

UC Santa Barbara

Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title

Making the Case for Middlebrow Culture

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/01j2b4ms>

Journal

Journal of Transnational American Studies, 2(1)

Author

Edmondson, Belinda

Publication Date

2010-03-30

DOI

10.5070/T821006984

Peer reviewed

Introduction: Making the Case for Middlebrow Culture

BELINDA EDMONDSON

A milestone of sorts was reached in 2007 when, for the first time ever, a dreadlocked, black Rastafarian woman won a Caribbean beauty pageant. It was no longer news, as it might have been ten years before, that Zahra Redwood, a dark-skinned, black woman, won the coveted Miss Jamaica Universe title. The predilection for light-skinned, long-haired Caribbean women of racially mixed heritage had already begun to fade in the English-speaking Caribbean since the dark-skinned black Trinidadian Wendy Fitzwilliam became the second black woman to win the Miss Universe title in 1998. (The first was the predictably light-skinned Trinidadian contestant Janelle “Penny” Commissiong, in 1977.) “Marcus Garvey must be smiling in his grave,” exclaimed one admirer, implying that Garveyesque black nationalism had come full circle.¹ But in a region where Rastafarianism has long been equated with poverty, marginalization, and subversive, millennial black power politics, Zahra Redwood’s victory was more than just an ideological triumph of indigenous aesthetics over Western ones. The Rasta beauty queen also heralded the *depoliticization* of black power aesthetics. Rather than the triumph of radical black nationalism, she highlights the co-optation of both Western metropolitan and local working-class culture in the upper echelons of Caribbean society. One interpretation of the Rasta beauty queen is to view her as representative of a globalized indigenous aesthetic, which she is. But even more so, she is the culmination of a long regional history of Caribbean middlebrow culture.

In the beauty contest-obsessed societies of the Caribbean and Latin America, a contestant’s chances of winning a national pageant are directly related to the perception that she has a shot at winning an international beauty contest such as Miss World or Miss Universe. By this criterion, critics have long complained, women who look like the majority almost never make it. So it was no surprise when, asked how she intended to improve the nation’s chances of winning the international Miss Universe competition, Redwood wrapped herself in the mantle of fellow Rastafarian and reggae superstar Bob Marley, responding that “Bob Marley has long been

synonymous with Jamaica and with all the attributes I possess.”² The beauty queen’s university degree and her interests in solidly upper-middle-class pursuits—including “parasailing and horseback riding”—along with her Rastafarian faith, channeled through the global reggae icon, marked her as essentially Caribbean yet—and this is critical—a cosmopolitan black professional.

It is tempting to read the story of the Rastafarian beauty queen as singular to our twenty-first-century moment, a moment when the terms “modernity” and “blackness” are not set in opposition to each other. But what the story illuminates is not so much singularity as continuity. The history of leisure culture in the Anglophone Caribbean for the last 150 years is very much the story of the nascent black middle class and the aspiring black middle class, striving to reconcile their origins in black-identified culture with its aspirations for social ascendance and international recognition. It is this story that I tell here. There are intellectual histories that address the emergence of the black and brown middle class in the Caribbean, but these tell a story of political, not cultural, ascendance. Authentic Caribbean culture is assumed to be the preserve of the working class. This book aims to rectify this perception by sketching a history of middle-class popular culture—or, more precisely, what I term *aspirational* culture—in the English-speaking Caribbean from the mid-nineteenth century to the present moment.

My subject encompasses a broad swath of cultural artifacts, beauty pageants among them. Yet it is framed by an analysis of Caribbean literature—albeit literature broadly conceived, from newspaper features to leisure magazines. Still, even my investigations of other cultural sites, like beauty pageants, inevitably reference literary culture in some way. I begin with a discussion of that most elite, yet most populist, of Caribbean industries: its literature. I do so because it is in the *culture* of literature, in not simply the reading but in the production, dissemination, and symbolic associations of literature, that the rigidly subscribed class distinctions of elite, middle-class, and even working-class Caribbean culture, begin to blur. And therefore it is in the Caribbean’s literary culture that we find the origins of middlebrow culture.

The Crisis of Highbrow Culture

In 1970, a book reviewer began his assessment of two anthologies of Caribbean literary criticism with a statement that he considered unassailable: “The two central facts about British West Indian fiction are that it began only twenty years ago . . . and that most of it has been written in Britain, Africa, and North America.”³ The reviewer had in mind the cohort of now-canonical writers, including V. S. Naipaul, C. L. R. James, and George Lamming, who did indeed pen the Caribbean’s most influential narratives in the mid-twentieth century while living in the metropolitan centers of Europe and North America. The newness of Caribbean literature, and its supposed genesis in foreign locations, is framed by the reviewer as a liability. How can one

speak of an independent Caribbean literary tradition when the literature owes its existence to a presumably more fertile foreign climate, and the forefathers of that tradition are still young men? While, on the one hand, the independence era required, and did indeed spawn, a singular Caribbean literary culture, on the other hand, the celebration of this newly found foundational literary culture was undermined by the feeling that it wasn't exactly native-born. It was not, in a word, independent. By this estimate, Caribbean literature is a mid-twentieth-century invention of expatriate Caribbean writers who were irreducibly influenced by metropolitan ideas. These "facts" have framed Caribbean discourse for the better part of a century. The Caribbean itself is rarely perceived by critics as a space that fosters a broad literary culture.

If early critics can be forgiven their ahistorical and limited perspective, what about the writers themselves? Barbadian novelist and critic George Lamming opined that his generation in essence created Caribbean fiction because it wrote "without any previous native tradition to draw upon."⁴ C. L. R. James, the Trinidadian intellectual, novelist, and founding member of the seminal Beacon group, bemoaned what he saw as the crisis of origins for Caribbean artistic production: "The question around which I am circling is this: is there any medium so native to the Caribbean, so rooted in the tight association which I have made between national surroundings, historical development and artistic tradition, is there any such medium in the Caribbean from which the [literary] artist can draw that strength which makes him a supreme practitioner?"⁵

James's anxieties about the genesis of artistic culture so vividly on display here reflect the wider anxieties not simply of his profession but of his socioeconomic class.⁶ The Caribbean literary tradition is perhaps the only tradition in the region thought to be unequivocally middle class, and yet its best practitioners fear that this cultural legacy is not "rooted" in the Caribbean. By contrast, no such anxiety attends scholarly observations on the roots of Caribbean working-class culture. George Lamming's statement that "the West Indian novel . . . has restored the West Indian peasant to his true and original status of personality" is in effect a concession to the idea that the writer himself has no culture upon which to draw, but rather must channel authentic Caribbean culture via the representation of the peasant. And indeed James's own novel, *Minty Alley*, clearly concedes the cultural territory as it tries to rectify the divide by placing the black, middle-class protagonist in a working-class Trinidadian "yard." The novel mirrors James's view of his own position in Caribbean society: an isolated observer of the "real life" of the working-class multitude.

