive their authority primarily from a *cultural* division, and that they represent a *parallel* order to that of the state, this analytical lens may end up obscuring as much as it reveals.

The frequent emphasis on cultural difference risks presenting support for donmanship as a form of cultural deviance, shaped by clashing norms and values.[3] Such culturalist explanations ignore the fact that many of the social and political values attributed to "ghetto" residents are shared much more broadly. By emphasizing cultural values, it may also play down the classed and raced structures of exclusion within which dons may appear to represent "rightful rule" and protection as much as the state. Meanwhile, the trope of the parallel order or the "state within a state" implies a much stricter separation of donmanship and the Jamaican state than is actually warranted. It ignores the many ways in which dons are entangled with various forms of bureaucracy, with electoral politics, with the justice system, and indeed with the police force. Dons' political authority derives from *both* their larger-than-life outlaw persona and their consistent engagement with these state institutions.

Understanding donmanship requires moving beyond "the clash between two Jamaicas" that was mobilized in *Your Issues Live*. This narrative of a postcolonial nation split in two along lines of identity, and hampered in its progress by a lack of social integration, is a dominant one. Why does this narrative of a cultural clash have such appeal? Importantly, this explanation of donmanship is rooted in long-standing academic and political debates on Jamaica's purported cultural fragmentation, first formulated in the pre-independence period.[4]

The most influential iteration of the cultural fragmentation thesis was the mid-twentieth century "plural society" theory first developed by J. S. Furnivall in Southeast Asia and elaborated for the Caribbean by Jamaican anthropologist M. G. Smith. In an era of decolonization, Smith's theory posited a profound disunity wrought by colonialism, characterized by culturally distinct groups. The lack of a normative consensus based on shared national values, he suggested, posed specific problems for postcolonial nations, as social dissolution was likely to take place in the absence of colonial political coercion.[5] While acknowledging the raced and classed nature of Jamaica's divisions, he stressed that the "plural society" should be understood as a *cultural* phenomenon rather than as a form of social stratification. In privileging a framework of cultural opposition over one of social inequality and exclusion, Smith established an approach that continues to inform contemporary analyses.

In the early twenty-first century, analyses of donmanship frequently draw on this conception of Jamaica's cultural fragmentation. Increasingly, these discussions are concentrated on *urban* conflicts and segregation as a way to understand

Jamaica as a whole. The reverberations of the plural society thesis are evident, for instance, in two prominent readings of the dons' popularity, by social and political theorist Brian Meeks and anthropologist David Scott. Both scholars read the support for dons as expressions of profound cultural difference, although they diverge in their views on the necessity—and indeed the possibility—of generating a cultural consensus.

Brian Meeks reads the support that dons enjoy as part of a "popular, subaltern insurgency" and "a widening fissure, from below, from the ways and means of official Jamaican society."[6] In contrast with M. G. Smith, he suggests that Jamaica's early post-independence years *were* characterized by a normative consensus. However, following the political violence of the 1970s and 1980s, Meeks identifies a process of what he calls hegemonic dissolution. Many Jamaicans no longer believe in the divisive "political fiction" that reggae artist Half Pint identified in the song broadcast during *Your Issues Live*, lamenting the segregation that had emerged "because of political war." In light of this normative dissensus, Meeks understands mobilizations in defense of dons as forms of subaltern politics. Discussing the 1998 protests following the arrest of Donald "Zeeks" Phipps, a prominent West Kingston don, Meeks suggests that these events—known as the Zeeks riots or the Zeeks uprising—"demonstrate the re-emergence of the Jamaican poor and working people on the political stage after almost two decades of quiescence."[7]

More than a decade later, in the wake of the Tivoli Incursion, Meeks identifies a next phase of cultural separation in the widespread support for Dudus. He identifies "substantially new cultural and philosophical spaces" that go beyond "the rebellious distancing of subaltern classes from the Anglophilic, Christian and creole notions of the traditional Jamaican middle classes." These new worldviews, Meeks suggests, include elements of "moral relativism, neo-fascist authoritarianism and the glorification of violence."[8] As a political formation, the Dudus "movement," as he describes it, represents "a turn toward a ruthless, monopolistic, and hierarchical approach to governing and a slide toward barbarism," even if Dudus's supporters included "plaintive and powerful advocates of equality arguing for an end to discrimination based on color, class, or geographical location."[9]

David Scott offers a related reading of the support for dons as an expression of cultural difference. Yet where Meeks echoes M. G. Smith's concern in identifying the lack of a national cultural consensus as a key postcolonial challenge, Scott contests this reading of difference-as-a-problem. In an influential essay on "the permanence of pluralism," he draws on the Zeeks riots to rethink the political meaning of difference. While concurring with Smith's view of Jamaica as constituted by relatively autonomous social and cultural sections, Scott argues against understanding this difference as a political *problem* that needs to be overcome through

cultural integration. Jamaica's historically constituted difference should be viewed as "ineradicable and indeed central to human flourishing," not as a hindrance to national progress.[10] Like Meeks, Scott's assessment of the Zeeks riots recognizes the dissolution of the political project of acculturation and assimilation that was intrinsic to postcolonial nation-building. Yet, he insists, it is precisely this project that has lost its credibility: we must reject the "moral-politics of improvement in which the unassimilable and indigestible identities Zeeks and his supporters embody are to be re-educated for middle-class civility."[11] The promise of national progress-through-acculturation that Scott skewers is still recognizable in Michael Sharpe's depiction of Jamaica as hampered by "a clash of identity that is often debilitating towards fostering unity and progress."

