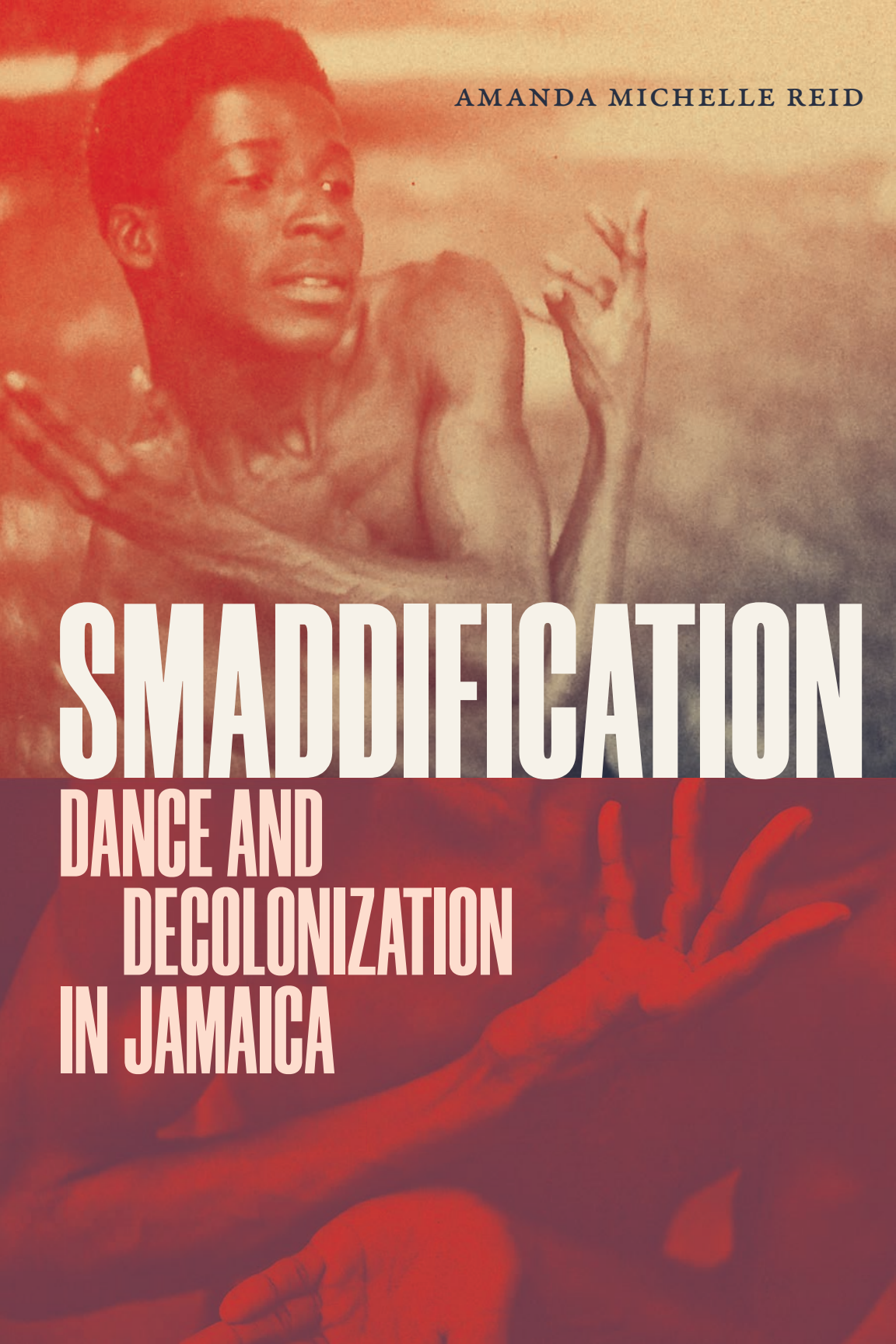




AMANDA MICHELLE REID

SMADDIFICATION

DANCE AND
DECOLONIZATION
IN JAMAICA

SMADDIFICATION



BUY

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DECOLONIZATION IN
JAMAICA

AMANDA MICHELLE REID

DUKE

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For Lilieth Harris and David Hutchinson

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INTRODUCTION TO OWN OURSELVES

In 1979, Rex Nettleford appeared as a guest on a Norwegian public television talk show to discuss current affairs in the West Indies. The forty-six-year-old professor and public intellectual was widely known as one of the young nation's most established voices in politics and the arts and was even rumored to be a contender for the next Prime Minister of Jamaica. However, Nettleford would always dissuade or deflect from those who attempted to persuade him to run for an elected office. As the creative director of Jamaica's premier modern and folkloric dance company, he was too busy dancing to bother.

With a close-cropped Afro, tight white turtleneck, and dark skin that appeared on desaturated 1970s film reel to be almost as densely pigmented as his jet-black flared pants, Nettleford lounged cross-legged and languid on the soundstage's couch, even as he spoke with contained urgency about the importance of dance for Jamaica's future. While stalwart about his advocacy for the arts, Nettleford spoke with the wariness of a staunch nationalist who had witnessed a decade of failed attempts by the Democratic Socialist government to nationalize foreign ownership of land and natural resources, leading Jamaica into an economic crisis that left the state increasingly reliant on foreign aid. Culture and creativity, he felt, were the only resources Jamaicans had ever owned or could hope to own. "For a people who have been suppressed and who have been dependent," Nettleford said in his interview, "they have had only what is innately theirs to fall back on—their capacity to create in song, to create in dance. After all, one's body belongs to one."¹

The program shifted from an interview to a dance demonstration. The cameras pointed stage left to an empty expanse of the talk show's set, where Nettleford would perform and narrate a series of Afro-Caribbean moves that, he argued, were a fundamental expression of Jamaica's national

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project of defining its brand of creole creativity. Rising to lead a group of three lithe, blond Norwegian dancers in a practicum, he explained that Jamaican movement reflects the openness with which Afro-Jamaicans related to their lush island landscape and the heart-opening warmth of the tropical climate, in opposition to white Europeans' stiff and cold nature (even as he entertained his European audience, Nettleford could not resist a cheeky insult hidden behind a smile). Dance, then, became not only a vector to assert sovereignty over one's body but also a way to create and claim intimate knowledge over Caribbean geographies. With his movement and sound, clapping and calling out a five-beat drum rhythm ("oom, ah, oom, akan-kan"), he led the women in a series of floor exercises, a simple grounded chassé across the small stage that he blithely claimed was as easy as walking. As he taught them how to burden their steps and root their movements, he slowly sped up the pace from a "stroll" to a "run" until the dancers were left spent, panting, laughing, unable to keep up with his beat. Within this movement of levity, Nettleford enacted high-energy performance strategies that black Jamaicans have long used to make claims to the land that they did not legally own, by making plain to this European audience the amount of bodily control it took to stylishly and joyfully adapt to the furious and nonlinear pace of Caribbean modernity.

