Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’: Investigating the Lived Experience of the Rastafari in Ethiopia Through an Ethnographic Documentary

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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March 2017
In loving memory of my mother

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14 July 1923 – 9 January 2017
DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the PhD is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Maria Elizabeth Stratford
March 2017
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There are a few people whom I would like to thank for their ongoing and tireless support during the long and sometimes painful progression of this PhD.

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I would like to thank particular members of my family who also gave me encouragement and were always willing to listen to the endless conversations on a subject that may not have remotely interested them! My dear old mum, Dr Bernice Stratford, who undertook her own PhD after completing her medical degree, working full-time and taking care of her six children. I would often think about Mum’s workload when I was feeling that I did not have enough time to do my own degree! Bernice would ask me every week how I was getting along and offered pointers where she could. My dear nephew, Dr James Stratford, who would also give me sound advice and encouragement on how to get through the PhD minefield. My eldest brother, Mr Clive Stratford, whose opinion on my completed documentary was
important to me, especially from an aesthetic point of view, through his eyes as a fine art painter, and my eldest sister, Ms Jude Stratford, who was crucial in gauging my voiceover recordings given her experience as a stage and screen actor.

I would also like to thank my documentary editor, Ms Nadia Astari, who worked remotely with me from Indonesia and helped me construct the film and greatly assisted in making it look as good as it does. I was so fortunate to be introduced to Nadia and am so grateful for her suggestions and involvement in the documentary.

Most importantly, I would like to give a huge thanks to all the Rastafari Bredrin and Sistrin who agreed to be interviewed for this project and who gave their time and life stories with such generosity and candour.

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Conclusion

References
This PhD project consists of two parts, a 40-minute documentary film as well as a dissertation. Together they offer an insight into the Rastafari community of repatriates who have made Ethiopia their ‘home’. The documentary component offers the viewer personal testimony from repatriates who live in Ethiopia and discusses the current and longstanding issues that face the community there. The face-to-face interviews are interspersed with carefully selected contextual footage of Ethiopia. This footage consists of stills photography and moving-image clips that serve to highlight themes of Ethiopia, representing the variety of people, the street life across Ethiopia, the Rastafari and their iconography, as well as other aspects of place. The dissertation acknowledges my personal connection with the Rastafari movement over an extended period of time and offers a critical discussion of my findings from the viewpoint of the repatriation discourse and the Rastafari’s significant connection to Ethiopia. The dissertation also explores the approach I have taken in the making of the documentary and the way the film structure has evolved and developed.

Both documentary and dissertation explore repatriation, bringing light to the actuality of the process of return, as opposed to the folklore broadly disseminated through oral history – especially via the lyrics of past and present reggae music – by challenging the messages that perpetuate the ideals of Ethiopia as Zion and the ‘land of milk and honey’. The Rastafari interviewees repeatedly express that the livity (way of life) is not easy and encourage potential repatriates to come prepared. I investigate how the act of repatriation to Africa has changed (or not) the Rastafari worldview, concentrating specifically on Rasta who have repatriated to Ethiopia. The research also examines the implications for the repatriates and their lack of legal status in their new homeland.

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1 The Rastafari are known most commonly by three names - Rasta, Rastafari and Rastafarians. I refer to them as either Rasta(s) or Rastafari. These are currently the more common terms of identity. The singular and plural of Rasta is used interchangeably and I will use both in this dissertation.

2 The terms ‘repatriate’ and ‘repatriation’ are used by the Rastafari to reinforce the idea that they were taken from Africa as slaves during 400 years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and are now ‘re-turning’ to the continent where they feel they rightfully belong, hence the term ‘re-patriate’ rather than ‘migrate’.

3 Many Rasta refer to Ethiopia as Zion or the Gates of Zion.
By creating an audiovisual narrative through a documentary film, I have provided the repatriates with a platform on which to express themselves and to have their voices both heard and acknowledged. One of the aims of this project is to offer future repatriates and scholars – in the areas of Rastafari studies and documentary studies – a visual document and portrayal of the ‘new’ life in Ethiopia. The visual narrative is also a vehicle for current repatriates to offer suggestions to those Rastafari who want to undertake the same journey. They make recommendations for preparation for repatriation to ensure a greater chance of socio-economic and cultural success.

The research project incorporates ethnography, documentary, immersion and reflexive studies from the researcher’s vantage point of being a member of one of the Rastafari organisations, known as the 12 Tribes of Israel and having been associated with the Rastafari movement for many years. The dissertation also examines the process of making an ethnographic documentary in Africa as a solo female filmmaker, as well as its contribution to the development of my own practice. It also explores the changes to the Rastafari culture now that they are living as ‘Africans in Africa’. This includes the changes to – and expansion of – reggae music in Ethiopia, as well as discussion of Rastafari iconography and social practices, so well-known and widely recognised in the West.

The principal research question is:

*How can an ethnographic documentary film illuminate the challenges confronting the Rastafari community who have repatriated to Ethiopia?*
NOTES FOR EXAMINERS

Order of PhD
Please watch the documentary first and then read the dissertation.

For security reasons
At times I do not name the primary interview source I am quoting, but use ‘Anon’ followed by a number. You might have been introduced to one of the anonymous repatriates in the dissertation where they are identified by their real name, i.e. their Rastafari name; however, due to the precarious nature of the repatriates’ legal status within Ethiopia, I consider it an ethical responsibility to ensure that nothing I say or include in the dissertation could jeopardise their ability to stay in Ethiopia. If you require substantiation of these specific quotes, I am happy to show you the audiovisual or audio material it is taken from.

Use of a pseudonym
I have also replaced the name of my ex-partner with a pseudonym for ethical reasons. He is known by the name Dan throughout the dissertation.

Dread Talk
Throughout the dissertation you will read the language of the Rastafari, which is known as Dread Talk or I-Talk. Each time a new word or phrase is introduced, I include the translation in brackets. I have also included a glossary at the beginning of the dissertation.
GLOSSARY: Dread Talk (or I-Talk)

Examples of the Rasta language that are found in the dissertation. Some words that follow are also general words used in Jamaican/Caribbean patois.

*Dread Talk* often uses a positive inversion of many English words, which are perceived by Rastas to be negative or a way of keeping people in an oppressed social and cultural position. The Rastafari language has addressed this by using ‘I’ in many words (‘I-man’, ‘Inl’, ‘Selassie-I’). Two other common examples are the use of ‘over’ where English uses ‘under’ (overstand instead of understand) and ‘forward’ instead of ‘backwards’.

12 Tribes of Israel (TTI) One of the main Houses/Mansions of Rastafari.

*Baby mother* The mother of a man’s child or children who does not necessarily live with the man as his wife or de facto. This is general Caribbean patois.

*Babylon* A socio-political reality that oppresses and discriminates against the poor and vulnerable in society. It involves co-opting the institutions, individuals and organisations that wield power over others, such as the police, the military, the government, the church, etc.

*Bauxite* Used as an exclamation to express surprise (positive or negative) or excitement.

*Binghi/Binghi-man* Short identifier for a person who follows the Nyabinghi Order of Rastafari.

*Bobo* Short identifier for a person who follows the Bobo Shanti Mansion of Rastafari.

*Bobo Shanti* One of the main Mansions of Rastafari. Its full name is Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress (EABIC).

*Bredrin/Sistrin* ‘Brother/s, Sister/s’; the collective nouns commonly used by the Rastafari to refer to one another.

*Bwoy* Boy.

*Chalice* An implement to smoke marijuana from.

*Debil* Devil.

*Dread* Two meanings: the most common is a way to
identify another Rasta by referring to his dreadlocks, e.g. ‘Hail up, Dread’, meaning ‘Hi, Dreadlocks’ or ‘Hi Rasta’. However, the other meaning denotes bad or negative happenings, e.g. ‘The cost of food dread Rasta’ would mean food prices are too high.

**Dread Talk**

The Rasta language, which differs in many respects to the Jamaican patois commonly spoken throughout the country.

**Earthday**

Birthday.

**Ethiopian World Federation (EWF)**

An organisation established in 1937 in New York City and managed by Dr Malaku E Bayen, a close confidante of Selassie, to collect and transfer monies collected to assist with Ethiopia’s fight against the Italian invasion (1935–1941). Later, when Selassie gave 500 acres of land in Shashamane to the African Diaspora for their support during this time, the EWF was the organisation responsible for the management of and distribution of the Land Grant.

**Ganja**

One of many words to describe marijuana.

**Haile Selassie-I**

Most common usage of Haile Selassie the First, pronounced Haile Selassie-eye.

**Haile-I Selassie-I**

Haile with the ‘I’ at the end, pronounced Haile-eye. Most often used with ‘Selassie-I’, therefore Haile-eye Selassie-eye.

**Higglers**

People who sell their wares in the markets in Jamaica.

**Houses and Mansions**

The organised groups of different Rastafari, a term taken from the Bible: “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2). The three main Houses or Mansions are the 12 Tribes of Israel (TTI), the Bobo Shanti and the Nyabinghi, and there are other minor groups. A large number of Rastafari do not associate with any House or Mansion. These Rastas are sometimes called Univershal (Universal) Rasta.

**Idrin**

Idrin and Bredrin are interchangeable forms of address for Rastafari men, but Idrin often refers to a closer friend than a Bredrin.

**I-Man/I-Sista**

Me (male and female).

**InI/landI/I and I**

There are several ways that InI is presented. The meaning is ‘we/us/our’. Some Rasta also use this term in the singular.

**Ital**

Natural unprocessed foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables. An Ital diet also avoids particular foods such as
meat, fish (especially shellfish), mushrooms and salt. This is a diet that many Rasta follow and some only eat raw fruits and vegetables.

*I-tiopia*  
Ethiopia.

*Jah Rastafari*  
Another name for Selassie-I and often used in conjunction with Selassie’s name i.e. ‘Jah Rastafar-I, Selassie-I’.

*Kingman/Empress/Queen*  
An endearment to indicate that the male or female is your boyfriend/husband/girlfriend/wife or even another Rasta of the same sex. For example, some Rastawomen call each other Empress and some Rastamen refer to each other as King.

*Licking cup*  
A homemade bong or *chalice* often made from the shell of a coconut or a calabash with a hard plastic pipe or straw.

*Livity*  
The fundamental philosophy of how one lives life as a Rastafari.

*Nah Bow*  
Refers to the militancy of the Rastafari: they will not bow down or give up.

*Natt up or Dread up*  
Begin to grow dreadlocks.

*Nyabinghi*  
One of the main Mansions of Rastafari. The name was adopted from Queen Nyabinghi of Uganda, who is said to have ruled in the 19th century and fought against colonial rule. The full title of the Mansion is the Theocracy Reign Order of the Nyabinghi. Also spelt Nyabingi or Nyahbinghi.

*Nyabinghi (event)*  
Nyabinghi also refers to the African-inspired drumming sessions held by the Rastafari whose purpose is primarily to praise Jah Rastafari (Selassie-I). These sessions can last for many hours. There are three types of drums used: the double-headed bass drum known as *thunder*, the middle-range drum called *funde* and the highest pitched drum called *repeater*. Traditionally, only Rastafari men play the drums at a Nyabinghi.

*Ooman*  
Woman.

*Organ*  
Organisation.

*Overstand*  
Understand – an example of making a word positive, ‘over’ rather than negative ‘under’. You often hear Rastas say to one another in conversation, *Overs*? which means ‘Do you understand?’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ras/Rases</strong></th>
<th>Rasta/Rastas.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repatriate/Repatriation</strong></td>
<td>Term used by the Rastafari to reinforce the awareness that they were taken from Africa as slaves 400 years ago and are now ‘returning’, hence the term ‘re-patriate’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason/Reasonings</strong></td>
<td>Deep conversations and discussions on a variety of topics including history, politics, society, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selassie-I</strong></td>
<td>Short for Haile Selassie the First, with the ‘I’ taking on the positive, as is common in Rasta language, therefore pronounced Selassie-eye.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spliff</strong></td>
<td>The common word for ‘joint’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sufferation</strong></td>
<td>Describes the hardship and deprivation of the poorest in Jamaican society. They refer to themselves as sufferers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tams</strong></td>
<td>Knitted beanie/hat, often but not always in the colours of red, gold and green. Often worn by members of the 12 Tribes of Israel, whereas cloth turbans are the preferred head covering for Bobo Shanti and Nyabinghi Rastas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The I</strong></td>
<td>You (singular and plural).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trod/trodding</strong></td>
<td>Walk with, or move/associate with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uptown Dreads</strong></td>
<td>A derogatory term for Rastafari who came from more affluent suburbs of Kingston.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upfull</strong></td>
<td>In a positive way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wha’ gwaan?</strong></td>
<td>Common patois expression meaning ‘What’s going on?’ It is also a form of greeting, i.e. ‘How are you going?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yard</strong></td>
<td>Where someone lives; includes the house and external areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yout</strong></td>
<td>Youth, meaning young person or young people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I outline some of the personal background of my lived experience with the Rastafari in order that the reader can understand my connection with the research and how this influences my understanding of the aspirations of repatriation. I also discuss my professional background and why I chose to use a variety of visual and audiovisual media to conduct my research for this PhD. I introduce some key issues and events that will be expanded on in Chapter 3. These issues are connected to the significance of Haile Selassie, who was the last Emperor of Ethiopia, the Shashamane Land Grant in southern Ethiopia, the overthrow of Selassie and the three main organisations within Rastafari.

1.1 Overview

The research for this Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) has been conducted by project and consists of two major components:

1. An ethnographic documentary film shot in Ethiopia and Jamaica: Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’ (40 minutes’ duration)

2. The accompanying dissertation, Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’: Investigating the Lived Experience of the Rastafari in Ethiopia Through an Ethnographic Documentary, which discusses the insights into the Rastafari livity (way of life) opened up through the making of the documentary, as well as examining issues that arose during the production of the documentary from a creative practice and ethnographic perspective.

Together the dissertation and the documentary offer an insight into the Rastafari community of repatriates who have made Ethiopia their ‘home’. The documentary

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4 Shashamane is a town 250 km south of the capital, Addis Ababa. It can be spelt several different ways: Shashemene, Shashamene or Shashamane. The latter is used in this dissertation.

5 Further details of the Land Grant will be explained in Chapter 3. In brief, the Land Grant was 500 acres given by Haile Selassie to the “black people of the West” and is situated in a town called Shashamane in southern Ethiopia. This land is significant to the Rastafari and the repatriation discourse.

6 There are three main Houses or Mansions in Rastafari: the Bobo Shanti, the Nyabinghi and the 12 Tribes of Israel. There are other Rastafari who prefer to not be affiliated with any House or Mansion.
component offers personal testimonies from repatriates who live in Ethiopia and who discuss the current and longstanding issues that face the Rastafari community there.

I have had a personal connection with the Rastafari movement for 40 years and view my position as that of an ‘insider/outsider’: An ‘insider’ in respect of my close association with the movement over an extended period of time and an ‘outsider’ as someone in a research capacity who can view the community from a more impartial standpoint and make a documentary about them. This has enabled me to gain a more nuanced perspective of the Rastas’ lived experience in Africa in contrast to their lived experience in the West. As a result, this privileged position has influenced my interpretation and view of the success or otherwise of returning to the motherland, “Mama Africa”, as the Rastas affectionately call the continent. By living within the community during my research period, I have also been able to observe how Ethiopia has accepted (or otherwise) this newest group of people, who strongly identify as Ethiopian.

The documentary and dissertation explore the actuality of repatriation as opposed to the mythology disseminated through many oral histories and music – especially the lyrics in past and contemporary reggae music – by challenging the lyrics and sentiments that perpetuate the ideals of Ethiopia as Zion (Stratford 2011, p. 153) and as “heaven on earth” (Ras Mweya 2008). I investigate how the act of repatriation to Africa has changed (or not) the Rastafari worldview, concentrating specifically on Rasta who have repatriated to Ethiopia rather than to other parts of Africa, and how the lack of citizenship in their new homeland impacts on them. These issues are examined in Chapter 3.

In undertaking this research project, I decided to make a documentary film of the Rastafari in Ethiopia because an audiovisual narrative would help accentuate the cultural aspects of the movement, including their distinctive language, their dress and the use of Ethiopia’s tri-colour flag, elements which form a strong identity for the Rastafari, as well as other iconography and practices of the movement. I saw this as offering a richer form of text than the written word alone. For instance, throughout the

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7 The adoption of the term ‘movement’ did not start until 1960 (Niaah 2002, p.24). However, to avoid confusion, I use the term when referring to earlier times as well.
documentary the red, gold and green colours of Rastafari are often seen. In the West, these colours widely signify the Rastafari and reggae music; however, they were initially adopted from Ethiopia in the early part of the 20th century and are therefore prevalent throughout the country. To this end, once a Rasta repatriates, these colours no longer signify and identify Rastafari in the same way as they do in the West. They are the signifiers of the dominant culture of Ethiopia and are therefore seen in a much broader context by the majority of the population, rather than as a minority cultural signifier for the Rasta (Stratford 2011, p. 151).

From the perspective of my creative practice, I have a background as a documentary photographer, videographer and filmmaker. I have an affinity with and understanding of the power of moving and still imagery through over 30 years as a visual media practitioner. Imagery is all around us through advertising, media, television, film, social media, magazines (Bate 2009; Berger 1979) and more recently online moving image sites such as YouTube. I suggest that there is a greater fluency in ‘reading’ imagery and its discourse than the written word which contributes to a greater audience reach for the final documentary in countries where written literacy is not universal. The making of Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’ and my creative practice will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The face of Ethiopia was changing during the period of filming the documentary, which occurred 2008–2012. By 2012, many building and infrastructure projects were in progress, including two huge dams, which affected many communities in both positive and negative ways. My film documents memories of Ethiopia before and during these changes. One of these building projects, locally referred to as ‘the Master Plan’, had a substantial effect on some Rastafari by encroaching on their land allotments in Shashamane. The effects on other groups such as the Oromo people, who constitute 35 per cent of the population and are the largest ethnic group in

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8 Throughout this dissertation the words ‘West’ and ‘Western’ do not refer to countries situated in the geographical Western Hemisphere alone (such as the Caribbean islands), but rather to countries that are predominantly affluent and of European/American ancestry or following a more European/American lifestyle.

9 During the 1950s and 1960s, when many African countries gained independence from their European colonisers, a large number of these countries adopted the colours of Ethiopia in their new national flags. Ethiopia was the only country in Africa not to be colonised by a European nation, although the Italians invaded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These invasions were temporary and Ethiopia regained sovereignty over its borders after each invasion.
Ethiopia (www.gov.uk), are still being felt at the time of writing in 2016. There have been many deaths of Oromo students who were demonstrating against the effects of ‘the Master Plan’ on their land and their livelihoods (Human Rights Watch 2016).

Alongside these memories of a changing country are the visual records and oral testimonies of three Rastafari whom I interviewed and who have subsequently died in Ethiopia. These interviews and visual records are permanent reminders of three of the repatriates who made the journey, repatriated and died on the continent of their forebears. This type of historical record is powerfully chronicled through the medium of the moving image. The audiovisual interview material and cutaway footage documents for posterity the attitudes, experiences and dreams of people who made the journey to Ethiopia and settled permanently in the country that held a rich and important historical, cultural and religious meaning to them, and who succeeded in the repatriation experience. One of these Rastamen (who is now deceased) considered himself to be “one who has returned [to Africa] to claim my royal inheritance” (Priest Isaiah 2008, interview, 19 September).

I also consider it important to have a visual record of the Rastafari who live on the Land Grant that was given to the “black people of the West” (Bonacci 2015, p. 162; Sista Asher 2012, interview, 18 July) by the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie. The significance of this for the Rastafari who are planning on repatriating is discussed in the documentary by a Rastaman I interviewed in Jamaica, David McPherson, who repatriated, built a business in Ethiopia and spent five years there before the impact of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 forced him to leave Ethiopia as his business started to fail. He articulates the specific issues that people need to be aware of prior to making the journey and settling in Ethiopia. In the dissertation I am able to further demonstrate the importance of the issues that people face when repatriating, including topics not directly represented in the film.

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11 The land was to be distributed by the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) to black people who had helped Ethiopia in its “time of distress” (Bonacci 2015, p.162). These were the black people from the United States and the Caribbean and predominantly, if not exclusively, descendants of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
I originally envisaged visiting Ethiopia once in 2008 for a period of six weeks to undertake all the filming and interviewing. I based this timeframe on my past experience as a director/researcher. However, I found on returning to Australia after the initial trip and viewing the material that a lot of new questions had arisen from the weeks of observing and living among the Rastafari community in Ethiopia. I returned two more times, in 2009 and 2012, for further interviews and to film general footage of the country. In total, I interviewed 27 Rastafari in Ethiopia and several more in Jamaica. The interview process will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

1.2 My Personal Background in Relation to the Rastafari Community and the Research

In 1976, I visited Jamaica and stayed in the country for nearly twelve months. I went there to join a Jamaican musician with whom I had begun a relationship in the UK. However, not long after my arrival in the country, he was shot and wounded and, shortly afterwards, he left the island fearing for his safety.

Just prior to my arrival, a state of emergency had been declared in Jamaica which was to last until the middle of the following year – the country was pretty much in a state of emergency for the year that I was living there, whether it was formally declared or not. The social problems caused by poverty and lack of opportunity for people to rise above their circumstances had created a society where violence, including political violence (Chevannes 1994), was endemic, especially in the impoverished areas of the capital, Kingston, where I lived.

Among the brutality and injustice of Jamaica, there was a growing section of the society for whom ‘love’ and ‘respect’ were key words in their vocabulary and in their approach to life. This group, or movement, was the Rastafari.

As I was witness to, and also subjected to, the discrimination and hardship experienced by the Rasta, I was sympathetic to the notion of leaving Jamaica for somewhere else and, in some cases, anywhere else. The connection and identification with Africa both historically and culturally made repatriation to that continent the goal of many Rastas, who saw the Caribbean as nothing more than “slave islands” (Ras
Kabinda 2008, interview, 20 September). The impulse to examine this desire to leave and make Africa ‘home’ was what initiated my research project some 31 years after leaving Jamaica.

The Rastafari started to develop their movement in the early 1930s soon after the crowning of Haile Selassie-I as Emperor of Ethiopia. In the early days, this faith and culture was very much on the fringes of society, however, by the end of the 1950s there was discontent in the Jamaican population against the “deeply stratified structure based on a high correlation between class and colour” (Nettleford, 2001, p. 47) which favoured the brown and white middle classes. In the 1960s and 1970s there was a large interest in the Rastafari philosophy and lifestyle among middle class youth (youth) (Nettleford 1998, p. 311), who saw more validity in the culture and faith of the movement than in the established churches and belief system of their parents which continued to keep the majority black population in a condition of hopelessness (Nettleford 2001, p. 48). Although the Rastafari theology is based on Christianity, the hypocrisy of Christian religious hierarchy associated and cultivated through the churches was pivotal in the questioning by many young people about the religion they were supporting (Lewis WF 1993, p. 128). Also, there were the issues around the involvement of Christianity in the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Thomas 1999, p. 298) and the Vatican’s approval of the invasion of Ethiopia (Lewis R 1998), which helped influence the move away from the established Christian churches by many young people in Jamaica at this time. Rastafari is a faith and a way of life, a culture. At the same time as being against established Christian churches, Rastafari separate the churches from the teachings of the Bible. The Bible heavily influences them and many members of the movement live by the scriptures and teachings within the “holy book” (Rowe 1998, p. 72). Nettleford (1998) concurs that the Rastas’ reinterpretation of Christian theology puts them at odds with mainstream Jamaican society.

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12 In Rasta language ‘Selassie the First’ becomes ‘Selassie-I’ (pronounced Selassie-eye).
13 The argument for Selassie and against Christ, and vice versa, is still very much alive in Jamaica. In July 2016, I was in a route taxi (a taxi that follows a designated route) travelling downtown in Kingston when a huge argument erupted between a young Rastawoman who was travelling in the taxi and the Christian taxi driver, who was playing a Pentecostal preacher over his car stereo. Each person hurled abuse at the other, calling Jesus and Selassie bwoty bwoys (homosexuals, one of the worst insults in Jamaica) and cursing them loudly and fiercely for the entire journey.
14 ‘Faith’ is used to express the belief that Rastafari have in Selassie as their God. In some legal instances Rastafari has been called a religion (Lewis WF 1993, p. 131; Boire 2002); however, the word ‘faith’ is often considered a more appropriate descriptor.
My intention was to stay in Jamaica for an extended period, so I enrolled in a few courses at the Jamaica School of Art (now known as the Edna Manley College for the Visual and Performing Arts), including a photography course. I was the only foreigner in my courses and one of very few white students at the College. Most foreigners from Europe and the USA had left the country before and after the recent elections, fearing the democratic socialist government of Michael Manley, who had won a second term in office. So when someone in the street yelled out, “white gal! white gal!” (which happened often), I knew they were referring to me.  

Most of the students at the Jamaica School of Art and the neighbouring School of Dance and School of Music were Rastafari or sympathetic to Rastafari ideals, and it was into this community that I was welcomed and in which I stayed for a year between 1976 and 1977.

During this time, and with encouragement from my Bredrin and Sistrin, I became a member of the 12 Tribes of Israel, one of the three main Houses and Mansions established by the Rastafari. I was the only foreign white member at that time in Jamaica, and attended the monthly meetings and the monthly dances along with my Bredrin and Sistrin. I adopted the cultural practices of the House: I became a vegetarian, read a chapter of the Bible every day (“a chapter a day keeps the debil (devil) away”) and reasoned (took part in deep and varied topics of discussion) for many hours on subjects as diverse as world politics, especially in regard to the African continent, world history, the environment, slavery, the world religions and world leaders. It was an invigorating and at times terrifying time of my life, and it could be said that through the contradictions of the country and my experiences there I was formed as an adult.

As an outcome of this experience, I have always held a strong affection for and

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15 Other names I was occasionally called were ‘white pig’ and ‘CIA agent’. However, ‘white gal’ never had a racist or insulting overtone to it.
16 A common form of address used by the Rastafari to refer to one another.
17 Becoming a member was not an arduous process. I went to the 12 Tribes’ headquarters with my Bredrin, who acknowledged that I was someone who had ‘taken to the culture’. By this time a lot of the members had seen the ‘white gal’ around the dances and meetings anyway, which also confirmed my sincerity.
18 A term adopted from the Bible: “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2).
19 Although 12 Tribe members were not as strict as the other organs (organisations) in refraining from eating meat and drinking alcohol, most of the members I moved with were strict vegetarians.
affinity with the people of Jamaica – especially the members of the Rastafari movement – and a strong admiration for their strength and stoicism in the face of a nation that, in the early days, looked at them with contempt and at times treated them inhumanely. One of the elders whom I interviewed in Ethiopia was a victim of one of the most infamous atrocities against Rastafari in Jamaica, which took place in 1963. It is commonly known as the Coral Gardens Massacre or the Coral Gardens Incident, where a number of Rastas were killed and many more were incarcerated and brutally beaten by the police (see Campbell 2013). This event served as one of the three examples that I use in the documentary to demonstrate the abuse and hardships Rastas endured in the West and one of the catalysts for repatriating to Africa.

1.3 The Houses and Mansions of Rastafari

The Rastafari movement’s three major organisations, known as Houses or Mansions, are the Bobo Shanti, whose full name is Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress (EABIC), the Nyabinghi Order, whose full name is Theocracy Reign Order of the Nyabinghi, and the 12 Tribes of Israel (TTI). There are also many Rastafari who do not belong to any House or Mansion but move freely between all of them. In Ethiopia, the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) also has a strong presence; however, it is not one of the Houses of Rastafari although a number of Rastas are also members of the Federation.

Each House and Mansion has different cultural practices, some of which are based on strict, literal interpretations of the Bible, especially but not exclusively the Old Testament. The Bible is seen as a book written by ancient Africans (Owens cited in Rowe 1998, p. 73). There is no universal doctrine within Rastafari and distinct differentiation in practices and beliefs are observed by each House or Mansion. Some TTI members, for instance, do not believe in the divinity of Haile Selassie20 (Bonacci 2015, p. 373) and the eating of meat (excluding pork) and drinking of alcohol by members of this House are tolerated. Both the Bobo Shanti and Nyabinghi Mansions have strict rules on the type of food one is permitted to eat. Their diet is purely ital.