Similar narratives of violently clashing segments, and related frameworks of pluralism and parallelism, have been mobilized to explain the power of criminal leaders in contexts beyond Jamaica. Where authors such as Meeks and Scott were primarily interested in understanding donmanship as expressing *cultural* difference, other scholars have framed criminal organizations such as those led by Dudus or Zeeks as parallel *political* orders, rather than as cultural fragments. Drawing on Weberian definitions of the state as an entity that can claim a monopoly of the legitimate use of violence within its territory, they describe these organizations and their leaders as "parallel states" or "shadow states."[12] Such terms suggest that these criminal organizations are both separate from, and competitive with, the nation-state. The idea of pluralism also features in influential work on "violent pluralism," a concept mobilized to understand how multiple subnational armed groups that operate with impunity may coexist within formally democratic states.[13]

In Jamaica, the garrisons over which dons rule have frequently been described, both by academics and by the general public, as "states within a state."[14] This common conception of donmanship as competitive, and ultimately incompatible, with the democratic state came out clearly in two cartoons by the popular artist Clovis, published in the *Jamaica Observer* immediately before and after the Tivoli Incursion. In the first cartoon, two gunmen stand guard at the entrance to Tivoli Gardens, which has been barricaded with debris. The informal border that they are securing is marked by a makeshift flag proclaiming the territory to be "the Republic of Tivoli." As a Jamaica Constabulary Force vehicle drives up to the barricades, the gunmen demand to know "Where unoo going, unoo have unoo visa?" asking where the police officers think they are going and whether they have a visa. Here, Tivoli under Dudus—marking its own territory, policing its own borders—is understood as a parallel polity at war with the nation-state. A second cartoon, published a few days later, after the security operation had begun, depicts a scene of burning debris. The barricades have been torn down and the nation-state has proven victorious.

In the foreground, a tough-looking Jamaica Defense Force soldier, his smoking weapon strapped to his back, plants the official Jamaican flag, reclaiming the territory. Tivoli's flag, previously flown so defiantly, slumps next to it, the branch to which it was tied broken, its claim to sovereignty defeated.

My own research in Kingston—and specifically in a garrison community that I refer to as "Brick Town"—suggests that such portrayals of donmanship as separate and antagonistic obscure much of the workings of this political formation. To frame donmanship primarily in terms of parallelism or pluralism misrecognizes its enduring entanglement with not only political parties but the entire state bureaucracy and even the police. Given the various state-like functions dons fulfill, from welfare provision and security to taxation, I was initially also inclined to understand donmanship as "alternative governance systems" that mirrored and supplanted the state. Increasingly though, I came to appreciate the difficulty of drawing any clear boundaries between "the state" and "organized crime."[15] To give just a brief example, the local youth leader who was interviewed during *Your Issues Live* in Tivoli Gardens was on stage representing the Presidential Click Police Youth Club. Police youth clubs have been a long-standing component of the Jamaica Constabulary Force's community policing efforts aimed at improving relations between young people and the police in low-income urban neighborhoods. The Tivoli branch was named after Dudus's entertainment company Presidential Click—apparently, the authority of "the President" and that of the "Police" were not experienced as incompatible.[16]

This lack of a clear distinction lies not so much in any particularly Jamaican tendency toward corruption. Designations of "narco-states" or "failed states" generally serve to reproduce simplistic understandings of governance "elsewhere," celebrating Western Europe and North America as the democratic ideal. Yet the intermingling of business and political interests, and of legal and illegal economic activities, is similarly entrenched in these countries. As political anthropologists have long recognized, the boundary between "state" and "society" is always an unstable effect.[17] Acknowledging the blurred and performative character of this boundary is all the more important in the context of neoliberal models of governance, where public service provision is established through networks of state, commercial, and voluntary actors. This is certainly the case in Jamaica: in addition to state agencies, dons take on a range of governance roles. But so do local and international corporations, NGOs, and churches, often in provisional, fragile coalitions.