Fellow Trinidadian V. S. Naipaul had a different view of the divide between working-class and middle-class Caribbean culture of the 1960s. Noting that the Trinidadian middle class loved dialect newspaper and radio stories but not dialect novels, Naipaul opined that the "Trinidadian expects his novels . . . to have a detergent purpose, and it is largely for this reason that there are complaints about

the scarcity of writing about what is called the middle class.”⁷ In other words, it is not so much that there is no middle-class literary tradition but that *that* tradition is not identifiably different from the tradition of working-class Caribbean culture. Naipaul’s remarks find an odd corollary among present-day critics: on the other side of the Caribbean literary continuum, forty years after Naipaul’s caustic comment and James’s anxious reflection, popular Jamaican author Colin Channer articulates a solution to the crisis of literary authenticity by framing the literary paradigm in terms of working-class Caribbean musical traditions. Or rather, in terms of one particular musical tradition:

[Bob] Marley is the greatest storyteller that the Caribbean has ever produced. And one of the things I really admire about him is that he didn’t “go disco,” didn’t follow market trends, didn’t sell his soul for acceptance by a wider world. As it turns out, global acceptance came over time. . . . I am currently facing something in literature that he faced in music, a kind of pressure to shoehorn my work into an ill-fitting definition of what “black” is supposed to be. I will resist as he resisted, and if it is the will of Jah, then people will accept me and my work for what we are—Caribbean in origin but global in scope.⁸

Again Bob Marley, now a touchstone of authenticity for everyone from beauty pageant winners to authors. Channer stakes out as his literary forebear not James or other canonical Caribbean authors but rather the reggae superstar. The working-class, black Jamaican singer is an emblem of diasporic black identity, simultaneously embodying the aspirations of the world’s poorest people and the glamorous international celebrity of the world’s richest. Bob Marley therefore symbolizes a particularly modern idea of Caribbean identity. By canonizing Marley as a storyteller, a romantic nationalist who eschewed “marketing” and yet achieved global appeal, Channer the postcolonial writer answers James’s (anti)colonial question, posed almost half a century earlier: authentic Caribbean literature has its roots in that which is at once organic, regionally specific, yet global.

In various ways Channer has attempted to strike a balance between two irresolvable Caribbean positions on race that are inevitably classed: on the one hand, that ethnic hybridity is organic to the Caribbean; on the other, that blackness is the fundamental culture and color of the Caribbean. His medium is the romance novel, and—the taint of “marketing trends” in Marley’s case notwithstanding—it is cannily marketed to an international Pan-Caribbean audience. Channer’s literary ambitions are larger than the middlebrow nature of his writing suggests; as an older version of his Web site noted, his works have been hailed as a “clear redefinition of the Caribbean novel.” Many of his novels are named after Bob Marley songs and feature male protagonists who are intellectuals or artists, with their mixed-race origins given a prominent asterisk in the narrative. Channer’s middlebrow genre thus epitomizes,

more so than the “serious” (though not necessarily less popular) literature of other contemporary Caribbean authors such as Jamaica Kincaid, the cultural conundrum of the modern Caribbean: the competing desires for authentic culture, middle-class status, and global appeal.

Both James and Channer, in their different ways, speak to the binary that is implicit in Caribbean societies—the binary between authenticity and middle-class status. This binary has persisted despite evidence that the middle class in the English-speaking Caribbean has also been a producer of popular culture from the nineteenth century. My goal is to challenge a dichotomous vision of Caribbean culture by exploring facets of what I call middlebrow literary and popular culture of the modern Anglophone Caribbean. These include, for example, popular novels, beauty pageants, music festivals, and other expressions of culture that are mostly created, maintained, and consumed by the middle or aspiring-middle class. My aim is to both contextualize and historicize contemporary Caribbean middlebrow culture as a phenomenon that reflects more than the obvious connection: a new marketing opportunity for international publishing houses or corporations whose business it is to sell popular literature, beauty pageants, and music festivals to a new demographic of consumers.

Caribbean Middlebrow presents, in a kind of historical chronology, moments in a cultural continuum. It assesses a number of different cultural moments and artifacts, starting with an examination of the commercial literary culture of the late nineteenth-century Caribbean. It interprets newspaper features and magazine short stories taken from the lively print cultures of Jamaica and Trinidad, and often aimed at an emergent black-and-brown middle class. The belief that the Caribbean merely reprinted English stories is given the lie here. Across the Caribbean we find a relatively high ratio of belles lettres from the eighteenth century onward, and in an ironic twist of salesmanship, many original articles and poems first published in local newspapers and pamphlets were republished in London and exported back to the Caribbean colonies.⁹ Moving from newspaper culture to popular fiction, I argue for the origins of a “brown” aesthetic that provides the foundation for middlebrow culture that is found in early, popular Caribbean novels such as the Trinidadian novels *Emmanuel Appadocca* (1853) and *Rupert Gray* (1907), or in the Jamaican novel *Jane’s Career* (1913).

If Caribbean society’s consignment of literature and entertainment to separate spheres has produced a schizoid perception of its own culture, then a more conciliatory vision of Caribbean life, one that combines the literary with the performative, is attempted here through an analysis of “dialect,” or vernacular, poetry. Popular vernacular poetry links the performative and literary modes of Caribbean middle-class culture. Found on radio and television as well as in the theater and at talent contests, popular dialect poetry has been a staple of middlebrow Caribbean culture for well over a century. It is a familiar presence in almost all of the regional newspapers, and indeed, the earliest published volume of dialect poetry, Barbadian Edward Alexander Cordle’s *Overheard* (1903), was culled from his regularly

published poetry series in Bridgetown's *Weekly Recorder* newspaper. The themes of *Overheard* still resonate: local issues such as the spread of smallpox, Barbadian relations with neighboring Trinidad, marital relations, and court hearings are treated with the comic tone favored by dialect poets even today.¹⁰ The genre is epitomized by the work of Jamaican Louise Bennett, whose poetry spanned the colonial and postcolonial eras and influenced every part of the cultural spectrum. Yet dialect poets, with the telling exception of the working-class "dub" poets, have been the most understudied authors in the Caribbean literary pantheon. From early on, their local concerns, comic outlook, and status as entertainers guaranteed that they would not be taken seriously as producers of Culture. Nevertheless, in this emphatically local and middle-class genre can be found the origins of everything from the highbrow theater of Derek Walcott to the musical lyrics of Bob Marley.

More recent moments in the middlebrow historical continuum include postindependence beauty pageant culture, the massive commercialization of Caribbean carnivals since the 1970s, the ubiquitous jazz festivals of the last twenty years, and of course the new genres of popular Caribbean fiction found within and without the region. Threading together this diverse history of aspirational culture are three key themes.