Nettleford's evocation of the body as the battleground for freedom was not simply an appeasement, a fanciful exercise, or a divergence from "real" politics. It was a desperate call to arms to attend to the Caribbean's incomplete sovereignty and indebtedness by returning to self-ownership as the final frontier of anticolonial struggle. Nettleford realized that his moving body (which, much like the postcolonial project, cycles through fight, flight, and rest) held his only hope for attaining liberation while freedom remained a moving target.

Nettleford referred to the cultural changes and longings of the first two decades of national independence as the "smadditisation of Jamaica." I borrow the term *smaddification*, the active process of becoming "a somebody" through spectacles that augment the self and take up space, from his writing to identify this specifically West Indian form of embodied relational poetics.² As a theoretical construct and embodied exercise, smaddification reclaims the centrality of bodily practices to Jamaican decolonization, a legacy that the text-based nationalist archive often denies. It provides a queer archival methodology for revisiting black independence moments in ways that move between personal and collective political freedom rapidly and continuously, if not always seamlessly.

I choose Nettleford as my starting point and fellow journeyman as I explore this body politics, not only because he is the scholar most closely associated with dance in Jamaica but also because the publicness, ambivalence, shape-shifting, and larger-than-life nature of his complex career encapsulate smaddification as a set of political practices. Nettleford emerged as a public figure in Jamaica in the late 1950s and 1960s, when he led the new University of the West Indies (UWI) public outreach programs and trade union education initiatives and hosted a current events news radio broadcast. By the end of his career, he rose through the university ranks to become vice-chancellor of UWI Mona. He was a fixture in Jamaica's Little Theatre Movement and cofounded the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica (NDTC) in 1962, which grew to be one of Jamaica's longest-running and most influential cultural institutions. When Prime Minister Michael Manley's administration attempted to use the arts to create a new culture of mass politics in the 1970s, Nettleford led their efforts. All throughout his life, he continued to choreograph, tour, and dance. Using his power and connections, Nettleford and other postcolonial scholar/artists institutionalized smaddification into cultural policy by building on deep traditions of post-emancipation Caribbean bodily movement and transnational black modern dance networks. Hiding behind the "unserious" aesthetic considerations of style, ornament, and theatrical narrative, he advocated for radical popular politics, claiming poor folks' rights to be spectacular as nationalist leaders attempted to simplify and integrate black peasant practices into national hegemony.

Still, perhaps because of the literary, masculine bent of the West Indian artist movement and the Marxist politics favored by the young, popular intellectuals of his time, Nettleford's written and embodied contributions to the idea of Jamaica as a black nation are undervalued in the canon of Caribbean critical theory. His queerness was known but rarely notated; it is knowledge that is hidden in his archive but passed down through orality, gossip, and performance. The radical left rejected Nettleford's class and sexual performance as a black man and dismissed the work he did as something less than "serious" politics. Others accused the NDTC of transforming revolutionary folk art into easily consumable market commodities. These critiques are not wholly without foundation. Nettleford's clean-cut appearance, the affected accent he put on in public appearances, his involvement in the tourism industry and international film industry, and his defense of liberal politicians throughout his lifetime are hard positions to reconcile with popular visions of the third-world revolutionary. Indeed,

his academic supporters have often avoided talking about his dance career and commercial work, focusing instead on a narrative that emphasizes his prolific writing career, his support of working-class culture, his work in institution building, and his involvement in more obviously progressive causes, such as with trade union education.³

My goal is not to argue the purity or progressiveness of Nettleford's catalog (or the other complex and flawed artists/scholars who aligned with or challenged him) but rather to attempt to position his commitment to the commercial and spectacular within a certain genealogy of queer Jamaican politics. While it is necessary to name and confront the ways that institutionalized folk culture can be exploitative, understanding spectacle as an aesthetic value of smaddification pushes against the notion that performance created for entertainment or commercial consumption is automatically anti-revolutionary, anti-black, and unauthentic. Nettleford disavowed the very characteristics—such as difficulty, qualities of “rawness,” and open transgression—that usually permit art of the Global South to be valued as “original” performance or translated into United States and European notions of the avant-garde.⁴ Both his friendships and his rivalries within the global black art-space create a field for me to explore Caribbean black radicalism as frivolity and pleasure. While Nettleford hoped to develop these practices of freedom, these fleeting embodiments of emancipation, as an experiential roadmap for Jamaicans in the broadest sense, he was also deeply invested in exploring how race, class, and geography favored or limited one's ability to move and claim value. His danced body of work not only renavigates cartographies of black freedom but also expands normative imaginings of who is allowed to represent the future of the Caribbean.

The tradition of Jamaican performance that I theorize alongside the independence era's artists' written and embodied performance is a queer politics of ambivalence that strategically used popular culture and the power of spectacle to negotiate with the postcolonial state and challenge its proprietary claims to liberation. The idea of self-ownership rejected the belief that politics could only be enacted through allegiance or opposition to “isms” (a popular patois term for imported economic and political ideologies) in the Cold War period. By attempting to shape national culture on a public stage, while negotiating relationships with various local political factions and black internationalist allegiances, these dancers were key contributors to conversations about how to live with the tenuous and unstable conditions of Caribbean sovereignty. The vexing uncertainty of

what constituted an “indigenous” and authentic West Indianness in an Afro-Creole society, the persistence of colonial class and color divides, and the state’s inability to create a convincing vision of national unity resulted in a wide range of experiments in dancing Jamaican blackness, inclusive of but not limited to the often heteronormative and masculinist lore surrounding the birth of reggae and urban sound system culture. *Smaddification* tells an often ignored but never fully silenced history of queer and female-gendered black culture workers’ negotiations of racial and national belonging.

This book uses the tools of performance and dance studies to chart a history of “smaddification performance,” a West Indian hermeneutic of black radicalism that makes visible practices of freedom within and beyond the formal politics of the nation. This performance aesthetic can be understood only through a structure of Caribbean affective connection that Édouard Glissant called the Antillean “poetics of relation,” a shared system of knowledge that holds Caribbean people’s polyrhythmic consciousness of cultural production’s implications within regional trends, local variations, and global systems. Although politicians sometimes hoped that Nettleford’s National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica and other Jamaican culture workers whose stories this book follows would produce a site of nationalist propaganda, these dancers/writers did not simply reflect already coherent and inevitable ideas about race and national identity. I’m interested in dance’s ability to reveal the porous inconsistency of the body as a representational tool, an inconsistency that mirrored and contributed to the tremendous changes in Jamaican popular discourse about black freedom and identity in the first two decades of independence. State-sponsored dancers’ ability to simultaneously subsume and disavow official stories of race and nation gives us new avenues through which to understand Jamaica’s postcolonial political history beyond normative metrics of success and failures, which, as David Scott has shown, adhere to a certain narrative structure that imagines postcolonial freedom as a single, romantic, triumphant revolutionary event.⁵ Instead, performance, and the repetitive form of the repertoire, privilege a vision of independence as a practice that must be continually revised and reenacted. They bear testament to the political intimacies, sexual anxieties, migratory crossings, pleasures, and misalignments within black diasporic communities that were at the very heart of West Indian decolonization. They revive new questions, hopes, and expectations for the enduring problem of Caribbean freedom.