My interest in this book is not just to emphasize the hybridity of states or the networked nature of governance. More specifically, I seek to understand how dons both produce and straddle this line between "state" and "nonstate," and how this strategic engagement is central to their political authority. Credible

performances of authority will at times involve dons positioning themselves as outsiders or outlaws, working against the oppressive agents of the state to the benefit of "the people." Indeed, such performances may implicitly or explicitly speak to long-standing experiences of cultural difference and antagonism. They draw on shared experiences of "sufferation"—on feelings of cultural intimacy that pit an impoverished black Jamaican "Us," represented by the don, against an elite outsider "Them."[18] This type of claim to authority enacts a clear and antagonistic boundary between state and nonstate rule. Yet simultaneously, dons' authority relies on their ability to cross this same boundary that they help to produce. The feeling that they have a right to rule is enhanced precisely through their close connections to political parties, their success in attracting government investment to their neighborhoods, and their ability to credibly appeal to democratic aspirations such as "freedom" or "equal rights and justice."

AUTHORITY AS CONSENT AND CONSENSUS

By approaching donmanship through the lens of authority, I also aim to shift our analyses of don-like rulers beyond a dominant focus on violence. This emphasis on violence has frequently led scholars researching "nonstate armed actors" to frame the political formations that emerge around them in terms of sovereignty, understanding them as "informal," "social," or "street" sovereigns.[19] Such analyses resonate with anthropological understandings of sovereignty, which center violence. In an influential article, Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat argue that all sovereign power is, at its basis, "premised on the capacity and the will to decide on life and death, the capacity to visit excessive violence on those declared enemies or on undesirables."[20] They distinguish between informal and formal sovereignty, defining informal or de facto sovereignty as "the right over life" or "the ability to kill, punish and discipline with impunity," in contrast with formal sovereignty, which is "grounded in formal ideologies of rule and legality."[21] The scholarship associated with this approach has been important in challenging the idea of sovereignty as located only in the nation-state. Yet in privileging violence, and in contrasting it with legality, this framing in terms of sovereignty may obscure the salience of other sources of power on which dons draw.

While dons' ability to use violence with a level of impunity is certainly an important element of their power, in practice they do not rule solely or even primarily through coercion, conflict, and fear, but also through consent and consensus. How does a don's ability to force people to do things come to feel normal, natural, and right? Why do many people accept their rules and obey their commands relatively willingly? In short, how does power become authority?

Authority is generally understood as the ability to rule *without* resorting to violence. As Hannah Arendt notes in her classic text on the concept, "Since authority always demands obedience, it is commonly mistaken for some form of power or violence. Yet, authority precludes the use of external means of coercion; where force is used, authority itself has failed."[22] However, she also warns against equating authority with persuasion through argumentation, suggesting that this presupposes an egalitarian order, where subjects consciously decide to follow a course of action: "If authority is to be defined at all, then, it must be in contradistinction to both coercion by force and persuasion through arguments."[23] Authority, she argues, involves both ruler and ruled recognizing the rightness of the hierarchical relation between them. This commonsense recognition of a leader's rightness—the *consent* of the governed—is where authority can be located.

What, then, is the source of this recognition? On what basis is this right to rule conferred? Following Weber, classic sociological theory distinguishes three ideal-types of authority: traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic authority. In contexts of traditional authority, the right to rule is based on custom and on hereditary or ascribed status; rational-legal authority is based on modern state institutions and achieved status; and charismatic authority on the exceptional supernatural qualities of an individual leader.[24] While Weber recognized that these types were often blurred, much subsequent scholarship has been marked by a rough division of interest in either individual leaders and their specific, charismatic qualities *or* in political institutions, from monarchies to the state. In this book, I am interested in locating political authority at the intersection of individual leaders and state institutions. In understanding why people come to accept, and even embrace, dons and the often violent systems of rule these leaders develop, it is this intersection that is important.

In focusing on this intersection, my interest is in the relational dimension of political authority: in how authority is claimed by rulers, but also in how it is recognized by the ruled, *and* by other rulers. Understanding how authority is claimed means studying carefully how dons, consciously or unconsciously, rely on embodied performances of authority while also making use of established institutional mechanisms. Understanding, in turn, how authority is recognized means concentrating on how residents of marginalized urban areas, as well as other political figures across the city, assess these claims, and on what basis they recognize them as legitimate. Certainly, not everyone supports donmanship. Yet within Downtown Kingston, and equally importantly, in more privileged spaces, there is a level of *consensus* that dons have a leadership role to play.

Authority is a relationship, if always a hierarchical one. Here, I am interested in exploring it as a three-way relationship between individual leaders, state institu-

tions, and political communities. These political communities, however, are not necessarily preestablished. Rather, they emerge—and political subjects are formed—precisely through the acceptance of specific forms of authority. When residents of a marginalized neighborhood come to accept a leader's right to rule as a commonsense "fact," this also shapes their sense of themselves as a community, a body politic. Across such neighborhoods, I frequently heard residents distinguish between good dons and bad dons. This distinction reflects the extent to which donmanship as a system is no longer in question—it has become a social fact. Within this system, however, individual dons can be good or bad, effective or greedy, a blessing or a curse. The shared recognition, or conversely the rejection, of a don's claim to authority is an important element in becoming a political "Us." When a crowd shouts "*Legend!*" in unison, they not only confirm the authority of their don, they also establish their belonging to the same political community.