The first is the continuing influence of American popular culture from the nineteenth century to the present. Although Caribbean scholarship emphasizes British colonial influence in the nineteenth century and American influence in the late twentieth, this analysis argues for a continuous American cultural influence from the nineteenth century to the present. In *Creole America*, Sean Goudie shows just how interconnected were U.S. and Caribbean commercial and cultural interests in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a connectedness that evidently continued to flow both ways into the next century.¹¹ West Indian businessmen were trying to attract white American tourists as early as the 1890s, and a flourishing commercial trade with the United States is evident in the many newspaper and magazine advertisements for U.S. goods of that period.¹² For over two hundred years American entertainers have been visiting the region, to the point where American culture has become synonymous with entertainment and modern pleasures. African Americans are instrumental in this connection. Harvey Neptune has shown that during the American occupation of Trinidad in the 1940s, for example, the musical tastes and style of African American soldiers fundamentally changed the consumption habits and forms of cultural expressiveness of the society in ways that disturbed the colonial administrators, who felt that African American culture was responsible for the growing discrepancy between West Indians' worldly desires and the provincial designs the administrators had in mind for West Indian economies.¹³ Even before this watershed moment, African American society was a constant, if underappreciated, presence in the Caribbean. From the late nineteenth century onward, Caribbean societies followed American racial politics, read African American uplift narratives, and hosted traveling African American theatrical and musical groups. Black America

gave the black—and brown—Caribbean a way to be modern and black in the twentieth century.

The second theme articulated here is the affirmation of not a hybrid but a brown cultural identity as a national ideal that has been both celebrated and castigated in the Caribbean. The actual population of mixed race people who inhabit the middle class notwithstanding, brownness is a central category for a discussion of middle-class Caribbean identity because it speaks directly to the middle-class issue of quasi-elite status and humble origins.

The third key theme is the centrality of gender categories in the delineation of middle-class culture. Much of what is identified as middlebrow is also considered genteel culture, or women's domain. If respectability is a category associated with the feminine, then arguably respectable culture is female culture. Gender norms are constantly being negotiated in the interplay between serious and leisure culture that preoccupies the middle class.

It is important to point out what this book is not. It is not an ethnography, or a general history of the middle class, or even a particular history of middle-class reading publics in the Caribbean. A historical, sociological, or ethnographic approach to class inevitably means a materialist reading whereby all narratives become transparent, a means into the society itself. Materialist readings always assume a connection between political events and cultural events: one begets the other.¹⁴ They are synchronic. Yet this relationship is not always the case: for example, the traditional trova music of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula became increasingly "classicalized" even as the government became progressively more leftist.¹⁵ To read the former, therefore, as a reflection of the latter may not ultimately be useful. Thus my analysis asks another kind of question: what do these artifacts of culture tell us that historical, sociological, or ethnographic approaches do not?

Aspirational Popular Culture

In recent years Caribbean cultural studies critics have begun to take note of the shift in Caribbean publishing from what can be called anticolonial literature to a more broad palette of themes and genres, similar to what we see in African American literature, where Walter Mosley's mystery novels and Octavia Butler's science fiction vie for shelf space with Terry McMillan's urban romances. This broadening may reflect nothing so much as the U.S. publishing industry's recognition of the fact that there are all kinds of black people with all kinds of literary tastes, and that they read. Similarly, anticolonial discourse in some ways obscured Caribbean middle-class literary culture as either nationalist or colonialist: between these two polarities it is difficult to judge what middle-class culture reflected, and reflects, "for its own sake." If the antiracist, anticolonial novel is fundamentally linked to a politicized modernism, as has been suggested,¹⁶ then the postmodern moment in the Caribbean has meant a liberation from assiduity; reading, like listening to "smooth jazz," is not laborious but

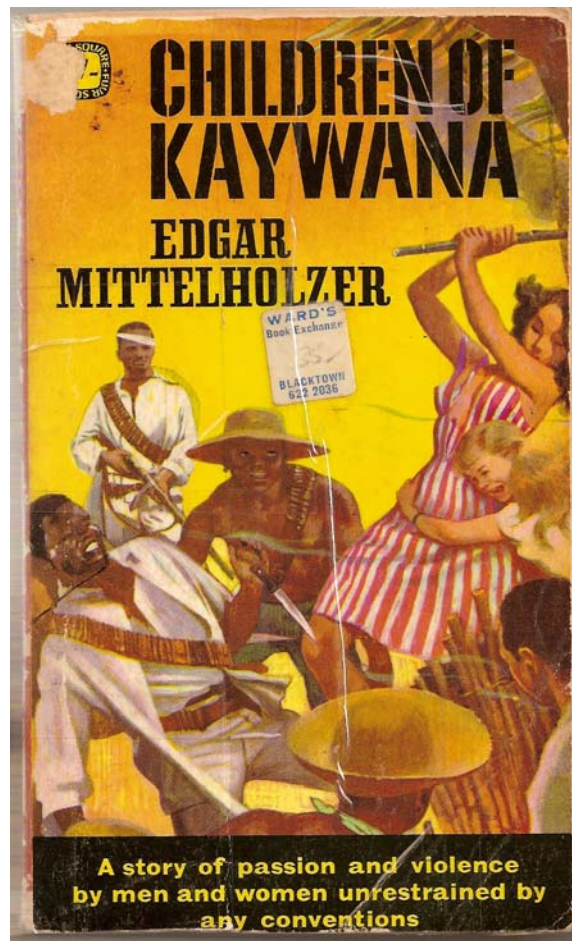
“natural” and pleasurable. Pleasure is key, because without pleasure reading is simply intellectual labor that West Indians do not yet “own.” So in this sense I think that postmodern global culture becomes, in the Caribbean, distinctly classed: it is middlebrow culture.

One of the truisms of postmodernism is that it has erased the distinction between highbrow and lowbrow culture, “good” fiction for the few and “bad” fiction for the masses. And, as the Africanist scholar Anthony Appiah famously observed, because the postmodern moment is also in some sense the postcolonial moment, so too has the division between high and low culture been blurred by something akin to middlebrow culture in the infamously elitist postcolonies of Europe. Africanist critics have noted the vibrant popular literature and local film industries of modern Africa, and scholarly attention is now being paid to the phenomenal Indian film industry to examine not just serious Indian films, but also those popular films that speak to a large middle-class audience that is simultaneously cosmopolitan and focused on the local scene. Yet the Caribbean persists in both popular and critical discourse as a region marked by the high/low division, with low the authenticating marker. As Chris Bongie points out, Caribbeanist critics generally reject the idea of a middlebrow postcolonial literature and tend to use the values of colonial modernism to render judgments about contemporary popular fiction.¹⁷ This notion is not to suggest that the necessary corrective is to equate the substance of Colin Channer’s novels with that of James or other canonical writers, on the basis of a superficial idea that all cultural exercises are of equal value.

I do mean, though, to highlight the way in which scholars unwittingly reinforce the high/low binary when we ignore the role that popularity and pleasure play in determining the meaning of books or other artifacts of culture. If “popular” has been synonymous with “poor” or “nonserious” in the Caribbean, what does it mean that “serious” Caribbean literature, such as that of Jamaica Kincaid or Edwidge Danticat, appears in such popular American venues as *People* magazine or Oprah’s Book Club? Does this sign change the way in which the Caribbean reading audience interprets these books? If the term “middlebrow” is associated with wealthy twentieth-century metropolitan societies with large middle-class populations, is it not misleading to speak of Caribbean middlebrow literature when there is only a relatively small middle-class population in the region? I don’t think so. Popular Caribbean fiction was not invented in the present era by U.S. publishing houses and desktop publishing. Several of the literary devices associated with highbrow Caribbean literature, such as the much-commented-on dialectical writing (or responses to European ideas by rewriting European texts), have their origins in popular eighteenth-century parodies of, or rebuttals to, famous poetry, plays, or tracts—parodies that found fertile ground in the popular plays and vernacular poetry of the Caribbean.¹⁸ Thus the dialectical tradition in the Caribbean grew from the bottom up, not from the top down. Popular Caribbean fiction has been around as long as there have been newspapers, and in the Caribbean almost everyone reads the

newspapers. Moreover, the audience for “serious” and “popular” literature has often been the same audience. The difference is in the context.