Emancipatory Acts

Smaddification covers the approximately fifty years of political change and state formation that I call the long decolonization period in Jamaica. It is a periodization that stretches from Marcus Garvey's creation of both the first working-class political party and commercial entertainment complex in Kingston during the late 1920s, to the cementation of a state-sanctioned brand of black nationalism during Prime Minister Michael Manley's democratic socialist regime of the 1970s. Between 1929 and 1976, we can chart the process through which Jamaica's contemporary racial story—that of a black nation—became a standardized performance narrative and cultural product that was then institutionalized by the state. By Jamaica's independence in 1963, culture workers were well on their way to transforming Afro-diaspora religious practices into codified folklore for export and pedagogy. Few Jamaicans in the post-independence period would define the now-canonized repertoires of artists who received state patronage as “revolutionary” art and, in fact, many of the artists themselves would not consistently claim the radicalism or government opposition in their work. Still, the very power of Jamaica's dance traditions lay in their doubleness and conscious use of unstable creole significations, in their ability to hide critique within the language of nationalist fidelity, to nestle dissent and rebellion inside of performance traditions seen as mere entertainment, and to work both with and outside of governmental channels. Hidden within state-centered histories of normative liberal state formation is an arrangement of embodied traditions rooted in queer and erotic politics. This sometimes dormant and often fugitive political otherwise that was (as poet Derek Walcott once described Rex Nettleford's choreography) older than the bounded, state-centered revolution that decolonization imagined, and requires us to briefly look back in history to understand its genesis.⁶

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Jamaica became a testing ground for post-emancipation governance in the former British West Indies.⁷ The colony that eventually became the independent nation-state of Jamaica had first come into being when the British captured the island from the Spanish 150 years earlier, in 1655, and quickly began to transform the twice-stolen territory into a sugar production powerhouse.⁸ Maroon warfare and near-constant slave revolts (including Tacky's Rebellion [1760–61], the largest slave rebellion in the Caribbean before the

1791 Haitian Revolution) gave Jamaica the reputation for being home to a particularly “unruly” black population. Despite these bouts of unrest, the slave population and plantation system grew rapidly throughout the eighteenth century, even as the island remained a colonial frontier zone with a relatively low European population.

Plantation owners’ and the British colonial state’s ability to assert total surveillance and control over their island territory during the times of slavery was, therefore, always tenuous. While sugar plantation owners pioneered a particularly violent and deadly culture of enslavement, black Jamaicans forged spaces of autonomy out of slave owners’ inability and refusal to put paternalist discourse of protection and oversight into practice. West Indian slaves had already begun to form a “proto-peasantry” during slavery, contributing to the market economy by working subsistence plots that provided food not only for their households but also for the free population.⁹ Slave plots formed alternative systems of claiming property and staked out spaces for religious practice, leisure, and funeral rites. Through laboring on these plots for themselves, free and enslaved black people developed what Jamaican historians have called an alternative “moral economy,” or an alternative system of communal and economic values that ran both parallel with and in opposition to the plantation system. Privacy from plantation surveillance, land ownership, and control over one’s time and physical labor emerged as Afro-Creole ideals of citizenship that could be temporarily enacted in these agricultural plots.¹⁰

By the nineteenth century, Jamaica was the most populous and productive sugar colony in the British West Indies. The British Parliament abolished slavery in the British colonies in 1834 after the Baptist War of 1831, a slave rebellion that abolitionists used to turn the tide on debates about emancipation in England and convince planters of the inevitability of abolition.¹¹ Non-elite Jamaicans, both the formerly enslaved and those who had already been free prior to emancipation, took advantage of their juridical status as freed men and women and their ability to leverage their labor to seek alternative ways of working and building communities. Many fled from the plantation to pursue small-scale commercial agriculture or walked out on sugar work as they pleased to enact their vision of freedom as ownership over their time and the fruits of their labor. The plantocracy waged a campaign against the emerging peasantry in the local government and colonial office, accusing the black and brown population of laziness, waste, and savagery for resisting the low wages and seasonal work that the dying sugar industry offered.

These conflicting visions of citizenship came to a head in 1865, when the colonial legislature began to roll back the privileges that black and mixed-race Jamaicans and white religious reformers had won in the twenty-five years since slavery's end, including informal squatting rights to old plantation lands and voting rights for the vast majority of black Jamaicans. Peasants in the parish of Saint Thomas rose in protest against the colonial courts, culminating in a tide of uprisings against the plantocracy and state known as the Morant Bay rebellion.¹² Haunted by fears of slave rebellions and race wars, the colonial militia violently suppressed civil unrest and, in its aftermath, stripped away much of what was left of black Jamaicans' claims to citizenship.¹³

But even after the wave of political repression that followed the Morant Bay rebellion, attempts to control, "civilize," and surveil the Jamaican and broader West Indian peasantry were never fully successful. Trinidadian-American theorist Lyndon K. Gill argues this incompleteness of state control resulted in West Indians' "queer relationship to formal legal and moral dictates," marked by inconsistency, ambivalence, and nonnormative forms of organizing to demand that their needs were met by the state. These queer politics were born out of frontier cultures "where authority—colonial, postcolonial, neocolonial—has historically been and continues to be precarious and imperfect at best."¹⁴ As they had done in previous centuries, non-elite Jamaicans found ways to exercise control over their hours, build a peasant labor system that decreased their dependency on the plantation (if not their entanglement in the global economic system), and construct their own creole ideas for popular justice and local democratic systems to suit the needs of a multiethnic society.¹⁵

The many ways that black and brown Victorian-era Jamaicans performed nonalignment with the duties of ideal British citizenship by spectacularizing "non-productive" labor and communal or individual erotic practices have been well documented by historians of emancipation. As legal historian Diana Paton reminds us, even as West Indians recognized, hid within, and exploited the gaps in colonial power, they still saw the law and performances of British authority as a powerful and usable force. Rather than rejecting colonial institutions, the courts, missionary organizations, and the plantation completely, black peasants often developed a flighty and discontinuous but nonetheless significant and integrated relationship with the state. Jamaicans showed up loudly and forcefully in civic and religious life to express specific grievances and to stage performances of their broader disavowal. Popular notions of

freedom included independent economic activity, rest, formal legal action, and protest. But they also included the ability to be a disruption, a disturbance, an annoyance, and, most of all, a powerfully visible presence. Through continuing Carnival traditions like Jonkonnu despite their criminalization, acting out in courtrooms in contempt of the law, and taking part in marathon revivalist meetings and physically taxing spirit possession, black Jamaicans created a spectacle out of not working.¹⁶ While these practices were not considered constructive or morally virtuous leisure time by mid- to late nineteenth-century British standards, Victorian Jamaicans' performances of an alternative value system to the plantation similarly materialized their aspirations to a good, moral, and healthy life.