AFFECTIVE ATMOSPHERES OF AUTHORITY

I approach this dynamic, relational formation of authority by considering factors that go beyond violence. An interview with "Derek," second-in-command to a powerful Central Kingston don, brought this point home to me forcefully. He explained to me how leadership worked: "If they fear you, they will do what you say. But if they love you, they will jump in front of a bullet to save your life." Effective donmanship is built on this dimension of love. Criminal power does not rely solely or primarily on coercion. But mindful of Arendt's caution, authority cannot be understood as a conscious decision either; it does not result from careful argumentation and deliberation.

In approaching authority as a matter of both consent and consensus, I am particularly interested in the shared linguistic roots of these two concepts in *consentire*, literally, "feeling together."[25] The relational recognition of the dons' right to rule takes shape in a sensorial fashion—their power comes to *feel* normal and natural. Their power becomes authority not so much through the rhetorical, rational forms of argumentation that Arendt references, but through the senses and through emotions. Grasping this dimension involves a conceptual and methodological emphasis on the embodied, often precognitive modes through which authority is claimed and recognized. As I show throughout this book, dons' authority works through the bodies of their constituents. I focus in particular on the role of popular culture—reggae music, street dances, and mural art—in this process. While dons themselves strategically create or encourage some of these art forms as legitimizing practices, other forms develop more spontaneously, at the initiative of residents, artists, or other supporters. In the music, dance, and visual art

that celebrate dons, we can identify aesthetic-affective practices that enact forms of sensorial persuasion through residents' listening, seeing, and dancing bodies.

In Jamaica, music has always been political, as the lyrics of "Welcome to Jamrock" and "Political Fiction," played during the Tivoli edition of *Your Issues Live*, attest. But the political power of art goes beyond lyrics and textual forms of persuasion. At street dances held to celebrate dons, from "birthday bashments" to memorial dances, residents move together to the same bass-line, but also in honor of the same leadership. Being moved in this way by sonic immersion in reggae and dancehall music, revelers experience a powerful physical sensation of both community and political order.[26] Such street dances involve a manifestation of power through pleasure rather than through force.[27]

The aesthetic forms through which donmanship works also include visual culture: the walls of Kingston's low-income neighborhoods are decorated with memorial murals, including images of deceased dons. These artworks are public reminders of local histories of political leadership, normalizing dons' authority visually. They make dons visible as individual icons—indeed, as "legends." At the same time, by inserting their portraits into a Jamaican tradition of mural art that celebrates elected politicians and other national heroes visually, these artworks also depict dons' leadership as compatible with the nation-state and its institutions.

In emphasizing the aesthetic and affective dimension of authority, I also highlight how donmanship feels normal, natural, and right *within specific urban spaces*. Emotions and affects are not static—they circulate between bodies within specific sites and through specific objects. Authority, then, is also produced in an emplaced fashion, reflecting and reproducing specific political geographies.[28] The political effects of aesthetic forms such as music, street dances, and visual art are embodied, but they are also embedded in neighborhood histories. In addition, the aesthetic-affective practices that generate authority work through the built environment of these same neighborhoods—their streets, walls, and zinc fences—to generate affective atmospheres that envelop residents visually and sonically. This enveloping spatiality can produce an immersive experience of intimacy and comfort, of being watched over and protected within a don's territory, although this atmosphere may also include more ambiguous affective impacts, such as wariness and tension.[29] In explicitly approaching political feelings as spatial, I draw attention to the crafting and experience of such affective atmospheres, to the "currents and transmissions that pass between bodies and which congeal around particular objects, materials and bodies in specific times and spaces."[30]

My argument in this book, then, is that dons' political authority is fashioned relationally and sensorially. In understanding authority as established not through coercion, but through consent and consensus, I argue for particular attention to

the various aesthetic, affective, and spatial practices that constitute claims to authority and their reception. Dons' power becomes legitimate only when their role as leaders is recognized both by those who live in the neighborhood territories over which they rule and by political figures who operate from within more formal spaces of state power. Being recognized as legitimate leaders involves a balancing act, in which dons claim a position both as charismatic individuals who are a law unto themselves and as part of established state institutions. But this recognition is also achieved sensorially. In addition to positioning themselves both in and beyond the state, successful dons generate connections between people, spaces, and objects in a way that *feels* right.