Take, for example, the Guyanese novelist Edgar Mittelholzer. During the 1940s and 1950s, English publishing houses packaged Mittelholzer’s historical novels as both hardcover literature and dime-store paperbacks. These novels tell the story of Guyana through a series of violent historical events, a subject that lends itself to both serious and popular readers. His most famous novel, *Corentyne Thunder*, was published by Heinemann, thus aligning him with the likes of George Lamming and C. L. R. James. His paperback novels, however, were published by commercial publishers and aimed for a whole new audience, the kind of audience that might not have been otherwise interested in stories that illustrate grand national themes. Their covers are instructive: mixed-race Amerindian women with bare breasts; a white creole woman holding a whip over a black, half-naked servant who lies at her feet; two white creole women fighting off threatening black men.¹⁹ Sex and miscegenation were, and are, irresistible topics. Much has been made of the “new” sexuality that pervades so much of today’s popular literature,²⁰ but as the covers of Mittelholzer’s books illustrate, there is nothing new about it. It is a question of what is emphasized.



The term “middlebrow” presents its own dilemmas. Lifted from American cultural studies, it suggests a confluence of economic and cultural status, or that consumers of middlebrow culture are, in fact, middle class. This definition may work well for the United States, with its consumer culture and large middle-class population with easy access to middlebrow “goods” like cheap novels. It works less well in the Caribbean, where poverty is endemic, and buying a book, however cheap, may mean not buying something else. Although middlebrow literature is largely read by middle-class readers, I want to emphasize that what people read reflects not just who they are (in terms of socioeconomic status) but who they *wish* to be. This concept is what I call aspirational status. So middlebrow literature reflects the validation of class status, yes, but it also may reflect the desire for higher class status—or the reconciliation of middle-class and working-class status. In short, middlebrow literature reflects the myriad and interlocking facets of the Caribbean class and culture dialectic. However, rather than argue for a globalized circulation of culture, as Paul Gilroy does in *Black Atlantic*, I am arguing for the circulation of class. There are two axes to what I am terming middlebrow culture: aspirational culture, or a desire for higher social standing; and authenticating culture, or a desire to connect with working-class culture. These aspects are sometimes the same thing, though not always. The middle class is, in a sense, an imaginary community, accessed through participatory rituals like reading certain kinds of books, dressing in certain kinds of clothes, and attending certain kinds of public events.

Part of the conceptual problem in establishing a popular middle-class culture is that the Caribbean, unlike Africa or India, has no precolonial culture: the creolized society that we recognize as the modern Caribbean began at the moment of colonization itself. If there are only creoles and no natives, then the idea of a native cultural tradition inevitably begins and ends as a classed notion. As a consequence, much analysis of Caribbean culture starts from the presumption that the society is divided into two discrete and exclusive camps: the derivative “highbrow” cultures of the elites and the authentic cultures of the working classes. Highbrow culture is usually signified by the region’s literary tradition, a product of its substantially black and brown middle class. In this region, where the majority of people are poor and comparatively few are what in the United States would be called middle class, the Caribbean middle class is *de facto* elite. Yet it is still not *the* elite. The middle class does not own the means of production; it owns no factories, media outlets, hotel chains. The real elite of the Caribbean is a haunting presence here, controlling and yet invisible; economically powerful yet culturally marginalized; shaping mass culture through its investments in music, literature, and pageantry, yet not driving it.

The propertied and business classes of the Anglophone Caribbean are, if no longer majority white, certainly disproportionately white—and of course they have always been so. The white elite has long been associated with highbrow culture of the Caribbean. This connection includes early literary culture, which is inevitably viewed as a rarefied by-product of the British education system. In Jamaica, it was an

English governor who underwrote early black and brown Caribbean writers like Claude McKay and H. G. de Lisser, and prominent members of white society who built its first theaters and acted in its first plays.²¹ Although there were indeed public elementary schools for the black working class that emerged in the post-Emancipation era of the mid- to late nineteenth century, these were not, by and large, avenues to the kind of elite education that was associated with the debating clubs, theater groups, and literary magazines of the era, the kind of education that essentially produced the cosmopolitan intellectuals who defined twentieth-century Caribbean literature.²² Still, what is left out of these traditional accounts of the privileged nature of Caribbean education is that while elite education was always a raced notion in the Caribbean, it was as often as not raced black or brown. The landowning class was not particularly invested in education. The British writer James Pope-Hennessy, whose grandfather John Pope-Hennessy was the governor of Barbados in the late nineteenth century, noted that it was only those of African origin who would speak to the governor “of subjects about which he was accustomed to talk in his own country: about books, music or religion. English persons on the other hand spoke mainly of tennis-scores, the country-club, whisky or precedence or oil.”²³ So: black, educated, propertyless. The more we plumb the narratives of the nineteenth-century Caribbean, the more we find the hallmarks of the emergent black and brown Caribbean middle class. Caribbean intellectuals are, inevitably, descendants of this earlier group. As the intermediaries of metropolitan and local societies, elite Caribbean authors are marked as keepers of Caribbean “high” culture, yet as a group their origins can be found in the local magazines, popular theaters, and debating clubs that characterize early Caribbean literary culture.

The high/low culture distinction that obscures the middlebrow coincides with other traditional scholarly binaries: metropolitan versus indigenous, European versus African, and so forth. Even the innovative recent criticism on cultural hybridity and popular culture has yet to dislodge this enduring presumption of a binary Caribbean cultural framework when it comes to reading actual cultural artifacts. In *The Caribbean Postcolonial*, the most definitive statement on Caribbean hybridity discourses to date, Shalini Puri focuses on the processes of hybridization more so than hybridity itself, with its overdetermined images of cultural harmony. This distinction is an important one because *cultural* hybridization does not, in fact, always correlate with *ethnic* hybridity. “Brown” people who usually identify with the professional class in places like Jamaica and Barbados are associated not with cultural synthesis and the transgression of social boundaries but rather with the consolidation of cultural boundaries. The same might be said of *douglas*, or half-black, half-Indian Trinidadians, who are usually identified as creole, and not Indian, in Trinidadian society.