The interwar period, the global Great Depression, and the emergence of the nationalist movement transformed the grounds on which Jamaicans organized for freedom as these queer peasant politics dispersed and evolved through urban and international migration. The 1920s and 1930s are often periodized as the next great collective push for democracy in Jamaica. This moment marks the beginning of what I identify as the long decolonization period. Men returning from fighting for the British Crown during World War I to disenfranchised colonial territories spread disillusionment with the myth of the empire's benevolence.¹⁷ Bourgeois brown leaders sought to build socialist and populist alliances with black union agitators around the idea that both racial equality and economic justice could come about only in the context of an independent nation-state.¹⁸ This mobility and the creation of a black internationalist consciousness also brought on a cultural revolution to the West Indies and its growing diaspora, or what Lara Putnam calls the "circum-Caribbean migratory sphere," which extended the networks through which Antillean migrants traded local music, dances, ways of healing, and forms of political agitation.

In my discussion of interwar and postwar British West Indies migratory artists' networks in chapters 1 and 2, I use the Jamaican patois term *shay-shay* to describe the courtship, competition dances, and queer regional aesthetics that emerged out of this cosmopolitan migratory cultural period (like *mento*, Lindy Hop, calypso, and *son*).¹⁹ Through *shay-shays*, working-class West Indians danced an imagined geography of a diasporic community that arched from New York to London, from Saint George to Nassau. They used their cosmopolitan movement language to display their impact on the popular culture of the Global North and to resist being marginalized to the peripheries of empire. *Shay-shays* inspired

choreographers like Beryl McBurnie, Katherine Dunham, the Holder brothers, and Ivy Baxter, who developed and codified the Caribbean's folk/modern concert idiom. Tracing *shay-shay's* migrations on and off the concert stage helps to shift an interwar and postwar period historiography of Caribbean radicalism that often privileges the stories of male soldiers and Caribbean-born "new Negro" leaders who migrated to the United States, to the ways that working-class and female subjectivities embodied noncompliance to imperialist aesthetic hierarchies in their everyday lives.

Between 1944 and 1962, Jamaica once again became an early testing ground for gradual freedom in the West Indies. After World War II, Great Britain began the process of divesting from its Caribbean colonies, in the wake of the labor riots, international pressure, and the delegitimization of some strands of blatant racial pseudoscience. Britain's Colonial Office and local brown creole elites aligned in the gradual push toward independence. Jamaica was granted a new constitution in 1944 that reformed Crown Colony status, consolidated Jamaica's current two-party system, and ushered in universal male suffrage.²⁰ Even as nationalist leaders built their movement on the conceptual and organizational foundation of agri-proletariat grassroots and working-class labor unionism, they still shared the Colonial Office's fears that black subjects were not ready for self-rule. The late colonial government's social welfare projects sought to teach poor black Jamaicans in rural areas not only to be industrious and be part of local civic life but also to develop "constructive" leisure practices modeled on British and American physical education pedagogy. This led to new "discoveries" and appropriations of popular culture and rural micro-local dance forms by the state and its local allies. Rather than use dance labor to perform "non-work"—or the uses of their bodies outside the capitalist system—late colonial and early nationalist artists attempted to professionalize dance labor to make their artistry legible in global markets. This search for folk cultural products that could be taught in classrooms or viewed on a concert stage often meant erasing the ways that popular working-class and peasant dances of the early twentieth century, or *shay-shays*, were migratory and far from provincial.

Many of the independence-era culture workers who guide this book's narrative were born or came of age as performers during this period. Rex Nettleford in particular came to represent the success of this late colonial social welfare program. Creative and erudite from an early age, a dark-skinned son of peasants born in 1933 and raised by his mother and grandmother in a Jamaican north coast village on the edge of sugarcane fields,

Nettleford received his early political education from the government's expansion of rural education and social welfare programs that I focus on in chapter 2. As an adult, Nettleford could switch between the posh Anglicized Jamaican accent he cultivated as a British Council scholarship student at Oxford in the 1950s and the countrified patois of his youth in the blink of an eye, a performance of race and class that he shaped to signify both his ascent into the ranks of the intelligentsia and the racial authenticity he espoused. Equally important to his life storytelling and artistic sensibility was the informal education he gained from watching and then choreographing *shay-shays* as a teenager. As a high school student, he became locally known in Montego Bay's entertainment circuit for his skill in putting together staged versions of "primitive native dancers" (inspired by African diasporic dance religion), faux-Latin rumbas, and exotic tangos carried to Kingston in the bodies and imaginations of circum-Caribbean laborers, as the small northern town ballooned into a notorious sex tourism and later mass tourism destination in the first half of the twentieth century. Throughout his career, Nettleford would challenge anyone who attributed all that was cosmopolitan and polished about his work to his exposure to European drama and modern dance, insisting instead that his dances cited the economic struggles, grassroots movements, and diaspora consciousness of Jamaican workers of the mid-twentieth century.

In 1956, Jamaica joined the Federation of the West Indies, a short-lived supranational coalition of islands that sought to integrate the economies of the former British West Indies to form a single unified state. Federation ended in 1960, when Jamaicans voted in a referendum to take a swifter path to independence alone. While the importance of this period is often minimized within both popular and scholarly histories of Jamaica, Federation came at a particularly formative moment of the island's national imaginary and arts infrastructure, affecting how Jamaican dancers and performance institutions oriented themselves on the world stage long after Federation's demise. Supported by new supranational institutions like the University of the West Indies and inspired by a decolonial imaginary that tied the British West Indies (BWI) together, Federation saw the flourishing of a Kingston-based performance and literary movement, which I identify in chapter 2 as the Federation modernist movement. The nationalist dancers—or state-affiliated dancer/choreographers who professed a mission of broadly representing "authentic" BWI cultures—who created the performance culture of this modernist movement clashed bitterly over long-standing interisland rivalries and

developmental inequalities, even as they collaborated to create a sense of unity out of the West Indies' creole diversity. These transnational dance labor exchanges and pedagogies were institutionalized into the lasting fabric of Jamaica's arts movements. A commitment to the ideology of racial democracy, the regional integration of the University of the West Indies system, and the flourishing of a West Indian modernist literature and drama movement nonetheless united these cultural ambassadors of the West Indian decolonization movement.