20 Prophet Gad (Vernon Carrington) created the 12 Tribes of Israel organ. He was interviewed on Jamaican radio, IrieFM, by Andrea Williams in 1997 and shocked many Rastafari by publicly recanting his belief that Selassie was the returned Christ as predicted in the Bible. The full interview can be heard at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uxflfiB4p1M. The relevant section is 8:10 minutes into the interview.
which excludes foods such as meat, salt, mushrooms and shellfish. The two latter Mansions also have a prohibition on women preparing food during their menstrual period (Rowe 1980) and, in the case of the Bobo Shanti, the women are separated for weeks during this time of their cycle long after they cease menstruating (Chevannes 1998b, p. 15). Members of the Bobo Shanti and Nyabinghi Order strictly adhere to most of these rules, with a more relaxed degree of regulatory practices followed by TTI members (van Dijk 1988, p. 13).

The TTI accepts membership of people from other cultures and ethnicities, whereas – in the mid-1970s at least – only Afro-Caribbean and other black people were accepted as members of the Bobo Shanti and the Nyabinghi Order. The Nyabinghi had a mantra of “death to white oppressors” which by the 1960s was changed to “death to black and white oppressors” (Chevannes 1994, p. 164). There was also a feeling of opposition towards the TTI organ (organisation) by others because a lot of the TTI members were from the middle class rather than the poorer classes of the ghetto (Campbell 2007; van Dijk 1988). As a consequence TTI members were often called uptown Dreads, ‘uptown’ indicating the location of the more affluent suburbs of Kingston.

My main association with Rastafari has been through the TTI and I therefore speak about this House in much more detail than the other two equally important Mansions.21 Rastafari repatriates in Ethiopia are predominantly from the TTI. However, although there has been a decline in Rastas making a permanent move to Ethiopia, of the numbers who are going, there is growth in the numbers of independent Rasta and those from the other Mansions repatriating as well.

In the case of Ethiopia, where the total number of Rastafari is very small in comparison with the overall population of the country, it was edifying to observe that the Rastas have largely put aside their differences and joined together to speak with one voice. There are individuals who represent the whole community on the kebele (neighbourhood/local government)22 committees and this helps the community as a

21 The TTI organ has almost completely stopped practicing in Jamaica however it is actively represented in a number of other countries around the world including Ethiopia.
22 Also spelt qäbäle, meaning neighbourhood or local government.
whole. For instance, Sista Shirline (2008, interview, 22 September), a TTI member, said that she sees Rases (Rastas) rallying around and getting things done, working on projects that benefit some or all within the community. This was not so prevalent within Jamaica, as the different organs worked predominantly for the good of their own membership.

1.4 Membership of the 12 Tribes of Israel

In the 1970s and early 1980s, one of the main roles undertaken by the TTI was facilitating Rastafari to repatriate to Africa (Sista Joan 2008, interview, 19 September; Small 2011, interview, 5 November; Tricka 2012, interview, 19 July). Rastafari, through the historical act of the slave trade, see themselves as people who have been ‘stolen’ from their homeland of Africa and their ideal; in fact, their ‘right’ is to return – to repatriate to the African continent.

The vast majority of Rastafari came from the stratum of society where a regular income was not common and therefore they were unable to afford this move. The TTI organ helped raise the funds required for a one-way airplane ticket to Ethiopia and a small stipend to help the Rastafari repatriate once they had arrived there. This was achieved through TTI members paying a small amount of money each month, called ‘dues’, and through holding a monthly dance and occasional live reggae concerts. The profits made from the dance helped fund the repatriates’ living expenses for a short while after they reached Africa (Burke 2011, interview, 10 November; Small 2011, interview, 5 November; Tricka 2012, interview, 19 July). This was how a number of the Rastafari I interviewed came to be living in Ethiopia.

The monthly dances were so popular that it was not unusual to have more than a thousand people attend the all-night event (Burke 2011, interview, 10 November). They were held at different open-air venues in Kingston and across the island where the iconic sound system called Jah Love Music would play until after sunrise the following day. The images of Rasta livity became embedded in my consciousness from this time.
For members who did not have transport, which was the majority of us, we would *trod* (walk) ‘up country’ hours earlier so that we could reach the dance by nightfall. Sometimes, if we were lucky, a large open-topped truck would stop to carry us part of the way. These trucks were generally full of Rastafari Bredrin and Sistrin who had been picked up along the road before us. There was a sea of red, gold and green within the trucks from the dozens of *tams* (woollen knitted beanies) worn by the members. These rides were full of joy and sometimes we would break out into song and everyone would join in, as we stood upright in the truck holding onto each other to avoid toppling over.

At other times, as we *made our trod* (made our journey), we would come across remnants of the slave trade in the form of huge, rusty water or sugar-cane wheels, which would give rise to a feeling of *dread* from my Bredrin and Sistrin. These reminders of the slave trade are still present in the countryside and in the cities of Jamaica. One can still see the remnants of an aqueduct and waterwheel that were used during slavery times on the Mona and Papine Sugar Estates, which now form part of the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies in Kingston.23

The majority of Jamaicans ostracised people who took up the Rastafari culture and often their families disowned them once they ‘took to the faith’. Rastafari identified with Africa and saw Africa as their rightful homeland, which was contrary to the majority of the nation, who saw themselves as West Indian, Caribbean people and wanted to make a successful life in the Caribbean. When one can see the remnants of Jamaica’s brutal history in the city and countryside, it makes me wonder how sections of the (then) contemporary society could ignore or, at least, not try to understand and acknowledge the legitimacy of the Rastafari sensibility, even if they did not follow it.

The TTI meetings were a chance for discussions, teachings and, on occasion, reports from members who had been on fact-finding missions24 to Ethiopia and other parts of

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23 In 2012 the graves of eight people were unearthed during building works on the Mona campus and the bones are suspected to be those of slaves who worked on the plantation in the 18th century. The bones were found in an area of the site where the Papine slave village once stood (Monteith, Lenik & Francis Brown 2012).

24 There were several fact-finding missions and a number of Rastafari in Shashamane told me that the first time they had come to Ethiopia was on such a journey. However, the first significant official mission was in 1961 when a group of Jamaicans visited five African countries to gauge how they felt about accepting ‘returned’ Africans from the Diaspora. The five countries were Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Ghana. They all expressed an in-principle acceptance of such ‘returning’ (Campbell 2007).
Africa. At one such meeting, where the fact-finding mission reported on their findings, I was dismayed by the – as clear to me – propaganda that was being reported. In short, everything in the Caribbean was regarded as inferior in size and quality to what they saw, ate and experienced in Ethiopia. This was in 1977, three years after Haile Selassie-I had been overthrown and during the time of the Red Terror in Ethiopia. Mengistu Haile Mariam, the leader of the Marxist Derg regime, was terrorising and killing people opposed to its control of Ethiopia. It is claimed that his regime was responsible for thousands of deaths and he was convicted in absentia of genocide in a 12-year trial in Ethiopia, which handed down its verdict in 2007 (Maogoto 2013, p. 303).

How, I wondered at the time, could the ‘fact’-finding group concentrate on the size of pumpkins and cucumbers, and leave out the frightening situation that the populace of Ethiopia was experiencing? This troubled me. I remember sitting on the grass along with over a hundred other TTI members who were so excited to hear about Zion, the holy land of Ethiopia. But what was coming from the fact-finders was very selective and at times wildly exaggerated. The desire of most of the members present was that they wanted to, needed to, repatriate to Africa.

I became curious about the strong desire for people to leave a place and, later on, understood the connection between the desire to leave and slavery. As is well-known, Jamaica was one of the largest and most prosperous slave markets in the Western Hemisphere (Austin-Broos 1995, p. 150; Thomas 1999, p. 211). This fact alone, and the desperate circumstances experienced by the slaves at the hands of the slave owners, hold much personal history for Rasta and others in the Caribbean (Daynes 2010) who do not fully separate their own lived experience from that of their forebears.

Even though there were elements of the TTI experience such as this, of which I felt critical, this was not enough for me to doubt the strength of community that

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25 It is believed that Selassie was murdered in 1975, one year after the overthrow of his Imperial government.
26 Also spelt Dergue. Further information about this event is included in Chapter 3.
27 After an appeal in May 2008, Mengistu’s life sentence was revised upwards to the death penalty (Maogoto 2013, p. 303). However, he was living in Zimbabwe and protected from extradition by the Zimbabwe Government.
28 This use of selective reporting was also present among some of the Rastas I interviewed for this research project.
surrounded me. This warmth and love were something that I had never experienced before in my life, and I overlooked some of the discrepancies and exaggerations I heard from time to time and looked at the bigger picture of belonging and community. I had become an insider who was part of the story and part of the community. However, even then, I had begun to interrogate what I was hearing and what I was seeing.

Just as the fact-finding participants all those years ago helped create an ideal of Africa, Ethiopia and the livity therein, I felt the necessity to create an audiovisual and written account of the Rastafari livity in Ethiopia as it is now, through my dissertation and my creative practice. To me this is a very important project; through my research and observations I hope to create a valuable project that enables people, Rasta and non-Rasta, to see wha’ gwaan (what is going on) with the repatriates and their lives as Africans in Africa. Through the written text in the dissertation, through the eye of the camera and the interviews they see and hear in the documentary, they can have a sense of what it would be like for them and whether they are prepared for, or are considering, repatriation.

1.5 My Association with Rastafari and My Filmmaking Background

Although 40 years have passed since my initial year in Jamaica (I have subsequently visited the country a further six times), I am still connected to the island in different ways. My son’s father comes from Port Antonio in Jamaica, I was a reggae DJ for some years and I have a weekly reggae music radio show that has been broadcast in Melbourne for the past 15 years and is still going strong. I also produced a three-part radio series on the Rastafari in 2006 called Rasta Nah Bow. The series covered the history of the Rastafari movement, the Houses and Mansions of Rastafari and, finally, repatriation to Shashamane. I interviewed a variety of reggae artists in Jamaica and the UK, as well as a Rasta academic at the University of the West Indies, Dr Jalani Niaah, who was the main thread throughout the three parts. My current project could be seen as a visual extension of the third part of the series, as it was through producing Rasta Nah Bow and conducting the research for it in 2006 that I discovered there was so little known about the Ethiopian repatriates. Through the years that I have produced and presented my radio show, I have interviewed scores of reggae
artists, and one of the regular questions I ask is on the topic of repatriation and whether they are connected to the concept. In other words, the ground has been set for me to undertake this project for a very long time.

My career in film began in 1982 when I started working as a freelance stills photographer in the film industry with directors such as Paul Cox, Chris Warner, Mark Gracey, Luigi Aquisto and Werner Herzog. It was not long until the desire to make my own films took hold and, after the birth of my son in 1984, I made my first documentary film, *Samba to Slow Fox* (30 mins). My roles in the film were as producer, director, researcher, co-editor and stills photographer. This film had sales and screenings nationally and internationally which encouraged me to continue making films even though I had not been formally trained as a filmmaker.

My second film, *Small Pebbles on a Giant Shore* (30 mins), was commissioned by SBS TV and screened nationally as part of the broadcaster’s *Australian Mosaic* series in 1987. My roles were as producer, director, researcher, co-editor and stills photographer. I continued to work in the film industry as a freelancer, predominantly as a stills photographer and production assistant on other filmmakers’ productions, for another decade. During that time I produced and directed a total of four documentaries, the two mentioned above and two others in 1991, *The Quality of Communication Part I* and *Part II*. The key idea that joins together the films I have made, including my PhD project, is that they all focus on either marginal or subcultural groups within society.

My professional career in film had an extended hiatus partly due to a recession that hit Australia in the early 1990s, leading to a downturn in the film industry. I had a small child to support and so, reluctantly, left the film industry for more secure employment. About seven years later, I was headhunted back into the industry to take up a position as Business Manager for Chris Warner’s film production company, Trout Films.

The training I received through making my earlier films and by working alongside some very experienced and well-known filmmakers has been beneficial for me in this research project. However, on my past film productions I was able to employ a crew,
which usually consisted of a cinematographer or camera operator and a sound recordist. Post-production professionals in the fields of picture editing, sound editing and titles were also employed. For Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’ I have worked principally as a solo filmmaker during production and worked remotely with an editor based in Indonesia in post-production.

1.6 The Film Project and Research Question

On 12 September 2007, Ethiopia celebrated the country’s third millennium with thousands of international guests helping the Ethiopians celebrate this significant occasion. This was a year after I had completed Rasta Nah Bow and I was still keeping abreast of all the news from Jamaica and Ethiopia concerning the Rastafari. Many hundreds of Rastafari from around the world travelled to Ethiopia that year. I hoped to as well, but this did not transpire. However, the following year I decided to start a master’s degree and the project I chose to undertake was a documentary film on the repatriates in Ethiopia. It had been many decades since the Rastafari had begun to repatriate and I had always planned to go there to see the community on the Land Grant. I saw this as a great opportunity to make a documentary on a topic I was familiar with in one respect and wanted to discover more about through researching the community in situ.

On doing my preliminary enquiry, it appeared that there were no documentary films so far that had been conducted as an academic research project on the repatriates, nor were there any documentary films that covered the repatriation discourse in any depth. I considered this to be a gap in the scholarship pertaining to the community in Ethiopia. There are, however, a number of short YouTube videos (3–15 mins) that tend to concentrate on the exotic nature of the Rastafari repatriates or are single-issue news reports. There are several written accounts of the Rastafari in Shashamane (see Campbell 2007; Lewis WF 1993), as well as three contemporary theses that began or finished concurrently to the period covering my research trips to Ethiopia. Each thesis

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29 Ethiopia follows the Julian calendar rather than the Gregorian calendar used by the majority of Western countries. In the Julian calendar, the years are different (e.g. the year 2000 in Ethiopia was the year 2007 in the Gregorian calendar), the number of months is 13, the number of days per month is different to the Gregorian calendar and the times of the day are also different. For instance, what we would understand as midnight the Ethiopians see as 6.00 am. Dan and I often woke up to what we thought was morning to find that half of the Ethiopians’ day was already finished.
highlights different aspects of this subject; one concentrates on the repatriation experience in Shashamane (Gomes 2011), while another excellent and very detailed study by Bonacci (2010) is nothing short of a forensic investigation into the history of the Rastafari movement in Jamaica, also covering the entire period of settlement in Ethiopia by the repatriates and others from the Diaspora. It also includes the relationship between the Rastafari and their indigenous neighbours and government authorities. Bonacci’s work was translated into English and published as a book in 2015. The final thesis concentrates on Ethiopian perceptions of the Rastafari repatriates (McLeod 2009), while covering aspects of the Rastafari experience as well. It is interesting that these investigations into the repatriates in Ethiopia all took place around the same period.

My research differs from these other studies in that I wanted to document, via my creative practice of moving and still imagery, how repatriation has manifested itself in Ethiopia. From my position as a TTI member, I was keen to see how many Rastafari had made the journey and still lived there, what they had done with the Land Grant and what sort of vibrant community was now living there 40–50 years after the first groups of both Rasta and non-Rasta had made the journey. Reggae music and its association with repatriation to Ethiopia was also a topic I was keen to examine: how one had influenced the other and how many reggae artists had permanently repatriated to Ethiopia. The timing of my research also extended past the completion dates of these previous three theses and it is therefore able to give more contemporary information in regard to aspects that may be evolving in Ethiopia for the repatriates, especially in relation to ‘the Master Plan’ and its effects on the community. These aspects are covered in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation.

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30 Bonacci’s thesis was completed in 2010 in French. It was translated into English and published as a book in 2015. Although I would like to reference her work in the year of its original publication, I could only read it once it was translated and therefore reference the 2015 book throughout this dissertation.

31 The early groups of “black people from the West” who travelled to Ethiopia to take up the opportunity of settling on the Land Grant were very few and came from the USA or Jamaica predominantly. The earliest and most well-known were James and Helen Piper, who arrived in Ethiopia in 1948 from the USA before the Land Grant was established. They were Garveyites and black Jews originally from Montserrat. Once the gift of land was granted around 1950–1955, the Pipers moved there, took over the whole concession and somewhat reluctantly gave plots of land to people who came after them in the early 1960s who were members of the EWF. They were especially hostile towards Rastafari even if they were members of the EWF. This group of people can be investigated in detail in Bonacci (2015). The current dissertation concentrates on the Rastafari repatriates specifically and not on Caribbean or American people who migrated to Ethiopia during the 19th and early 20th centuries.
Since the main form of communication to date encouraging members of the broader Rastafari movement to repatriate to Africa has been through the Houses and Mansions, reggae music and, to a lesser extent, the written word and online sites that are focused on the culture of Rastafari, I considered that a well-researched and factual audiovisual representation of the repatriates and their relation to Ethiopia was overdue; giving the repatriates a voice, hearing their voices and seeing the images of repatriation are an important extension of what research is currently available. It was also very important to me to tell the story without glorifying the repatriation experience, as many texts have tended to do. Therefore what issues I focused on and the approach I took in both the writing of the dissertation and the construction of the documentary were carefully considered in order to give a credible interpretation of the Rastafari within the broader context of Ethiopia. I will discuss the importance of the concept of voice in Chapter 4.

The ideals of physical repatriation seem to have been buried in the memories of the distant past among the predominantly older generation of Rastafari. The younger generation of Rastafari is not taking up the challenge of repatriation to Africa. However, being able to connect with the repatriates through the audiovisual medium, and to see the scenes and images of Ethiopia more broadly, may indeed rejuvenate the ideas and desires that were prevalent in earlier decades. The life experience of this current generation of Rastafari is quite different to those of their elders, who had to constantly fight the fight within a somewhat hostile society and against hostile law enforcement agencies. This is not to say that such issues have been eradicated. However, I would argue that contemporary Rastafari in the West are not as discriminated against as in the past. At the very least, this documentary will serve as a starting point for conversations on the issue of repatriation (among a broader audience than the academic community), alongside the written investigations that have been produced thus far, including this dissertation, which is the most current information on the livity and struggles of the repatriates in Ethiopia.

Although violence in Jamaica is still extraordinarily high, with at least 1192 murders committed in 2015 (Mitchell 2015), the economy has also grown over the past few decades (FocusEconomics 2017). This is clearly evident when one walks down the streets in Kingston. As a consequence, one could surmise that many younger Rasta
have a chance to live a better life in the West Indies than in earlier decades. Alongside this economic growth is the greater acceptance within society of the Rastafari, who, from my more recent observations in Jamaica, are now seen as a valid and valued section within the broader community, although they still suffer a certain degree of prejudice from mainstream society (Tafari-Ama 1998, p. 102). This broad acceptance is very different to the experience of earlier times. More Rastafari are now well-educated and many have entered conventional institutions, members becoming authors, lawyers, doctors, academics and many other types of professionals (Hannah 2006, p. 4; Lewis WF 1993, p. 134). This has helped with the “evolution of consciousness” in mainstream society (Tafari-Ama 1998, p. 102). There is now a dedicated unit within the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Kingston that studies Rastafari culture, the Rastafari Studies Centre (Mona Campus).

Perhaps the imperative to leave, especially to leave and live in Africa, is not as strong as it used to be. The motivation to migrate to other Western countries is still very high, as this migration is generally attempted to improve the living standards of the migrant and to assist the broader family who remain in the Caribbean. However, this impetus is quite different to the aspiration of repatriation to Africa, which aims, in part, to reclaim the individuals’ rightful place on the continent and bears no connection to increased financial security. In many cases the reverse is true. Many of the repatriates depend on financial assistance from outside the country at various times, whether it is money from Rasta organisations or from family and friends. This fiscal assistance is generally via international money transfer companies such as Western Union (Gomes 2011, p. 97; MacLeod 2009, p. 244) and is a source of antagonism among the local Ethiopians due to their inability to call on outside financial help when they require it. The urgency for the youth to leave Babylon and claim Africa as their ‘home’ may no longer be there. The reality is that the majority of Rastas who repatriate are older in age or are retired and have held onto that aspiration for many years.

32 Babylon in Rasta language refers broadly to a socio-political environment that oppresses and discriminates against the poor and the most vulnerable in society. This oppression is supported by institutions, individuals and organisations such as the police, the military, the established church and other forms of control, which are seen by Rastas as evil and discriminatory. The word Babylon is taken from the Bible, where it is often referred to as a sinful, pagan city. The evilness of Babylon is referred to many times in the Bible and its demise is written of in the Book of Revelation: “Then the powerful angel picked up a stone like a huge millstone, threw it into the sea, and said, ‘With this kind of sudden violent force Babylon the great city will be thrown down and it will never be found again!’” (Revelation 18:21).
As my research progressed, I realised that my core question required a greater focus on both my creative practice and the community I was researching. The question needed to investigate issues pertaining to the ethnographic nature of the documentary and how this documentary aims to help articulate the problems, concerns and successes of the Rastafari community in Ethiopia. The central research question is:

_How can an ethnographic documentary film illuminate the challenges confronting the Rastafari community who have repatriated to Ethiopia?_

Several of the specific questions that were asked during the interview process helped form the spine of the structure of the documentary. There were standard questions that were asked of all interviewees and occasionally their answers garnered further enquiry. However, it was impossible to include responses to all of the questions in the film and consequently others are addressed more fully in the dissertation. The core questions covered and asked in the documentary are:

1. How has the physical act of repatriating to Ethiopia altered you psychologically, spiritually and emotionally?
2. How does the lack of citizenship/permanent residency affect the Diaspora?
3. Why do some Rastafari leave Ethiopia when their plan was to permanently repatriate there?
4. What advice can you give Sistrin and Bredrin who plan to repatriate?

In the process of making the documentary, issues also confronted me as an individual and as a filmmaker which were totally unexpected and had consequences for the overall design of the project. I will elaborate on the specifics of the documentary production, the challenges faced and these shifts and changes in Chapter 4.

In addition to this, in August 2016 I was notified about the release of a documentary film shot in Ethiopia called _Shashamane_ (2016) and directed by Giulia Amati. From what I can ascertain from the trailer and other sources, Amati’s film is specifically about the repatriates in Shashamane. My film covers repatriates in the capital, Addis Ababa, as well as in Shashamane and is a scholarly work, which Amati’s is not. The research period and making of Amati’s documentary took place after my own project.
was shot; however, her documentary was released several months earlier than mine in 2016 due to my need to complete the dissertation component of my PhD. I have not seen the complete documentary, as it has not yet been released in Australia. At the same time, Amati’s approach seems a bit different to mine. Her shooting style is very accomplished, with highly artistic imagery denoting aspects of the Rastafari and their environment. My film style is simpler and may be considered more ‘raw’. The music score in Amati’s trailer is European/Western, whereas my documentary features Rastafari reggae music that relates to the issues of repatriation and Rastafari culture. I am unaware of whether there is any overlap between our interview participants and the information that we are highlighting in our films. There is room enough for more than one visual interpretation of the Rastafari in Ethiopia and hopefully our films can add to each other’s vision and interpretation of the experience.

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have situated myself in regard to my personal history in Jamaica alongside the Rastafari with whom I lived. I have given an overview of how that familiarity helped me decide on making a documentary film about their repatriation experience in Ethiopia. Although I have not made a film for many years, I have explained my involvement with the media of both photography and documentary filmmaking and why these media were chosen to study and record my research. In the next chapter I will explain the approach I took to undertaking this project.
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter I discuss why I decided to use the medium of film to undertake my research on the Rastafari in Ethiopia. I describe the methodology I used in the project and justify why specific methods were chosen. Drawing on academic descriptions of the fields of ethnographic filmmaking and documentary practice, I suggest that my research and creative practice intercept between these two broader fields of audiovisual production and are therefore appropriate for this study. I have used a variety of methods or approaches in this research including interviews, participation observation, memory studies, immersion and reflexive practice. They are discussed further in this chapter.

As previously mentioned, although some notable recent research on the Rastafari in Ethiopia exists (Bonacci 2015; Gomes 2011; MacLeod 2009), it has all been undertaken through written analysis rather than using audiovisual media to interrogate the repatriation discourse. The reasons for choosing to make a documentary are, firstly, because it is a form that I am familiar with through making nonfiction projects in the past. Secondly, I am very interested in developing and expanding my creative practice in filmmaking after many years away from the medium and, finally, because of the nature and opportunities that visual media can offer that the written text finds more difficult. MacDougall argues that the written form needs to work much harder than film to articulate, in particular, the sensorial behavior of a group or an individual. Film has an immediacy through its “complex interpersonal and multisensory context, as well as the nonverbal forms of communication that accompany speech” (MacDougall 2006, p. 43). However, I appreciate that the ability to incorporate a written component alongside the documentary allows me to expand in more detail on aspects of the research that may only be touched on briefly in the audiovisual project.

2.1 Aim of the Research Project

My aim, through my creative, practice-based research, was to make a documentary in Africa on the Rastafari who have repatriated specifically to Ethiopia and made Ethiopia their ‘home’. The call for “Africa for the Africans at home and abroad” is a much-quoted statement by the Rastafari and was originally made popular by the
Jamaican activist Marcus Mosiah Garvey in the early part of the 20th century (Barrett 1977; Cronon 1969). The predominance of the repatriation discourse still holds currency for numerous members of the Rastafari movement who live in various countries around the world, and I wanted to visualise the experience for those who have not made the journey but are still interested in the concept of realising the ‘return’ to Africa.

Another reason for producing an audiovisual ethnographic project is to give ‘voice’ (Couldry 2010; Heikkinen et al. 2012; MacDougall 2006) to the repatriates by producing an in-depth documentary rather than the moving image grabs one sees online. As Heikkinen et al. assert, “The concept of ‘voice’ is closely related to authenticity” (2012, p. 9). On a number of occasions I found that community members would shy away from being interviewed due to past experiences where the material had ended up on YouTube or similar content-sharing sites without their permission. They felt misrepresented or even exploited to some degree. Their authenticity, their voice, was compromised. The ethical considerations associated with making this documentary project are important to me because misrepresentation by filmmakers is not unknown. Nichols’ article on the International Documentary Association’s website (2006 n.p.) gives the example of Robert Hudson and Bobby Houston’s 2004 film Mighty Times Volume 2: The Children’s March, where it is alleged that the filmmakers used footage from one particular incident to represent another separate incident and that some fiction footage was interwoven with nonfiction footage without indicating that it was a re-enactment. Nichols also makes reference to Stanley Milgram’s 1965 film Obedience, where the participants were told they were being recruited for a specific scientific experiment but the intention was quite different.

Most filmmakers require written consent from all participants via a release form which clearly outlines the intention of the documentary and what the participant is agreeing to. This transaction generally helps alleviate misunderstanding and often involves a conversation between the participant and the filmmaker where concerns or

33 This feeling of misrepresentation and/or exploitation was told to me in a conversation with a repatriate whom I asked to interview. He declined and said the reason was because an interview he had done previously ended up on YouTube and he had not been made aware of this. The ‘grab’ was taken out of context and he felt aggrieved by it.
clarifications can be discussed. Nevertheless, there is no guarantee that the participants will be satisfied with how they are portrayed in the final film, no matter how fair you as the filmmaker think you are being. As a consequence, having their footage shown to the participants prior to the completion of the film can actually work against the best interests of the project. They are looking at an isolated aspect of the film, viewing their own representation rather than the narrative in its entirety. The filmmaker needs to make a judgement as to whether the documentary would lose its purity and spontaneity by reshooting the participant’s interview. The result could be footage that resides somewhere between candid fact and fiction, which would be detrimental to the final project.

As *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* engages visually and aurally with the repatriation story of the Rastafari community in Ethiopia, I have embraced an interpretive methodology focusing on naturalistic inquiry (Frey et al. 1999, p. 259) and reflexive practice to produce and inform the final research project. Interpretive methodology focuses predominantly on the “understanding and meaning-making” (Bhattacharya 2012; Denzin 1999) of the research. It acknowledges that the information gained through participant observation is strongly influenced by the “interests and values of the observer” (Smith 2012, p. 461) and that ‘understanding’ and ‘interpretation’ are inextricably bound together. Part of my emphasis is on participant observation and naturalistic inquiry as research methods. Naturalistic inquiry works alongside interpretative methodology as part of an ethnographic method. One of the tenets of naturalistic inquiry is that there are multiple realities that are “socially constructed” (Owen 2012, p. 548). Owen emphasises the importance of the research being in situ and that the participants are going about their everyday activities (2012, p. 548) without interference from the researcher. He also notes that the research outputs can be “value-laden” due to the personal experience of the researcher in relation to the topic being investigated and the prior interest the researcher has in the topic. These methods are therefore well-suited to my specific interest in and experience with the community being researched. The impetus of both the written and creative practice components is to ensure that my research does not overly interfere with the daily life and processes of the repatriates; hence a naturalistic inquiry is pertinent.
Interpretive methodology is consistent with the production of an ethnographic documentary film and a written dissertation. The interpretive nature of my enquiry complements what I consider to be a privileged vantage point due to my personal relationship and connection to the Rastafari movement discussed in the Introduction. This position can “offer space for the readers to see the intentions – and not just the theories and methodologies – of the researcher” (Dauphinee cited in Denshire 2014, p. 843). In other words, my documentary film is not an analytical presentation of an unfamiliar community in Ethiopia, but a response to a culture that I have a strong affinity with and admiration for, especially in light of the continuous struggle represented by the repatriates’ experience. Within this familiarity there are times when the participants express great satisfaction with their environment. However, there are also times when the viewer will hear murmurings of discontent and I openly address this in the documentary by including dialogue from the Rastas describing issues that concern them. In the dissertation I am able to expand in more detail on these and other issues that affect the repatriates. I hope that the audience assessment of the life lived by the repatriates can stimulate practical and enlightened debate or simply a greater understanding around the process and success (or otherwise) of repatriation to Ethiopia and why it is so important to the Rastafari. Along with the deep satisfaction of the repatriates, there are many obstacles to success and many compromises that have had to be made on a continual basis, and it is important to examine both sides of the experience. This can be seen in the documentary and is also discussed in Chapter 3, which concentrates on the Rastafari livity and looks at the alterations and concessions they have made to their cultural practices once they have repatriated to Ethiopia.