The ethnically mixed middle class’ self-serving nationalist rhetoric that the region’s hybrid culture reflects its ethnic harmony, has been significantly punctured by recent scholarship. Puri points out that the “popular” is inevitably linked to the

nation-state such that we must not assume that the nation is necessarily repressive or the popular always progressive. Richard Burton astutely notes that despite the revolutionary rhetoric that originates in the Caribbean, Caribbean publics—particularly Anglophone ones—have tended to make pragmatic and cautious political choices rather than revolutionary ones, so that we should view Caribbean societies as a blend of respectability and oppositional cultures, rather than a binary.²⁴ Yet, for the most part, critics continue to interpret Caribbean culture in mostly oppositional terms: cultural hybridity reflects, if not social harmony, then nothing more than the transformation of culture into state resource; or, popular culture is innately progressive, and thus a threat to a repressive state and to an inequitable social order.²⁵ And who threatens the social order? Inasmuch as all of the iconic artifacts of Caribbean identity—salsa, carnival, calypso, reggae—are identified with the Caribbean working class, “popular” in Caribbeanist scholarship is synonymous with “poor.” And “poor” usually means black or Indian, not mixed race or white. The middle class, itself culturally rootless, is viewed as a consumer of authentic culture, not a producer. As we have seen from James, scholars have presumed that there are no authentic Caribbean middle-class cultural products.

One such scholar, Peter Koningsbruggen, in his book on Trinidadian carnival, argues that there is an increasing “middle-classization” of Trinidadian society, as the “cultural homelessness” of the middle class makes it dependent on the cultural production of the lower class to the point where the working-class carnival tradition has now been largely appropriated as a middle-class event.²⁶ What Koningsbruggen and other critics of middle-class appropriation fail to note, however, is that elite appropriation of working-class culture is, far from a Caribbean phenomenon, something that has long and storied roots in Europe, the United States, and around the globe.²⁷ Elite appropriation of working-class cultural ideas in these other contexts does not inevitably lead to the charge that those middle-class communities or those elites are culturally irrelevant; in fact, often the opposite is true. In other words, why do scholars invert the relationship between political power and cultural power in the Caribbean in ways that we would not consider in other national contexts? There is nothing singular about middle-classization in the Caribbean context. Yet the image of “cultural homelessness” in effect repeats a nineteenth-century claim that the brown and black middle class is an “unnatural” presence in the Caribbean, a claim that persists into the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, Koningsbruggen’s formulation of the middle-classization of Trinidad is useful for my counterargument here. As I see it, middle-classization is the reconciliation of two apparently conflicting Caribbean impulses so evident in Caribbean middlebrow culture: the desire for modernity, writ usually as white or First World, and the desire to establish or maintain cultural traditions, or roots—which are usually writ black (or now, in the case of Trinidad in particular, Indian).

A related view is that of anthropologists Deborah Thomas and David Scott, who see the middle class as culturally irrelevant to the working class. Using Jamaica

as a case study, they argue that as the power of the state has waned, so has the influence of the state-identified middle class. Now that the black working class no longer sees middle-class status as a conduit to economic power, it is no longer dependent politically or culturally on respectable middle-class institutions such as the church or the school.²⁸ This point is critical, one with which I fundamentally agree, but only so long as I define middle-class identity solely through its institutions. Or define working-class identity solely through black identity. Although the Jamaica example is reflected in many ways across the Anglophone Caribbean, it should not be taken as the only model of possibility. Race is a critical factor in this argument. A notable contrast would be the working-class populations in Caribbean societies such as Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, which are heavily Indian-descended, and are forging closer relationships to the state as their political power ascends. My framework for middle-class identity is necessarily more fluid: my point is that middle-classization does not mean solely middle-class appropriation of working-class cultural ideas, nor does it follow the traditional trajectory of the discourses of respectability. It does not mean the socialization of the working class into middle-class institutions so much as into middle-class mores, which have themselves changed. If the poor and working-class constituencies of the Caribbean have no interest in becoming “respectable” along the usual lines, they also have no interest in preserving working-class popular culture in the old formaldehyde of a nationalist “folk” cultural tradition. But if the Caribbean state is no longer a model of emulation, where does the hope for social mobility lie? The emerging working- and middle-class migrant Caribbean communities in the United States and Europe who send barrels as well as cultural ideas back home reflect a different model of possibility. The aspirations of the migrant Caribbean community are those of the working-class communities at home. Those aspirations are mirrored in the discourse of American-style professionalism that now characterizes the region’s black and brown Caribbean middle class, a discourse of modernity that has been over a century in the making.

This discourse is informed by a familiarity with American manifestations of middle-class culture, which in the Caribbean take on an added significance, particularly in terms of the act of reading. In the same way that, in earlier generations, the act of reading Shakespeare, or possessing a Shakespeare play, was in itself a signifier of elite, gentlemanly status, so too does the act of middlebrow reading signify cosmopolitan status, the easy marriage between what is modern and what is authentic, or “roots.” Unlike so much Caribbean highbrow fiction, middlebrow fiction does not require mastery of any canonical text. There is no status in being able to read a romance or a whodunit. The difficulty and complexity associated with the highbrow—either of form or of theme, is reversed in the middlebrow. It hasn’t thematic complexity (although it may imply knowledge of canonical texts); nor has it formal complexity—or if it does, that is not its point. Its accessibility is part of its pleasure. Middlebrow literature’s pleasures are heightened by the understanding that the mere mention of particular ideas or social contexts

confers, in and of itself, elite or cultural group membership status: say, the heroine's presence at a lecture on behaviorism at the university in the Indo-Trinidadian romance *Hand in Hand*, or allusions to highbrow authors such as John Updike in Jamaican author Colin Channer's *Waiting in Vain*. The work of continuously identifying and defining the Caribbean middle class, its desires and its parameters, is the point of middlebrow literature.

The Domain of Women

Like middlebrow literature, Caribbean middlebrow culture is, broadly speaking, to a large extent women's culture. Much of middle-class popular culture is heavily weighted toward women in that women are more apt to be considered "leisure" (rather than "serious") readers of fiction. Caribbean women's behavior outside of the home is often taken as a barometer of the respectability of the wider community. Much of the popular fiction was and is in the form of the romance, inevitably a female genre. Interestingly, the black Jamaican writer and nationalist Una Marson, whose plays and poems addressed all of the serious themes of the day, was also at one time a writer of short story romances during her stint as the founder and editor of the *Cosmopolitan*, the literary magazine of the Jamaican Stenographers' Association. Romances were indeed the preferred literary mode of the magazine's contributors and, taken together, suggest that the desire to maintain a respectable status as a "pink collar" worker also coincided with larger, "cosmopolitan," desires, all bound up in the pleasurable romance.²⁹ The *Cosmopolitan* was a site for some of the earliest, American-style professionalism discourse in the Caribbean, where career tips mingled with beauty tips and romances. Another early site of professionalism discourse is the Caribbean beauty pageant, which—even as its appeal fades in its birthplace, the United States—is more popular than ever in the Caribbean and other developing regions of the world. In the Caribbean, as in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, the beauty pageant is the quintessential middlebrow cultural product, a mix of cheesecake, social desire, commercial canniness, and Third World nationalist ambition. Its audience, both the television audience as well as the live audience, is made up overwhelmingly of women. Its winners are overwhelmingly middle class, often university educated and "well spoken," and frequently are used as spokeswomen to promote state initiatives in farming or commerce. The beauty pageant, then, covers roughly the same terrain as the romance novel—social aspiration, nationalism, and pleasure.