Jamaica was the first British Caribbean colony to become independent, in August 1962. That same summer, a group of Kingston-based dancers joined together to form the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica. On an institutional level, the company was invested in supporting the liberal state apparatus through its cultural labor. In fact, the dancers' longevity and prestige had largely been due to intimate client-patron relationships with government authorities. But unlike the urban, middle-class leaders of the generation before, Rex Nettleford and NDTC co-founder Eddy Thomas identified as "peasant-born" themselves and had been recipients of the increased social mobility the social welfare and education reforms of the 1940s and 1950s permitted. Though their social class status and place within the West Indian intelligentsia shifted over time, Nettleford and the NDTC sustained a "queer orientation" or sensibility to negotiating with hegemony, a politics of pragmatism and whimsy that disallowed them from being tied to any one ideology, which reveals important truths about the uneven ways that many West Indians experienced the long decolonization process. Even as the NDTC claimed the title of "nationalist dancers," they approached the work of ambassadorship with ambivalence. Barbadian intellectual and poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite argues that the NDTC and its interlocutors developed in the "maroon tradition," a relation to hegemony that was "contemporaneous of course, but independent of and outside though not unconnected with the plantation" or the state.²¹ They flaunted a range of cultural influences in the faces of critics who condemned their lack of West Indian authenticity, and condemned the Global North's cultural imperialism even as they shaped their bodies to master US and UK modern dance traditions. They were never fully state-sponsored, in large part because of a lack of adequate funding for the arts, but the NDTC used their political intimacies to claim favors from patrons while using the freedom of "amateur" status to duck government censorship. Their experimentation in dancing and in negotiating small island politics showed their messy work of trying to make sense of

everyday experiences of decolonization. This was the very tangible labor of enacting the Caribbean's incomplete freedom.

Queer West Indian Dance

More than sixty years after independence in Jamaica, Caribbean modern dancers' claims that dance, and particularly a style of concert dance drawn from Afro-religious peasant practices known as Jamaican "folk" culture, could be a path to liberation seems idealist at best. At worst, it has been interpreted as being what Michael Hanchard called a "black culturalist" appeasement by the state in the context of Brazil's racial story, or an empty representation of pro-blackness offered as a consolation prize to block the formation of oppositional formal black politics.²² My argument that post-war Jamaican anticolonial dancers' maximalist and spectacularized mix of modern dance and Afro-Caribbean movement was a form of radically anti-imperialist black queer performance might seem even more unlikely for those used to associating the pared-down, steady sonics of reggae that emerged in the 1970s as Jamaica's most important cultural export and symbol of "authentic" black Jamaican protest.

But much like samba in Brazil and tango in Argentina—other forms of racialized celebratory social dance in Latin America and the Caribbean that became signifiers of the state's cannibalization of black working-class culture—concert dance as both performance and social welfare pedagogy carries a story of the complex and often ambivalent ways everyday Jamaicans queered the rational dynamics of state formation and nationalist performance by finding the liberatory potential in the colonial government and independent state's deficiencies. Even as popular dance traditions were translated for the stage or commercial markets throughout the long decolonization process, they did not automatically lose all ability to carry political meanings and queer uses. As Nadia Ellis asserts, "Queer shifts, queer moves, it does not rest." It is action and context, not a state of being, making it necessary to always define queerness within a specific historical, social, and discursive field.²³ Public disavowals and exclusionary rhetoric about queer folks—a social category and orientation that scholars like Cathy Cohen have led us to acknowledge have always included working-class black women and others marginalized by non-normative gender and class performances—were a constant feature of the postcolonial government's modernization programs in this period. Because they

relied on state patronage, dancers claimed and embodied mainstream nationalisms, their relationship to diaspora, and their own desires inconsistently and at times contentiously, moving between different modes of defining and articulating the self as it served them. While they did not always seek to resist hegemony directly, they nonetheless used dance to manipulate or reconstitute its terms.

Despite the differences in political affiliation and the diverse positions vis-à-vis hegemonic power that each dancer inhabited, one defining belief formed the queer undercurrent in all the performances and performance publics that shaped this study: the idea that being publicly spectacular, visible, and entertaining was not only an aspirational virtue of citizenship but an anticolonial tactic. A commitment to using spectacle to hide anti-racist critique in plain sight, while at the same time insisting on the black folks' right to claim optic space, became central to the national dance movement in the British West Indies. I use *smaddification* to name both this aesthetic throughline over the long decolonization period and the interpretive framework that artists built around dance to claim performance as a liberatory act. The Jamaican patois word *smaddy* (directly translated into standard English as "somebody") refers to a person who carries himself as a "big man," or makes herself purposefully and defiantly noticeable. One resonance of *smaddy* is captured in Reverend Jesse Jackson's call-and-response self-affirmation, "I am—somebody," an utterance that calls into being the fact that one's value is at once internally self-defined and a visible, unshakeable fact. However, Jamaican philosopher Charles W. Mills emphasizes that Nettleford's theorization of *smaddification*, more than just a classed aspiration to be "a big man" or woman through upward social mobility, captures an ontological struggle toward decolonialization that in the context of the Caribbean was fought on political, cultural, and metaphysical fronts.²⁴ It was the work of reclaiming humanity and heritage stripped away by colonization, and deferred by the failures of post-colonialism, articulated in Nettleford's work most clearly and thoroughly, I argue, through everyday acts of embodiment and exaggerated moments of performance. It forms the corrective to Martinican poet/artist/theorist Aimé Césaire's description of the process of becoming a colonial subject as "thingification."²⁵ Yet *smaddification* (or the verb form that Nettleford employed, "to *smadditize*") is a movement practice rather than a destination that can be easily arrived at. It is driven by a longing for self-possession that is often imagined as elsewhere, like the fugitive maroon tradition that Brathwaite identified as the NDT's ancestral source.

This journey toward a sense of individual self-confidence rooted in pride in the collective cultural achievements of West Indians (regionally) and Jamaicans (nationally), Nettleford and his interlocutors felt, was a process necessary for forging the kind of political community that independence, emancipation, and even the black/brown solidarity that Third World unity failed to fully realize. While smaddification was a pedagogy of bodily self-ownership, it also configured the body as a porous, communal system rather than a purely individual experience, so that smaddification could be shared through networks of feeling or performance encounters that lead to mutual recognition. As a performance program, smaddification manifested the pursuit of three discrete overlapping goals that I trace across a wide range of dance spaces: (1) to embody the Caribbean's creole complexity through promiscuous intercultural mixing, (2) to take up visual space to hide critique in plain sight, and (3) to elicit a form of spectatorship that instructively builds pan-Caribbean community.

Understanding smaddification is the key to decoding Jamaican concert dance's contributions to global modernist dance, a way of seeing beyond the "apolitical" meanings viewers associate with such highly entertaining and folkloric dance. Smadditizing performances often maximalize dissenting desires and make visible Global South connectivity in ways that joyfully offend raced and classed European and Anglo-American ideas of "good taste" or "good sense," revealing the ridiculousness of these regulatory systems that seek to delimit how black folks can dance, praise, commune, find pleasure, and express eroticism. The NDTC's total theater aesthetic, which drew on sometimes clashing cultural influences from Broadway, pantomime, social dance, and expressive modern dance, is emblematic of this maximalist creole tradition. Caribbean dancers were hyperaware of how their performances might be viewed as derivative or aesthetic failures by their international peers. Their written arguments about where they located their own standards of performance success and relation to global culture were as central to the pursuit of smaddification as the performances themselves. Unwieldy cultural layering was one way that artists claimed the small islands' centrality to the development of global economic order, and in the process, they "smadditized" or extended the cultural territory that black artists were able to claim as their own.