In Chapter 4, I reflect on the making of the documentary and the different aspects and stages that made up that long and interesting process. One of the principles of reflexivity is transparency. Heikkinen et al. (2012, p. 9) assert that the description of the researcher’s materials and methods needs to be clear, and I therefore cover all aspects of the documentary process in detail. My main emphasis during the making of the documentary was on the ethics of voice. Through my research I have explored how effective (or otherwise) the repatriation experience has been for those who have settled in Ethiopia, and within the documentary I have incorporated footage and photographs of the broader Ethiopian context in which they live. In turn, I have also
reflected on how my use of audiovisual media has been able to convey a greater understanding of the Rastafari community’s *livity* by communicating and expressing this through the “connections between semiotic chains of signification” (Macleod & Holdridge 2002, p. 6). Semiotically, many still or moving images that appear in the documentary signify aspects of Ethiopia that I saw and experienced while undertaking my research. Different audiences will interpret the images differently because the ‘reader’ is influenced by their specific education, their cultural background and, in the case of some Rastafari, their preservation of the mythology around Ethiopia as *Zion* and the Promised Land (Nettleford 1998, p. 320). The Rasta audiovisual experience could therefore be different to the experience of a local Ethiopian who may not appreciate the continued reminders of the last Emperor through images of Selassie and the Lion of Judah that are displayed by the Rastafari in Shashamane and Addis Ababa (Campbell 2007). There may also be objections to the photographs that show ‘old’, ‘traditional’ aspects of Ethiopia rather than concentrating on the imagery that represents a growing and developing nation. My argument in regard to these possible objections is that many of the rural areas are still ignored in favour of more vibrant areas of the country where land can be used by foreign investors.

Geertz also uses the word “transparencies”, but in a different and equally pertinent way to that of Heikkenen et al. (2012, p. 9), to describe the intensity and sensorial nature of images that evoke “sound, smells, heat and cold” (cited in MacDougall 2006, p. 33). The sensorial nature of images and sounds is celebrated within my documentary through the themed sections that highlight aspects of life within Ethiopia. MacDougall identifies the difference between the written word and visual representation eloquently when describing the power of the moving image, and also photography, in conveying the sensations one experiences of people and environment by observing imagery. He explains that, whereas the written word is generally linear and conveys emotions and descriptions one by one, visual imagery is more likely to give a “composite vision” of the same sensorial experience; we are able to see and experience the “interactive postures and gestures” simultaneously (MacDougall 2006, p. 42). MacDougall continues, “Sound and image together can generate powerful synesthetic responses, creating a heightened sense of space, volume, and texture” (2006, p. 42).
2.2 Lived Experience and the Sense of Place

The visualisation of place is explored in this project. The Rasta community sees Africa as their ‘home’ and repatriation as the process to reach ‘home’. The general population of Rastafari in the West mentally visualise (and theorise) Ethiopia in a way that is often very different from the reality on the ground and in some cases popular culture, through music and art, perpetuates this myth. It is natural to show one’s exuberance for a special place such as Ethiopia to the Rastafari; however, it is also important to advise an audience of the trials and tribulations that will be experienced there as either an independent traveller or someone who is hoping to repatriate to the country. Many people who repatriate, or go to Ethiopia with the intention to repatriate, end up leaving the country and returning to the West. Part of this stems from their inability to cope with the country they are seeing and experiencing for the first time. This is exacerbated by the lack of audiovisual material showing potential repatriates and the broader community of Rastafari what Ethiopia actually looks like so that they are more prepared for what to expect once they reach there. As Ras Hailu recounts in the documentary, “Leaving a developed country like England, I automatically thought that I would jump from there and see lots of big buildings in Ethiopia” (Ras Hailu 2008, interview, 21 September), but the reality was quite different. However, over the past five years in particular, the rate of development in Ethiopia has greatly increased and a new vision of Ethiopia is evolving.

Ethically, as a documentary filmmaker it is imperative to me that my film is an authentic representation of what the filmmaker experienced during time spent in situ. The intentionality of choosing what to film and how to edit the footage in post-production indicates the resolve of the filmmaker to explore one particular narrative out of many narratives. What I experienced in Ethiopia is not only what I saw through my eyes, but also what I smelt in the air, how I travelled through the country, what hardships I endured in capturing the everyday nature of the project. This is the experience of all new repatriates and travellers as well. I have created a project that mirrors, to some extent, what one will see and whom one will encounter in the community and beyond. The physicality of the experience, the joys experienced, alongside the friendships made and the inevitable frustrations with people and place, inform the sense of authenticity in what has been produced as the final audiovisual.
text – the documentary – and to a degree exemplifies what Pink calls “sensory ethnography” (2015).

I have intentionally included a substantial amount of incidental or atmospheric footage of the broader Ethiopian community, recording the everyday events in the streets rather than concentrating completely on cutaway footage of the Rastafari themselves. This is a deliberate strategy to place the Rastafari in the larger context of the country and the area where they live, rather than visualising them as an enclosed silo or community within Ethiopia. My intention is to engage the viewer in the Ethiopia that I viewed each day, which is also the Ethiopia that the repatriates view and experience each day. This will hopefully also facilitate an ‘experience of place’ by viewers of the documentary. Favero (2014, p. 167) invites us “to move away from the frame … and to pay attention to the context surrounding [it]”. By giving a broader view of the country and its people, which includes the Rastafari, and by incorporating themed still image narratives within the body of the documentary, I situate the repatriates within ‘place’. This also situates the viewer in ‘place’ and helps to create a “sense of virtual intimacy” (Biella 2008 cited in Pink 2015a, p. 172). Through this process the viewer is able to “participate in the constitution of a renewed ethnographic place, and to arrive at a particular form of multisensory knowing” (Pink 2015a, p.172).

2.3 The Participants and My Relationship With Them

Over the three research trips I took to Ethiopia from 2008–2012, I interviewed 27 Rastafari members of the community who were living in either Shashamane or Addis Ababa, and one Ethiopian (Oromo) mother and her son. There were 17 Rastamen and 10 Rastawomen. I also interviewed three Rastamen in Jamaica during 2010–2012 who had lived in Ethiopia for some time and returned to Jamaica for various reasons. The nine repatriates who ended up in the documentary are four Rastamen who are currently living in Ethiopia, one Rastaman who ‘goes and comes’, one Rastaman in Jamaica who repatriated but returned to the West and three Rastawomen who reside in Ethiopia.

34 Members of the community have informed me that three of the Rastamen I interviewed are now deceased.
By observing the dynamics within the Jamaican *Safar*\(^\text{35}\) (Jamaican Village) over the period of four years, I noticed that there was a steadfast group of repatriates who were permanently living in Shashamane and I also encountered three further groups of Rastas. They were:

1. People who practised another form of repatriation which basically involved spending some time in Ethiopia and returning periodically to the West. This gave them the opportunity to replenish their finances by working and saving money that was required to build a house and set themselves up in Ethiopia. This group of people were generally ‘going and coming’ with the aim of permanent repatriation in the future.

2. People who repatriated but found the *livity* too difficult and returned to the West.

3. Visitors who would come for a short time and then return to their lives in the West.

Each of these groups helped to build a picture of repatriation’s strengths and weaknesses and how this impacted on the ideal of returning permanently to Africa. It also held an emotional resonance for the people who stayed. I felt this myself when I returned and found that people I had formed friendships with had since returned to the West. Referring specifically to action research, Heikkinen et al. use the term “subjective adequacy” and ask what sort of relationship the researcher has with their research subjects (2012, p. 8). I feel that their question is relevant to other forms of research as well and this was very much the case in relation to my own research journey. Remaining totally objective when living among and communicating on a daily basis with people in a community is unrealistic. The relationship that I built with the participants was an important aspect of my process and production of the film. My longstanding relationship with the Rastafari spans four continents and 40 years and I saw this as an advantage in helping gain acceptance by the community, an *entrée* of

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\(^{35}\) The area in Shashamane where the Land Grant is and where a lot of the Rastafari live is known as the Jamaican *Safar*, the Jamaican Village (Gomes 2011) or Jamaican Neighbourhood (Bonacci 2015). It is also spelt *safär*. 
sorts. I half-expected to meet Bredrin and Sistrin whom I knew from earlier times.\textsuperscript{36} My relationship with the participants began with a cultural and historical familiarity rather than a personal relationship, since most of the repatriates were of a similar age to me and therefore our experience of Rastafari in the West (and all that that entailed) was familiar to us all. There was an \textit{overstanding} (understanding) that needed no verbal explanation. However, in saying that, when one spends so much time within a community (in total, more than five months over a four-year period), relationships develop such as the friendships between some of the women and myself.

My walking around the Jamaican \textit{Safar} holding a still or moving image camera became the norm and I was never asked by repatriates or local Ethiopians what I was doing filming and recording there. I had become a “convincing ‘I’” (Geertz 1988, p. 79).\textsuperscript{37} Grushka suggests that, “For artists reflective orientations are essential between the affective self, engagement with their medium and their socially discursive constructed ways of knowing” (2005, p. 354). This is relevant for filmmakers as well. It involved being able to have the assurance that, through my knowledge of visual storytelling and knowledge of the community, what I was doing in creating a narrative on the life of the Rastas in Ethiopia was pivotal to further understanding of the repatriation experience. Whether I was filming or shooting stills in public areas or filming the daily lives of the people in the streets or in the marketplaces, the imagery was helping to build a more robust and complete visual description and character of ‘Ethiopia the country’ and the Rastas’ place within it. The sensitivity, the empathy, the curiosity that one has when creating images is influenced, as Macintyre and Mackenzie (1992) state, by “the experience, the motivations and the social positions of the photographers [that] are intrinsic to the images [they produce]” (cited in Pink 2011).

This is true within my own experience and reminds me of an incident that occurred in Ethiopia when I first went there in 2008. During this first trip there were literally hundreds of homeless boys all over the city of Addis Ababa and it was most distressing. One day I was photographing a monument of the Lion of Judah, which

\textsuperscript{36} I did meet one Rastaman who recognised me immediately from 1976 and started to speak to me about people we both knew. I could not recognise him at all.

\textsuperscript{37} Geertz (1988, p.79) argues, in regard to authentic creative practice, “to become a convincing ‘I-witness’, one must, so it seems, first become a convincing ‘I’ (whether researcher, artist or subject)”.
appears in the final documentary, and a fight broke out in front of me between three young homeless boys who were dressed in filthy, tattered rags. They were fighting over a sandal; one boy had one of the sandals on his foot but the other one was being fought over. As most of their days were spent roaming the streets begging, the comfort of a sandal was not to be underestimated and was therefore worth fighting for. Although I photographed a sequence of the boys fighting, I have not published them and probably never will; they serve as part of my personal memories of the city as I first encountered it. I could have included them in the documentary, but I felt that that was not appropriate to the story I am telling. They represented an aspect of Ethiopian society that was not present to me in the other two trips I made. However, whenever there was a feast day, the roads would be lined with beggars who were often sick with leprosy and other terrible diseases. I never photographed these people.

2.4 Gathering Data – Tools and Techniques

Over the period of time I spent with the community, I adopted a mixed-methods approach using digital ethnography and documentary practices while incorporating narrative inquiry and participation/observation methods. The research timeframe and data collection span approximately eight years, incorporating visits to Jamaica as well. My acquired knowledge through lived experience with the Rastafari is partially acknowledged through the inclusion of photographs that I took in Jamaica 40 years ago when I began studying photography in Kingston. Although the bulk of the research took place in a country that was new to me, Ethiopia, the environment that the Rastas live in, the town of Shashamane, was very familiar. I found the Jamaican Safar to be a little Caribbean society existing within a broader Ethiopian context. This familiarity, this ‘knowing’, is gained, as Gibson asserts, “somewhat by immersion and then somewhat by exertion and reflection” (2010 n.p.). In relation to my ‘knowing’, it was also through my past experience: I had been and was a part of it.

During each visit I immersed myself into the community by spending time with each person at their home or place of work, eating with them or at their restaurants, etc. I

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38 When I returned six months later to Addis Ababa, there were no child beggars in the streets. An NGO had apparently taken an interest in their welfare and was assisting them. Most of them, I was told, were orphans of AIDS victims. There had been many girls as well, but I had only seen them occasionally. The boys and girls had slept under the bridges in large numbers, possibly as a form of protection.
was engaged with what was happening every day and ‘writing’ the story in real time through the process of filming and recording sound. Hemley describes the immersion narrative as “shaping and creating a story happening in the present while unabashedly lugging along all that baggage that makes up the writer’s personality: his or her memories, culture, and opinions” (2012, p. 8). This relates directly to the way I interpreted what I observed, which, in turn and in this specific situation, was affected by my memories and experiences of Rastafari culture. This affected the material I garnered while in situ. The ‘immersion narrative’ therefore “is as much forward-looking as backward … in which the writer is a part of the story being told” (Hemley 2012, p. 8). My immersion into the community of Rastafari is longstanding, but in the case of this particular project the story being told is not principally about the writer, as would be the case in an auto-ethnographic approach. However, in a similar vein to auto-ethnography, immersion writing is told in the first person and serves to engage the reader more intimately in the narrative and the experience of the writer (Ellis et al. 2011).

As well as undertaking participant observation methods, I conducted individual face-to-face interviews with all the participants using similar open-ended questions. Apart from the four principal questions that are explored in the documentary, some examples of other questions asked are:

1. What was life like for you growing up in the Caribbean?
2. When did you become a Rastafari?
3. Why did you choose Ethiopia to repatriate to rather than one of the West African countries?
4. Was it hard to settle into life in Ethiopia when you first arrived?
5. What are some of the positive aspects of repatriation to Ethiopia?
6. What are some of the challenges you experienced in repatriating to Ethiopia?
7. Do you miss anything from the West?
8. What is the relationship like between the repatriates and the local Ethiopians?

As I travelled to many areas of Ethiopia, I found that the entire country was a rich source of audiovisual material. Ethiopia has so much variety in terms of ethnicity, language, culture and music. I recorded footage and took many still images in a
variety of towns and villages throughout Ethiopia. In the film, this imagery represents the fact that the whole country of Ethiopia holds great significance in the discourse of Rastafari and not just the Land Grant in Shashamane. These images give a more holistic view of the country that repatriates have connected with and serve to visualise the sense of place and culture that some of the Rastafari spoke to me about during their interviews. I have populated the documentary with periodic still and moving image themes based on the following topics:

1. Ethiopian homes
2. Rastafari iconography
3. Ethiopian portraits
4. Religious images
5. Street life in Ethiopia
6. Rastafari portraits

The themed moving-image sections include:

1. Homes and families
2. Market scenes
3. Transport and animals
4. Children in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has a huge diversity of cultures, music and religious practices with more than 80 different ethnic groups. As Ras Hailu states in the documentary, “I’ve grown accustom[ed] here, rich cultures, diverse cultures. People love me and I love the people” (Ras Hailu 2008, interview, 21 September). Ras Kabinda speaks fondly of the different monasteries he visited when he first arrived and the experience of being among the priests in the mountains of northern Ethiopia, who left a great impression on him, especially the holy men called ba’atawi who are strict vegetarians like himself.

I visited the homes and businesses of the repatriates and observed them interacting with friends, clients, family members and the broader Ethiopian community in Shashamane and Addis Ababa. I went to the Rasta dances and celebrations that took
place during my visits, which included a concert starring two visiting Jamaican artists, Luciano and Mikey General, several TTI dances, the celebrations for Haile Selassie’s 120th earthday (birthday), a Nyabinghi event, a wedding between a Rastaman and a local Ethiopian woman, and other public reggae dances held by repatriates. Through these many different and varied exchanges, I have developed the themes and highlighted the key issues relevant to the Rastafari repatriates in the Ethiopian community.

2.5 Hybridity – Participant and Observational Documentary Modes

The style of documentary I have made is a hybrid. It straddles observational and participatory documentary modes and sits within the research method so familiar to ethnographic cinema and fieldwork: participant observation. Although there is some observational footage in my film, it departs quite significantly from the traditional form of observational documentary, a form which fully emerged in the 1960s and remains a powerful and common mode today. The main characteristic of observational documentary is the lack of intervention by the filmmaker in the subject being filmed and the absence of interviews with the participants. A good example of this approach to filmmaking is Hilary Harris and George Breidenbach’s The Nuer (1970). The film follows the daily lives of the Nuer, a traditional tribal group of Ethiopia’s south-western region. There is almost no narration and very little interview material. Weinberger suggests that, although it is one of the most “aesthetic” films, it is full of ethnographic information even if it contains few of the classic tropes of ethnographic filmmaking, such as voice-over commentary explaining what the viewer sees the participants doing or saying. Weinberger describes the film as going “beyond the capabilities of the written monograph. Not observed and analysed data: it is a physical and intellectual act of seeing” (1996, p. 156). In Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’ the storyline is quite clear and the details of the repatriates’ lives are enriched by the fact that their voices are heard and understood. In this way, an observational film such as The Nuer is very different from my documentary.

Nyabinghi is not only the name of one of the Mansions of Rastafari. It also refers to the drumming sessions that occur on special occasions and often run for many hours. There are three types of drums used: the double-headed bass drum know as thunder, the middle-range drum called funde and the highest pitched drum called repeater (Chevannes 1998b; Bradley, 2000). Traditionally, only Rastafari men can play the drums at a Nyabinghi.
Another fairly recent observational documentary film is Christian Frei’s *War Photographer* (2001), which follows the famous war photographer James Nachtwey on various military deployments. The filmmaker incorporates the use of footage shot on a small ‘lipstick’ camera attached to Nachtwey’s still camera, helping to record fly-on-the-wall imagery that places the viewer in the line of fire and as witness to the distress and hopelessness of situations that Nachtwey encounters. It includes interviews with people who work closely with Nachtwey. Kim Longinotto’s *Rough Aunties* (2006) is another very powerful observational documentary that follows a group of multiracial women in South Africa who are devoting their lives to helping protect and defend young South African girls who are victims of sexual abuse and actively working towards bringing the perpetrators to justice. The filmmaker records the harrowing testimonies of the child victims as the women gently coax their evidence from them. It is hard to watch at times, but the commitment to the cause of child rights and the strength and fearlessness of the women involved as they deal with the police, the victims and the perpetrators is extraordinary.

In regard to my own filmmaking practice, the observational sections of *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* are more prominent in the photographs and cutaway footage, watching how daily life unfolds and observing people going about their business in the streets of Ethiopia. I do not think that I would have been able to portray the important issues highlighted in my documentary through the use of the observational documentary mode alone. As I had immersed myself in the community, it was essential to be both a participant as well as an observer (Hemley 2012, p. 8). I needed to interview the people in the community and these interviews, along with the images of everyday Ethiopian life, are the materials that carry the structural weight of the narrative that is established in the film. Although I can be heard at times, I am not physically visible in the film (except in three historical photographs) and I made a conscious decision for my voice to be infrequently audible. The viewer rarely hears me ask a question, for instance. This again reflects a relationship with observational filmmaking without a strict adherence to the style. I wanted to appreciate and emphasise the voice of the interview participants but, at the same time, to acknowledge my presence within the process in a minor way. The Rastafari I interviewed were the primary participants in the documentary – the visible and audible players who drive the documentary narrative. My position is only
occasionally directly acknowledged. Couldry explains: “Treating voice as a value means discriminating *in favour* of ways of organising human life and resources … by respecting the multiple interlinked processes of voice and sustaining them, not undermining or denying them” (2010, pp. 1–2; italics original). In this way, I pointedly favour the Rastas’ voices as the predominant voice sustained throughout the documentary.

In fact, such direct presence as I do have in this documentary was only decided after completing the filming for the project. When the focus changed from being about Dan’s
discovery of the repatriation experience to being about the Rastafari community more directly, it never entered my mind to include myself in some of the shots. I have never appeared in any of my previous documentaries and such an approach this time was not considered. I am glad that I am not visible because it would imply that my presence was more significant than I want it to be. My personal relationship with the community in Ethiopia is therefore not made visible. I kept my social interactions and my research interactions separated as deliberately discrete entities where the blurring of roles was not questioned. However, in some ways the readiness to socialise and to be part of what was happening in the community impacted in a positive way and helped me secure and extend the rapport I had made with particular people there. As Hemley states, although some authors are more present than others in their work, eventually their presence through immersion into a community becomes evident and “vital to your understanding of what it means to be human” (2012, p. 65). In other words, as the author of this research project it is important for me to cut through the stereotypes associated with the Rastafari and show that they are dedicated and politically savvy individuals in many cases and have a strong sense of what it is to be human, to have agency, to have an identity, to be African. This could only be done by fully immersing myself into the community and interacting with them both on a filmmaker/researcher level and as a socially engaged friend or acquaintance. As a consequence, I am present but not as a physical character.

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40 As noted at the beginning of this dissertation, I have replaced my ex-partner’s name with the pseudonym Dan.
I have been mindful of the privilege of understanding the power of interviewing, filming and editing, and have thought deeply and deliberately about what to keep in the documentary and what to leave out. When writing about participatory documentaries, Nichols points out that, “The filmmaker steps out from behind the cloak of voice-over commentary, steps away from poetic meditation, steps down from a fly-on-the-wall perch, and becomes a social actor (almost) like any other. (Almost like any other because the filmmaker retains the camera, and with it, a certain degree of potential power and control over events)” (2001, p. 116). I would suggest that the filmmaker has more than just “potential power and control over the events” and that this power is manifested in a variety of ways including through the decisions relating to structure, content, editing, sound sources etc which are generally made by the documentary filmmaker. The fact that they have decided to make a documentary on a specific topic and make choices about how they are going to construct that film is an act of power and control in itself.

The important point is how this power plays out in the final documentary and what message the filmmaker wants to convey. Does the film honestly represent what was happening in that community or that environment at the time of making the film? This power to control all aspects of the film process begins with deciding whom to film (Eraso 2006, p. 4) and whom not to film. The interview process is particularly significant, the gathering of the information from the participants and how we formulate the questions asked. The style of questioning is important and can include open or closed questions that elicit either a comprehensive response or a one-word response, or leading questions that influence the participant to respond in a particular way. Is this ethical, unethical, typical or atypical? It continues in how we frame the images we are shooting (MacDougall 2006, p. 54), where we shoot the interviews and cutaways, and is ever present until the end of the editing process and what footage ends up on the (now metaphorical) cutting-room floor. As filmmakers, we wield a lot of power in sculpting the documentary and pre-empting how the viewer perceives the narrative being told.

As mentioned previously, giving the Rastas a voice has been a keystone of this documentary. However, I have not offered the interviewees access to their interviews after they were shot, as is common practice in participatory documentary. This is
because I wanted to record and include their reactions and comments in as spontaneous and unfettered a way as possible. This was also the reason why most participants did not hear the questions before the camera started to roll. I wanted their responses to be totally unhearsed, ‘in the moment’ and ‘in that place in time’. Even if I had shown each participant the footage of themselves after their interviews, the design and editing of the documentary are still a construct in the hands (and ethics) of the filmmaker and seeing their footage would not necessarily give them an indication of how it would be used in the final film.

Each time I returned to Ethiopia, I would bring prints of all the photographs I had taken of people in the community to give as presents. I found that sending them image files via email was useless due to the intermittent internet access they had in the region. The images were always well-received and, in some cases, the children had changed and grown significantly, which often elicited laughter as the memories of those times were made visible through the photographs. Other ethnographic researchers have used photography as a type of entrée into a community, including Collier and Collier (1986 cited in Pink 2011, p. 73), who described the camera as a “can-opener” in starting a relationship with participants. Pink (2011, p. 74) also found taking still images an advantage in establishing herself within a community and she describes the approaches of two other ethnographic researchers, Shanklin (1979) and Schwartz (1992), who use this strategy as well (both cited in Pink 2011, pp. 73–74). I acknowledge that this practice could be of benefit for a researcher unfamiliar with the community they are studying; however, it was not my motivation, nor was it required in my situation.

2.6 Ethics

I applied for and received ethics clearance from RMIT to undertake this research project. On a number of occasions throughout the writing, filming and editing of my PhD, I have called on my personal ethics to guide me in deciding whether to film a specific situation and whether to include a troubling scene in the final documentary. I have also questioned the integrity of exposing the identity of participants whose explicit quotes may be controversial but which would be beneficial to the research outcome recorded in the dissertation. To safeguard some interviewees, I have
indicated to readers that I give a pseudonym rather than the actual name of a participant to avoid possible adverse outcomes on their position in the community or in the country. Obtaining written consent to undertake the research was only part of my ethical responsibility towards the participants. Another significant way that I can express and gauge how ethical considerations have been reflected in the material is by returning to Ethiopia and showing the participants the final documentary. This is a trip I hope to be able to take within the next 12 months.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodology and methods I have used in the making of the ethnographic documentary and the broader research outputs of the dissertation. It has emphasised how interpretive methodology and naturalistic inquiry work alongside participant observation methods to help construct the documentary narrative through the collaboration of still and moving images. Through this audiovisual medium, the audience is able to hear firsthand testimonies from the Rastafari which were given while I immersed myself within the community. They help the viewer understand the significance of the repatriation experience and the relationship that the Rastafari have with the Shashamane Land Grant and with Ethiopia in a broader sense.
CHAPTER 3: RASTAFARI LIVITY IN AN ETHIOPIAN CONTEXT

This chapter is divided into two main sections: 3.1 Historical Overview of the Rastafari followed by 3.2 Observations and Findings In Situ Among the Rastafari. Although both parts are interrelated, they cover very different aspects of the movement and the experience of repatriation. In the first part, I concentrate on giving the reader an overview of the history of Rastafari that I consider important. Although I have covered aspects of my personal relationship with the Rastafari in the Introduction, the historical overview gives readers the background on how the movement came into existence, the significance of repatriation to Africa and to Ethiopia in particular, the importance of Rastafari in Jamaica (specifically) and the Land Grant that Selassie gave to people of the African Diaspora. After reading this section, I feel that section 3.2 on the repatriated Rastafari will make more sense. It will help to contextualise aspects covered in the documentary, as well as the subsequent broader discussion of specific topics which are only covered in the dissertation. Much of the information in the Findings section has come out of my research for the film but is not included in the film.

Although studies on the actual experience of Rastafari repatriation are only covered in a select number of texts and to varying degrees of complexity (some examples are Bonacci 2015; Campbell 2007; Chevannes 1994; Gomes 2010, Lewis WF 1993; MacLeod 2009), there is extensive literature on the Rastafari, their history and their contemporary existence. This discussion therefore does not go into great detail on material that can be found elsewhere (see Barrett 1977; Campbell 2007; Chevannes 1994, 1998; Murrel, Spencer & McFarlane 1998; Nettleford 2006; Zips 2006 and many others).

3.1 Historical Overview of the Rastafari
3.1.1 A Brief History of the Rastafari

The Rastafari culture and faith developed in the early 1930s after the coronation of Haile Selassie I as Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930. The Rastafari claim Haile Selassie as their “God and King” (Edmonds 2003, p. 36). This belief stems from a number of historical events including the statement attributed to one of Jamaica’s most
significant historical figures, Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887–1940), who created a black pride and consciousness-raising organisation called the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)\textsuperscript{41} (Barrett 1977; Campbell 2007; Chevannes 1998b; Cronon 1969; Hill 2013). The UNIA promoted racial pride and economic independence from white society (Chevannes 1998, p. 10) and became highly popular in the USA, the Caribbean and Central and South America, as well as in colonised Africa. There were also a number of African-American leaders who promoted black consciousness and pride in the early decades of the 20th century, such as the Pan-Africanists Booker T Washington (1856–1915) and WEB Du Bois (1868–1963) (Cronon 1969). However, Garvey’s UNIA would become the largest Pan-African organisation in the early 20th century (Lewis R 1998, p. 146). The UNIA was the impetus for later black mass movements such as the Black Power and Black Nationalist Movements,\textsuperscript{42} the Black Panthers, and the Nation of Islam\textsuperscript{43} (Zips 2006, p. 79).