RESEARCHING DONMANSHIP

In analyzing donmanship through this lens, this book draws on extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Kingston. Roughly speaking, it follows two interrelated extended case studies. The first is the "Dudus affair," which started with the United States' extradition request in 2009. The impact of the Tivoli Incursion, with its spectacular display of state violence, reverberated in the decade that followed. The handling of the extradition request and the security operation itself were the focus of two Commissions of Enquiry, and these events became the main point of reference for shifts in urban and security policy, from frequent calls to "revitalize Downtown Kingston" to a marked militarization of urban policing. My second extended case is of one low-income Kingston neighborhood. From 2010, I conducted research in "Brick Town," an area formerly ruled by an influential don, "the General." (I use pseudonyms for the neighborhood and its former leader—and for all individual interlocutors mentioned throughout this book.) Brick Town and the General were associated with a criminal organization I call the "West Side Posse," which had long-standing connections with the PNP, one of Jamaica's two main political parties. Working in one "garrison community" helped me to understand how Jamaica's urban and national transformations—including the Tivoli Incursion and its aftermath—intersect with neighborhood-level histories and power struggles, and how these are also entangled with residents' transnational mobilities and connections.

This research involved long-term participant observation in Brick Town, which mainly entailed a lot of "deep hanging out": eating and drinking at neighborhood cook shops, watching television and DVDs with residents, sitting on street corners chatting and watching passersby, shopping at the local market, and occasionally attending festive events such as street dances, or going on outings with friends to other parts of the city. In addition to this neighborhood-level fieldwork, I did

research throughout Uptown and Downtown Kingston, organizing a survey in multiple low-income areas and spending time with politicians, policymakers, bureaucrats, businessmen, NGO workers, police officers, and a number of smaller dons and their seconds-in-command, some of them retired. By using pseudonyms and omitting or changing identifying details such as gender or political affiliation, I have sought to anonymize my interlocutors and fieldsites; I do refer to public figures and places where specific political events occurred by their real names.

More broadly, this book draws on my long-term engagement with Kingston, which started with research on urban pollution in 2000, a project that first alerted me to the importance of dons in urban governance. From 2006–2007, I lived and worked in Kingston as a university lecturer and began to learn more about dons' connections to economic and political elites. Focusing specifically on donmanship, I conducted a total of twelve months of fieldwork in Downtown Kingston during the period 2008–2012, followed by shorter return visits to Brick Town over the decade that followed, along with phone calls and WhatsApp conversations in between. My analysis of donmanship set out here also draws on a larger research project on plural policing that I developed from 2013 onward, which included work with police, military, and private security companies, and which helped me understand better how dons are inserted in Kingston's broader geographies of protection.

Conducting research on criminal leadership, and concentrating on a neighborhood known for its high rates of violent crime, raises a number of methodological and ethical issues. Hearing about my research, common responses amongst friends and colleagues, both Jamaican and international, were "Isn't that dangerous?" and "Aren't you scared?" Often, these questions were explicitly raced and gendered: people wanted to know how a *white woman* was able to do such research.[31] Kingston's segregation along lines of race and class, combined with its high rates of crime, produce invisible boundaries that many are loath to cross. White women, in particular, are rarely seen outside the gated enclaves of Uptown Kingston.

In general, I did not experience this research as risky, certainly not while I was doing fieldwork. In the months that followed the United States' request for Dudus's extradition, dons became *the* national topic, dominating newspaper headlines, talk shows, and everyday conversations across the country. Nearly everyone I spoke to, from Brick Town residents to police officers and politicians, was surprisingly open in speaking—anonymously, but on tape—about dons. Moreover, being a foreign white woman largely seemed to make neighborhood-level research easier rather than harder, as Chelsey Kivland also found during her fieldwork with young male *baz* leaders in an impoverished Port-au-Prince neighborhood. She explains how her status as a *blan* woman generally worked to her advantage, allowing these leaders to approach her "with a degree of neutered professionalism," where their encoun-

ters with Haitian women might have been read in a more sexualized fashion. At the same time, Kivland's gender often worked to temper her racial and foreign privilege.[32]

My experience in Downtown Kingston was roughly similar. As I had also found during my earlier fieldwork, which concentrated on urban pollution in low-income neighborhoods, the appearance of a white-looking female researcher often elicited surprise, but only very rarely generated any hostile or otherwise overtly negative responses. My foreignness generally appeared to facilitate rather than limit access, and few residents seemed to experience my presence as threatening or otherwise unwelcome. Rather, they seemed invested in keeping me safe, and also in ensuring that I *felt* safe. As in other neighborhoods where I had worked, many people went out of their way to make me feel comfortable. Friends would block off a parking spot for me when they knew I was coming to Brick Town, walking me back to my car to see me drive off safely, or escorting me to the border of the community if I was leaving on foot, especially at times when things were "running hot." They would intervene if they felt vendors or passersby were too assertive or nosy in their interactions with me, but would also warn me if I engaged in behavior that might be read as suspicious, such as taking photographs of street scenes. Being married to a Jamaican and becoming a mother during the course of my fieldwork—and being accompanied by my husband and son on various occasions—perhaps also helped frame my presence as a friendly one.