This is not to say that there are no male middlebrow cultural artifacts. Calypso and, even more to the point, cricket are both conspicuously absent from my analysis. Calypso and its modern variant, soca, are still mostly masculine, mostly working-class cultural preserves, particularly the "steel pan men" of the carnival bands. But carnival itself, from which calypso and calypso culture originate, is rapidly being purged of its black, working-class male associations, as has been noted by critics and fiction writers

alike.³⁰ Most discussions of popular culture in the Caribbean address calypso and cricket, ever since C. L. R. James was rediscovered by cultural studies critics and his magisterial study of Caribbean cricket, *Beyond the Boundary*, became a cultural studies primer. The conventional reading of Caribbean cricket, as posited by James and others, is that as an upper-class British game it provided a respectable vehicle with which to express an intense anticolonial, nationalist sentiment. (Indeed, cricket is such a signifier of Caribbean identity that Fire, the protagonist of Channer's *Waiting in Vain*, declares that as a "yardie to de bloodclaat core," he prefers cricket to baseball. Here cricket functions mainly as a differentiator between American and Caribbean identities.) So why no analysis of cricket? By way of answer, an example. Cricket's supposed apotheosis—the 2007 World Cup Cricket tournament held for the first time in the Caribbean, to great fanfare—in actuality signaled its descent.

Let us be clear: cricket is still very popular in the Caribbean, particularly in Barbados and Guyana. In Trinidad there is an airplane named after that nation's famous cricketer, Brian Lara. And indeed, Jamaica's populist former prime minister, Portia Simpson, found it expedient to dress up in cricket gear and lace her political speeches with cricket vernacular in order to exhort the party faithful to vote in then upcoming elections. The prime minister hoped to capitalize on the cricket fever that was supposed to be gripping the nation for the 2007 World Cup, with its first-time Caribbean venue. Large crowds were expected, but the stands were half empty for most of the tournament. Ticket prices were exorbitant, and Caribbean-style crowd culture was ruthlessly suppressed: no "wine and jam"³¹ music, no food, no drink. "It is like watching cricket at Lord's," complained one English visitor, "It's no bloody different."³² Cricket clubs like Jamaica's 115-year-old Melbourne Cricket Club now face possible extinction as young men choose sports like soccer and basketball. Which, again, is not to say that cricket is not popular, or indeed genteel—James's formulation still holds true; its popularity crosses class lines—but it no longer offers the same social benefits. What jazz festivals do for Caribbean culture is precisely what cricket doesn't do: establish a link with the U.S.-based black professional class. Cricket is a commonwealth game, after all. It is a game that ties the region to a colonial past and not to the present, where quick, high-scoring American games reflect the new sports consciousness and new possibilities for self-invention.

If cricket is no longer an apt example of male middlebrow culture, what else is there? In terms of literature, detective novels or science fiction are the obvious parallels to the middlebrow romance. Science fiction in particular has always enjoyed the status of being intellectually engaging, if sometimes badly written. The science fiction film genre has always evoked intense interest from scholars that the romance has not, for its perceived ability to promote serious philosophical or scientific issues—witness, for example, the academic industry around *Star Trek* or *The Matrix*—or reflect a particular cultural moment. Science fiction is not a genre associated with the Caribbean in general, however, and there are no male science fiction authors from the region that I know of.³³ So we return to the premise that

middlebrow culture in the Caribbean is mostly the domain of women. Much of the marketing efforts for jazz festivals appear to be aimed at families—another code word for women—or at single women. In addition, the influence of African American middlebrow culture on the Caribbean cannot be underestimated. The way Terry McMillan and others literally created their own markets, from selling books out of the backs of cars all the way to making the best-seller lists and signing movie deals, is a lesson in literary social mobility to Caribbean immigrants. Interestingly, the African American women’s magazine *Essence* was perhaps the first organizer of a music festival aimed at middle-class African Americans, particularly women: the annual *Essence Music Festival* in New Orleans. These African American cultural models have been instrumental in combining “real” African American culture with social mobility and modernity, a combination that finds its parallel in Caribbean middlebrow culture, with the emphasis on aspirational, socially mobile, yet pleasurable.

What is “respectable” popular culture? Is there such a thing? Why is this category important? If respectability has been the hallmark of the middle class from the nineteenth century to the present, insofar as respectability has always been tied to what women do or don’t do, then respectable culture is, as I’ve already asserted, the domain of women. Nevertheless, the discussions of “respectability” as a Caribbean category in anthropology discourses are incomplete. The usual academic divide between the “respectable” elites and the not-respectable working class no longer obtains, especially when thoroughly middle-class, often nonblack or light-skinned black women have taken center stage in the “lewd” wining (or gyrating) that now characterizes carnival in Trinidad, Jamaica, and elsewhere. The colonial, female-identified respectability discourse described by anthropologist Peter Wilson in his classic 1973 analysis, *Crab Antics*, no longer applies: —that Caribbean women characterize colonial virtues of domestic or professional respectability, and Caribbean men characterize the opposite in that they aspire to public, “man in the street” models of masculinity. Instead, the divide between public and private, male and female spaces, respectable and not, has shifted. What I call the discourse of professionalism has now superseded respectability as a category, certainly among the upper middle class, which does not see its women “wining” in the streets at carnival as incompatible with the professional discourses of the office and the upwardly mobile home. Indeed, it is arguably a part of the secular Caribbean upper-middle-class experience—even if middle-class black and Indo-Caribbean women are still far more likely to meet with criticism for “bad behavior” at carnival than are brown or white women, middle class or no.

So if middle-class Caribbean women are in the public domain of the “man in the street,” resignifying the space in ways that do not merely mean they are viragos, jamettes, streggehs,³⁴ or any of the various negative Caribbean terms used, this resignification converges with the new professionalism discourse that has replaced the respectability discourses of an earlier generation. And the discourse of professionalism is also, not surprisingly, heavily associated with women. As Carla

Freeman observes in her important study of black Barbadian female informatics workers, although these women workers in the multinational computer industry are from working-class backgrounds, and many worked previously as domestics or agricultural laborers for *higher* pay, they leapt at the opportunity for a job in the informatics industry because of the *atmosphere* of professionalism that pervades the workplace: the air conditioning, the emphasis on “professional” dress (high heels, makeup, business attire), and above all, the “promise represented by the computer.” All of these elements combine to make these jobs more desirable and, significantly, more pleasurable to the women.³⁵

The investment of women workers in fashion as a symbol of professional status is mirrored by an equal investment of the multinational corporation, which encourages what Freeman calls the “strategic ambiguity” of appearing to be of one class and belonging economically to another.³⁶ Yet to dismiss the informatics industry as just another example of Western neo-imperialism is to miss two significant changes from the colonial model. In 1990s Barbados, Freeman points out, two of the three informatics companies were owned by black Barbadians, and the third was owned jointly by local whites and an American company; in Jamaica, the owners were all black Jamaicans. In addition, the emphasis on fashion in these corporate spaces is a result of the influence of U.S. popular culture that arrived during the 1980s through the increase in mass tourism, migration, and the sending of “barrels” to relatives overseas. It would be easy to call this willing embrace of corporate culture by the working class an instance of Marxist false consciousness, and perhaps on one level it is. But those of us who have made arguments about the dehumanizing effects of becoming human capital in the multinational workplace must also grapple with the fact that examples such as this one challenge the Marxist concept of the alienation of the worker from her labor. In the same way, I want to challenge the two opposing pillars of globalization theory: on the one hand, that globalization spreads the virtues of democracy through capitalism (it doesn’t); and on the other, that globalization is a dehumanizing process that commodifies culture and the global worker (it does, but not always, or not in ways that always mean a repeat of the colonial moment). When the companies are black owned, or when consumer culture is a local phenomenon as much as one that is reinforced by one’s relatives abroad—at what point does Commodification simply become Culture? In other words, are globalization and localization the same thing?