Before departing for the USA in 1916, Garvey is said to have told his followers in Jamaica, “Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black King, he shall be the Redeemer” (Barrett 1977, p. 67).\textsuperscript{44} In 1930, Ras Tafari Makonnen was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia and took the title “His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Elect of God, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, King of the Kings and Emperor of all Ethiopia” (Brus 1975, p. 8; Edmonds 2003, p. 36).

In Jamaica, the followers of Garvey, known as the Garveyites, saw this as a realised prophecy and established a movement, adopting the name \textit{Ras Tafari},\textsuperscript{45} which was Selassie’s regal name prior to Coronation. One of the principal founders of the Rastafari was the Garveyite Leonard Percival Howell (Hill 2001; Spencer 1998, p.

\textsuperscript{41} The original name of the organisation was the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (Cronon 1969, p. 16).
\textsuperscript{42} Malcolm X’s father was an active member of Garvey’s UNIA and was murdered while campaigning for greater membership for the organisation (Barrett 1977; Vincent 1989).
\textsuperscript{43} The father of the leader of the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakan, came from Jamaica and he was therefore very aware of the significance and history of Marcus Garvey (I was present at a meeting in Jamaica on 12 December 2011 where Farrakan told the audience of his Jamaican heritage).
\textsuperscript{44} The prominent Garvey scholar Professor Robert A Hill doubts that Garvey ever made this statement, although scholars still reference it. Hill quotes a speech given by Rev. James Morris Web in 1924 which contains a similar sentiment: “When the prophetic part of the \textit{Bible} is preached the world will realize that the universal black king is coming” (Hill 2001, p. 15).
\textsuperscript{45} In Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia, \textit{Ras} is a regal title that roughly translates to ‘Prince’ or ‘Regent’ and \textit{Tafari} means ‘one who is revered’.
who, along with his brethren, Robert Hind, preached of the divinity of Ras Tafari (Hill 2001). Other early associates and preachers of the faith were Archibald Dunkley and Joseph Hibbert (Chevannes 1998b). Although the Rastafari revere Marcus Garvey as a prophet, unlike them Garvey never venerated Selassie as divine (Lewis R 1998, p. 148; Tafari RSS in Hill 2001, p. 7) but recognised him as a black leader who could become a significant figure in the Pan-African Black Nationalist movement (Lewis R 1998, p. 148). In contemporary Jamaica, Garvey is revered within the broader society, where he is considered a significant historical figure. This is demonstrated by Garvey’s official recognition as one of Jamaica’s seven national heroes (Jamaica Information Service n.d.; Lewis R 1998).

3.1.1.1 Rastafari in Jamaica

The Rastafari movement holds a unique position within Jamaican society and is seen to promote a “persistence[tr] [and] revolutionary character” (Johnson-Hill cited in Hannah 2006, p. 1) while also promoting peace and love among the nation. Nettleford writes, “Rastafari can claim to be the only major indigenous Caribbean-creole phenomenon of its kind (apart from Garveyism)” (1998, p. 321). Members are widely recognised as militant activists who question and often protest against the status quo that has done little to improve the situation of underprivileged members of society (Rowe 1980). This protest is most significantly displayed through reggae music, but also very much in the oral history tradition of the island and the broader Caribbean (Chevannes 1994; Nettleford 1998). From the 1930s onwards, the Rastafari established communities in the hills around Jamaica, as well as in the ghetto area of Kingston. The predominant demographics of followers were poor, undereducated and underemployed. They developed an identity that in turn disassociated them from the general populace on the island by creating a new and contrasting livity – a new identity, a new culture, a new faith, a new language (Chevannes 1994) and a new philosophy. Along with this new culture, the Rastafari acknowledged a ‘new’ god, a god whom they could identify with – a black god in the personification of Haile Selassie, whose ancestry claimed to be from a union between two biblical figures, King Solomon of Israel and the Queen of Sheba (Ethiopia). As Nettleford (cited by Niaah) states:

Of all the people who have been fighting for Human Dignity, for
Black Dignity, and justice to People of African ancestry, the Rastafari are the only ones who have made the kind of quantum leap that all civilization must make, in terms of determining its own God, its own image, and this is a fantastic development and this is not usually understood (Niaah 2002, p. 2).

Pentecostals and orthodox Baptists, along with other forms of Christian religions, dominate Jamaica’s general population, all of whom recognise and worship a white god or, as Austin-Broos describes, “[a] ‘Savior’ as a European derived construction” (1996, p. 59), which has the physicality of a white man with blue eyes and brown hair. This representation was anachronistic to the Rastafari, who saw the hypocrisy associated with an image of a god whose physical identity resembled the nations that had enslaved them, rather than a representation of Christ and the Madonna whose more informed likeness would correspond to people from the Middle East and Africa.

Historically, and to a lesser degree in contemporary times, the Rastafari have suffered considerable discrimination and persecution on the island of Jamaica (Tafari-Ama 1998, p. 102), as well as on other islands in the Caribbean, but this has not stopped the increasing numbers of followers. From the 1930s to the 1980s in particular, it was common within Jamaican society for individuals and groups to discriminate against Rasta due to their alternative lifestyle, the use of ganja (marijuana), their appearance and their belief that Haile Selassie is the manifestation of God. Verbal and physical abuse and derogatory comments against the Rasta were commonplace. It was not unusual for police and soldiers to harass Rastafari – often brutalising them and, in some cases, shaving their dreadlocks as a form of abuse, humiliation or punishment. As dreadlocks are seen as part of a religious commitment and cultural practice within Rastafari, this could be seen as an act against their basic human rights (Stratford 2010, p. 197). During the time I lived on the island, there were numerous occasions when I either heard of or witnessed this harassment, and on some occasions the police also killed Rastamen.

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46 In 1974 the Government of Dominica introduced the Prohibited and Unlawful Societies and Associations Act, commonly called the ‘Dread Act’, permitting citizens to kill anyone who looked like a Rastafari (Campbell 2007; Ras Kabinda 2008, interview, 20 September).

47 I experienced intimidation myself by the police in Jamaica because I trod (moved, associated) with Rastafari.

48 It is not a mandatory requirement for Rastas to grow dreadlocks.
Ironically, in contemporary Jamaica the Rasta language has been incorporated into the public discourse. I was surprised to hear the common use of *Dread Talk* when I returned to Jamaica in the early 1990s and this continues today. The language is now internationalised through reggae music and through communities of Rasta worldwide. When I was undertaking my research in Ethiopia, I found that some young Ethiopian people who are interested in the Rastafari *livity* or are adopting reggae music as their form of musical expression have also adopted the Rasta language.

Throughout the decades of the 1960s and the 1970s, the appeal of the Rastafari movement resonated in a different social stratum than in previous decades (Lewis R 1998, p. 150). Middle class youth were now ‘taking to the culture’ of their working class Bredrin and Sistrin. This was due, not only to their questioning of the perceived hypocrisy of the established Church (as mentioned earlier), but also due in part to the rise of black consciousness through the Black Power movement in the 1960s and the success of reggae music in the 1970s (see Christensen 2014; Lewis R 1998; Rowe 1980). As they shared a similar history, people from other islands in the Caribbean adopted the Rastafari culture as well. Since the 1970s, membership of the movement has had a global reach (Christensen 2014; Hannah 2006), not only in the West but also in developing countries and countries with large Afro-Caribbean communities.

It is suggested that the rise of the Rastafari movement in the 1930s was a response to the ideal of Ethiopianism (Hill 2001) and Pan-Africanism among the strata of the population who identified and followed African ideals and identity. Both movements developed as a consequence of the trans-Atlantic slave trade that ended in the mid-19th century. Ethiopianism is an ideology that began in the late 16th century and cultivated aspirations of nationhood that included cultural, political and spiritual freedom for all members of the African Diaspora. Africans on the continent who were under colonial rule later adapted forms of Ethiopianism. Ethiopianism came under a number of different guises over the centuries, but one constant was the belief that redemption for black people was linked to the coming of a black messiah, which was part of the canon of a variety of black religions on the continent (Savishinsky 1998, p. 138; Smithsonian n.d.). Garvey also advocated for his followers to see God “through our spectacles” (Garvey 1986, p. 44) or “God in our own image” (Lewis R 1998, p.
Garvey went on to say “We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia, the everlasting God…That is the God in whom we believe, but we shall worship Him through the spectacles of Ethiopia” (Garvey 1986, p. 44). The Rastafari took up this mantle. This idea was not new, its genesis being in other Jamaican religious movements such as Myalism in the 18th century and Zion Revivalist churches of the 19th century (Chevannes 1994; Nettleford 1998, p. 315; Schuler cited in Hill 2001).

The Africans who were taken against their will to the ‘New World’ by various European nations came from disparate regions and ethnic groups, and were predominantly from West Africa (Campbell 2007; Thomas 1999). Through the brutal and determined repression of their cultures, the slaves, to a great extent, lost their individual and collective cultural identities (Daynes 2010) while holding onto some practices and even vocabulary of the particular nations and regions they originated from. However, it could be argued that this severe loss of identity and cultural reference has allowed the descendants of Africa to create new hybrid identities, one of these being the Rastafari movement (Stratford 2011, p. 149).

3.1.1.2 Repatriation to Africa

There is a strong desire among some Rastafari to repatriate to Africa, although this is not a universal aspiration within the movement (Chevannes 1998b, p. 31) and in contemporary times has lost a lot of its momentum. Nevertheless, for many Rastafari the longing to experience firsthand the greatness of the African continent (Savishinsky 1998, p.138) that they have heard about through the teachings of the elders, through the context of Ethiopianism and through the lyrics of reggae music (Chevannes 1994; Lewis WF 1993) is still potent. The Rastafari use the word repatriation in a specific way (Chevannes 1998b). Their identity and connection with their ancestors who were forcibly removed from Africa during 400 years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Thomas 1999) is still current in their own identity (Dudley-Grant & Etheridge 2008, p. 223). Many Rastafari see their plight in the West, which keeps

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49 Chevannes (1998, p. 68) quotes from the diary of the famous Jamaican artist Edna Manley (who was also the wife and mother of Jamaican prime ministers), who wrote that it was not the belief in Haile Selassie that struck her most about the Rastafari, but their “identification with a Black God”.

50 Myalism was an African-derived religion created in Jamaica by black Baptists from the USA who came to preach Christianity to the slaves. It created a unified cultural and ethnic identity that promoted a moral and cultural equality among slaves who were from different tribes and nations in Africa (Chevannes 1998b, p. 22).
many of them in a state of poverty and dispossession, as a continuation of this practice in the form of ‘economic slavery’ and “mental slavery” (Edmonds 2003, pp. 48–49). Although many of the repatriating Rastafari have never been to Africa before, they consider the act of repatriation as returning to their African roots and thereby asserting their African identity in a more tangible way than people who identify themselves as African but remain in the West. Through ‘returning’, the Rastafari repatriate the spirits of their ancestors to the African continent. Chevannes explains the essence of spirit life in Jamaican (and Caribbean culture) and says, “As God is distant, so are the Spirits near” (1998b, p. 23). Returning ‘home’ has historically been a significant aspect of the Rastafari discourse and is a popular trope repeated in reggae music throughout the decades. Some notable examples are Gregory Isaacs’ Take Me to the Border, Dennis Brown’s Repatriation, Luciano’s Shashamane, Marcia Griffiths’ Steppin’ Outa Babylon, and Bob Marley and the Wailers’ Rastaman Chant and Exodus. Some examples of reggae music that I use in my documentary that refer to the issue of repatriation, Ethiopia or being an African are:

*Holy Mount Zion* (Cocoa Tea, 1997)

Holy Mount Zion
I’m coming home to you
I’ve faced a lot of trials and tribulations
But through all of that I-man still stand strong
Giving thanks and praise to the Almighty One
And looking forward to reach Mount Zion
And I-man say Zion
I’m coming home to you.

*African Roots* (Johnny Clarke, 1976)

I was born and raised in the ghetto
With the blood of African roots
So you can always call me
Call me African roots
Just call me, African roots,
Just call me, African roots
Please call me, African roots.

*Calling All Rastaman* (Robert Ffrench, 2000)

Calling all Rastaman, we have work to do
Jah guide us day by day
Jah guide us night by night
Come on, come on, Rastaman
We got 'nuff work to do
Plenty work fi do
Come on, brother man.

_African_ (Buju Banton, Marcia Griffiths, Beres Hammond, Tony Rebel, Queen Ifrica, Bushman, Louie Culture and Gramps Morgan, 2010)

Don’t care where you come from
As long as you’re a black man
You’re an African
No mind your nationality
You have got the identity of an African
So whether your 'plexion [complexion] high, high, high
Or your 'plexion low, low, low
You’re an African.

So over a five-decade period it can be seen that the imagery evoked and the lyrics that are sung by Rastas are continuing the message of black pride in being an African and the glorification of Africa and Ethiopia, _Zion._

3.1.1.3 Repatriation to Ethiopia

Historically, the majority of Rastafari returning to Africa repatriated to Ethiopia due to their association with Haile Selassie (Nettleford 1998, p. 320). Rastas refer to the process of repatriation as coming ‘home’ even though none of them were born in Ethiopia. They often speak about the similarities between the Caribbean islands and Ethiopia, a familiarity with the country that feels comfortable. This familiarity was mentioned by Blacks Emmanuel, as well as King Kong, who claims in his interview, “It is like Jamaica, you know, with the main street and all the side streets are dirt lanes. It was a great feeling to know that you are home and reached your heart’s desire” (King Kong 2009, interview, 22 May). So being able to come to a country where one understood the importance of the connection to place, to land, to community, a country that, historically at least, had offered a place to settle via the Land Grant, was a huge incentive for some to finally make the journey.

This connection to Ethiopia was repeated in other interviews I undertook for the research. The elder Bobo Shanti, Priest Isaiah (c. 1929–2012), who was interviewed in 2008, states, “We [the Rastafari] come to the conscious state to know that our
relatives were taken from here [Africa during the time of slavery], and we were accidentally [sic] born deh [in the Caribbean]. So we claim here as our royal heritage” (Priest Isaiah 2008, interview, 19 September).

“I’ve appeased my ancestors”, Sista Asher says in her interview. I asked her how that made her feel as a Rastawoman, being able to do that, and she replies, “Humble, yeh, it’s just that, I can’t say no more. I feel humble” (Sista Asher 2012, interview, 18 July). Sista Joan (2012, interview, 25 July) also makes reference to the returning of her ancestors to Africa and Dirty Harry Selassie says, “Right now, my foreparents, like my great great great granddad and my great great great grandmum say, ‘Bwoy! Bauxite! One of the family make it forward here still!’” (Dirty Harry Selassie 2009, interview, 20 May).51

Napthali came to Ethiopia with his wife and three children. By 2012 when I met them again, they had three more children who were born in Ethiopia. He sees it as a huge privilege to have children born in Africa and is proud to be living in Ethiopia. He sees it as ironic that many Ethiopians want to leave the country and live in the West, while the Rastafari want to live in Ethiopia and be recognised as returned Africans (Ras Napthali 2009, interview, 16 May).

One of the reasons for wanting to undertake this project was to see for myself what the outcome of repatriation to Ethiopia had been for the Rastafari who embarked on the journey, as well as for the Ethiopians with whom they now lived. At the beginning of the documentary in the voice-over I explain this and pose the questions that I was curious to hear answers to. For example, what industries had the Rastas created (with their knowledge and education gained in the West), how successful was the act of repatriation and what was it like to now live as Africans in Africa?

The responses I received from the repatriates in relation to how the experience of repatriation has altered them are varied and, in some cases, some people found this question hard to articulate an answer to. The fact that so many of them have stayed is testament to how the experience has resonated with them. The feeling of belonging

51 “Boy! Wow! One of us made it back here [to Africa]!”
outweighs the legal and financial difficulties that are still ever present. They enjoy the expansion of the community and seeing new people come into the Jamaican *Safar*. They are despondent if for some reason people have to go back to the West. In my interview with Tricka, I asked him if it was embarrassing for the repatriates if they had to return to the West and he replied: “It might be embarrassing for them, but for us it is sad because some of these people are good people” (Tricka 2012, interview, 19 July).

A number of Rastas have been successful in carving out a life for themselves in Ethiopia and have had the skills or the flexibility to create a business to support their family and themselves. On the other hand, many people think that life will be easier in Africa than the hard life they live in the West. They consider the information disseminated by the West in regard to Africa as propaganda (Stratford 2010, p. 198). However, the realities of life in Ethiopia are difficult and, in many cases, much harder than they are in the Western urban environments that they have left (Lewis WF 1993, p. 114). Rastas repatriate without being fully prepared for what they are going to experience in Ethiopia. Some have no plan for how they are going to sustain a living, some have not done any research to find out what they can do in Ethiopia and whether the skills they have will be useful. Some of them are of retirement age before they reach *Zion* and so they need substantial funds to sustain themselves on the land for an indefinite period.

### 3.1.2 The Land Grant

The second significant event that has drawn so many Rastafari to repatriate to Ethiopia is as a consequence of the second invasion and strategic occupation of Ethiopia by Italy from 1935 to 1941. Ethiopia’s status as the only country in Africa not to be colonised by Europeans was of immense significance and pride to the African Diaspora, as well as to colonised Africans on the African continent. There was a groundswell of support for Ethiopia at this time – both moral and financial – especially from the African Diaspora in the USA and in the Caribbean. Thousands of African-Americans wanted to join the Ethiopians and fight for the freedom of the

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52 The second Italian invasion of Ethiopia began in May 1935 prior to the outbreak of World War II in 1939. The defeat of Mussolini’s army was in January–May 1941 prior to the US entering the war.
country, but they were prevented by the US law banning citizens from participating in a war against a nation with which America is at peace (Scott 1978, p. 129). At the same time in Jamaica, there was an upsurge of support with a number of organisations being created (Hill 2001), as well as a petition with more than 1400 signatures being sent to the British Government (this was prior to Jamaica’s independence) requesting permission to enlist in the Ethiopian army to help secure “the glories of our ancient and beloved Empire” (Weisboard cited in Lewis R 1998, p. 150).

Around 1955, in recognition of the moral and financial backing from African-Americans and people in the Caribbean who supported Ethiopia during the Italo-Ethiopian war, Selassie granted five gashas (approximately 500 acres) of land in Shashamane to the “black people of the West”. This gifted land, commonly known as the Land Grant, is in a farming area located in Melka Oda – which is now part of the Shashamane woreda (MacLeod 2009) and is located in the state of Oromiya. The distribution of land among the African Diaspora peoples who wanted to take up the offer of migrating to Ethiopia was the responsibility of the Ethiopian World Federation. It is to this gifted land that the Rastafari originally repatriated and even now, with no further Land Grant available, Rastas still repatriate to this area due to its historical significance. Yet by the 1970s there was only a very small group of people from the African Diaspora (the land was given to all black people of the West, not specifically to the Rastafari). Campbell (2007) states that towards the end of the 1970s it was estimated that there were only 40–60 Rastas and African-Americans in

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53 The most popular consensus on the year that the Land Grant was given to the “black people of the West” by Selassie is 1955. However, Bonacci (2015, p. 158) found EWF documents dated 1950 that discuss the Land Grant although this was not widely known or acted on. Chevannes (1998, p. 60) states that in 1955 an EWF member visited Jamaica to let people know that Selassie was granting a small parcel of land for settlement. Hill stated at a book launch held at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica in 2015 that there is no written proof of a land grant. The Land Grant was both reduced and added to over the decades, and is considerably smaller than the original size (see Bonacci 2015).
54 A woreda is the third level of government that refers to a district. Within the district there are several smaller units of government known as kebele or neighbourhood associations (MacLeod 2009).
55 The gifting of land was not uncommon under Emperor Menelik II’s rule during the time of Ethiopian expansion. He would give conquered land to various people including soldiers who helped conquer the land, the nobility and to royal family members as gifts. The process was called rist gult and was a type of freehold tenure (Keller 1988, p. 54). Selassie abolished this practice in 1966, approximately ten years after he gifted land to the “black people of the West”.
56 It is said that James Piper made representation repeatedly to Selassie for land to establish a settlement for people from the Diaspora. This settlement was the precursor to the Rastafari repatriation journey (Campbell 2007).
the community. Ras Kabinda stated in 2012 that there were only around 300 repatriates in Shashamane.58

In 1974 the Provisional Military Administrative Council, commonly known as the Derg,59 permanently altered the opportunity of repatriation to the Land Grant, after the overthrow of Selassie. In that year a group of disaffected Ethiopian military colonels, backed by the new urban elite, many of whom were educated abroad, ousted Selassie and his autocratic Imperial regime and installed a Marxist style of government. In time, it became clear that what they had appointed was a brutal military regime that waged war on many of their own citizens.

When the ousting of Selassie occurred, the local Oromo people of Shashamane went on a rampage through the village where the Rastafari lived on the Land Grant. The Oromo took control of the land that was occupied by the Rastafari and destroyed some of their homes, seizing their assets (Campbell 2007) as well as destroying their crops. The worst affected were Rasta who had not ingratiated themselves with the locals. If the Oromo liked the individual Rasta, they spared their houses but still destroyed their crops (I Coore 2010, pers. conv., 10 December).

During this initial period of the Revolution,60 the country was in turmoil and many repatriates were frightened, especially when their land was confiscated. The Jamaican Government offered the Rastas in Ethiopia the opportunity to be airlifted back to Jamaica and some of the families accepted the offer (I Coore 2010, pers. conv., 10 December). A number of the Rastafari decided to stay and appealed to the new Ethiopian Government to have the Land Grant reinstated. They drafted a petition, took it to Addis Ababa and waited in the palace for hours, hoping to speak with a senior member of the Derg to plead their case for the return of their land. When they were finally granted an audience, the Rastas were informed that it was the local indigenous Oromo people who had instigated the land takeover, not the Ethiopian Government (I Coore 2010, pers. conv., 10 December). The Government agreed to

58 A figure of 275 repatriates of all ages is mentioned in a 2007 report by two Rastafari Bredrin who live on the Land Grant: Ras Kabinda and Ras Mweya (2007). Both were interviewed for this project. MacLeod estimates the Rasta population of the Safar to be approximately 200 in her 2009 thesis.
59 Also spelt Dergue and also known by the acronym PMAC.
60 The Ethiopian Revolution began when Selassie was overthrown and continued until 1987 (Tiruneh 1993).
reinstate the land to the remaining Rastafari families who had stayed on the Land Grant, but their individual parcels of land were reduced from 25 acres to 5 acres, which was in line with the amount given to each local family.61 At this time in Shashamane approximately 20 Rasta families remained and their reduced portion of land was returned to them with the assistance of officials sent by the central Derg Government in Addis Ababa to oversee the process and to ensure that there were no further conflicts with the Oromo people (I Coore 2010, per. comm., 10 December).62

It was not until after the return of the small parcels of the Land Grant that the Derg nationalised all rural land and private ownership of land was abolished (Meredith 2011). One could deduce that if there had been more Rastafari living on the Land Grant, more land would have been secured. This is not to judge or disrespect the Rastas who left, as it would have been a terrifying time, but more to point out that the slowness in taking up the offer of the Land Grant was detrimental to its very existence. None of the remaining 500 acres was ever reinstated as gifted land to the African Diaspora. This outcome was devastating for the Rastafari community, as the total Land Grant was reduced to about 10 per cent of its original size. As a consequence, all new repatriates who have arrived since the deposing of the Emperor and want to live close to the Land Grant have had to lease land either from local farmers or from Rastas who have wanted – or needed – to downsize their parcel of land.

After the Revolution, the TTI was still sending members who wanted to repatriate. Some Rastas who repatriated at this time experienced racial discrimination from Ethiopians who were anti-Selassie and thought the Rastas should go back to their own country now that he was dead. Sista Joan, who arrived in Ethiopia in 1976, claims, “Oh, Ethiopia was very difficult in those times, because we came at the time of the Revolution and so Haile Selassie was … ‘dead!’ When you’d walk on the streets they’d say ‘Haile Selassie is dead! Haile Selassie is thief’ and they would even throw rocks at you at those times, you know. It wasn’t easy for us” (Sista Joan 2012,

61 There are other ethnic groups who live in the Oromiya (also Oromia) region where Shashamane is located. They include the Tigrayans, Gurage, Amhara, Dorzes, Soddos and other minorities. The Oromo people have also been called Oroma or Galla. Galla is seen as an offensive term.
62 The amount of land reinstated varies in different accounts, ranging from 11 hectares (27 acres) (Kabinda 2012) to 44 hectares (108 acres) (Campbell 2007). From personal observation, I would ascertain that the former is currently more accurate.
One Rastaman seen often in my documentary is Ras David, whom I interviewed in Jamaica. He is the only repatriate I included in the film who has had to leave Ethiopia and return to the West. All the other interviewees in the film are repatriates who still live in Ethiopia. David is very direct with the audience and tells the viewer a lot of the fundamental aspects one needs to know without glorifying the act of repatriation. He gives advice about acquiring land from others and how to be aware of the correct procedures to ensure that the local government does not destroy your home or business, as was the case for King Kong and the Nyabinghi Tabernacle.

3.2 Observations and Findings In Situ Among the Rastafari

In this part of the chapter I discuss my findings that relate specifically to changes in Rastafari cultural practices as a consequence of living in Ethiopia. The findings that I have observed and documented here provide new information which has not been recorded before. The information has been observed through the interpretive methodology I used during this research. From my long association with the Rastafari and my techniques of immersion, individual interviews and structured filmed dialogues, I have gained a new perspective on, and a consideration of, the issues confronting the Rastafari and their lived experience as repatriates in Africa. Some of the cultural changes have surprised me because Rastafari livity is so intrinsically entwined with their unique identity, which has differentiated them from other societies in the West. Although a major part of my PhD is in response to my development as a creative practitioner, the subject of my documentary is also equally as important as its creation. This is not a unique position to be in, I am sure; however, bringing light to the repatriation experience was one of my main reasons for choosing this group for my documentary topic. It is therefore pertinent for a large part of the dissertation to respond to my findings on the Rastafari community, as well as responding to my practice as a solo filmmaker in Africa.

It was only through travelling to Ethiopia three times and spending time in the communities in Shashamane and Addis Ababa that I was able to see and hear for myself the complications that the community encountered, which contributed not only
to changes in their cultural practices but also to the lack of development of the Jamaican Safar and projects led by Rastafari repatriates elsewhere in Ethiopia. Particular aspects of the material discussed below are mentioned in the documentary, but the majority of the findings are discussed in this dissertation, where the topics can be explored in greater detail than in the film.

In repatriating to Africa, the Rastafari have found that there are rules and regulations, laws and discrimination, and all aspects of Babylon in Africa. Has this realisation and the hardship experienced in Africa forced the Rastafari to alter their outlook and behaviour, or is it that they have reached ‘home’ and they are determined to ‘fit in’? Is there a conscious decision to refrain from engaging in aspects of their culture that could cause repercussions for their community? Do the compromises that need to be made to the Rastafari livity in Ethiopia contribute in part to why many return to the West? These questions are addressed in this chapter.

I discuss the background to some aspects of Rastafari culture and how the repatriates have adapted to suit the Ethiopian political and social environment. This is central to the work I have done, because it raises questions about the adaptability required by community members who want to repatriate and acknowledges that there are conditions placed on the repatriates that could be interpreted negatively or as racially motivated. Issues pertaining to law enforcement, open political commentary and the use of the iconic Lion of Judah flag are some of the topics examined in this chapter. However, it is reasonable to conclude that, to assist with their assimilation into the dominant culture within Ethiopia, the Rastas have accepted changes that may have been fiercely resisted in the West.

### 3.2.1 The Master Plan

One of the major issues that has had severe ramifications for some members of the Rastafari community involves a major capital works project called the Integrated Regional Development Plan (known locally as ‘the Master Plan’). Prior to 2008 the

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63 In earlier times many Rasta who arrived in Africa would throw away their passports, considering them a feature of Babylon and not relevant to them now that they had returned ‘home’. However, as passports are required in most territories, if these individuals wanted to travel outside the country for health or family reasons, for instance, obtaining a new passport was a difficult and lengthy process (Stratford 2010, p. 200).
government announced it would undertake the Master Plan in the Oromiya region that included the area of the Jamaican *Safar* in Shashamane. This infrastructure project affected some of the land allocations of the Rastas, as well as jeopardising the buildings constructed on them. Within the Land Grant area, although Rasta families or individuals occupy an allotment and have fences and buildings on their piece of land, none of the Rastas have any legal title or official written acknowledgement that the land is theirs under a lease agreement common to other people in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia land is owned by the State (Crewett & Korf 2008, p. 203) and the Government allocates land to each family in their area. People ‘buy’ the buildings on a piece of land and, if they want to move, they sell the buildings and recoup their investment through the sale (Ras David 2011, interview, 15 November).