During the first few years of my research, Brick Town was relatively calm. I was first introduced to the neighborhood by one of the General's relatives, and following some initial awkwardness I struck up a number of fieldwork friendships and felt increasingly comfortable showing up unannounced. The fact that Brick Town was not involved in any active gang feuds, and remained calm in the run-up to the 2011 national elections, contributed to my feelings of safety. Even when, starting in 2012, an escalating conflict between two factions competing over leadership within Brick Town led to multiple murders, I still felt relatively comfortable visiting. The murders generally took place at night; I experienced the daytime "vibes" around the market area of the neighborhood where I spent most of my time as more or less unchanged and I did not feel that I would be a target. The fact that residents seemed to carry on with their everyday activities, seemingly without feeling too much fear, also helped.

In short, my research rarely felt actively risky to me. Of course, the risk involved in a certain research project may be borne less by the researcher than by her interlocutors. In Jamaica, where the don's rule is *informer fi dead*, snitches must be killed, this is an evident concern. The frankness of my interviewees in discussing dons as rulers—as opposed to discussing their role in drugs and arms trafficking—suggested

that donmanship was not a taboo topic in itself. Indeed, Jamaican newspapers also publish regularly on the issues discussed in this book. Nonetheless, my research obviously involved potential risks for my interlocutors, both for those who were (or had been) involved in criminal activities and for those who were not. In writing up my ethnography, in addition to creating pseudonyms for interviewees, I have often limited or altered my descriptions of persons or places, sacrificing context and ambience for anonymity. As I began working to publish my research, I asked two Brick Town friends, whom I call "Keith" and "Mikey" here, to read a manuscript I had submitted for review. I was relieved to find that they did not recognize themselves where I quoted from my conversations with them. In discussing the text with Keith, I asked him explicitly whether he thought my research was risky, for the people interviewed or for me, and whether it would be safe to publish the article. Fortunately, he said he did not see any risk, not as long as I used pseudonyms, adding: "One thing me have to rate [commend] you for. Me rate that you never get into the drugs thing and the guns thing." Those things, he advised me, were kept very secret and if I started asking about those things people would get upset.

On the whole, these discussions and experiences gave me a sense of relative openness, but this had its limits. During an early visit, one of the General's relatives, "Lorraine," made a quasi-casual remark aimed at me, warning that "We don't want no *Born fi' Dead*, it mash up the thing." This was a reference to *Born fi' Dead* (literally, "born to die"), a popular, semi-ethnographic book by Laurie Gunst, a white American historian.[33] Recounting the violence perpetrated by transnational criminal "posses" as they moved from dealing with Jamaican politicians to assuming a central position in the US drugs trade, Gunst had apparently failed to properly anonymize the individuals and events she had observed, and allegedly this resulted in at least one revenge killing. Given my outward similarity to Gunst, and my intention to publish my ethnographic research in written form, I was quite shaken by what I interpreted as Lorraine's implicit threat. I was not sure how to react and in the end, I more or less avoided her section of the neighborhood until I left to go home to the Netherlands, three weeks later. However, on my next return visit, almost a year later, she greeted me warmly with a hug and never made mention of Gunst's book or my writing project again. Perhaps, as a Jamaican colleague suggested, she was just "testing" me to see how I would respond. Nonetheless, the incident, even if it consisted of no more than a nonchalant remark, made me consider even more carefully what I was writing, how it might be perceived by those associated with organized crime, and what the consequences might be for my interlocutors or for me if they took offense.

Such warnings have no doubt resulted in some level of conscious or unconscious self-censorship on my part, especially with regard to drugs and arms trafficking.

These illegal activities are an important source of income and weapons, and in so doing shape dons' ability to rule. Yet knowing or discussing the details of such activities is not necessary to understand their authority.

Violence in itself, whether legal or illegal, seemed much less taboo as a topic. However, and perhaps surprisingly, violence did not necessarily present itself as a dominant theme within my fieldwork. In academic circles, my analytical and ethnographic decentering of violence often elicited surprise and sometimes disbelief or even disapproval. In addition to asking about the dangers of fieldwork, audience members at conferences and seminars where I presented my research, and peer reviewers assessing manuscripts, would frequently ask, "Aren't you *romanticizing* the dons?" This charge referred specifically to my lack of emphasis on the violent activities associated with organized crime and "inner-city life." Such questions resonate with responses to Austin Zeiderman's research on insecurity in Bogotá, which also lacked a direct focus on violence. "Where's the blood?" his audiences would ask, literally or in so many words.[34]

In truth, violence and crime were significant background features of life in Brick Town, but they were not the only or the dominant theme, and residents did not appear to go about their daily lives in a state of fear. Throughout the years that I visited, residents would sometimes discuss historical or recent incidents of gang-related violence or police brutality amongst each other, and in interviews with me, but it was not a constant preoccupation. In their discussions of donmanship, they did not restrict their discussions to dons' nonviolent activities, which included providing local access to a range of public goods and services, from welfare and employment to solid waste management and the construction of public parks. They also confirmed the dons' use of violence although they tended to justify its use as necessary to maintain local peace and order, as I discuss in chapter 4. (A "good don" uses violence proportionately and in service of the community, a "bad" one is excessively violent or uses force primarily to further his own interests.) Dons and seconds-in-command I interviewed did not deny the need to use violence in maintaining their rule, although they were quick to emphasize that the threat of violence, or a reputation of historical involvement in violence, could in itself be sufficient. With respect to crime more broadly, quite a few of my interlocutors turned out to have been deported from foreign countries after having been involved in "a little drugs business," or had spent time in prisons in Jamaica, but they were generally not treated as scary, violent individuals.