However, taking up space and portraying a fuller, more layered black experience did not manifest only in maximalist stagings. The embodiment of powerful submerged and private desires, or the translation of "politics on a lower frequency" into tender relational moments between

dancers, is also key to my definition of smaddification.²⁶ The spectacular or sublime does not always have to be loud, legible, satirical, or defiantly directed toward an audience in the Global North. In his theorization of the black aesthetic of “quiet,” Kevin Quashie reminds us of the subtle authority of performances that softly interrupt the tenor of masculinist, black political performance.²⁷ I highlight these moments when unexpected shifts to a lower grade of energy open up the possibility for dances to make decadent claims to ease and leisure, particularly in the dance works of Beryl McBurnie and Ivy Baxter that re-examined black rural life. While dissemblance or withholding the self may not have been the self-conscious aim of their performances, inserting surprising moments of privacy, opacity, and rest into otherwise flashy productions was part of the distinctive style female creators carved out in the male-dominated world of West Indian theater. This index of smaddification is queer in the unexpected ways women dancers disidentified with the ways that brown and mixed-race female bodies were cast in colonial fantasies as transparent and sexually available objects of desire. McBurnie and Baxter’s work shows that smaddification is not about proving one’s humanity to anyone; it is the physicalization of the internal or collective process of redefining the human in a post-slavery society. Extending the project of smaddification beyond Nettleford, to the women who laid the foundation for this company, is one way that I push against reinscribing NDTC’s own company lore that structures the emergence of Jamaican concert dance around the figure of a benevolent patriarch: a self-taught male genius. Just like the grandiose productions that Nettleford preferred, performances of interiority can support representations of blackness and transnational community that are “irreverent, messy, complicated”—representations that defy the ways that capitalism ascribes use-value to black physicality.²⁸

Standing out in a crowd, being fabulous, openly embracing one’s desires, or being “represented” within a hegemonic national narrative or global black community does not automatically constitute liberation, and the NDTC was aware that smaddification was not only a style but a fine-tuned strategy. As madison moore reminds us in his theorization of fabulousness as a form of embodied QTPOC critique, visibility and vulnerability can be a double-edged sword. Spectacles can help queer black folks materialize utopia in their daily lives and resist being passively under the white gaze, but they can also be used to surveil, frame, or fetishize.²⁹ To combat the dangers of racialized hypervisibility, art historian Krista

Thompson has theorized the power of spectacle or “shine” in West Indian dancehall photography and videography as a self-conscious shield directed against visual entrapment and exploitation. Flashiness, reflectiveness, and “bling” can be protectively disarming to viewers, allowing black folks to assert opacity or at least confront surveillance on their own terms.³⁰ At different moments in its institutional history, the NDTC oscillated between successfully wielding loudness and overexposure as a shield, and being targeted for these very same performance elements. In chapter 4, I explore how critics and colleagues at the University of the West Indies faulted the company for focusing too much on style instead of substance, leaning too much on class privilege and the trappings of respectability, or playing the trickster Anancy to benefit from unjust systems instead of confronting them directly. Ideally, smaddification is a vision of freedom that does not necessitate the disempowerment of others, in opposition to colonialism and the plantocracy’s notions of freedom that relied on the ability to own, subjugate, and exploit black bodies. Still, the concert dance elite’s vision of dancing black pride relied at times on local hierarchies of class performance, primitivism, and modernity: cannibalizing folk practices while denying them artistic credit and promoting gendered stereotypes that were not liberatory for all Jamaicans. Whether radically queer, in service of nationalist hegemony, or somewhere in the muddy middle, I argue that over-the-top and theatrical interpretations of Afro-Caribbean traditions are not merely failed attempts at European aesthetics. Theatricality, dramatic flourish, and the virtues of the spectacular are also a form of politics from below.

To be a black Jamaican and claim emancipation and its contradictions, or to spectacularly and earnestly perform ambivalent nationalism and imperfect democracy, is to fundamentally live in a state of disidentification. It is to assert the right to thrive “on sites where meaning does not properly ‘line up,’” where nothing works exactly as it’s meant to according to Global North metrics of “development” and progress, and to do so out loud, fabulously, and unapologetically. The project of smaddification both consumed and critiqued these epistemic failures of British liberalism’s legacy by flipping systems of aesthetic value on their heads. It worked as both identification and disidentification with the Caribbean plantation and all its aesthetic legacies, critical of capitalism but seduced by it.³¹ It testifies to freedom constrained and freedom’s discontent materialized. The postcolonial Jamaican modern dancers choreographed, reprised, and reimagined their repertoires across the 1960s and 1970s to articulate these

contradictions in Caribbean political life, chasing smaddification to find a way to move toward freedom.

Choreographies of Race and Nation

In order to fully understand how smaddification works within and against a state-authored discourse of freedom, we must look closer at the local specificities and gendered hierarchies of race in Jamaica, particularly as they came to define Jamaica's space in black internationalist politics in the final decades of the long decolonization period. Rather than a black-white racial binary, Jamaica's class/color hierarchy is most often described as a division between the "brown" middle and elite classes (inclusive of Middle Eastern Jamaicans, mixed-race Jamaicans, and the underrepresented Asian Jamaican population) and the dark-skinned black working class and poor majority. Jamaican politics are often narrated as a series of shifting alliances between these two groups. Since the colonial government granted universal suffrage in 1944, a two-party parliamentary system consisting of the conservative Jamaican Labor Party (JLP) and liberal People's National Party (PNP) has dominated formal political participation in Jamaica. Political scientist Anthony Bogues points out that while the JLP and PNP styled themselves as opponents in every way, an ideology of brown creole nationalism, also referred to in this book and wider scholarship as "creole Nationalism" or "creole multicultural nationalism," formed the ideological undercurrent of both parties' social and cultural policies.³² Unlike notions of creolization posited by 1970s Caribbean cultural theorists, who used the term *creole* to describe the unique process of cultural production that arose from the uneven social relations of plantation societies, creole nationalism centered "a notion of Creole which stated that Jamaica was neither African nor European while upholding European standards as the universal norm," at once exploiting and submerging blackness.³³