In 2008 and 2009 when I visited Shashamane, a number of Rastafari had small dwellings or small shops and restaurants along the King’s Highway, the major sealed road that links Ethiopia with Kenya. Apart from having their business strategically positioned along the King’s Highway to take advantage of the tourist trade that comes through the town on its way further south, the Rastas were sentimental about having businesses along Selassie’s Highway (the King’s Highway). Once the Government had approved the Master Plan, the *kebele* (neighbourhood or local government) advised the Rastafari, and all businesses along the King’s Highway, that they could no longer stay on the frontline with small shops and one-storey buildings. Under the Master Plan, the new minimum height for any building located directly on the King’s Highway was increased from one to three storeys. All businesses and residents were given three years’ notice and, if they were unable to undertake the building requirements, they would be relocated further inland away from the major highway. At times during my stay in 2009, I discussed this with the Rastas. Some confidently thought that they might get assistance from investors in the West to help finance the reconstruction and extension of their premises. However, when I returned in 2012 most of the businesses owned or run by Rastafari along the King’s Highway had closed and, in some cases, relocated to other areas. In my documentary I have a rough tracking shot taken in 2008 from a *bajaj* (three-wheeled vehicle commonly used as a taxi) of the little shops along the King’s Highway that were predominantly owned by the Rasta repatriates. Since the introduction of the Master Plan, all those shops have now gone.
One Rastaman I interviewed in 2009, and then again in 2012, was so disadvantaged by the move from the King’s Highway that he did not reopen his little restaurant. The relocation was to an area where passing trade was non-existent. Although the Rastas’ businesses had been removed from the Highway, there were Ethiopian shops and lean-tos selling their wares along the road, none of which were three storeys high. This suggests that the kebele actively demonstrated a more sympathetic attitude towards traders who were local Ethiopian people, at the expense of the Rastafari. As a consequence, the Rastas who ran businesses along the highway were discriminated against and denied their livelihoods while others benefited from their removal.

Another requirement of the Master Plan was that residents who had quite large allotments, but were situated away from the Highway, had to make use of the land or it would be taken away from them. In Rastas ‘Journey ‘Home’ we see the intensive use of their land by several repatriates, Ras Hailu, Ras Kabinda and Priest Isaiah, as they cultivate all the fresh food they require to feed their families and to give to others who do not have enough land to cultivate or feed themselves. The kebele considered this use of the land inadequate; there needed to be buildings on the remaining lands. One Rasta family extended their existing business by building a restaurant/bar and an outside eating area, although they still lost part of their allotment to the construction of a road (Williams 2012). Five Rasta repatriates had land confiscated for the building of roads which were not on the Master Plan and therefore constituted an act of discrimination against the repatriates. This is allegedly illegal under Ethiopian law (Williams 2012). One Bredrin had just finished building a hairdressing salon on his land and was forced to demolish it. Two other Rastas had structures on their land that were demolished as well (Williams 2012).

Religious sites were not immune to the Master Plan directives. There is a special designation for land that is for religious worship and the TTI headquarters and the Nyabinghi Tabernacle have such classification. However, this did not stop the destruction of a Nyabinghi building by the kebele under the pretext of the Master Plan. This was distressing for members of the Mansion and the community at large, as they had contributed a lot of money and many hours’ labour in building this structure. Ras Kabinda had also had the foundations built for a ceremonial building and had
been waiting for confirmation of a building permit from the kebele to proceed. However, at the time I departed Ethiopia in 2009 there was still no building permit. On visiting Ras Kabinda in 2012, I noticed that the extensive work he had done in laying the foundations had been removed and it appeared that he had lost that section of land. You can see the foundations for these buildings in some footage in Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’ as Ras Kabinda shows us around the land.

One Rastaman lost over five metres of his allotment and more of his land was threatened by the kebele. He recounts the incident, describing a scene of chaos and intimidation:

A gang of 24 people, armed with sticks, cutlasses and spears, organized and led by the local kebele authorities, violently cut down I and I [our] fences. It was a most vicious act and exposed their desire to exercise ethnic cleansing. When I and I sought an explanation from the chairman [gave the name of the chairman], his reaction was pure hate and malice (Williams 2012 n.p.).

The reference here to “ethnic cleansing” demonstrates a heightened feeling of racial and ethnic tension between some of the Rastafari repatriates and the indigenous Ethiopians of Shashamane.

Although the Rastafari community has representation on the kebele in Shashamane and is able to maintain a cordial relationship with it, they were powerless to change these aspects of the Master Plan that disadvantaged them. The Land Grant seems to have a tenuous validity and these examples of forced land reallocation are an indicator of that position. A repatriate who lives in Shashamane claims that, since the deposition of the Emperor, the Government has been trying to reclaim the Land Grant for development purposes (Williams 2012).

As an aside, in more recent events encroachment on land of the Oromo ethnic group (around Addis Ababa) and Amhara ethnic group (in Gondar) was the major reason for demonstrations in late 2015 and early 2016 against the central government of Ethiopia, whose members are predominantly of the Tigrayan ethnic group. So although the Oromo and Amhara peoples were able to take to the streets and demonstrate against the loss of their land (and in the case of the Oromo land

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64 There are nine ethnically based regional areas in Ethiopia. They are Oromiya, Somali, Amhara, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People, Afar, Benishangul-Gumaz, Gambella and Tigray.
encroachment, they have stopped the government plan for now), the Rastafari are not in a position to show open dispute with any such government plans. This lack of voice and the consequences of this are covered in the following section on civil rights.

3.2.2 Civil Rights and the Rastafari in Ethiopia

For many ethnic groups and nations around the world there is a deep-rooted relationship between the people and the land of their forebears. For the Rastafari, the land where they feel they belong is not the land of their birth. However, by repatriating to Ethiopia – as Ras Hailu says – they are returning to the land of their Father [Selassie] (Ras Hailu 2008, interview, 21 September). The physical interaction between people and place, the sense of belonging and how that manifests itself within the community of Rastafari in Ethiopia, has been a difficult process in terms of some aspects of culture, human rights and the ability to agitate against discrimination.

As mentioned above, in recent times there have been large and sometimes violent demonstrations in regard to Ethiopian’s ancestral lands and government plans under the auspices of development. The issues of land encroachment or dispossession are not only in the states of Oromiya and Amhara. In the south of Ethiopia it has been reported that tribal people are being forcibly removed from their traditional lands in the state of Gambella, beginning in 2012, and in the state of Southern Nations, Nationalities and People (Human Rights Watch 2012a, 2012b).

Rastafari are at the vanguard in their opposition to forms of discrimination, especially regarding equal rights and justice for black people, and are seen as “a most important global catalyst for social change” (Hannah 2006, p. 5). The forced removal of Africans from Africa is part of the discourse on reparations and repatriation; however, when it comes to speaking out about black dispossession and equal rights within their

65 A great number of young people and children were shot and killed in 2015 and 2016 by the Ethiopian police in the Oromo demonstrations. They were demonstrating against the proposed encroachment on their lands around Addis Ababa in order to make the capital city larger. I was at a Diaspora Conference in Melbourne in late September 2016 where a stream of images of dead youth from these demonstrations was shown as part of a discussion about the Oromo people and their land.

66 The landmass that constitutes Oromiya is huge, comprising 284,538 km, and spreads across a vast part of Ethiopia (the Somali region is just slightly smaller). Addis Ababa is not a state in the same sense as the regional areas mentioned above, but is classified as a ‘chartered city’ situated on Oromiya land. Although the Rastas are also on Oromiya land, they are very far from the area being disputed around Addis Ababa. As previously mentioned, Shashamane is approximately 250 km south of Addis Ababa.
adopted country of Ethiopia, my findings show that there is often uncomfortable silence on the part of most Rastas. This rebellious and militant trait, and speaking out against injustice, are almost non-existent. As someone who has lived with and among Rastafari in Jamaica, England and Australia for many decades, it was curious to see how the Rastafari in Ethiopia reacted to situations that would be seen in the West as grossly discriminatory, such as the removal of tribal people from the land they have lived on for over a thousand years. I queried this with one of the Rastas I interviewed and their response was, “We don’t talk about politics, we don’t get involved”.

Another Rasta is quoted as saying, “One’s mouth must just stay shut, no matter what is being done” (Williams 2012). Politics is a topic that is rarely discussed in public and there is a very good reason for this. The Rastafari are in a tenuous position because none of them have Ethiopian citizenship and therefore do not have the rights that go along with that status. Not that this fact would make any difference in the current Ethiopian political climate, since the injustices are being carried out on citizens of the country by their own government.

There are examples of Rastas’ civil rights being affected other than the Master Plan issues. Three Rastas were imprisoned on a trumped-up charge of murder because they were discussing the concept of a United States of Africa with Ethiopian youth. “They gave us a taste…of what could happen [to us]” was a statement given to me by one of the Rastamen involved (Anon 1 2008). They were released after a couple of months and given a written apology. The old Rasta, Priest Isaiah, also told me about an incident when the kabele, along with some other men, jumped the fence into his yard and tried to pick the lock to his house, where he had been living for some time. They spat all over the floor and told him he had to get out straight away because the house belonged to an Eritrean. Isaiah’s neighbour was present and said to the men, “But where will Father go?” Isaiah saw that there was going to be further trouble and told them he would leave the next day, which he did.67 There was also a murder of a repatriate by an Ethiopian in November 2015 (Hayden 2016). The authorities suggested that this was in part due to a disagreement over land that the Rastafari had acquired from an Ethiopian.

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67 Fortuitously for Priest Isaiah, a Bobo Shanti house in Shashamane was made available to him and his family.
I propose that when referring to a group as a homogenous entity, as we sometimes see in dialogue around Asians, South Americans or Africans, we realise such overarching identifiers are not being complicated by the tribal and ethnic divisions that are seen in many African countries, not least of all Ethiopia. So although the Rastafari are opposed to discrimination against black people in general, this political view is compromised when the argument is brought to a more nuanced position in relation to which black people. In Ethiopia alone there are nine different recognised nations and over 80 different tribes, who do not always agree with one another. It is into this mix that the Rastafari have come. Hypothetically, if the Rastafari decided to support the Oromo people in their struggle against the encroachment on their lands to enlarge the area of Addis Ababa, that might ingratiate them with their immediate neighbours and that would be a good outcome. However, the current central government is predominantly of another tribal group, the Tigrayans, and they might take umbrage at this collaboration and it might threaten the Rastas’ position within the country.

3.2.3 Legal Status for the Repatriates

The issue of citizenship for the Rastafari community has been discussed across a number of publications and there are no definitive statistics to verify the population of Rastas in the region. As stated earlier, the numbers that are quoted estimate that there are approximately 200–300 Rastas living in and around the area of Shashamane (MacLeod 2009; Ras Kabinda 2010; Williams 2012). This number fluctuates from time to time, as some people leave and return to the West while others come into the community. Other Rastafari have also settled in other parts of Ethiopia, predominantly in Awassa or Wonda Genet in the south, Addis Ababa the capital and Bahir Dar in the north. Bonacci states that the Jamaican Embassy in Addis Ababa conducted a census in 2003 which showed that there were only 120 adults, and most of them had overstayed their visas or had not continued to pay the annual fee required to keep them legal (2015, p. 374).

Legally and morally, the Rastafari repatriates are “alone in this ancient land” (Lewis WF 1993, p. 113), where they have to fend for themselves without the backing of

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68 However, it could also give rise to an argument about the Land Grant being on Oromiya territory.

69 As at 2016 there is no Jamaican Embassy in Ethiopia, but a Jamaican Honorary Consulate.
legal rights given to the Ethiopian citizens of the country or moral support from one of the ethnic groups within Ethiopia. In a 2003 interview Professor Robert A Hill stated, “There’s no refuge in Africa to be found, if ever there was. Africa is something that we can and must struggle and fight for, but it is not a place to go and rest” (Herbert & Hill 2003, p. 696).

Some of the repatriates who live in Shashamane and other parts of the country have been there since the 1970s. Although they have been there for so many years, their legal status is precarious and uncertain. This leaves the community in a situation where they are not secure in the country they reside in and I would suggest this affects the way they publicly express themselves. The Ethiopian Government is aware of the Rastas’ belief in the former Emperor’s divinity and it accepts new repatriates settling around the area of the Land Grant and elsewhere in the country. But the numbers are so few that they do not have enough collective voice to demand such rights as citizenship, and the associated benefits of this status such as official certification of their land allocations. In my documentary, legal status is discussed by a number of repatriates. It is one of the major problems they face.

All foreigners including the Rastas need to renew their visas each year, which requires a fee to be paid. After a number of years and with little money to spare, many Rastafari find it hard to remain ‘legal’. A Sistrin told me in 2012 that the authorities kept moving the goalposts and, although she wanted to stay legal, it was virtually impossible to do so (Anon 2 2012). As long as the repatriates do not want to travel outside the country, this does not create any problems. However, another repatriate who is a reggae artist told me in 2009 that he was invited to perform at a concert in Kenya but could not go because he could not afford to pay the money he owed Immigration for unpaid visas (Anon 3 2009). When we consider this in another way, this visa barrier traps the repatriates by not giving them the freedom to leave the country for work purposes in order to help sustain them on the land, to possibly seek good medical assistance or to travel to see their families in the West.

If someone’s visa has expired, which renders them illegal, if they want to travel they have to pay approximately Birr 400 (approx USD20.00) for each year that they have not renewed their visa. They are also taken to court and fined for overstaying their
This creates a great impost on many people and makes their situation vulnerable by creating a catch-22 situation: To apply for permanent residency they have to be legal, and to be legal they have to pay the fee every year to have their visa renewed. This also applies to business and investment visas. I was told a number of visa stories from both the elders and more recent repatriates. They want to live within the laws of the land, to be legal, but due to the financial impost they cannot. One cannot but admire their determination and strength of resolve in the face of such adversity and uncertainty. Their desire to make repatriation successful is admirable – as their mantra states, ‘repatriation is a must’ – through all the hardships that they have endured while establishing themselves and working for acceptance in Ethiopia.

At the same time, most Rastafari do not see their position as being precarious in regard to the central government ever telling them that they must leave the country. My impression is that they feel quite secure in that respect. Ras Mweya, a Rastaman, said that when he went to Addis Ababa to renew his visa, the Immigration person asked him, “Are you flying?” Ras Mweya replied, “No, I’m not flying”. The Immigration man said he should “go back to Shashamane, you are safe there, Selassie gave that land for you” (Ras Mweya 2008, interview, 19 September). This sentiment contrasts with the more recent privations that the repatriates have had to endure under the local government in Shashamane in regard to the Master Plan.

In one of my interviews, I posed a hypothetical: It must make people feel insecure if at anytime the government wills it, everyone could be thrown out. The Rastafari repatriate states, “It would be war. They would just have to kill us if that is what it came to… Because we don’t cause no problem, we are not a strain on [their] society” (Anon 4 2012). Lewis WF suggests that, after he visited Shashamane in the 1980s, his interpretation was that the Rastas were outsiders in relation to the Ethiopian style of life; Lewis WF quotes another visitor who suggested that the Rastas were not looking to become “inside the Ethiopian culture but inside themselves” (1993, p. 114). I would suggest that this is still true of some of the repatriates, but the majority of repatriates have accepted that to make it in Ethiopia, they must become an ‘insider’.

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70 While writing this dissertation, I was informed of the death of Ras Mweya in Shashamane on 26 September 2016.
Although there is a tension between being legal and not legal, a number of the more established repatriates are ‘registered’ with Immigration. In my documentary, Ras Kabinda discusses his legal status through his agro-industry business, which he carries out with some other Rasta Bredrin. I also included a clip from Ras Kabinda telling us that in October 2005, during an official visit by the Prime Minister of St Vincent, Dr Ralph E Gonsalves, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia at the time, Meles Zenawi, announced that he was presenting a Bill to the Ethiopian Parliament which would give individuals of the Rastafari faith the same status as Ethiopian citizens (Ras Kabinda 2008, interview, 20 September). But as late as 2016, this has not eventuated. In a 2012 interview with another repatriate, I mentioned that as Zenawi had publicly announced this positive citizenship Bill in 2005, why not petition the Prime Minister to get the Rastas’ status confirmed? The reply was that these things take time and it was “on the cards”. Unfortunately, a few weeks later in 2012, Zenawi died at the age of 57 with the Bill still not presented to the Parliament, let alone ratified. I consider that this is why building up the population of repatriates is imperative for the Rastafari presence in Ethiopia. While they remain insignificant in numbers, they will find it difficult to gain enough traction for positive action towards citizenship and other rights.

This lack of follow-through on the part of the Ethiopian Government is curious. There have been a number of occasions over the years when the Government has publicly praised the Rastafari and discussed solutions to their legal status. One of the popular propositions was establishing the Rastafari as the 83rd tribe of Ethiopia. The Rastafari were invited to participate in a cultural event where all the tribes in the country were represented. This was the first time the ‘83rd tribe’ identifier was used. Although a number of repatriates spoke to me about this status and welcomed it, there has been no legal or constitutional enshrinement of this position. The government proclamations all end in empty promises that disappoint and frustrate the community.

3.2.4 Women in the Rastafari Community in Ethiopia

Soon after beginning my research in Ethiopia, I noticed that there were proportionately more West Indian Rastamen living there than West Indian Rastawomen. As the Rasta community is so small and the culture is so distinct, I
found this strange. So I added another question to my interviews, which Dan would ask participants: Why are there so few Rastawomen in Ethiopia?

I was pretty annoyed by the answers from a couple of the Rastamen, which are, for example:

Oh, the *ooman* (women) can’t handle the *livity* (Anon 5 2008).

and from a Rastaman in Addis Ababa who came from England:

In the West, the black woman has security. If she has children and she and her husband are not together, she can get money from the government, she can get a house. So the woman is not keen to come to Ethiopia unless her man has plenty money. But if he wants to come with small money, she’s not coming with him! Because she’s not leaving that … you know … But Ethiopia means so much to us [the men] that we can’t wait until we have money to come because they might never have money, so they have to come home.

To my astonishment, Dan then says, “They run to the money before their heart”.

The interviewee agrees and adds:

They will come on a holiday, but it’s hard to get them to stay … They have such an easy life in the West, and see, now we come home, we repatriate, it’s a struggle, you know, to get things the way we want it and they don’t intend to struggle like that (Anon 6 2008).

I found both these statements at best flippant and at worst sexist. They certainly did not represent the Rastawomen I knew from Jamaica and the UK, or the Rastawomen I had recently met in Ethiopia. In my observations in the three countries mentioned, many Rastawomen are the backbone of the family unit and often bring up their children without a male living with them (Dudley-Grant & Etheridge 2008, p. 217; Tafari-Ama 1998, p. 104) and often with minimal support. This is a common practice among the general populace within the Caribbean. Rastawomen are, or were, more likely to be employed outside the home and therefore the main breadwinners for the family. There were reasons for this in some circumstances. In earlier times, not all Rastafari women would *dread up* (grow their hair in dreadlocks) and they were therefore more visually neutral and found getting a job easier than their menfolk, who predominantly had dreadlocks. Rastafari is in many ways a patriarchal movement (Chevanne 1994; Dudley-Grant & Etheridge 2008; Lewis WF 1993; Rowe 1980); however, many Rastafari men pride themselves on being better parents than the
mainstream men in Jamaican society and, in my own experience, Rastamen are also very good cooks! However, this situation of employability often meant that Rastawomen were employed outside the home, as well as expected to be homemakers (Tafari-Ama 1998, p. 100). Of course, this is not exclusive to Rastawomen; in Australia the percentage of household chores undertaken by women who work outside the home is hugely disproportionate to the percentage performed by men (Jericho 2014).

Although I had not come across as many Rastawomen as Rastamen in my initial trips to Ethiopia, during my visit in 2012 when I came on my own, I met quite a lot of women and wondered why I had not seen them during previous visits. The other aspect of my 2012 stay that I found interesting was that, when I returned without Dan, a number of the men who would not speak to me on earlier visits were now much more open to conversing with me anytime we saw each other around the Safar. I have deduced that going to Ethiopia with Dan may have influenced my personal engagement with both men and women in the community. The women would not approach me because I had a Kingman71 and the men would not approach me because I was with my Kingman.

When I returned to Ethiopia in 2012 for my third research trip, I focused my research predominantly on the Rastawomen. Although some of them had experienced some discrimination from the men, they were generally very independent and strong women and this did not sway them from their repatriation goals. “[Life] is not easy here” was repeated to me in a number of the interviews. From one woman’s description, she implies that it was difficult to remain on the land as a single repatriated woman, especially an older woman, because of the attitude towards her not only from some of the Rastamen in the community, but also from the local Ethiopian men.

Rastawomen have been represented on the Land Grant since the 1960s and others have come later, as is true of the Rastamen as well. The complication of coming with young children or waiting until the children have grown up and left home was a common situation, and not to be underrated or dismissed with flippant comments such

71 Kingman is an expression used by the Rasta as a term of endearment to denote a woman’s husband or partner. Rastawomen are affectionately referred to as Empress or Queen.
as the Rastamen’s quotes above. The medical facilities and standards in the country, for instance, are well below those found in the West\textsuperscript{72} and are not well resourced. Although there is a small group of mostly Rastawomen in Shashamane who help in the areas of health services and aged care, there is no adequate medical unit or service in the community. There is a private hospital in Awassa, which is approximately 45 minutes away. This lack of medical expertise alone could be one of the reasons why some women are reluctant to repatriate with young children. The education system in Ethiopia is more basic and under-resourced than in the West and, once children reach tertiary level, they are charged the fees of ‘international students’ even if they were born in Ethiopia and/or have lived most of their life there (Uniqua 2012, interview, 26 July).

As a parent and a daughter myself, I was able to identify with the women’s situation. One Rasta Sistrin repatriated with three generations of her family. Her elderly parent required regular medical attention and the specific medication was not available in Ethiopia, so the decision was made for her parent to return to the West. The lack of formal identity as citizens for the children and the need to start from scratch with housing, friendships and employment are enormous undertakings; for some people these are challenges that motivate them, but for others the barriers are too great and they return to the West. This is also true for Rastamen. But the women’s resilience in making repatriation a reality for them and their families is to be admired. Many Ethiopians in Shashamane get along very well with the Rastas, but there is also some hostility, especially as the region is growing and expanding into areas that were once quite isolated from villages and towns. The issue of land distribution and the attitude towards the distinctive Rasta cultural practices and beliefs – so different from those of the average Ethiopian – will certainly be ongoing challenges in the future.

Whereas a number of Rastamen marry indigenous Ethiopian women, I only heard of one West Indian Rastawoman who married an Ethiopian man and that relationship

\textsuperscript{72} For instance, the infant mortality rate in Ethiopia is 53.37 per 1000 live births (2015 est.), in comparison with Jamaica with 13.7 per 1000 live births and the UK with 4.38 per 1000 live births. Although there are 6.3 beds per 1000 in Ethiopia (in comparison with Jamaica with 1.7 beds per 1000 and the UK with 2.9 beds per 1000), once you get to hospital, there are only 0.03 physicians per 1000 in Ethiopia, in comparison with 0.41 for Jamaica and 2.81 for the UK. These comparisons become more pertinent when one looks at the total population in each country. The 2015 estimate for Ethiopia was 99.46 million people and Jamaica’s 2015 estimate was 2.95 million people (World Bank 2016; World Fact Book 2015).
ended. Some of the Rastamen have wives or baby mothers in the Caribbean but have no finances to bring them over to Ethiopia. For some men it is a practical response to this type of situation to forge a relationship with a local woman. This also has positive outcomes as far as negotiating the cost of food, rent and other necessities, as foreigners are always charged much more for services and food than local people. However, if the relationship between an Ethiopian woman and a Rastaman breaks down, the authorities generally favour the Ethiopian woman at the expense of the Rastaman. A couple of Rastawomen also expressed doubt to me about the Ethiopian wives’ sincerity in adopting their faith and culture, implying that they still remained wedded to the religion of their Ethiopian family.

3.2.5 Health Services and Burials of Rastafari Repatriates

An example of how some members of the community have altered their dominant cultural practices to accommodate life in Africa is when Rastas in the community die. Many Rastas do not believe that true Rastas pass away (Chevannes 1998b). In the West, Rastas do not touch the dead as this is seen as unclean and many will not take part in the preparation of burial services or attend funerals either (Besson 2002). They, like the general population, leave the preparation of the body for burial to the undertaker, but this is not an option in Shashamane. Until a few years ago, there was only one Rastafari, Ras Kabinda, who took on the responsibility of preparing a body and overseeing the burial process (Sista Bev 2012, interview, 25 July). With more Rastafari coming to Ethiopia, there are also more repatriates with experience in health services in both herbal and Western medical practices. In 2007 a group of carers established Ancients of Days, a committee of Rastafari who help care for the aged in the community, especially the Rastas who reside in Shashamane. There are quite a few Rastas aged 70 and older and some of them require regular medical assistance,

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73 On my first trip to Ethiopia, a Rastaman tried to sell some of his land to Dan and me. He was separating from his wife and the courts had found in her favour, ordering the Rastaman to hand over the land, the house and all their assets to her. When I returned in 2012, they had reconciled and were living together again. It is unclear whether this reconciliation was due to the pending loss of everything the Rastaman had worked for over many years.
74 Three examples of reggae songs based on the topic of not going to funerals are Peter Tosh’s Burial, Prince Alla’s Funeral and Michael Rose’s No Burial.
75 Two Rastawomen I interviewed have backgrounds in nursing and alternative therapies, and Ras Kabinda is an herbal doctor. All of them are active in the community when repatriates and local Ethiopians need assistance with health issues.
which they are generally unable to afford. The committee raises funds from people outside Ethiopia to assist a specific Rasta or donate whatever they are able to afford.\footnote{I received an email on 4 July 2016 from the Rastafari Studies Centre in Jamaica. It included a letter attached from the Ancients of Days requesting ongoing support for the elders. In regard to a more permanent centre, MacLeod (2009) states that the Bob Marley Foundation donated USD50,000 towards a medical facility in Shashamane; however, as of 2012 there was still no functioning medical centre in the Jamaican Safar.}

### 3.2.6 Crime and the Building of a Police Station

The crime rate within the **Safar** against tourists as well as the Rastafari repatriates had reached such a level that action needed to be taken by the members of the community. Ras Kabinda explains in *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* that some of the local Ethiopian youth were stealing from the tourists who were coming to visit the Rastafari village. They would pretend to be helping the tourists, but would then take their bags and camera gear and run away. These actions were giving the Rastafari a bad reputation even though it was not of their doing. The tourists were not the only victims of crime. Quite a number of Rastafari were also subjected to home invasions and other crimes. One repatriate told me of an occasion when she and her husband were asleep inside their house. They awoke to find all their furniture and other belongings had been stolen except for the bed they were sleeping in. This became such a problem that many Rastas stopped going out at night for fear of their homes being burgled.

Some Rastas in the community approached the local police in Shashamane town, which is about 15 minutes away by **bajaj**, and requested more patrols within the **Safar**, but the police said that because there was nowhere for the police to assemble and rest, they could not come. Some Rastas in the community took the initiative and decided to build a police station to counter this situation. There was a team of around five Rastamen who built the station, painted it and furnished it. They also supplied a television set for recreation. Once the police were a regular feature around the **Safar** the crime rate greatly reduced and it is now a safe place to walk during day and nighttime hours.

Rastafari living in the West would never have undertaken this project. Police and soldiers are part of the **Babylon** system and therefore considered oppressors of the Rastafari and others. King Kong says in his 2009 interview, which is included in the
documentary, that as someone who had been harassed by the police when he was young and accused of crimes that he did not commit, he would never have believed that he would be involved in building a police station. I think this would have been a common sentiment not only from the Rastas who were directly involved in the construction of the building, but also from other members of the community. However, the need was there. They needed an authority to step in and take control of the crimes being perpetrated, and the police are the authority to do this.

The only negative outcome from having the police in the Safar is that they began to harass the Rastafari over possession of ganja. This was generally to elicit a bribe, but in one recent case a repatriate of five years’ standing who was not up to date with his visa was deported after being found in possession of half a spliff (joint) of ganja (Williams 2012).