The lack of "blood" in this book, then, reflects the fact that I did not observe many violent incidents during fieldwork, nor did stories of violence dominate in the interviews and informal conservations I held with residents. Beyond this relatively low exposure to violence—which may, of course, have been shaped by

my reluctance to look for it, or ask after it explicitly—I realize that my tendency to write "around" the violence associated with dons might in part be a form of self-censorship. My emphasis on nonviolent practices is also informed by an interest in countering more sensationalist, culturally essentialist accounts of sadistic Jamaican criminals and morally deviant inner-city residents. There is a persistent popular and scholarly imagery of urban Jamaica that centers on violence, and this tradition of representation sometimes also evidences an undercurrent of racialized essentialism.[35] While I recognize the dons' agentive role in perpetuating Jamaica's high rates of violent crime, to give it narrative centrality would be to misrecognize the extent to which their rule relies on consent and consensus. It is this fashioning of authority that is my central concern in this book.

THE BOOK

Based on this research in Jamaica, this book develops an analysis of political authority. I theorize authority as shaped both in and beyond the state: successful claims to authority involve credibly embodying an outlaw persona that stands outside of the political establishment while also connecting strategically to state institutions and mobilizing democratic ideals such as freedom and equality. Political authority is the outcome of mutual recognition by rulers and ruled—it requires the consent of the governed. In addition, a leader's authority within a specific sphere or territory must be recognized by *others* who hold positions of power—for dons, this means politicians, state bureaucrats, the police, and influential businesspeople. Showing how dons' power relies on a widespread belief in their right to rule rather than on a reign of terror, I explain how the urban poor come to experience donmanship as legitimate. Consent and consensus are produced and reproduced, and occasionally contested, in everyday urban life, as dons activate the space of the neighborhood and a range of aesthetic forms to foster deeply felt experiences of political belonging. I am particularly interested in highlighting how affective atmospheres of authority—those immersive, material-affective relations that lie in between bodies, objects, and material spaces—generate shared political sensations, making donmanship feel normal, natural, and right.

In chapters 1 and 2, I highlight, respectively, the histories and geographies of donmanship. Chapter 1 traces histories of political leadership, exploring how these have been narrated and contested in official historiography, popular culture, and everyday discussions. In so doing, it describes how donmanship developed from Jamaica's colonial past into its postcolonial present. Chapter 2 concentrates on the spatial dimension of dons' authority, demonstrating how their power is always rooted in those marginalized urban areas associated most closely with Kingston's

impoverished black population. It highlights the significance of Kingston's geographies of inequality, showing how conflations of race, class, and urban space allow dons to appear more proximate and more representative than elected politicians.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 examine how dons' authority takes shape at the intersection of individual, embodied forms of leadership and strategic relationships with state institutions. Each of these chapters focuses on one such institution, emphasizing how dons rely on personified leadership and sensorial strategies to craft a relationship to electoral politics, law, and taxation, respectively. In chapter 3, I discuss how dons' authority connects to electoral politics, building on their historical role as brokers within the clientelist system of "garrison politics." Dons' claims to authority are strengthened when elected politicians actively recognize dons' right to rule, framing their leadership in terms of participatory democracy. In addition, dons' party-political allegiance can strengthen their bonds with residents by allowing them to draw on the aesthetic, affective dimensions of partisan identities in ways that go beyond the transactional benefits of clientelist relations. Chapter 4 focuses on how dons derive authority from their ambiguous relationship to the law, showing how the violently enforced "community justice" system centered on dons can be perceived as more legitimate than Jamaica's formal legal system. Community justice connects to dons' role as security providers: despite their central role in Kingston's high homicide rates, within their own neighborhoods, the most powerful dons are credited with ensuring peace and safety. Chapter 5 analyzes dons' ability to extract money or goods from a broad range of people who conduct business within their territory. By taking seriously the widespread framing of such payments in terms of "taxation" rather than extortion, I consider how such a performance of consent reflects and reinforces dons' political authority. In the conclusion, I extend the general analysis outlined throughout this book, arguing that while donmanship represents a historically and culturally specific type of political authority, my analysis of this phenomenon can offer insights into the entanglement of violent autocratic rule and democratic institutions with implications extending far beyond Jamaica.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

A portion of this introduction is extracted from Jaffe, "Writing around Violence."