For the first decade of independence (1962–72), the conservative Jamaican Labor Party maintained majority rule, led in its first term by the charismatic, populist trade union leader Alexander Bustamante (1962–67). But after half a decade of rapid economic growth, cracks in the JLP's hold on power emerged in the late 1960s as its traditional rural voter base began to voice discontentment with foreign ownership of already scarce farming land, as well as rising levels of unemployment in the industrial and agricultural sectors. In Kingston, a black nationalist movement—inclusive

of Rastafari and Black Power—critiqued the ways that creole nationalism’s myths of multiracial democracy served to hide color hierarchies and sustain the inherited class privilege of the brown elite. The PNP, helmed by its charismatic and attractive party leader, Michael Manley, capitalized on these grassroots, multi-class coalitions. While part of a powerful family of “brown” elite career politicians, the fair-skinned Manley adopted a youthful and heretical “pro-blackness” political stance to win the 1972 election. The political and cultural changes during the first Manley administration (1972–80)—the international success of reggae and Rastafari, the PNP’s adoption of a program of moderate socialist reform, and a politics of non-alignment—partially subsumed Caribbean Black Power into nationalist hegemony, marking a permanent shift in both popular imaginaries and scholarly discourse about Jamaica’s racial story.³⁴

The legacy of Manley’s economic policies continues to be highly contested, but the grassroots, reggae-influenced vision of black modernity popularly referred to as “roots culture” that came to prominence during his leadership has remained central to hegemonic notions of “authentic” black Jamaican culture in both nationalist and touristic discourse. Anti-blackness did not simply disappear through the triumph of a black cultural revolution. Rather, politicians and “respectable” media outlets transferred racial stories about black laziness, leisure, and labor into anxieties about lower-class black unruly behaviors and sexual deviance.³⁵ Still, the late 1960s and 1970s marked a moment when the majority of Jamaicans began to proudly identify as black in their social lives and on the official census, and Jamaica embraced its status as a black nation internationally. Some popular forms of nationalism continue to imagine Jamaica as a multiracial melting pot. However, scholarly work on Cold War Jamaica from the 1970s on has largely maintained that the national motto that has come to emblemize brown creole nationalism, “Out of Many, One People,” is an empty slogan propagated to naturalize the leadership of a small group of light-skinned elites who retained political and economic control of the nation, while hiding the “fact” of the nation’s black heritage. These critiques of the limitations of multiracial nationalism are valid; however, I challenge the ways that scholarship tends to ascribe any lack of coherence amongst Jamaicans in acknowledging the biological “fact” of blackness or embracing their “true” African cultural heritage as evidence of a failure of the Jamaican post-independence national project.³⁶ This allegiance to the facticity of race diminishes the ways that both in everyday life and in the political discourse of the 1960s, 1970s, and beyond, Jamaicans of African

descent persistently claimed complex and migratory racial origin stories that decenter a hegemonic notion of “black pride” as it was propagated by the state.³⁷ The archive of dance in Jamaica testifies to a much less teleological and continuous history of racial formation, one that reminds us that Jamaicans’ understandings of blackness and bodies have always been relational, inconsistent, and richly expressive.

Smaddification builds on Jamaican political historiography by interrogating the dissensus surrounding the broad range of racial identifications that Jamaicans historically have performed through their bodies, and the political meanings that these staged and everyday performances of culture articulated. A focus on the black masses and the mulatto elites as the main twentieth-century sociopolitical division, and the tendency to see Manley’s black cultural revolution as a single turning point, erase the range of competing ideologies of black nationalism, forms of radicalism, and the complex network of patron-client relationships that structured political affiliations. Representations of an impenetrable black/brown class and social divide perpetuate a false notion of blackness as a eugenic and cultural fact, in contrast to brownness, which is represented as a creative but white assimilationist construction. In fact, both blackness and, brownness in Jamaica are unstable and rely on visual, social, and, most of all, performative relations. Language about blackness in Jamaica is also profoundly sexed and gendered as a legacy of how the plantation ascribed value to black productive and reproductive labor. Recent scholarship has employed black internationalist frameworks and transnational methodologies to open up comparative ways of understanding Jamaican blackness, highlighting the complexity of black identity and political behavior.³⁸ Following this scholarship, I seek to integrate West Indian history into larger histories of black radicalism within the British Empire, the United States, and the greater Caribbean to illuminate the range of local and transnational influences that constituted the West Indies’ constructions of blackness and brownness.

The project of smaddification is not only a reaction to or a conversation with the legacy of colonialization but also a diaspora dialectic that attempts to dramatize and bring to the surface the inequalities within international black coalitions and the Caribbean as a whole. The black British Caribbean has yet to be fully included in these conversations of racial self-making, multiracial democracy, and Caribbean modernisms/postmodernisms centered in the Spanish and French Caribbean. Language divides, access to economic development, competing mythologies

of creolization, and historically different relationships to empire and nation have stratified how we attribute diasporic cosmopolitanism or internationalism across the region.³⁹ I use the lens of queer diaspora to draw attention to erotic forms of politics and performances of regional and antiracist coalitions that are often excluded from US-centered or Latin Americanist visions of progressive, revolutionary, masculine forms of radical black politics. “Queer diaspora,” as it has been established by scholars such as Nadia Ellis and Gayatri Gopinath, charts a series of aesthetic practices, intimacies, and affective networks that testify to the racial, sexual, and gendered “otherwise” of queer of color existence that remains unacknowledged, if not hidden, within imperialist history writing.⁴⁰ Queer diaspora aesthetics disrupt coloniality’s ways of seeing, moving, and knowing racialized, gendered, and sexualized bodies “through a particular deployment of queer desire and identification that renders apparent the promiscuous intimacies of our past histories as they continue to structure our everyday present, and determine our futures.”⁴¹ Whether evidence of real encounters between queer folks or fabulations, the sites where artists sought connection or oriented their desires provide a critical space for historians to understand how Jamaicans relationally understood a geography of freedom and their place in the world.

Migration and return migration circulated shared frameworks of embodied aesthetic practices around the circum-Caribbean, and wider British Commonwealth political and artistic networks provided other vectors for staging comparisons or South-South solidarities.⁴² For instance, my emphasis on the period of Federation (chapter 2), a moment when the British West Indian politics attempted to creatively imagine and perform a common history and future, represents one queer “otherwise” to the Jamaican nationalist ideals of autonomy, regional cultural dominance, and multiracial exceptionalism. Caribbean performers used regional and commonwealth friendships and affinities to enact smaddification by drawing attention to amplify the Caribbean’s collective contributions to global culture, and by mapping out alternative geographies that disavowed the centrality and uniqueness of imperial seats of power. Identifying the shared aesthetic practices of the NDTTC’s international community reveals how Jamaicans performed the work of diaspora recognition and political solidarity with their bodies.

West Indian art-makers both exploited and resisted their position in global black consciousness, all the while struggling to configure a modernity that was all their own. The history of the Jamaican concert dance

allows us to see beyond the racial performances commonly associated with accommodating or resisting colonial hierarchies and to understand how, in the rich internationalist milieu of decolonial black politics of the 1960s and 1970s, blackness was at once a choice, a creative construction, an exclusionary constraint, and a joyous experiment.