3.2.7 The Lion of Judah

One successful campaign by the Rastafari in Ethiopia was in regard to their flag, which holds great significance for them and has been an enduring iconic symbol of the Rastafari since the early days of the movement. It is the Imperial flag that was introduced in 1897 by Emperor Menelik II (Chojnacki 1980) and continued under Selassie until his removal from power. The Imperial design is the colour green at the top, gold in the centre and red at the bottom, with the Lion of Judah in the centre. When Selassie was overthrown in 1974, the Derg changed the Ethiopian flag by removing the Lion of Judah, which was such a potent reminder and sign of Imperial rule. I suggest that in doing this, they intended to remove any representation of Empire from the identity of the Ethiopian nation (Stratford 2010, p. 199).\footnote{Williams quotes a Rasta repatriate as saying that the Government has all but eradicated any mention of Emperor Selassie and his wife, Empress Menen, from the official school curriculum (2012).} From the Rastafari perspective, removing the Lion of Judah was almost sacrilege, but in the greater Ethiopian context this could be seen as a way of helping to unite the populace under the new political regime.

As the Imperial flag is such an important symbol for the Rastafari, the repatriates had meetings with the local Ethiopian Government in order to seek permission to continue
displaying the Imperial flag. A compromise was agreed on and the Rastas are allowed to fly the Lion of Judah flag as long as the Ethiopian flag and the regional flag fly higher (Sista Joan 2008, interview, 19 September). When I discussed the flag with various repatriates, they were adamant that it would continue to fly in the area where the Rastas live. Some repatriates were more strident; Priest Isaiah stated that the Lion of Judah flag should be reinstated even if it took a change of government (Priest Isaiah 2008, interview, 19 September).

3.2.8 Development and Progress in the Jamaican Safar

On arriving in Ethiopia for the first time and being aware that the repatriates had been settling in Ethiopia for over 40 years, my expectations and the reality I experienced were very different. I thought there would be a vibrant, reasonably large community involved in a number of medium to large-scale industries that employed many local Ethiopians. The small number of repatriated Rastafari in Ethiopia surprised me; specifically, how small the community was on and around the Land Grant in Shashamane. After so many years of assisting TTI members with their passage to Africa through the donations of its supporters, it was a shock that there was such a small contingent that had remained. This was a disappointing discovery and I was very curious to find out why this was the case.

With such a small permanent Rasta population in Shashamane, this affected the number of enterprises that could be established; however, there are standout projects that have been very successful initiatives. In 2002 the Jamaican Rastafari Development Community (JRDC), which is based in Shashamane and assisted through international donations from Rastafari in the USA and the UK, built a primary school on a three-acre plot that was donated to the community by a Rastafari Sistrin (Sista Shirline 2008, interview, 22 September). Initially the JRDC school was run by Rastafari members, but management was taken over by Ethiopians and to this day most teachers who are employed there are Ethiopian.

The number of Rastafari children who attend the school at any time has been small, which is to be expected considering the small number of repatriates in comparison to the large number of predominantly Oromo people who live in the region. With an
estimated school population of 400–450 students, 95 per cent are Ethiopian children (Sista Shirline 2008, interview, 22 September). The school has a high retention rate and high educational scores. This school is one of three schools that the Rastafari community has built (Ras Kabinda 2008, interview, 20 September).

There is also a tofu business called Royal Afrakan Link (RALCO) (MacLeod 2009) that employs a number of local Ethiopians, as well as one large and very successful hotel called Lily of the Valley that also trains and employs local people in the hospitality and catering industries. There was another Rastafari-owned hotel called Rift Valley, but on my return in 2012 Ethiopians had taken over ownership and management of this establishment. An artist from St Vincent and the Grenadines has a factory that employs a number of local people, and there are two bustling restaurants owned and run by Rastafari, which are very successful and employ a few locals. However, on the whole there are only a few businesses that can employ more than a handful of Ethiopians on top of their own family members. In the main, the Rastafari who are living in Shashamane support themselves through cottage industries such as small grocery shops, clothing shops and restaurants.

At first it would have been easy to pass judgement on the Rastas for not creating technical schools, universities, health facilities, and hospitality courses and other practical industries where the Ethiopian people could benefit from the education and skills of the repatriates. Why did they not have the ability to teach large numbers of locals in different trades and skills? Why did they not ensure that they had adequate financial backing to build a number of businesses that could train and employ many local people? The Rastafari repatriates have never been in a position where they could create large industries. One of the reasons for this, I would suggest, is that most people who have such experience and the capital to back such projects do not repatriate. From other information that I have gathered from various repatriates, it occasionally comes down to not being able to obtain permission or afford the required permits to start specific businesses. Obtaining a particular type of visa and then keeping the visa current is also an issue with some repatriates. In the documentary, Ras David tells us that when he obtained his business licence, part of the requirement was that he had to build a large factory. As an herbal medicine manufacturer only employing a few staff, his requirements were small. He states that he did not need a
large building, but went ahead with what was requested by the government because he was so pleased to be there. I gathered from his interview that altering the size of the building was not negotiable. As a result of so much of his finances being expended on the construction, when he eventually suffered financial hardship he was unable to ride out the long recovery time.

As is common in many developing countries, Ethiopia wants and needs big investment and big industries, not only for the capital injection but also for the employment opportunities they offer its population, which is presently close to 100 million people. In one of my interviews, a Rastaman states that Ethiopia has integrity and does not give away its land to the white man; however, the country is allowing large-scale investment from both China and India, which is impacting on parts of the population. This is evident in the financing of the Gibe III dam in the Omo River area and swathes of land being granted for foreign agricultural purposes (Human Rights Watch 2012b; Rice 2012). As the Rastafari are a minority group in the Caribbean and due to the Caribbean being an emerging economy itself, there has not been the high level of foreign investment from this region (such as from China, India and Saudi Arabia) that could have helped spearhead such projects and given not only the Rastafari but the broader Caribbean community a foothold or at least a certain status within Ethiopia.

3.2.9 We are All Jamaican, We are All Ferenji78

There are many countries and islands represented among the repatriates. The majority are from Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, but other islands are represented as well including Dominica, Anguilla, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Thomas and other countries outside the Caribbean including the USA, the UK, France and Chile. I met and interviewed people from most of these countries. To the Ethiopians, all repatriates are ‘Jamaicans’. Ethiopians do not distinguish between these nationalities, nor the colour of the skin, but make identification through the cultural practices of the individual. If you associate with or identify as Rastafari, then in their eyes you are Jamaican. Newly arrived Rastas sometimes feel aggrieved at this generalisation;

78 Also spelt färänj and meaning foreigner.
however, they soon realise that there is no point in trying to change the Ethiopian mindset. Some Rasta feel that there should be a more generalised identifier for them, rather than being grouped under the name of the largest Caribbean island.\textsuperscript{79} Tricka, a Rastaman from Jamaica whom I interviewed in Shashamane, laughs and tells me that the repatriates from Jamaica sometimes tease other Rastas about this if they start to big-note themselves too much (Tricka 2012, interview, 19 July).

In an interview I conducted for the film with Blacks Emmanuel, who originally came from Trinidad and Tobago and repatriated via the UK, he explains the wonderful feeling of finally being in Ethiopia and then makes reference to being referred to as a Jamaican:

You come to Ethiopia and you behold ‘how good and how pleasant it is’ to be on the land. Where else in the world can you wake up in the morning and as you walk, 24 hours a day ‘Rastafari!, ‘Haile Selassie the First!’ [indicating what people say to Rastas in the streets]. You don’t get that in the West. We still get the fight from there, even though the elder ones get the fight, now we get the fight and our children will get the fight, but being here, they accept us. The Ethiopians say no matter where you come from, they see you as Ras (Rastas), they see you as Jamaican, but we’ll make that go through, yeah, we’ll make that go through cos at the end of the day they reach the borderline (Blacks Emmanuel 2009, interview, 20 May).

A unique and engaging acknowledgement of the Rastafari in parts of Ethiopia is the greetings from strangers in many major towns and cities where they are aware of the Rastas and their belief in Haile Selassie. In Addis Ababa, Blacks says, you walk down the streets and people call out to you, ‘Rastafari!’ and ‘Haile Selassie the First’. This was something we encountered several times a day in the capital and this recognition was done with such warmth and friendship. So what Blacks is saying is that the general population of Ethiopia accepts the Rastas and their culture, whereas in the West it is a constant struggle for them against the prejudice and negativity that are generational and still continuing. He also mentions that, even though Ethiopians refer to everyone as Jamaicans, which antagonises some of them, the Rastas from other islands and other countries accept this representation because so much else of their initial experiences with Ethiopia is positive. This is very much the attitude of new repatriates before they are involved with the bureaucracy that, in some cases, hinders

\textsuperscript{79} This is a very sensitive point with a number of the Rastas from other islands because Jamaicans tend to refer to other Caribbean people as ‘small islanders’, which implies the superiority of Jamaica and Jamaicans.
their plans for development and prior to them being exposed for an extended time to the government denial of their permanent status within the country. One area where this positive salutation did not occur very often was in Shashamane where the majority of the repatriates settle. This could be seen as an indication of underlying tension between some indigenous Shashamane residents and some of the repatriates, or it could just indicate that because the Rastas are resident in the area, they are not viewed as being an unusual sight.

No matter how long they have lived on African soil, the Ethiopian people and Ethiopian Government see the Rastafari as *ferenji* (foreigners), not as Africans who have returned ‘home’. The recognition of Rasta expressed by Blacks does not transpire into an acceptance by the people that the Rastafari are Ethiopian. This lack of inclusion is distressing and disrespectful to the Rastas, who see themselves as strong promoters and advocates of Ethiopian people and culture.

In an interview Sista Ijahnya recorded for blackstarexodus.com in December 2012, she states:

> We are really expecting the Ethiopian Government to make its statement concerning our status. The Government has been quite gracious in accommodating us, but we do need to be recognised as a legitimate Ethiopian nationality. In the West we defend Ethiopia, we hold fast to our Ethiopian cultural identity, so it is a very strange thing to be in Ethiopia and to be referred to as *ferenji*. We take offence!

Another example of this sensitivity was expressed during an audio interview I did with one of the teenagers who lives in Shashamane. She says that some of her friends at school refer to her as *ferenji* even though she has been studying alongside them for the past eight years. It surprises and saddens her when this happens, as it immediately reinforces the fact that they do not see her as one of them. She says that she has a lot of friends at school, but her closest friends are the Rasta youth. This could be interpreted as a shared experience of being seen as *the other* within the Ethiopian milieu. It is the same experience if the Rasta youth are born and raised in Ethiopia or if they came as young children and have lived most of their lives there: the representation as *ferenji* never leaves them.

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80 This part of the interview took place after I had turned off the recorder and so there is no record of it.
3.2.10 Repatriation Advice

In the interviews for my documentary, each time a Sistrin or Bredrin was asked what advice they would give to Rastas in the West who wanted to repatriate, the common response was “come prepared”. I was surprised that this message has not been widely heeded by the new repatriates. There seems to be a lack of preparedness in the form of knowledge of the country, the services that are available, the average salary and the standards of the health and education systems. A lack of appropriate skills needed in Ethiopia is also very much a problem for the repatriates. Ras Joseph’s advice is that you need to have more than one skill to survive and adapt, and he lists the trades and skills that they need in the country: “We need mechanics, we need electricians, we need plumbers, we need masons, we need computer specialists” (Ras Joseph 2009, interview, 16 May). The list goes on, emphasising the practical skills required to help build the community and the country.

Other common pieces of advice had biblical connotations relating to the Apocalypse. Priest Isaiah says in the documentary that Rastas in the West should come soon before the gates of Zion close and they are called “careless Ethiopians going down with Babylon” (Priest Isaiah 2008, interview, 19 September). King Kong refers to the end of the world as well, with images of men being chucked into the sea and trying to swim to safety (King Kong 2009, interview, 22 May).

Ras Kabinda (2008, interview, 20 September) is blunt in his advice: “If you are not prepared to work, then better you don’t come”. He continues, “When you think that the work has been done, there is so much work still to do”. Financial security was another common piece of advice they would give to the Rastas in the West, to ensure they came with enough money to cover costs while homes were built, businesses were being established and children enrolled into schools. A number of Rastas had come to Ethiopia with the intention of opening small restaurants. It was not until they arrived and started their businesses that they realised there were not enough patrons to cover their overheads. Most Ethiopians in the Shashamane region are farmers who do not

81 See Ezekiel 30:9, “In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt: for, lo, it cometh”.

74
eat Caribbean food and do not have the money to eat out. The tourist trade in Ethiopia is generally very small considering the size of the country. Shashamane has a small tourist trade, but they are able to benefit from the buses passing through the area on their way further south. So businesses that rely on the Rastas and local residents alone have trouble surviving. Notwithstanding this, there are two very successful restaurants in the Jamaican Safar, one run by Sista Joan’s family and the other by Sista Carol’s family. Both women have very good business acumen and have successfully tapped into the needs of the area.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter there has been an introduction to the history and culture of the Rastafari that has given an overview of the creation of their movement, their strong emotional ties to Africa and their desire to repatriate to Ethiopia in particular. The significance of the Land Grant from Selassie to the “black people of the West” has also been explained.

In the second part of the chapter, my research findings have been documented. Through an interpretative methodology, these findings show that, due to the absence of any current avenue for legal citizenship, the Rastafari community is unable to be forthright in political commentary on any issues or to react to perceived or real cases of racial discrimination or prejudice against them and others. The negative effect on some members in their community is demonstrated through the implementation of the Master Plan. I also update or elaborate on areas of existing research into the Rastas’ cultural and social life that have been discussed in earlier publications. Some examples of this are on the topics of health and funeral practices, citizenship and Rastafari women in Ethiopia.
CHAPTER 4: TOWARDS AN ETHICS OF VOICE IN ETHNOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTARY

In the previous chapter the Rastafari community has been discussed, both their history as a movement and my findings on their current situation as repatriates in Ethiopia. In this chapter I discuss my place within the research process as an ethnographic filmmaker, scrutinising aspects of the making of the film such as the interview process, the evolution of the story structure, the relationship with the participants and the use of stills photography, as well as other aspects including the ethical concerns that helped shape the final film. An emergent overarching theme and point of enquiry within the making of the film and the broader research is the ethics of voice, which is explored in detail here.

One of my key initial concerns was whether I would be able to obtain a sufficient number of interviews to make a substantial documentary that covers the repatriation experience. Was my experience with the Rastafari movement outside Ethiopia relevant and advantageous to the research process inside Ethiopia by giving me an entrée of sorts into the community? It was important to me, in fact fundamental to the whole process, that the actual voices of the repatriates be heard and seen. I really wanted to use my skills as both a photographer and a documentary filmmaker in the structure of the documentary. I was not yet sure how the combination of still and moving images would benefit the narrative on Ethiopia and the Rastafari. Obtaining the right music for the film and how I was going to use the music were not completely clear to me, but I knew it had to be reggae music and music that was familiar to people in the movement. How I would secure the music rights to the tracks I wanted to use was a concern as well.

At first when I travelled to Ethiopia to conduct the research and shoot the documentary, I was part of a couple; later, I was on my own. This forced me to reconsider my situation: now that my relationship had fallen apart, how did that alter the way the film production proceeded? Did the fact that I was now a solo white woman filmmaker have any consequences for the making of the film? These are some of the topics and questions that are covered in this chapter.
4.1 In the Beginning There Were Two of Us

In 2008 I enrolled to do a master’s degree (by research) and decided to make a documentary in Ethiopia for the research project. I discussed my idea for the documentary with my partner, Dan, and suggested that he could be the person who was the main thread in the film. I envisaged the story as being about him as a Rastaman going to Ethiopia to experience repatriation. I suggested that he could ask the questions I wrote and that I would film him and the repatriates during our time there. Dan agreed to be in the film and we then planned a six-week journey to Africa.

By the time Dan and I left for Ethiopia, we had been together for almost seven years and our relationship had been formed and lived within an Australian context. By that I mean that Dan had lived outside the Caribbean for around 20 years and had adapted to the Australian lifestyle. I knew him as a confident person who got on with most people. He had a good job which paid well and gave him access to a lot more financial freedom than his earlier life in the ghetto in Trinidad and Tobago. Although financially he was much better off, he still maintained his cultural roots as an upfull (righteous, genuine) Rastaman. However, although Dan had lived in very poor conditions in the Caribbean, when we reached Ethiopia he experienced severe culture shock which lasted for most of the first six weeks that we were there. He was very antagonistic towards the Ethiopians and discussed this with the Rastafari we interviewed. None of them understood his reaction to or his interpretation of the Ethiopians. My reaction to the Ethiopians and to the country at large was not the same as Dan’s and I also found it perplexing. It made that initial journey quite difficult. The image of Ethiopia that Dan had envisaged was not what he was confronted with when we arrived. The mythology of Africa that I mention in the Introduction, as Zion and a land of milk and honey, was shattered and this is one reason why I interpret Dan’s severe and ongoing reaction as culture shock.

I had designed the film around Dan to give the documentary a clear narrative thread. It would follow his journey, his discovery and his ‘repatriation’. Much of the footage I shot in the first two trips therefore includes him. This was going to be used throughout the film as cutaway material. My idea was to discover the broader issues that were relevant to the community as a whole and focus on them in the documentary. By
getting Dan to ask the same questions of each participant, I would be able to gather footage that would represent the majority of Rastas in the community and it would enable me to determine what they considered the important issues in regard to repatriation and settling in Ethiopia.

Due to the effects Dan was experiencing, I made a point of not filming or recording his reactions towards the local population. However, his discussions about his feelings towards the Ethiopians are recorded and reflected in the interviews we did with people in the Rasta community. I also delayed interviewing him about his reaction to the country and its people because I felt the topic was too sensitive and exposed a reaction that was atypical of his personality. My intention was not to exploit his vulnerability in the film. He often looked distressed about his situation, which served to exacerbate his disorientation. We had talked about visiting Ethiopia together for years because both of us were independently interested in visiting the Land Grant. My interest had been formed in Jamaica in the 1970s and Dan’s interest had begun as a young Rasta in Trinidad and Tobago. He was really keen on coming with me and being the main character in my film, but what he experienced and was confronted with each day was not what he had anticipated.

The structure of the film around Dan began to falter early on and our personal relationship began to be affected along with our professional relationship. I soon realised that having someone else to ask my interview questions was counterproductive. Dan would at times change the wording of the question, which in turn changed the question’s intent. One example of this was a question that enquired, How has the repatriation experience changed you psychologically, emotionally or spiritually? Dan changed the wording to, Has repatriation changed your blackness in any way? As a consequence, the question made little or no sense to the participants and it was frustrating for me to be behind the camera and have to watch the confused look on the face of the interviewee as they tried to understand what was being asked of them. That is not to say that my original question was any easier in some respects. Most people would need time to reflect on such a large question and so I rephrased it depending on the person I was interviewing. However, one of the Sistrin I interviewed, Sista Ijahnya, gives a very thoughtful response. Her answer is so insightful and significant that I include it in full at the end of the documentary. In
response to the question, not heard in the film, How has repatriation altered you psychologically, emotionally or physically?, Sista Ijahnya replies:

What I do know is that there was a very strong emotional experience once I had decided to repatriate. There is a feeling of joy that makes me question whether this is because I am Rastafari in Ethiopia, or whether this is what Ethiopia does to people. So there is that. And there are many many many stresses and situations to which one has to adjust, and recognition of damage that needs to be repaired, here, maybe even a concentration, here. But the joy that I described is larger than all of that rolled into one and that is something that I don’t believe anyone can take away! So I don’t know if that is part of a prepared mental state or simply what repatriation feels like. I don’t know, but that is my experience (Sista Ijahnya 2012, interview, 24 July).

One way of framing this theoretically is through Couldry’s idea of reflexivity. He points out that voice involves reflection, “exchanging narratives back and forth between our past and present selves, and between us and others” (Couldry 2010, p. 8). In relation to my “past and present self[f]”, this was the response that I anticipated to the repatriation experience. From the years of hearing about repatriation and the discourse of reggae music highlighting the wonder and beauty of Africa, however, it took until my third and final trip to hear someone articulate the experience in the way Sista Ijahnya did. Her description of what repatriation means to her is something that she had, I would suggest, reflected on and enunciated to herself and possibly to others before the day of our interview. I had not given her a list of questions prior to our meeting and yet her answer is so evocative and complete. Such a response, I propose, will resonate in a positive and instructive way with Rastas who have not been able to go to Ethiopia.

From the outset, my intention was to make an ethnographic documentary film in order to hear firsthand from the repatriates and to endeavour to find out what the act of repatriation actually means for the people who have gone through this process. The importance of hearing their testimonies in their own voices, rather than a transcription, adds another dimension to the process of ‘speaking’ and ‘hearing’ and ‘seeing’. As Couldry puts it, “voice is the process of articulating the world from a distinctive embodied position” (2010, p. 8; italics original). This “distinctive embodied position” is made visible through the various repatriates within the documentary and also, to a lesser extent, became relevant in the case of my embodied position within the documentary as an ethnographic filmmaker. Through the practice
of “immersion” (Hemley 2012) I was able to shoot the footage and later create the film from the perspective of being in that time and place with the repatriates.

4.2 On My Own and Regaining My Voice

Dan and I travelled to Ethiopia twice together in 2008 and 2009 and, on returning to Australia, our relationship ended. I travelled to Ethiopia again in 2012 without him to continue my research and filming. By doing this I regained my autonomy as a filmmaker. By this I mean that I was not speaking through another person who was interpreting my research agenda in their own way and in a manner inappropriate for my project. This does not mean that Dan and I did not get some very good material in the first two trips, and I subsequently used some of this footage in the final documentary. However, when I returned to Ethiopia in 2012 I was able to respond to questions and answers more freely and spontaneously without fearing that I would offend Dan or be judged by him, which was the case when he was with me on the two previous trips. This changed the dynamics of the interviews, because it changed the dynamics within me and my relation to others. Being on my own meant that I could be myself, not an extension of someone else. I was able to ask anything I wanted without feeling I was undermining the position of the ‘main character’ in the film, a position I had elevated Dan to by wrapping the narrative around him. I was able to joke or add comments during the interviews and kept the rapport between interviewer and interviewee as the paramount concern. In a number of cases this is present in the film, especially through the interviews with Sista Joan, Sista Asher, Sista Ijahnya, Terralox and Ras David.

Due to the circumstances I now found myself in by being alone, the direction of the project changed somewhat. In my original concept, my ‘voice’ – and I mean this in a holistic way, referring to my visual and oral presence as well as who I am as an individual – was not consciously part of the documentary. The story was to be told through the onscreen presence of someone else, their voice, their image and their personality. However, once Dan left and I was halfway through the project, I had to rethink the concept and, through further research and reflecting on what it was I had discovered, I realised that the project was not just about the Rastafari, but also about my journey with the Rastafari over these four decades, as well as my broader creative
practice. As Dauphinee suggests, I was “variously present in the text as author, witness [and] participant” (cited in Denshire 2014, p. 843). In a way, once Dan left the story became more targeted and more honest. By taking away the ‘star’, I was able to concentrate on the community I encountered and their stories, which is what I had envisaged doing in the first place. So the first thing I had to do was change the title so that Dan’s name was no longer contained in it. Acknowledging the community at large, the title changed to Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’, an inclusive plurality of the community I engaged with. And within that community, I became “one character or social actor among many” (Nichols 1987, p. 11).

This is demonstrated by the shared history between many of the Rastafari in Shashamane and me, many of whom were TTI members – as I was – and many from Jamaica where I had lived. This shared experience and history gave me a privileged position when reasoning with them in Ethiopia. Ihde (2007) alludes to the process of a shared language when he states:

The voices of others whom I hear immerse me in a language that has already penetrated my innermost being in that I ‘hear’ the speech that I stand within. The other and myself are co-implicated in the presence of sounding word … [my] experience is always already ‘intersubjective’ (cited in Couldry 2010, p. 92).

This, in Rastafari culture, is represented by their very distinctive language that was created over the early years of the movement and which identifies and privileges Rastafari members. Not just the literal language but the way Rastafari dress, what they eat and what their philosophy is. These are also part of their language and their narrative. The fact that many of the repatriates and I attended the same meetings in Jamaica held by TTI and we were therefore privy to a shared dialogue, as well as the exuberance and tangible desires of the repatriation discourse, meant that the dialogue between InI (us) was different, more intimate, than those of other researchers who were not part of that ‘time and place’ in Rastafari history.

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82 As Dan’s name formed part of the original title, it is not possible for me to include the former title here without compromising his anonymity.
4.3 Speaking and Listening

In hearing the occasional question or comment from me after a response from a participant, the documentary becomes a richer, more reflexive interaction between the researcher and the participant. As Couldry explains, voice is always more than just speaking: “Voice as a social process involves, from the start, both speaking and listening, that is, an act of attention that registers the uniqueness of the other’s narrative” (2010, p. 9). A good example of how speaking and listening furthered the research project in ways that were unintended is captured during one of my first interviews in Ethiopia when Dan was asking the questions that I had written. As a way of introduction to the interview process and as a form of data collection in relation to the demographics of the repatriate community, I got him to ask each participant when they had became a Rastafari. In a 2008 interview, Priest Isaiah, a 77-year-old Bobo Shanti priest, answers this question in the following way: “I had risen to the faith on the 5th of October in 1955”. Knowing the history of the movement, I understood that this was a period when being a Rastafari would have meant suffering significant discrimination and retribution. Dan started to read the next question, but I was keen to hear more from Priest Isaiah from this time in his life. I interjected and spoke to the Priest from over the top of the camera, saying to him, “In those times it must have been very difficult, was it, for Rasta in Jamaica?” The Priest replies, “Very difficult! I’ve been through some terrible things there, I don’t … sometimes when I try to remember them, it roll water out of my eyes [I start to cry]” (Priest Isaiah 2008, interview, 19 September). I asked him if he could tell us about those times and he recounts, in graphic detail, being caught up in the Coral Gardens Massacre (which I mentioned earlier in Chapter 1), how he was tortured and brutalised, and how the Jamaican police tried to kill him. This is an example of listening which helped secure the telling of a piece of Jamaica’s history on film by an elder who was part of this infamous period in the country’s history and who has since died. Although I only used a small part of his account in Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’, it serves as an example within the documentary of reasons why some Rastafari needed to or wanted to leave the Caribbean for Africa.83

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83 The Coral Gardens Massacre/Incident, also known as Black Friday, is commemorated each year in Jamaica. I have been asked by the Head of the Rastafari Studies Centre in UWI Jamaica to make a documentary from the testimony of Priest Isaiah that I recorded and filmed. Priest Isaiah died in Ethiopia in 2012.
There is a section early on in the documentary where I include three accounts of personal *sufferation* by Rastas who have made Ethiopia their home. The other two accounts come from King Kong and Ras Kabinda. King Kong is a well-known reggae singer from Jamaica who is the most famous artist who has repatriated. He tells us that he was earning a lot of money from his music in Jamaica, but that there were people around him – hangers-on as well as his professional peers – who were after his money. He felt that his life was in danger and every day he lived in fear. Ras Kabinda recounts in the documentary the time when he was living in Dominica and was rounded up with about 150 other Rastamen and put on trial on a trumped-up charge; 50–60 of the Rastas were killed and he was sent to hang and placed in solitary confinement for seven-and-a-half years before escaping.

The passion, emotion and sentiment expressed by some of the participants while they are answering questions in the documentary are made *visible*. The recollections of painful events in their lives are shared with us in a physical and spontaneous way. I would propose that this recognition of emotion and passion is more complicated in a written research text. Barbash and Taylor suggest that ethnographic film, in comparison to written text, “has a unique capacity to evoke human experience, what it feels like to actually be in-the-world” (1997, pp. 74–75). Pink also contends that film/video “may offer a sense of intimacy, a route to intercultural understandings and ways of knowing not available as directly through written words” (2015a, p. 173). However, at the same time I would agree with Pink when she suggests that both the visual and the written text serve “different types of ethnographic experience and theory” (2011, p. 175). I have utilised this difference by embracing the writing of the dissertation and offering two interconnected yet different forms of research that complement and enrich each other. There is also more scholarly writing being produced using creative writing techniques, which could transform the ethnographic writing landscape. Nevertheless, I agree with the contention that visual narratives, through the medium of documentary film, enable immediate recognition by the

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*Sufferation* generally describes the hardship and deprivation of the poorest in Jamaican society. They refer to themselves as *sufferers*. I have taken the liberty of using the term in the case of these three Rastamen’s experiences.

This fear that King Kong expressed is valid because quite a number of successful reggae artists have been murdered including Peter Tosh, Prince FarI, Junior Braithwaite, King Tubby and Carlton Barrett.
viewer of the emotions and body language that are onscreen, which the viewer is therefore able to register and interpret for themselves (MacDougall 2006, p. 54). Examples of this can be appreciated on a number of occasions in Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’.