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon indicts the function of the middle class in Third World societies as both intermediary and imitative, the transmission line between the nation and international capital:

But this same lucrative role, this cheap-Jack’s function, this meanness of outlook and this absence of all ambition symbolize the incapability of the national middle class to fulfill its historic role of bourgeoisie. Here, the dynamic aspect, the

characteristics of the inventor and of the discoverer of new worlds which are found in all national bourgeoisies are lamentably absent . . . this is because the national bourgeoisie identifies itself with the Western bourgeoisie, from whom it has learnt its lessons.³⁷

For most critics of Caribbean popular culture, this analysis still rings true today.³⁸ But while not denying the intermediary role of the Caribbean middle class in international capital, I believe this formulation is complicated by the fact that the international bourgeoisie of today does not necessarily resemble that of 1961. Consumer-driven culture is now as authentic a reflection of the larger society in almost any arena: religious culture is consumer culture;³⁹ music culture, working class or no, is consumer culture. In other words, even the lodestones of authenticity—carnival, crop-over, dancehall—are being shaped by tourism, multinational profits, and the desire to reach an international audience. Indeed, Bob Marley himself, despite Channer’s romantic view, is a triumph of the marketing savvy of Island Records founder Chris Blackwell, whose decision to market Bob Marley and the Wailers as black rock stars (an image more familiar to the white metropolitan audience in the 1970s than the local Caribbean Rastafarian) paid off handsomely.⁴⁰

The presumption has been that the flow of culture is one way: from “the people” to profit. But who is to say that from profit may not also flow culture? If transnational administration is now *necessary* to the flow of local authenticity, we critics must ask ourselves what are our investments in the alignment of Culture against Commodity when the lines between the two are so indistinct. International capital now comes in the form of Caribbean and African American people, middle class and working class, aspiring to and finding meaning in an increasingly converging idea of global black popular culture that is acquisitive, commodifying, but also in some sense truly diasporic, created and consumed right there in the Caribbean.

Notes

1. See S. Harris, “Dreadlocked Beauty a Bold Step,” Letters to the Editor, *Jamaica Gleaner* (online ed.), March 28, 2007.
2. “Redwood, an Ideal Jamaican Mix,” *Jamaica Gleaner* (online ed.), March 25, 2007.
3. Malcolm Page, “Review Essay: West Indian Writers,” *Novel: A Forum for Fiction* 3, no. 2 (Winter 1970): 167–72, quotation at 167. In this article, Page reviews *The Islands in Between: Essays on West Indian Literature* by Louis James and *Caribbean Writers: Critical Essays* by Ivan Van Sertima.
4. George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (London: Allison and Busby, 1960), as quoted in Leah Rosenberg, *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

5. The Beacon group of Trinidad was the first organized, and by far the most influential, writers' group in the Anglo-Caribbean. The quotation is from a lecture given by C. L. R. James in 1959, published as "The Artist in the Caribbean," *Radical America* 4 (1970): 62–63.

6. The attitude that the Caribbean did not produce authentic art was not confined to literature: Harvey Neptune observes that in 1944, white Trinidadian critic and local musician McDonald Carpenter dismissed the calypso as merely entertainment and not art, a distinction confirmed by the fact that the Americans, known not to have any interest in "real" art, were enthusiastic fans of the calypso. What is noteworthy here, however, is that it is a middle-class musician and critic who is dismissing the calypso. See McDonald Carpenter, "Calypsos Not Art," *TG*, February 8, 1944; and Carpenter, "Europe's Culture Cast Our Own," *TG*, February 25, 1944; both quoted in Harvey Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States' Occupation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 154–56.

7. V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage* (New York: Vintage 1981), 69.

8. Colin Channer, "Q & A with Author," <http://www.colinchanner.com> (accessed 2007).

9. See Helen Tiffin, "The Institution of Literature," in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*, vol. 2: *English and Dutch-Speaking Regions*, ed. A. James Arnold (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2001), 58; and Bradford F. Swan, *The Spread of Printing (Western Hemisphere): The Caribbean Area* (Amsterdam: Vangendt, 1970).

10. See Edward A. Cordle, *Overheard: A Series of Poems Written by the Late Edward A. Cordle* (Barbados: C. F. Cole, Printer and Publisher, 1903). Clearly this is not true for the working-class version of dialect poetry, written by the so-called Dub poets of Jamaica, whose serious, overtly political commentary found a much larger international audience than did the dialect poetry of the earlier generation.

11. Sean X. Goudie, *Creole America: The West Indies and the Formation of Literature and Culture in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

12. The *New York Times* carried an account of the Jamaican exhibit at the 1893 World's Columbia Exposition in Chicago. Headed by Colonel C. J. Ward, founder of Jamaica's Ward Theatre, the exhibit was intended to showcase Jamaica as the "winter island par excellence of the West Indies" ("What Jamaica Will Show," May 1, 1893). See also Krista Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), for an account of the origins of Caribbean tourism.

13. See Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees*, 109.

14. It is Karl Marx's fundamental conceptualization of bourgeois society that provides the engine for almost any scholarly analysis of middle-class culture, and this analysis is no different. I owe a debt to Marx for his powerful insight that middle-class society is omnivorous and co-opting, a point that anchors my thesis on middlebrow culture. Yet it is this Marxian formulation that is, in another sense, the problem. Marx saw bourgeois society as fundamentally omnivorous and parasitic. In his view, the cultural production of the working class (or any other social formation) always means absorption by the middle: "Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of

production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby allow insight into the structure and relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along with it." See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 105. I thank Natalie Melas, whose paper "Modernity and Untimeliness" (Society for the Humanities, Cornell University, April 2007) drew my attention to Marx's formulation here.

15. I owe this example to Gabriela Vargas-Cetina, "Music, Silence, Noise and the Uncomfortable Scribe: Studying Trova Music in Yucatan, Mexico," paper presented at the Society for the Humanities, Cornell University, Fall 2006, which influenced my thinking here.

16. There have been countless discussions of African American modernism, and a significant number on Caribbean modernism. For some of the more influential examples, see Simon Gikandi, *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); and Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language and Twentieth Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

17. See Chris Bongie, "Exiles on Main Stream: Valuing the Popularity of Postcolonial Culture," *Postmodern Culture* 14, no. 1 (2003): 3.

18. The popular dialectical tradition in Anglophone Caribbean literature probably begins with Augustus Matthews, *The Lying Hero, or an Answer to J. B. Moreton's Manners and Customs of the West Indies* (St. Kitts [St. Eustatius]: Edward Luther Low Printery, 1793), a response by Matthews, of Montserrat, to J. B. Moreton's critique of Caribbean society. See Tiffin, "Institution of Literature."