1. Most definitions of the term "don" include a reference to their involvement in crime. Charles Price, for instance, defines a don as "a politically connected local leader who wields power, status, and prestige derived from multiple activities, legal and illegal" and "typically provides social welfare and informal justice services." Price, "What the Zeeks Uprising Reveals," 79.
2. See, for example, Arias, *Criminal Enterprises and Governance*; Kivland, *Street Sovereigns*; Michelutti et al., *Mafia Raj*.
3. David Scott refers to this as "the quasi-anthropology of social pathology . . . the 'culture of violence' discourse that has such wide purchase among opinion-makers in the Jamaican public sphere." Scott, "Permanence of Pluralism," 297.
4. For example, Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*; Chevannes, "Those Two Jamaicas"; Hall, *Familiar Stranger*.
5. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*; Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*.
6. Meeks, *Envisioning Caribbean Futures*, 77.
7. Meeks, *Narratives of Resistance*, 4. For a similar analysis of these protests as an uprising, see Price, "What the Zeeks Uprising Reveals." Price found these events to be a form of "direct popular action" that is "couched in rhetoric about injustice that focused on people's physical and social welfare" (97). He identifies "a counter-narrative of social relationships and obligations that co-exist alongside the state's juridical, political, and economic obligations and definitions of justice and rights" (98). Christopher Charles also reads the mobilization on behalf of Zeeks as a form of political antagonism, or resistance, that reflects a deep cultural divide, interpreting the protests more expansively as evidence of "counter societies." Writing on Kingston's gangs in the 1970s, Faye Harrison argues that their activities could be seen as a form of "social outlawry," as attempts to evade escape and resist partisan political cooptation. Price, "What the Zeeks Uprising Reveals"; Charles, "Garrison Communities as Counter Societies"; Harrison, "The Politics of Social Outlawry."
8. Meeks, *Critical Interventions*, 178, 179.
9. Meeks, "Reprising the Past," 192.
10. Scott, "The Permanence of Pluralism," 298.
11. Scott, "The Permanence of Pluralism," 298.
12. See, for example, Barrow-Giles, "Democracy at Work"; Leeds, "Cocaine and Parallel Polities"; Benmergui and Soares Gonçalves, "*Urbanismo Miliciano* in Rio de Janeiro."
13. Arias and Goldstein, *Violent Democracies in Latin America*.

14. For example, National Committee on Political Tribalism, *Report of the National Committee*, 6; Rapley, "Jamaica," 28; Meeks, *Critical Interventions*, 185.
15. Jaffe, "The Hybrid State."
16. According to the United States, Presidential Click was the name of Dudus's criminal enterprise, synonymous with the Shower Posse. United States Attorney, Southern District of New York, "Jamaican Drug Lord Christopher Michael Coke Sentenced."
17. Gupta, "Blurred Boundaries"; Ferguson and Gupta, "Spatializing States"; cf. Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect."
18. In his conceptualization of sufferation, Jovan Lewis describes it as "an all-encompassing phenomenological condition where the experience of poverty is mobilized as a means for poor Jamaicans to organize and understand their world," experienced as "the lived spatialization of endemic poverty in Jamaica, and the inequalities and adversities that cause it." Lewis, *Scammer's Yard*, 27, 49.
19. Rodgers, "The State as a Gang"; Davis, "Irregular Armed Forces"; Kivland, *Street Sovereigns*.
20. Hansen and Stepputat, "Sovereignty Revisited," 301. This work in turn draws on the strong early twentieth-century interest in Giorgio Agamben's approach to sovereignty; see Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.
21. Hansen and Stepputat, "Sovereignty Revisited," 296. To my mind, the authors cause unnecessary confusion by defining "sovereignty as a tentative and always emergent form of *authority*, grounded in violence that is performed and designed to generate loyalty, fear, and legitimacy" (297, emphasis added).
22. Arendt, "What Was Authority?," 82.
23. Arendt, "What Was Authority?," 82.
24. Weber, *Economy and Society*.
25. For an elaboration of this approach to feeling together, see Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*.
26. See Henriques, *Sonic Bodies*.
27. See Kivland, "Becoming a Force in the Zone."
28. See also Brigstocke et al., "Geographies of Authority."
29. Jaffe, "Security Aesthetics."
30. Closs Stephens, "The Affective Atmospheres of Nationalism," 192. For a distinct but significant related approach to the spatiality of political feelings, see Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space*.
31. Such ideas about the difficulties and dangers of a white-identified woman's access were, in my experience, part of a complex dynamic maintained not only by non-black, foreign researchers or audiences but also by Jamaican academics and policymakers. The questions I received resonate with what Victor Rios calls the "jungle book trope," which surfaces in many urban ethnographies: a racialized trope of white researchers immersing themselves in dangerous black spaces and surviving to tell the tale. Rios, *Punished*, 14.
32. Kivland, *Street Sovereigns*, 28.
33. Gunst, *Born fi' Dead*.
34. Zeiderman, *Endangered City*, 29.
35. On representations of Jamaicans as violent, see also Thomas, *Exceptional Violence*.