Ras Kabinda, for instance, discusses in the film the importance of the Ethiopian Government accepting that the Rastafari should be acknowledged because the African Union recognises the Diaspora. He also asks why the Government is “denying us our rights” (Ras Kabinda 2008, interview, 20 September). He is an articulate man, a proud and devout Rasta repatriate of over 20 years, and his frustration is clearly heard in this response. In another very different dialogue between Sista Joan and me, she explains that her sons are the managers of a new restaurant/bar they have built and she “just cooks for them”. I mention that she seems to be doing more than anyone else and she laughs and says, “Not the boys them! I’m the manager and everything!” (Sista Joan 2012, interview, 25 July). Viewing these interactions, the viewer is able to appreciate and be part of the frustration or joy that is apparent in the voices and mannerisms of the participants.

4.4 Recognition of the Voice of Others

While interviewing some Rastas, more than once the interviewee said, “I hope you include this in the documentary” or “this is the reason why I agreed to be interviewed” as they made a statement on a particular issue that they felt strongly about. I consider that the making of Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’ was not only integral to my PhD research, but also useful for the community in Shashamane in disseminating information to a wider audience. Sista Shirline was one of the Rastas who made such a statement. She was very keen to let the Rastas in the West know of her overwhelmingly positive experiences in Shashamane among the Rasta community, saying that when things needed to be done, there were people who would be there for you. She was also pragmatic about some of the negative statements made by some newer community members:

If you have a type of negative vibration in the West, for example, you’re going to bring it here! You know, you’re not overnight going to change. That’s what people seem to forget! They are not looking at themselves. They would look at
individuals or groups and say ‘Bwoy [boy], what are they doing for Africa, bwoy dem nah do nothing’ or ‘Mi nah dealing with this person’ or ‘I’m not dealing with that’. But the one thing as human beings we fail to do sometimes [is to] check ourselves. What are we giving to Africa, what am I doing for the development? We have to check ourselves first! (Sista Shirline 2008, interview, 22 September).

Couldry suggests that:

Failing to respect the inherent differences between voices means, once again, failing to recognize voice at all. Yet voice does not involve a claim to a unique interiority, but only a claim that the way we are each exposed to the world is unique (2010, p. 8).

Sista Shirline’s contribution was significant, as she was not afraid to voice her strongly held opinions on aspects of repatriation that she saw working or otherwise. The fact that I have not included Sista Shirline in the final documentary, even though she is appealing directly to the Rases in the West, has troubled me somewhat. Am I, in Sista Shirline’s case, as Couldry indicates, “failing to recognize [her] voice at all”? With some participants it was clear that they would not be in the final documentary and there are a variety of reasons for this. Sometimes they did not add very much to the discourse on repatriation, sometimes the footage and exposure were not good enough to include, but the most crucial reason is that I needed to keep the number of interviewees on screen at a manageable number so that the audience would have enough ‘time’ with each participant in order to get to know them “in-the-world”. So Sista Shirline was there until the very final editorial decisions were made and unfortunately was ultimately left out. Does the use of her words in this dissertation help to “recognize” her and others whom I quote in the written text, rather than the film?

Although I had asked and received responses to quite a number of questions from each participant, when finalising the content of the documentary I had to narrow the number of issues down to a handful, otherwise the project would have become too long. Therefore, Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’ relies on a targeted narrative related to four specific areas that I felt were most important:

1. Citizenship and permanent residency
2. Why some people who repatriate then leave
3. The status of children
4. Advice that repatriates can give to others who want to come

Having the opportunity to produce both a written and audiovisual outcome for the PhD has been beneficial. The combination of the two parts is central for a number of reasons. In the dissertation I am able to comment further on the four topics explored in *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’*, as well as introducing other areas that interest me from my research trips to Ethiopia but which do not appear in the documentary due to time and other restrictions. Examples of interviewees who are quoted in the dissertation are: Sista Shirline, Blacks Emmanuel, Uniqua, Sista Bev, Ras Mweya, Dirty Harry Sellassie, Ras Joseph and Ras Naphtali. Several participants are quoted anonymously due to the sensitive nature of their comments. Within the dissertation I am able to go into detail on these topics while protecting the identity of the anonymous contributors.

4.5 The Absence of Voice-over

At the beginning of the film, the viewer is guided through a short history of how the Rastafari movement came into existence with my voice-over accompanied by black-and-white archival photographs of two of the principal historical characters, Marcus Mosiah Garvey and Haile Sellassie I, without whom the movement would not have developed. My voice-over continues into a brief explanation of my personal connection to the Rastafari movement. This section is also accompanied by historical images. Some of the images are of me as a young woman living in Jamaica that were taken by two Sistrin I *trod* with, as well as other black-and-white images I took of Rastas I knew during the 1970s when I was studying photography in Kingston. The viewer hears my voice-over for the first and last time within these two-and-a-quarter minutes. Apart from a brief introduction for viewers who may not be familiar with the development of the Rastafari movement, I felt there was no reason to overlay the images or the interviews with additional voice-over since the storyline was constructed in a manner that was easily understandable by the audience. It was also an ethical choice, as I wanted the voices of the Rastafari interviewees to guide the film. Originally I did not anticipate including my voice at all; however, I decided that I needed to as a way of setting up the history of the Rastafari and my personal history in relation to them as well.
At one stage, after doing numerous unsuccessful takes of my voice-over for the beginning of the documentary, I considered using someone else’s voice, perhaps one of my Rasta friends in Jamaica. I have a tendency to be quite formal in my pronunciation, which may stem from my radio experience, and it did not suit the subject of this documentary at all. After showing a rough cut to some colleagues, I was told that I sounded like a BBC radio presenter. This could have unintentionally been interpreted as sounding like a “voice of God” (Nichols 1987, p. 11) commentary, or, as Eraso describes, using “voiceovers to impose the filmmaker’s own categories and values” (2006, p. 4), which was the opposite of my objectives. This authoritative style of voice-over could have been construed as signalling aspects of colonialism, especially as there is a clear connection between colonialism and the history of the Rastafari. In the end I decided to retain my voice rather than using someone else’s and re-recorded the voice-over. Also, once I incorporated a short explanation of how I came to be making this film, having two different voices in such a small timeframe might have caused some confusion. It seemed more honest to use my own voice. The story in one sense was about my discovery, with regards to not only my long-held desire to find out about the Rastafari repatriates in Ethiopia, but also my own reflexive research journey as a documentary filmmaker and a member of the TTI.

Voice-over in documentary film has had a long history and is still widely used in various modes of nonfiction and fiction films. From the multitude of documentaries filmed in Africa by Jean Rouch right up to contemporary works such as Sonia Kennebeck’s National Bird (2016) and Werner Herzog’s Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World (2016), voice-over is a very useful construct that assists in adding information that cannot be conveyed through direct, synchronised sound, or helps to add information that is important to the documentary narrative (Bernard, 2012, p. 205). Voice-over varies widely in tone, source, inflection etc., particularly in the work of filmmakers like Rouch, MacDougall, Leach, Gardner, Herzog and many others.

86 BBC radio presenters are wonderful and I listen to them often; however, within this context that style and tone of reporting were definitely unsuitable.
Herzog in a recent interview states that it took him decades to develop his “own voice” and to have the confidence to be the narrator of his documentaries. He says that his first attempt “started in a fairly painful way for me, that was during the shooting of The Great Ecstasy of the Woodcarver Steiner” (1974) when the producer of the series insisted that each filmmaker had to be present in their film as a commentator. It was after this experience that he decided he should use his voice-over more often in his documentaries, “because what I have to say as a … commentator would be more authentic” (Herzog 2016). Herzog goes on to say that he has become much better at narration, but at the same time he does not want to become perfect in his English pronunciation because he would lose part of his identity (Herzog 2016).

MacDougall’s film Familiar Places (1980) is a good example of how a narrated film can serve the community it represents in a long-term and meaningful way. Familiar Places shows a family group of Australian Aboriginals returning to their ancestral land after many years away. It shows particular cultural practices and ceremonial activities which are new to the younger members of the group who have accompanied their parents to the land. MacDougall’s voice-over is very low-key and unobtrusive. He explains aspects of the cultural practices as we watch them taking place onscreen. This information is significant to this family group and, as a consequence, the group has incorporated the film into the narratives surrounding their rituals (Eraso 2006, p. 5).

Rouch uses voice-over in very particular and varied ways. In his 196487 film La Chasse Au Lion A L’Arc [The Lion Hunters], he returned seven times to film the Peul, a semi-nomadic tribe of lion hunters who live near the border between Niger and Mali. He narrates the story of the lion hunt, as well as the detailed preparations before and after the event. Rouch’s style of narration is poetic and expressive, rather than formal and academic, yet the facts are still given within this descriptive style of voice-over. In this film especially, he shows his talents as “the cinematic Griot”, as Stoller describes Rouch in his 1992 book of the same name. An example of Rouch’s dialogue in this film details the morning when members of the tribe make the poison for their arrows:

87 Rouch began La Chasse Au Lion A L’Arc in 1957 and completed it in 1964.
One early Saturday morning, the hunters get ready to make the poison. It’s a serious operation, which takes place every four years, and from which women are excluded. They go off into the bush, for that’s where bad things are made (*La Chasse Au Lion A L’Arc*, 1964).

At the end of this film, still in storyteller mode, Rouch addresses the children of the tribe:

> A story like this, children, you may never experience, for when you are grown no one will hunt lions with bow and arrow. There, the story of Gawey–Gawey is finished (*La Chasse Au Lion A L’Arc*, 1964).

Rouch’s documentaries have not been universally admired, especially in the eyes of some African filmmakers. However, they continue to have historical resonance for some of the tribal groups he filmed. Some of his films include specific tribal practices that are no longer performed, such as the lion hunt in the film mentioned above and the Hauka possession ceremonies in Ghana[^88] that can be seen in arguably his most controversial film, *Les maîtres fous [The Mad Masters]* (1955). Another film he made in 1952, *Bataille sur le grand fleuve [Battle on the Great River]*, was about the hippopotamus hunters of Ayoru. “Rouch and his camera became guardians of Songhay traditions” (Stoller 1992, p. xvii). These films hold a valued place for contemporary members of these societies who use his historical films to educate the younger members of the tribe on ceremonies that are no longer practised (Stoller 1992). Rouch’s films are still highly regarded by many people around the world for their originality both as ethnographic films and as participatory documentaries. His critique of African colonialism is equally regarded.

In relation to my film and the Rastafari experience of repatriation, I hope that *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* may also hold significance for the younger members of the movement in years to come. I consider the film to be an informed testament of what life was like for the repatriates at this time in history.

### 4.6 White Woman with a Camera

Yes, I am a white woman with a camera and it was on three different extended periods that the community was exposed to my presence there, as well as in Addis

[^88]: The country was called the Gold Coast in 1955 when Rouch made the film.
Ababa. At first I was not sure how they would react to having a woman wandering around with a camera taking photographs and footage of them and their surroundings. This was something that initially troubled me because, when I lived in Jamaica in the 1970s, some people objected to having their photograph taken. Although friends and acquaintances were accepting of this practice, with strangers it was sometimes a different matter. It was not only the aspect of perceived exploitation by the photographer that was a concern but also, especially in the countryside, the widespread belief that taking a photograph of someone takes away their spirit or their soul. Photography was not the only medium that was suspect in this regard. During a trip ‘up country’ with a Rasta Idrin who was an artist, he was verbally abused by some local people for sketching their likeness.

But as it turned out, there were generally no such problems. In Ethiopia, most in the community recognised me as someone who was interested in them and had an affinity with them. I ‘go and come’ like some of the repatriates do and I would suggest that this was another reason for my acceptance. An example of this recognition can be seen in a question I was asked by one of the Rastawomen in the Safar who, on my second trip to Shashamane, asked me, “When are you going to repatriate?”

Although I was warmly welcomed into people’s yards on many occasions and accepted by the community in general, there was one exception. On my first trip in 2008 with Dan, when we were leaving a Bredrin’s yard after conducting an interview I saw an old cloth sign hanging from a doorway which read, “Welcome Home to Ethiopia” [sic]. This was in the Nyabinghi Tabernacle. I asked if I could photograph it and I was advised to ask the keeper at the Tabernacle. Dan and I walked into the Nyabinghi grounds and I still had my video camera on the tripod in clear view. A woman at the main building saw me from a distance and yelled out as she ran inside, “White woman with a camera!” I felt really odd about being described in that way and wondered how it would have been interpreted if it was a ‘black woman with a camera’ and a white woman running away as she yelled out this statement. Nevertheless, we made contact with the Bredrin and Sistrin there and asked if we could take a photograph of the sign and whether they would like to be interviewed for

89 The name for the headquarters of the Nyabinghi Mansion.
the documentary. The answer was no to both, unless we paid them. As I have never paid for an interview as a documentary maker or as a radio producer, I declined and we left the grounds. When I returned to Ethiopia in 2012, the people who had been so hostile to me had left the Tabernacle and a very welcoming Bredrin had replaced them. He was always happy to see me and I spent many pleasant days in the Nyabinghi Tabernacle during my visit that year. I subsequently conducted a number of interviews there with Sista Bev, Sista Ijahnya and Terralox.

4.7 The Relationship Between Still and Moving Image

One of the reasons why I chose the documentary format for my project *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* was because the Rastafari culture is a perfect subject to engage with visually. When one thinks about the Rastafari, their unique language and iconography come to mind immediately. Their dreadlocks, cultural practices and the colours of red, gold and green are omnipresent. As well as that, documentary is a medium I had previously worked in and I enjoyed telling stories through the moving image. However, I had not made a documentary film for a long time and so I was not sure how capable I would be of managing a digital work. For this film, I planned on incorporating still imagery to assist with the narrative and I was interested to see how well (or not) I could make the audio and both the still and moving image tell a continuous, cohesive story.

A style of filmmaking that incorporates still images is not new, but it was new within my personal creative practice. Filmmakers such as the radical Cuban filmmaker Santiago Alvarez and the essayist filmmaker Agnès Varda have used photographs creatively and effectively in their films since the 1950s (Varda) and 1960s (Alvarez). Alvarez often uses the still image almost as a moving image, such as in his famous documentary *Now* (1965), where the majority of the film is constructed from photographs but the camera zooms in and out and pans across the images as if they are moving subjects. This is a very powerful film examining the Civil Rights movement in the USA in the 1960s that still resonates today. Apart from the use of

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90 Many of the images are indicative of the ongoing unlawful murders and victimisation of African-American citizens today. The most recent activist organisation to be created in response to racial discrimination against black Americans is called Black Lives Matter, which began in 2013 to campaign against incessant violence against black people and to help rekindle the black liberation movement.
still imagery, the similarity I find between Alvarez’s *Now* and my film is in the use of music. All the music in my documentary is relevant to the discourse of the Rastafari, including the themes of repatriation, Ethiopia and Zion. Alvarez uses a song by the African-American singer Lena Horne, whose 1963 song is also titled *Now*. The lyrics of Horne’s song speak directly to the images of the violence inflicted on African-Americans that are edited together throughout the film. Horne’s lyrics include: “Now is the moment/Now is the moment/Come on/We’ve put it off long enough/Now/ No more waiting/No hesitating”. Where the two films differ is in the pace of the images. Whereas in *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* the images ‘move’ at a very slow pace which reflects the rhythm of life in Ethiopia, the images in Alvarez’s *Now* are fast and frantic, which serves to reflect the confusion, brutality and viciousness of the content of the images where people are being killed or beaten by the police.

Another powerful Alvarez film, *79 Primaveras [79 Springtimes]* (1969) is based on Ho Chi Minh’s adult life and his role as a political leader fighting against imperialism in Vietnam. Shortly after the film begins, there is a head-and-shoulder photograph of an unidentified young man. We are at first introduced to the image as an analogue negative frame, which slowly turns into a positive image of the man. The camera proceeds to zoom in gradually on the photograph and dissolve, repeating this process until we are only seeing the young person’s eyes. This technique not only makes the photograph appear as if it is moving, but serves to keep our attention fixated on the image. The close-up shot dissolves and transforms into a much older representation of the same person. The audience then recognises him as Ho Chi Minh, the man who ousted the colonial French and helped defeat the USA invasion of Vietnam before his death in 1969. The still images are accompanied by either music or the sound effects of war. It is a very imposing representation of a Communist leader by a Communist filmmaker.

Agnès Varda was a photographer before she started filmmaking and some of the key qualities that emerge from her films are her ease and confidence in using still images and the way she sometimes makes moving images almost static, rendering them proxy still photographs. This style can be seen in *Elsa la Rose* (1966), a film profiling the author Elsa Triolet and her husband, the poet and novelist Louis Aragon, whose work is predominantly influenced by Triolet as his muse as well as his wife. A lot of still
images used in the film are of Elsa from her youth through to old age and the film becomes almost an illustration of Triolet through Aragon’s poetry. One of the most poignant moments in the film for me is when Aragon says, “What are you thinking/One never knows what you are thinking about”. Varda’s use of the camera at this moment, as it lingers on Triolet, is a visual representation of the question Aragon poses. It is as if the camera, through its gaze, is also trying to find out what she is thinking or trying to suggest that Aragon does not have access to this part of her being – her private thoughts. In regard to my own film, the photographs are a place where the viewer can linger. The images in Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’ are representations of a country loved by the Rastafari repatriates, who look at its diversity and see themselves as part of that.

Throughout the filming and editing, I use conventional linear documentary strategies. By that I mean that the film is made up of interviews with participants who tell their stories accompanied by the use of cutaway footage and their voice-overs. I did not experiment with visual or sound effects in any new way, nor did I think the subject warranted that style of filmmaking. I consider that the visual and sound effects within the frame and the interview subjects themselves grant this documentary visual interest. As suggested earlier, it is my intention that the film will also serve to disseminate information and enhance the communication between those Rastafari in the West and the repatriates in Ethiopia. For this reason also, I wanted it to be more conventional and easily accessible.

From the material I gathered from my research trips, there were several options in how I could present the final project. Some of the options I considered were: a multimedia piece, an installation or a photographic exhibition with audio grabs from the repatriates. However, I feel that the documentary form will hopefully give the project a longer shelf life and a more comprehensive audience reach than any of the other options mentioned. Due to the amount of material I have gathered in Ethiopia, I plan on making more projects in the future including a photographic exhibition accompanied by audio tracks from the interviews, and a radio documentary. The first
project will be a documentary on Priest Isaiah, which will include his image and dramatised footage to accompany his voice-over.\textsuperscript{91}

Another motivation for making an ethnographic documentary as part of my research stemmed from my earlier time in Jamaica in 1976–1977, when I studied photography there. I took many images of my surroundings during those twelve months, presenting these images in class and learning the skills of ‘seeing’ and ‘framing’ what I saw in order to create a narrative. And through my compositions and the framing of what I saw, I was making a comment on life as I experienced it in Jamaica. Many of these early images are of Rastafari Bredrin whom I knew mostly in Kingston. These images are still relevant today and hold a resonance for me from those earlier times. I would suggest that they also hold historical significance to the Rastafari community as well; this is a depiction of Rasta life in Kingston and other places on the island at that time and, as Bate describes, the purpose of documentary images is to “show, in an informal way, the everyday lives of ordinary people to other ordinary people” (2009, p. 45). I argue that my documentary is an extension of these images and the cultural representations therein. The documentary also concentrates on one specific and significant aspect of Rastafari culture, repatriation.

My reinterpretation of the photographs I took in the 1970s, the historical images that I have used at the beginning of the documentary, is a deliberate engagement with the hardships prevalent among many of the Rastafari in Jamaica. As Berger suggests, “photographs are relics of the past, traces of what has happened” (1980, p. 57). Such traces are visible in the images of the Bredrin who are living in cardboard shacks, for instance the image of me licking cup (smoking a chalice or bong) with Winston in his little shack, and of the Bredrin who spent their days on the captured land which is shown in the images of the cardboard enclosure with salutations to Rastafari written on the front. It reads:

\textbf{Priest Isaiah’s interview was quite comprehensive and, although the interest of the University of the West Indies in this situation is predominantly related to his experience of the Coral Gardens Massacre, they are also interested in his account of meeting the leader of the Bobo Shanti order, Prince Emmanuel, in the 1960s. His recollection is very poetic and also of historical significance within the Rastafari movement. The last part of Priest Isaiah’s interview, which has resonated with me, is when he discusses how much he misses his three adult children, who live in Jamaica. He says that they do not know where he is and since that interview he has died. I have already started looking for his children in Jamaica through my Rastafari contacts because I would like them to see the footage and to know that their father missed them. I intend giving them a copy of the film when it is completed as a keepsake.}
‘Blackart Dreadlock, The Niahbingi [sic] Divinity’ and
‘Vangard [sic] of Truth Jah Rastafari’

In those days, and in contemporary times as well, Rastafari often consciously rejected society’s materialism and embraced a modest way of life based on *ital* (natural) foods and a natural *livity*. At the same time as embracing this lifestyle, in many cases this was the only way of life open to many Rastafari. This was due to their inherent poverty and/or their exclusion from mainstream society for practising their beliefs and culture, which were considered anathema to the mainstream in Jamaica.

Some of these black-and-white images clearly have technical imperfections caused by the age of the negatives and my inexperience with the medium at the time. This is demonstrated, for example, in the glare at the top of the frame in a couple of the images. It was a deliberate decision to leave these images in their original state, as I think this reflects a more honest reading and presentation of them and me at that time. I also decided not to touch up some of the images of Selassie and Garvey which were also technically imperfect.

All my contemporary colour images were taken during my research trips to Ethiopia from 2008 to 2012. Each time a themed section appears in the documentary, it is accompanied by contemporary or historical examples of reggae music. The music highlights or complements ideas important to Rastafari culture. The images express what the Rastas would see when they travelled around the country. My intention was for these images to act as *surrogate eyes* for those Rastafari who have not been able to ‘return home’ or who are in the process of arranging their repatriation. The audience is seeing Ethiopia and her people through the repatriates’ eyes, so to speak. Visual anthropology, according to Banks, “is an exploration by the visual, through the visual, of human sociality, a field of social action, which is enacted in planes of time and space through objects and bodies, landscapes and emotions, as well as thought” (cited in Prosser 2006, p. 19). The images in my documentary say ‘this is Ethiopia’ and the music reinforces the desire for Ethiopia and Africa to the Rastafari. Through the image themes, which explore objects, bodies, landscape and emotions throughout
Ethiopia, I am also acknowledging that the Shashamane community is only a minute aspect of that huge and diverse country.

Creating a documentary film in this way expands the experience and visually engages the viewer with Ethiopian society, its various peoples and the variety of housing, transport and environments throughout the country. It also enables the viewer to become familiar with the Rastafari and their lived experience in Ethiopia and among different ethnic groups, depending on where in the country they live. Much of the imagery is taken in and around two of the main areas where the Rastafari live, in Shashamane and Addis Ababa. Some of the images and footage were taken on my way to Bahir Dar, where another community of Rastafari is located. These images are relevant because they represent imagery and sights that the Rastafari who travel by local buses would also encounter. In the case of the moving-image cutaways, the viewer can also hear the sounds of the environment, such as the loud bird chatter as the two priests walk up the hill towards the bright blue rotunda and the market traders or higglers\(^2\) selling their wares.

Some of the imagery describes scenes that seem reminiscent of biblical times – the group of men and women sitting on the bare earth outside a stable with their donkeys, the group of women talking as they wait their turn to take water from the well and the procession of men and women in white shawls walking down the steep hillside and across a small wooden bridge after a religious service in a rock-hewn church. These photographs describe “social experience, social memory” that are real and present in Ethiopia and have not altered greatly in several hundreds of years, “acquir[ing] something of the surprising conclusiveness of that which was and is” (Berger 1980, p. 61). They are a living reminder of many societies that have long since developed and are only memories of the past. In regard to previous studies on the Rasta repatriates, I would propose that this is a fundamental point of difference between the more traditional analytical descriptions used in written theses and the visual representation of a country as seen in my documentary.

\(^2\) Higglers are people who sell their wares in the markets in Jamaica. This word is not commonly used elsewhere, but I think it is a good description of market sellers in Ethiopia as well.
This is not to say that the printed word is not capable of great expression in both fiction and nonfiction; however, this form of written description has not been utilised in relation to the Rastafari repatriates in Ethiopia thus far. For instance, in Bonacci’s work (2015), her anthropological research is deeply comprehensive and this formal, almost scientific style is reflected in her writing. I thoroughly enjoyed reading her book and I learnt a lot from it, but her work is not descriptive in the sense found in creative nonfiction. MacLeod (2009) and Gomes (2011) are less theoretical in style than Bonacci, but they equally lack any sensorial description of the emotional and physical world around the Rastafari.

When weighing up the reasons for undertaking film-based ethnographic or written research, Eraso states, “Through the audiovisual language, ethnographic cinema has proven to be a unique medium of representation, able to capture sensuality and expressiveness that can hardly be grasped through other languages”. She continues:

The process of representation in social sciences involves a permanent tension between absence and presence of the context of analysis. In the case of the audiovisual technique, this presence is extremely close and vivid, whereas in the process of writing there is a much greater absence due to the distance in time and space (2006, pp. 1–2).

In other words, from the gathering of the data to the subsequent data processing and publication, aspects of that material can be lost or forgotten, especially in relation to the emotional and sensorial aspects of the encounter in the field. I would surmise that the immediacy of visual recognition and appreciation, which are all present in the medium of the moving image, creates in the viewer a completely different experience from the written word by letting “the speaker vouch for his or her own validity” (Nichols 1983, p. 23), within the close proximity of place and time. Humans have always been able to read the body language of others, an important way to understand the intentions of your enemy (fight or flight) and to recognise distress, pain, joy and the other emotions we all experience. Hence the richness of the text displayed through audiovisual research. In the case of writing a dissertation as a complement to my documentary, I suggest that through my own experience, Eraso’s “distance in time and space” has allowed me time to contemplate what the research has revealed and uncovered, and the writing of the outcomes is quite different from the immediacy of the documentary. In other words, the written text and the audiovisual project serve
different functions and engage the ‘reader’ in different, but complementary ways.

As mentioned earlier, I avoided using a lot of voice-over; however, I did communicate my ideas about aspects of Ethiopia – the country, the economy, the people – through the themed interludes of photographs and incidental moving-image footage. These images are used to ‘explain’ what a voice-over may have communicated to an audience. The way an audience understands or ‘reads’ these images may vary depending on the cultural background of the audience, the historical timeframe that the images were taken and then viewed in, and other considerations. Roland Barthes used semiotics to explain the varied understandings people can have of visual images such as photographs. Because a viewer is interpreting the images before them from their individual standpoint in regard to cultural heritage, familiarity with images as signs and their individual knowledge of the subject projected, these aspects come together to give each viewer a certain amount of autonomy in how they read the images and the narrative communicated to them (Barthes 1977, p. 16). The variability in interpretation and meaning of a film is often outside the control of the filmmaker.

This could be pertinent to my film as well. I hope that an Ethiopian audience would be proud of the representation of their country that is seen in the documentary, which highlights the diversity and richness of their culture; however, there may be exceptions to this. The photographs that I shot in many of the small towns in the north and south of the country, for instance, show life as very basic and rudimentary. The country is currently experiencing a development boom, especially around the capital city Addis Ababa, and was ranked number one in Africa in terms of economic growth in 2015 (Davies 2016). There has been a huge increase in the middle class in Ethiopia over the past ten years (Mwiti 2016) and they may interpret such images as representing the country as ‘backward’. My response to that would be that I photographed what I saw in the towns, villages and cities in Ethiopia and that this is what the country was/is like. In some instances within the film I show people working on construction sites, which speaks to the idea of development. I would also propose

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93 This connoted meaning stems from the development of semiotics by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in the early 20th century. In the 1960s it became popular again through theorists such as Barthes.

94 This economic growth was later questioned in an article by J Bonsa in AllAfrica dated 19 July 2016, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201607190544.html>.
that most of the small towns that I visited and recorded are probably still very much like these photographs and that the majority of the development boom has taken place in the capital and larger regional towns. But as a consequence of this documentary and the images within, this film shows a country that is now changing and acts as a commemoration of what it once was, in the same vein as Rouch’s films shot in Africa.

4.8 The Nature of the Interviews

When I returned alone to Ethiopia in 2012, my style of interviewing was different from that of the previous trips. Prior to 2012 I remained behind the camera controlling the image and checking the sound levels, only occasionally asking a question when I thought an opportunity was being lost. However, in 2012 I spoke over the top of the lens directly to the person I was interviewing. This style suited me; it was much more conversational than in the past and it relaxed the subjects and made things more congenial. At the same time, I was very conscious of the material being gathered visually and aurally during the interview process.