19. I am referring here, in chronological order, to the various covers of *Children of Kaywana*: the 1976 Corgi paperback edition, the 1952 Nevill Day mass market paperback edition, and the 1955 New English Library edition. The novels of H. G. de Lisser have been packaged in similarly sexualized ways, notably Sangster's edition of Lisser's historical adventure *Psyche*, which features a young black woman, head wrapped and exposed bosom heaving, watching a white couple embrace.

20. I am thinking in particular of the various statements made in Kwame Dawes, *Natural Mysticism: Towards a New Reggae Aesthetic* (London: Peepal Tree Press, 1999), esp. chap. 6, "Stir It Up': The Erotic in Reggae"; and by Colin Channer

in his essay "I Am Not In Exile," in *Catch Afire: New Jamaican Writing*, ed. Kwame Dawes, special issue of *Obsidian III: Literature in the African Diaspora* 2, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2000–2001): 43–56, as well as on his Web site and in various interviews that emphasize graphic sexuality as part of a postcolonial "reggae" aesthetic. Certainly contemporary Caribbean novels employ graphic sexual scenes in ways that their predecessors did not. We see similarly "graphic" sexual scenes emerging in African literature, from young novelists such as Yvonne Vera of Zimbabwe and Calixthe Beyala of Cameroon, which begs the question of whether such graphic sexuality has more to do with generational differences than with a specifically Caribbean aesthetic, "reggae" or otherwise.

21. Sydney Olivier, friend of Bernard Shaw and governor of Jamaica from 1907 to 1913, functioned as a patron of sorts for both de Lisser and McKay. Errol Hill's detailed account of Jamaican theater reveals the central role that white Jamaicans played in that country's dynamic theater scene up to the early twentieth century, from building influential venues such as the Ward Theatre to acting in early plays. See Errol Hill, *The Jamaican Stage, 1655–1900: Profile of a Colonial Theatre* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).

22. Kenneth Ramchand gives a scathing account of “popular” education in the nineteenth-century Caribbean that underplays the central role of literature in popular culture: “The basic facts about popular (mainly Negro) education in the nineteenth century, and those broad effects of concern to the literary historian are only too well known: popular education was elementary education; it began out of public funds with the Emancipation of the slaves, but it was neither sufficiently extensive nor deep enough to create a public able to read and write—even by the least demanding criteria; the system, such as it was, produced a few distinguished Negroes for the professions (mainly Law and Medicine, with the Church a poor third), but literary Negroes in the nineteenth century were exceptions among exceptions.” See Kenneth Ramchand, *The West Indian Novel and Its Background* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), 19.

23. James Pope-Hennessy, *Verandah: Some Episodes in the Crown Colonies, 1867–1889* (New York: Knopf, 1964), as quoted in Naipaul, *Middle Passage*, 57.

24. See Shalini Puri, “Beyond Resistance: Notes toward a New Caribbean Cultural Studies,” *Small Axe* no. 14 (vol. 7, no. 2) (September 2003): 24; Richard D. E. Burton, *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition and Play in the Caribbean* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 267, as quoted in Puri, “Beyond Resistance,” 24.

25. The most influential examples of the oppositional popular culture argument are those made by Jamaican critic Carolyn Cooper, who consistently reads dancehall and other working-class Jamaican cultural practices as defying of Jamaican state interests. See Carolyn Cooper, *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large* (New York: Palgrave 2004). On the subject of cultural hybridity, Shalini Puri takes a more nuanced tack, identifying what she calls “douglarization”—or the synthesizing of Afro- and Indo-Trinidadian culture in Trinidad—as both “canonized” and “resistant.” Nevertheless, the dougla as an ethnic symbol tends to stand in for an oppositionality to orthodox Indian identity. See Shalini Puri, “Canonized Hybridities, Resistant Hybridities: Chutney Soca, Carnival, and the Politics of Nationalism,” in *Caribbean Romances: The Politics of Regional Representation*, ed. Belinda Edmondson (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999).

26. Peter van Koningsbruggen, *Trinidad Carnival: A Quest for a National Identity* (London: Macmillan, 1997), as quoted in Gerard Aching, *Masking and Power: Carnival and Popular Culture in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 76. Aching notes that Koningsbruggen draws his conceptualization of middle-classization from the work of S. B. MacDonald, *Trinidad and Tobago: Democracy and Development in the Caribbean* (New York: Praeger, 1986); and Gordon K. Lewis, “The Contemporary Caribbean,” in *Caribbean Contours*, ed. Sidney W. Mintz and Sally Price (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

27. See, for some of the more famous examples, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); and Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979). For an insightful look into how Shakespeare is transformed from populist to polite culture in the United States, see George Levine, *Highbrow, Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

28. Deborah Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); and David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

29. See Leah Rosenberg, "Modern Romances: The Short Stories in Una Marson's *The Cosmopolitan* (1928–1931)," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 12, nos. 1–2 (November 2004): 170–83.

30. See Natasha Barnes, *Caribbean Conundrums: Gender, Race, Nation, and the Making of Caribbean Cultural Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006); Aching, *Masking and Power*; as well as the novel by Earl Lovelace, *The Dragon Can't Dance* (Port of Spain: Longman, 1977).

31. "Wine and jam" is a popular Caribbean phrase for gyrating ("wining") and body rubbing ("jamming").

32. Tony Becca, "The Missing Cricket Fans," *Jamaica Gleaner* (online ed.), April 1, 2007; for a discussion of Portia Simpson's political use of cricket, see Marc Lacey, "In Jamaican Politics, Just about Everything Is Cricket," *New York Times* (online ed.), April 2, 2007.

33. The only male-authored Caribbean fiction that I found reviewed in science fiction journals was, ironically, Edgar Mittelholzer's novel *My Bones and My Flute* (1955), which was reviewed by Dennis Lien in the journal *Fantasy and Science Fiction* (Hoboken) 109, no. 6 (December 2005): 162. The reviewer referred to Mittelholzer's homeland, Guyana, as "British Guinea." Moreover, it seems that science fiction may become a female genre as well: witness the popularity of black women science fiction writers such as Octavia Butler or, more recently, Guyanese-Jamaican writer Nalo Hopkinson.

34. "Jamette" is a term originating in early Trinidad for public women, usually black, who danced in the street during carnival; later it became a general phrase for a virago. "Streggeh" is a Jamaican term for a promiscuous, loud woman.

35. See Carla Freeman, *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 214.

36. Freeman is not the first critic of globalization to notice strategic ambiguity. See Barbara Ehrenreich and Annette Fuentes, *Women in the Global Factory* (Boston: South End Press, 1985), for a similar observation of Asian and Latin American global workers.

37. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 153.

38. For example, see Aching, *Masking and Power*, 98, quoting Frantz Fanon.

39. Look, for example, at the large number of American evangelical preachers making regular forays into the Caribbean for both healing and profit, who are instrumental in the changing religious landscape of the region.

40. See, for example, Mike Alleyne's discussion of the "refining" of the Bob Marley sound and image; Alleyne, "Positive Vibration? Textual Hegemony and Bob Marley," in Edmondson, *Caribbean Romances*.