There are times when I decided to leave my off-camera voice audible, either in the form of asking a question (which is a typical use of the filmmaker’s voice) in the case of Priest Isaiah and Sista Asher, by making a comment as is the case with Sista Joan or by expressing adulation as you can hear at the end of Terralox singing his song called Shashamane. Although I did not want to be visually featured in the documentary, I think that these few audio examples demonstrate the relationship I had with the Rastafari in Ethiopia and the specific subjects of my film. It was a relationship of equals, of people who overstood one another, and of friendship. As Couldry suggests, “Voice is socially grounded. Voice is not the practice of individuals in isolation” (2010, p. 7; italics original). Engaging in off-camera conversation to clarify the meaning of a response or to expand on the answer of the person onscreen is a strategy often used by documentary filmmakers, including Martin Scorsese in The Last Waltz (1978), Dennis O’Rourke in The Good Woman of Bangkok (1991), Errol Morris in The Thin Blue Line (1988) and Tabloid (2010) and Werner Herzog in On Death Row (2012) and Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World (2016), to name just a few.
In *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’*, the eye-line in the interviews generally indicates when the interviews were shot. Although I interviewed both men and women on my last trip to Ethiopia in 2012, most of the footage I have included of Rasta *men* is from the interviews I shot with Dan in 2008 and 2009. These interviews include Ras Hailu, Priest Isaiah, Ras Kabinda and King Kong. The reason I use these specific interviews out of those with the 17 men that I shot is because they are the strongest and most articulate interviews. On the other hand, all of the Rasta *women* I interviewed who appear in the final documentary are women I interviewed without Dan in 2012. They are Sista Joan, Sista Asher and Sista Ijahnya. The other interviews that I shot on my own included in the documentary are those with Terralox and Ras David.

What is evident in the earlier interviews is the difference in engagement between the interviewee and the audience (via the camera lens). On the first two trips, the participants engaged directly with the interviewer – Dan – who was sitting next to them. Hence, all these interviewees are in profile and not looking towards the camera. Semiotically this puts a distance between the audience and the interviewee. Likewise, it also puts a distance between me (the researcher and filmmaker), the interviewee (the research participant) and the film (the research outcome). In the third and final trip when I was interviewer and camera operator at the same time, the engagement is directly with the camera and myself, and therefore between the audience and interviewees more directly. This was a comprehensive shift in the filmmaking process. My engagement with the research participants was not compromised by a third person, and the process and outcome were considerably altered in a positive way.

The audience could read the positioning of the participants’ faces in various and unintended ways. On the first trips to Ethiopia, I appear more as an appendix to the process, responsible for the technical gathering of the research material. The direct engagement is between the (predominantly) male interview subjects with a male Rasta interviewer. The assumption can be made that the Rastamen are more comfortable engaging with other Rastamen. This was not universally the case, although I think there is an element of truth on some occasions. The fact that I was able to get interviews in 2012 with Terralox, Tricka and Specialman in Ethiopia and
with Ras David in Jamaica in 2011 – participants who engaged directly with me and the camera – proves this not to be a common issue with the Rastamen within the community. This observation is mirrored in Eraso’s statement, “In cinematographic terms, reflexivity translates to a series of processes and techniques that are largely dependent upon who is behind and/or who directs the camera, as well as who edits the film that is produced” (2006, p. 9). My reflection on the engagement of the participants with the camera/viewer, and the difference with that engagement between the men and the women, only resonated with me once I had completed filming and was regularly reviewing the footage in preparation for the editing process. The positions of their faces are distinctly different and, through the process of reflection, I was able to articulate this variance while writing the dissertation. I find this inconsistency raises an interesting comparison even though it was not fully intentional.

As a perfectionist, I was troubled by the occasional ‘mic in shot’ but then I came to the view that everyone is aware of the technology involved in filmmaking and if a mic enters the frame it gives the footage a certain authenticity. In an ethical sense it also gives the film a sense of transparency, demonstrating the conscious understanding by the participants that the filmmaker is gathering data. After all, this is ‘documentary’, a form of factual storytelling, and not a fiction film. If a mic enters the frame in a fiction film it can destroy the atmosphere for the audience, but in documentaries I think the audience forgives such anomalies, as they are more interested in what the person is telling them at the time.

4.9 The Editing Process

Having recorded around 400 hours of footage and taken around 300 images, my decisions about what to keep in and what to take out of the documentary were not only difficult, but also painful. MacDougall (2006) explains that the many fragments of footage that have been shot now need to be constructed analytically to create a new narrative. Hemley refers to this stage as manipulation, “the ordering of events, the ways in which information is disclosed, the ways in which the writer creates tension in a narrative, and more” (2012, p. 80). This process can be onerous, especially when a lot of the material is worthy of inclusion. Being methodical is an important process.
As the filmmaker, you become very close to all the footage. It constitutes more than what you can see: it incorporates part of the filmmaker’s life – their lived experience among the people they have recorded and filmed. I think this is especially true for documentary filmmakers who work closely with participants whom they form strong connections with.

One of the dilemmas that faced me was whether I would use any of the footage containing Dan (my now ex-partner) or keep him out of the film altogether. He had become the ‘elephant in the room’, so to speak. Would his inclusion distract the viewer from the film’s narrative form and intent by bringing up a lot of questions in the viewer’s mind, such as, Who is this person with the microphone? What is his position in the film? What relationship does he have to the film project? After showing a number of colleagues the specific footage with Dan in it that I wanted to use, there was no such questioning and I felt more confident including some of it in the documentary.

*Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* is bookended with responses from two of the repatriates to one of my key questions: What is it like to now be repatriated? The documentary does not begin with a title page but goes directly to footage of one of the participants, Ras Hailu, who explains what it was like for him repatriating to Ethiopia. He tells us that he did not know what to expect, that he did not know the language and that he had nowhere to live: “It wasn’t about *feelings* … It was about how to *survive*” (Ras Hailu 2008, interview, 21 September). At the end of the film, the counterpoint to this ‘survival’ experience is one emphasising ‘emotional connectivity’ with the repatriation experience. In Sista Ijahnya’s response, she emphasises the “joy” that she experienced along with the “stresses” and the emotional and psychological “damage that needed to be repaired”. For me as the filmmaker, these two scenes help to encapsulate the experiences that unfold throughout the duration of the documentary and the film becomes, as MacDougall explains, “a progressive unfolding from the initial, presumptuous image addressed to the audience” (2006, p. 39) to the very last image of the film.

With my previous documentaries, the editing process had always featured two protagonists, the director and the editor, locked shoulder-to-shoulder in a dark room
for an intense but short period of time. In the case of *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* the editing process occurred over a very long distance and took more than a year while I worked full-time and studied part-time. Nadia Astari, the editor, lives and works in Indonesia and is the only other significant creative practitioner involved in the making of the documentary. She was a very welcome addition to the ‘one-woman band’ that I had been up until 2015.95 I visited Nadia in Yogyakarta and we spent a few days discussing the film and how the narrative would unfold through the interviews and the moving and still images. After leaving the materials with Nadia, I returned to Melbourne and all other editing correspondence to do with structure, timing, edit cuts, stills, music etc was done via email and Google Drive. The film production was a truly global, cross-cultural project with the shooting taking place in Ethiopia and Jamaica, the editing in Indonesia and the production in Australia. Although I was a bit nervous about undertaking the editing process in this ‘cyber’ way, it was surprisingly successful and I feel confident in doing it again.

4.10 The Power of ‘Message Music’96

The importance of music to Caribbean people, and to the Rastafari in particular, is a significant part of any understanding of the Rastafari culture. This is no less the case in Ethiopia.

Like the *Griot or Jali*97 from West Africa, whose role was to communicate to their communities through song and music, many reggae artists do the same in the Caribbean, especially the Rastafari.98 Not all reggae artists are Rasta and not all reggae music is political, historical or social, but reggae is the style of music that was, and still is, favoured by the movement. The other significant style of music in

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95 I had someone help me by holding the mic during interviews in 2008 and 2012, but neither were sound professionals. In 2009 I used radio mics.  
96 I do not explore reggae music in depth here, as there are many well-respected authors on the subject including Carolyn Cooper (2004) and Sonjah Stanley Niaah (2010) from Jamaica, Sarah Daynes (2010), Lloyd Bradley (2000) and many others. I wrote a journal article in 2011 called “Image, Identity and the Rastafari Movement in Ethiopia”, which includes a brief overview of the history and contemporary narrative of reggae music and the Ethiopian repatriation theme. 
97 *Griot or Jali* come from several West African cultures and play a special role in their societies. A *griot* is a person who conveys the history, local contemporary news and culture of a tribe through the media of music and song; they are traditional storytellers. The position of *griot* is hereditary and several noteworthy contemporary African singers come from *griot* families including Youssou N’Dour and Mansour Seck. 
98 Other music that originated in Jamaica (e.g. ska, rocksteady, mento) and in other parts of the Caribbean (e.g. calypso, soca) has also served the purpose of ‘message music’, but arguably the genre that is the most internationally recognised and listened to from the West Indies is reggae.
Rastafari culture is Nyabinghi, which has been heavily influenced by the Afro-Jamaican folk traditions of Burra and Kumina (Savishinsky 1998). Nyabinghi is more generally associated with live ceremonial, almost sacred drumming, singing and chanting which is heavily influenced by African culture. Reggae music has become an international, commercial, popular form of music. For the Rastafari, it serves the added purpose of reinforcing their culture and celebrating the sacred and the divine.

What surprised me when I first reached Ethiopia was that there were so few prominent reggae artists who have repatriated. I honestly thought there would be many who had made the journey ‘home’, since the ‘Back to Africa’ and ‘Africa for the Africans’ narratives are still alive in their music. Even if not directly quoted, the discourse persists. In fact, what I discovered was that most reggae artists have not been to Ethiopia and their lyrics are based on an ideal rather than an actual experience of the country (Stratford 2011, p. 153). So there is a clear gap between the rhetoric and the reality of the repatriation experience.

The three most prominent reggae artists who have repatriated to Ethiopia are King Kong from Jamaica, Sydney Salmon from Jamaica/New York and Ras Kawintseb, an elder from Trinidad. Their message as repatriated artists, their ‘message music’, now shifts from the longing to return to the actuality of life, the livity on African soil, albeit concentrating on the positives. As well as interviewing King Kong, I have included one of his songs called Missin’ Africa at the beginning of the documentary. The lyrics represent the ‘message’ that reggae music delivers. At the beginning is a quote from the Bible and then King Kong’s message follows:

He who hath eyes to see, let him see
And he who hath ears to hear, let him hear
That the coming of the Lord is near
So beware, be prepared!
Dem nah know wha dem a missin’
But dem down deh inna Babylon
Nah know wha dem a missin’
We’re sitting up inna I-tiopia [Ethiopia] land.

Consequently, the positivity of repatriation continues through the artists who have made the journey ‘home’ without further public exposition and appreciation by them (through their lyrics) of some of the difficulties experienced once repatriation becomes a reality.
There is tension in Ethiopia among some of the repatriates regarding the contemporary reggae music that is being produced in the West, which “calls Selassie’s name” (King Kong 2009, interview, 22 May; Priest Isaiah 2008, interview, 19 September) and promotes ‘Africa’ and ‘repatriation’. During several of the interviews for the documentary, repatriates were critical of reggae artists who do nothing constructive for the upliftment of the community or the country. One Rasta says, “You know, this is almost treason, to be calling His Majesty’s name and you are not coming to see what is what, not coming to help or contribute and see what you can do to assist” (Anon 7 2008). I decided not to use these statements in the documentary. However, I do leave in one criticism, which comes from Priest Isaiah. He says that the artists who are calling on Selassie’s name are doing so for financial gain. At the same time they are not helping the poor who may also be Rasta. I leave this in the film because I feel that it might help to start a dialogue about what can be done by artists, and others in the music industry, for the poor in both Ethiopia and the Caribbean. I hope that there will be discussion of how appropriate it is to use the topics of Ethiopia, Africa and repatriation without some positive consequence for the repatriates who are the realisation of this discourse.99 Through their music, specific reggae artists are the ‘voice’ for the broader movement and their music speaks to Rastas at home and abroad, as well as the wider non-Rasta community who love reggae music. They serve the esteemed position of griot and some would suggest that this means there is responsibility and accountability in the words and message they convey through their music.

Even though I was disappointed with the lack of presence of Rastafari reggae artists in Ethiopia, it did not change my intention of combining the still-image segments with reggae music. But I did feel uneasy about the potential rift between the artists in the West, many of whom I had met and interviewed in Jamaica and elsewhere for my radio show, and the repatriates in Ethiopia, whom I also know and empathise with.

Although it was not planned, a small but I feel significant act of recognition for the repatriated Rastafari transpired when I visited Jamaica in June 2016 to obtain the

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99 Gomes (2011, p. 173) quotes Werner Zips (2006, p. 157), who indicates that a number of Bobo Shanti (EABIC) reggae artists donate a percentage of their music royalties to their Mansion in order to develop EABIC branches in Africa in preparation for the mass repatriation of members of this organ.
copyright clearances for the music I used in the documentary. I contacted as many artists, producers and distributors as I could and in most cases was able to show them how their music was being used in my film. Without hesitation and without any persuasion from me, all the artists, producers and distributors agreed to donate their returns from sales of the documentary to the repatriates in Ethiopia. I consider this to be a positive indication to the repatriates that the artists are acknowledging them and that further initiatives such as this may develop in the future.  

I will be interested to see the reaction to Priest Isaiah’s statement and whether it is considered to be overstepping the line between filmmaker and the broader Rastafari community. I hope not. I hope they see it as I intend: as a place to start positive action in helping the community of repatriates, who often suffer greatly through the lack of financial security. Another constructive dialogue would be with organisations that may be able to assist with the repatriation of those who still want to go to Africa. I consider that one of the most important first steps for the current and future repatriates would be senior-level negotiations between leaders of the Ethiopian and Caribbean governments to finalise a more stable and permanent position for the Rastafari and their children in Ethiopia through citizenship and land registration.

Indigenous reggae music in Ethiopia grew intensely between my first and last trips. There were very few reggae songs on the airwaves in 2008, but by 2012 I could hear almost nothing but reggae. This Amharic reggae explosion was not restricted to any one part of the country. I did a lot of travelling from the north to the deep south of Ethiopia that year and the genre was popular everywhere. The growing of dreadlocks among young male Ethiopians had also become a ‘fashion’. It would be interesting to investigate the reasons for this visual and aural adoption of Rastafari culture and whether it indicates anything deeper than just a trend. Is it a statement against the traditional conservative society they are growing up in, for instance, or perhaps an indication of their political awakening? So although the repatriated community is small in Ethiopia, the music and the message the music conveys are being adapted

100 The following artists, producers and distributors have donated any returns generated from the sale of the film: Cocoa Tea, Big Youth, Johnny Clarke, Leroy Sibbles, Earl Morgan (The Heptones), Robert Ffrench, Bobby Digital Dixon (producer) and Bunny Lee (producer), VP Records, Donovan Germain of Penthouse Records, Beres Hammond of Harmony House and Bobby Konders of Massive B. And in Australia: Darryl Bennett and Desmond Tucker from Freetown Hustle.

101 Amharic is the official language of Ethiopia.
and produced by Ethiopians as well, sometimes in collaboration with Rastafari repatriates. I have acknowledged this in the documentary by including two reggae songs in Amharic by a young Ethiopian reggae artist, Yidnekachew Mengistu (Yidney), who has worked with King Kong.

4.11 Subtitles or No Subtitles?

One thing I was in two minds about was whether or not to subtitle the documentary. Robert Gardner’s *Deep Hearts* (1979) is a good example of an ethnographic film where the majority of the synchronised conversations between the Bororo people of Niger are left without subtitles, although this dialogue is very much featured in the documentary. The film was shot during the performance of a ritual dance called Gerewol. The film juxtaposes between the men preparing their faces and ornate headdresses for the dance, and the women of the community doing all the heavy lifting and attending to the daily chores. We, as the audience, are left to interpret the conversations of the Bororo for ourselves without the aid of subtitles. In making this decision, Gardner has let the Bororo speak for themselves. Weinberger suggests that this film represents an example where “ethnographic description must give way to the ethnopoetic: a series of concrete and luminous images, arranged by intuition rather than prescription” (1996, p. 162). A more recent film, *Mahana* (2016), is a feature film from New Zealand that tells the story of a domineering patriarch and how this impacts on his extended family. In this film a substantial amount of the dialogue is in the Māori language. The director, Lee Tamahori, made the decision not to include subtitles and left the audience to interpret what was said through the way it was said and the accompanying action. The lack of subtitles also serves to address different audiences differently; for instance, a Māori audience may engage with the narrative differently to a Pākehā (non-Māori) audience.

Initially, in the case of *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* I hoped that through close listening, the viewer would catch on to the rhythm of the Rasta language and only have minor difficulties in comprehending the odd word spoken by the participants. I have asked myself whether the Rastafari repatriates and other Caribbean people who watch this

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[102] Pākehā is a Māori word that is used to describe New Zealanders of European descent; however, in more recent times it refers to all non-Māori, light-skinned people.
documentary may find it insulting or even racist to include subtitles. I also thought about the aesthetic implications and how this could possibly interfere with the overall look of the film. After showing it without subtitles to my three supervisors and a couple of colleagues, I was advised that they were all able to understand some of the people but not others. To deny the viewer the opportunity to engage with the stories that were being told onscreen seemed counterproductive. The whole premise of making the documentary was for their voices to be heard and so that the communication of their joys, insecurities and advice would be broadcast to an international audience.

Consequently, I have made two versions of the final documentary; one has subtitles for screenings in the West and another is without subtitles for screenings in the Caribbean or among West Indian audiences, including the repatriates in Ethiopia. My intention from the start was that the film was for the Rastafari community and I think that is where my film differs from many existing ethnographic films. Primarily, the audience of my film is related strongly to the subject of the film, Rastafari ‘speaking to’ Rastafari through a filmic reasoning.

I hope there will be interest in the film by a broader audience as well, including people interested in migration stories and the effects of social and cultural dislocation, and people interested in the way music works within a cultural milieu both socially and through representations such as film.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that throughout the process of making Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’ I have become more aware of my own practice and how it has shifted and developed. This is the first time I have made a film outside Australia and undertaken almost all aspects of the production completely on my own, apart from the editing. Even though my relationship ended and with it my principal ‘character’ disappeared, I was open to transforming the film into something else. In fact, I had to transform it into something else. This alteration in story structure has ended up being a positive outcome, rather than making the film a less competent or cohesive production. I was determined to keep going and returned to Ethiopia on my own to complete the filming
and my research. What this did was create between the participants in the film and me a different dynamic, which was completely unexpected and helped garner some strong expositions from the interviewees. The use of photographs and reggae music periodically throughout the documentary also helps to give the film a sense of being more than just an exposé of the Rastafari in their community in Shashamane. It expands their experience to reference Ethiopia in its entirety and gives them a broader contextual dimension.
CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this research journey I posed the question:

_How can an ethnographic documentary film illuminate the challenges confronting the Rastafari community who have repatriated to Ethiopia?_

Part of my response to this question would be to suggest that as a filmmaker one has to closely consider the challenges of the repatriation experience. Through an ethical lens, I questioned whether exposing the sensitive nature of some of the issues that face the Rastafari may inadvertently create more problems for them, rather than instigating solutions. This exposure may not be beneficial but counterproductive for the community in Ethiopia. Therefore _Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’_ is measured in its exploration of the social, cultural and political aspects that face the Rastafari community who now live as Africans _in_ Africa. The dissertation is where I have found a way to elaborate on their problems by describing in detail their concerns as well as their successes.

Originally the act of repatriation for many of the Rastafari was to ‘return’ to Ethiopia, the land of their ancestors, the place they call ‘home’, and to help develop and build the country. The Rastafari are a particular and unique society with strong emotional, cultural and historical ties to Africa. Through my research, I would suggest that the often ambiguous acceptance of the Rastafari within Ethiopia hinders their ability to be strong and active members of society, and reduces the ability for Rastas to build a legitimate homeland within the nation of Ethiopia.

My findings and interpretation of the life of the repatriates are complex; however, one of the major issues circulates around citizenship, which other researchers have drawn attention to in different publications and with varying degrees of clarity. My response is frank and honest. Although the late Prime Minister publicly stated that the Government would legislate for the repatriates to become citizens of Ethiopia, this has not yet come to pass. The Government has also proposed to recognise the Rastas as the 83rd tribe of Ethiopia and this has not yet transpired. If the repatriates were acknowledged formally as another tribe or as a special interest group with citizenship
entitlement, they could avoid the ongoing setbacks due to visa expiration that affect their status in Ethiopia and their participation in the further development of the country. Consequently, first and foremost they require legal stability through formalising the status of all repatriates, but especially for the children who are born in Ethiopia and who are effectively stateless or forced to take out the citizenship of their parents. The concern over legitimacy is clearly discussed by members of the community in the documentary.

The relationship between the authorities of Ethiopia and the Rastafari is not clear-cut; in some respects Ethiopia has been accommodating by continuing to recognise the Land Grant as gifted land to the African Diaspora. However, over the decades the land has diminished in size and has been further reduced by the implementation of the recent Master Plan. The consequences of the expanding region of Shashamane and of the land subsequently required to accommodate a much larger population could be of further concern for the preservation of what is left of the Land Grant. Formal acknowledgement of the repatriates’ land allotments is a key issue that needs to be undertaken and legally certified by the Government so that the Rastafari have continuity and certainty for their future and for the future of their children.

*Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’*, along with the dissertation, gives voice to the repatriates. There are clear benefits in having more than one form when conveying research into such a complex community. Some aspects of the research are more aptly explored in a written and heavily sourced document where, for instance, historical background can be explained, helping to situate the reader for discussion of contemporary developments and research findings. Examples of two more sensitive issues that are discussed in the dissertation pertain to a lack of political voice and racial problems for some of the Rastafari. This combined approach allows the topics to be explored in more detail.

In the original concept for the film, I was not present or recognisable at all. I was the invisible camera operator, invisible sound technician and invisible stills photographer. Due to the changes that I had to make to the design of the project, I became more present in the documentary, which is a huge shift from the structure and style of my past films. When I realised the correlation between the act of repatriation and my
longstanding personal interest and experience with the Rastafari, it became obvious to
me that I needed to be the narrator. This style of direct involvement will be explored
in future documentaries I plan to make.

In the beginning of this dissertation I reflect on how all the films I have made have
been about sub-cultural groups within society. *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* is clearly an
extension of that. However, in my past productions I was not looking at my work with
an ethnographic eye and sensibility. As a result of the extensive study undertaken in
making this particular film, I can approach future documentaries in a more informed
way given the research and background knowledge I have acquired in the discipline
of ethnographic film production and theory. This production has confirmed for me the
importance of immersing oneself within a community in order to validate one’s
findings, even if the discoveries and conclusions are not what the participants may
expect or want, as might be the case in *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’*.

*Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* creates a strong visual and emotional connection between the
viewer and the documentary participants in order to tell the story in their own voices,
for the viewer to *hear* and to *listen*. From my position as an ‘insider/outsider’ this
audiovisual expression of the repatriation experience along with my dissertation
contribute to the body of knowledge in Rastafari Studies. The benefit of engaging
with the sensory experiences of the repatriates through the vehicle of this
documentary film is that it helps the viewer to identify and empathise with the
repatriates and their lived experience in Africa. It also focuses on issues that speak
directly and consciously to a Rastafari audience in a particular, culturally specific
way. At the same time I believe that, after *seeing* the film, the reader of the
dissertation is able to *visualise* these sensory characteristics while engaging with the
text.

I also consider that *Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’* contributes to the area of Documentary
Practice. In Chapter 4, I describe in detail the process of undertaking a documentary
on my own in Africa as a solo female filmmaker. Working in a developing country
with spasmodic access to water and power, and being unfamiliar with the language
and the geography, were aspects that have added to my experience in making the film.
I consider that the documentary successfully conveys the story of the Rastafari in a
creative and engaging way. It also visualises Ethiopia in a way that has not been done before especially in relation to the position of Rastafari in that country. The film serves as a visual commentary on a country that is changing rapidly. Before shooting the film I was not sure how the photographs would help in the narration of the story, but I would suggest that they add another dimension or layer to the overall film. The use of reggae music alongside the themed sections is also important as there is a synergy created between the two, which serves to help communicate the repatriation discourse.

Some questions that I would like to explore in my future research also respond to Rastafari and the act of repatriation. Has the physical act of repatriation lost its appeal to younger generations of Rastafari who are also descendants of the trans-Atlantic slave trade? How does the Rastafari movement envisage nationhood if returning to Africa is no longer the goal? Is there a place for large Caribbean corporations, organisations and/or governments to be actively involved in assisting with the development of social and educational schemes within Africa and specifically Ethiopia? In the style of other ethnographic filmmakers I have studied for this project, I hope to be able to explore these questions using participatory documentary whereby the interview participants can be directly involved in the filmmaking process, and through that method I can pass on my skills as a filmmaker to a generation of Jamaican people who have their own stories to tell.
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**Filmography**


*La Chasse Au Lion A L’Arc (The Lion Hunters)* 1957–1965. Directed by Jean Rouch.


The Nuer 1971. Directed by Hilary Harris & George Breidenbach.


Interviews Audio/Audiovisual

Ethiopia (appearing in the documentary):
Sista Asher (Paulette McCatty) 2012, interview, 18 July.
Ras Hailu Tefari (Bandi) 2008, interview, 21 September.
Sista Ijahnaya (Christian) 2012, interview, 24 July.
Priest Isaiah (Kestexle (AB) Kelly) 2008, interview, 19 September.
Ras Kabinda 2008, interview, 20 September.
King Kong (Dennis A Thomas) 2009, interview, 22 May.
Terralox (Gary Prince) 2012, interview, 25 July.

Ethiopia (not appearing in the documentary):
Sista Alma 2012, interview, 26 July.
Sista Beverley (Stewart) 2012, interview, 25 July.
Blacks Emmanuel 2009, interview, 20 May.
Bulla Shon (Stephen Lewis) 2008, interview, 15 September.
Sista Carol (Rocke) 2012, interview, 25 July.
Dirty Harry Selassie (Euskin Clarington Jackson) 2009, interview, 20 May.
Esa Mohammed 2009, interview, 18 May.
Halo Mohammed 2009, interview, 18 May.
Ras Joseph (Aldwyn McPhee) 2009, interview, 16 May.
Sista Judah (Daphne Clarke) 2009, interview, 15 May.
Julian Whitely 2009, interview, 17 May.
King Solomon (Alberto Rennie Hills) 2008, interview, 15 September.
Ras Mweya (Masimba) 2008, interview, 19 September.
Ras Napthali (Alva Nelson) 2009, interview, 16 May.
Sanchez Rollocks 2008, interview, 15 September.
Sista Shirline (Hall) 2008, interview, 22 September.
Sista Simeon (Yvonne King) 2009, interview, 15 May.
Specialman (James Thomas) 2012, interview, 25 July.
Tricka (Patrick Campbell) 2012, interview, 19 July.
Uniqua (Stewart) 2012, interview, 26 July.
Zion (Gary Harris) 2009, interview, 15 May.

Jamaica (appearing in the documentary):
Ras David (McPherson) 2011, interview, 15 November.

Jamaica Audio Interviews (not appearing in the documentary):
Alan ‘Skill’ Cole 2011, interview, 7 November.
Ivan Coore 2010, interview, 5 December.
Peter Burke 2011, interview, 10 November.

Reggae Music Featured in Rastas’ Journey ‘Home’

African 2010, written by Peter Tosh. Performed by Beres Hammond, Marcia
Griffiths, Queen Ifrica, Tony Rebel, Bushman, Buju Banton, Gramps Morgan and
Louie Culture. Produced by Donovan Germain and Penthouse Records.

All Nations Bow 1975, written by Manley Augustus Buchanan and Winston Riley. Performed by Big Youth. Produced by Techniques.


Missin’ Africa 2009, written and performed by King Kong. Produced by Bobby Konders. Distributed by Massive B.

Right Time 1976, written and performed by Donald Shaw, Fitzroy Simpson and Lloyd Ferguson of The Mighty Diamonds. Produced by Channel One. Distributed by VP Records.

Shashamane 2006, written, performed and produced by Terralox.

Tsion Babaur 2006, performed and produced by Yidnekachew Mengistu (Yidney).

Warrior 2013, written, performed and produced by Darryl J Barrett and Desmond JW Tucker of Freetown Hustle.
We Want to Go Home 1994, written and performed by Leroy Smart. Produced by Bunny Lee.

Yinegal 2008, written, performed and produced by Yidnekachew Mengistu (Yidney).