The Dancing Historian

The subjects of this book were always moving, traveling, and adapting to ever-changing geopolitical conditions that sought to delimit their rights to protection under empire, nation, and the status of “human.” To keep up with them, I had to move too, becoming a migratory historian. Over the five years that I was conducting focused research, I visited black radical community bookstores and imperial archives in London and collected papers of West Indian artists and intellectuals that were deposited or bought by higher education institutions across the United States. In Jamaica, I searched for documents and interviewed dance elders in state archives in Spanish Town and Kingston, the libraries of the University of the West Indies, and studios/headquarters of the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica. My research practice in many ways was a testament to the limitations of academic history’s focus on the nation as the ultimate unit of analysis, as different kinds of intellectual and artistic communities proved more useful organizing classifications as the project progressed. Still, lived environment, states of citizenship or alienness, and geography deeply affect the body and the work the body produces. The physical experience of transitioning between sweating over mildewed documents in the humid Kingston heat, and nursing a runny nose and stiff fingers on a humid summer’s day as I emerged from highly surveilled and overly air-conditioned British state archives, materialized the haptic, somatic, and sensorial experiences of my interlocutors. It led me to both speculate about and testify to the virtuosity of migrancy, of learning to labor in between imperial centers and peripheries. In this way, I borrow both theory and form from the rich genre and border-crossing legacies of postcolonial Caribbean scholar/artists who created beyond the boundaries of disciplines too narrow to accept the fullness of their approaches to theorizing Caribbean blackness, including C. L. R. James, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Sylvia Wynter, Derek Walcott, Édouard Glissant, and Antonio Benítez-Rojo. Following in the path of these ancestors, I claim this book’s interdisciplinarity with

ambivalence, knowing that black studies and Caribbean studies have used creative and fugitive methods in response to the violent erasure of black life from historical records long before it became fetishized by the academy writ large.

Caribbean dance scholar Melissa Blanco Borelli argues that writing from the position and identification of black and brown migrants—historically “perambulating bodies”—has the power to generate an ontological break from the hegemony of the Global North’s conception of the liberal citizen. She argues that displaced, disenfranchised, and extra-territorial bodies disrupt liberal personhood and universalist notions of freedom of movement, and asks us to question instead “who is allowed to move, who is allowed to remain still, who can enjoy moving for pleasure, and who must move for survival.”⁴³ A historical and ethnographic method that acknowledges that each body’s affordances for imagining and making movement is reliant on race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, time, and place requires a certain kind of scholarly agility across disciplines and beyond the traditional archive, and a willingness to let conditions of freedom and unfreedom remain as knotty and entangled in our texts as they are in lived experiences. By troubling this false dichotomy and wading through the messy contradictions of danced and written history, we see that postcoloniality was a discontinuous and migratory state of belonging that everyday people experienced as intimacies on the level of the body and as abstract spectators to statecraft, and as a local and international movement. A focus on how perambulating and dancing bodies crossed and dwelled within the chaos challenges a postcolonial narrative that accepts liberal personhood as the ultimate freedom and excavates the queer otherwise of emancipatory social relations. Physical presence and unspoken social relations, not just written and speech acts, shaped historical events and allow us to write histories that acknowledge the contributions of creatives who lacked literacy skills and citizenship rights, or whose stories were actively erased from the histories of concert dance and the nation.⁴⁴

Methodologically, too, this book was formed at the crossroads of several disciplinary boundaries, and I hope it can inspire further spaces of collaboration between the fields of Caribbean studies, history, critical dance studies, and queer performance studies. A critical dance studies and queer studies of the British West Indies is still in its nascent stages, particularly in comparison to the extensive body of scholarship on African American, Haitian, and Spanish Caribbean dance history, but the Anglo-Caribbean has long integrated expressive culture, erotics, and performance into

official and grassroots practices of doing history.⁴⁵ Caribbean studies' approaches to history writing and anthropology often challenge the nation-state as the primary scale of history by attending at once to empire, transnational racial-religious communities, and micro-history to capture the region's fluid and shaky migratory foundations. Likewise, dance studies uses the broad umbrella of "choreography" to describe how bodies are evolving systems within larger relational sociopolitical ones. Thus, both Caribbean studies and dance studies share a commitment to attending to the practice of politics across a range of scales. They allow us to locate the origins of critical theory and world system analysis at the micro-level of the small island, the village, the creative community, and relations between bodies and objects to find ways that marginalized people make sense of and intervene in the machine of empire.⁴⁶

My desires and relationships to the living and dead also haunt these pages. Over the past few years that I have been doing this work, many elders from the NDTCC and their wider Caribbean community of scholars, writers, and dancers who led the region in celebration of and critical reflection on independence have passed: Rex Nettleford, Derek Walcott, Stuart Hall, Barrymore "Barry" Moncrieffe, Bert Rose, Audley Butler, Barbara Requa, and Edward Kamau Brathwaite, and so many others. I have met each departure with great mourning and surprising attachment, alerting me to the one-sided intimacy that I've cultivated with these men and women—some of whom I knew, many of whom I never met, but all of whom I have carried with me through all my journeys. I have gotten to know them through the memories of my parents and elders, by reading their archives, listening to their voices, sharing stories and libations, and studying how their bodies moved. I developed an affinity despite our differences in age, gender, and relation to patriarchy and United States empire. Feeling this erotic connection to these people and their political projects, while facing the tragic impossibility of our meeting face to face, has reminded me that much like ethnographers, historians ought to be self-reflective also about the desires and longings driving their work. In the cold, white Ann Arbor winters and dreary New Haven autumns, I used this project to build an imaginary West Indian community to sustain me. I've accepted my desire and ambivalence and used it to fuel writing about how the allure of both patriarchal revolutionary masculinism *and* idealized queer communities can exist in tandem. Perhaps the greatest and most worthwhile struggle of this scholarship has been to write through the full force of my love for these 1970s visions of Caribbean freedom, so

spectacularly embodied by the dancers of that era, to trace the boundaries and peer into the spaces of exclusion, and to return to the messiness of the present with new strategies for forming political attachments across diaspora.

Book Structure

This book forms a queer and knotty family tree, moving loosely chronologically with time but across several spatial and ideological planes. It traces how ideas, intimacies, and conflicts took root throughout West Indian dance networks. Chapters 1 and 2 begin in the late colonial period (1934–60), and chart a genealogy of concert dance in Jamaica, revealing the vaudeville traditions, social dance, modern dance training, and African diaspora religions that formed the basis of the state-patronized dancers' practice of using smaddification as a strategy for both promoting and critiquing raced and gender nationalisms. The broader regional lineages and migratory exchanges that formed the West Indian queer aesthetic guide my questioning. Chapter 1, named after the black social dance *shay-shay*, emphasizes the links between smadditizing performance culture and early decolonizing politics in the former British West Indies. I tell this story by using African American modern dancer Katherine Dunham as a bridge between transnational Pan-African and modern dance performance networks in the 1930s and 1940s. I draw from Dunham's ethnographic work in the Caribbean but decenter fieldwork and access to the "live" ritual source material that many biographers represent as the sole basis of her Caribbean-inspired concert dance. Instead, I emphasize her West Indian concert dance collaborators and rivals, as well as her urban social dance inspiration, to explore the gaps and silences generated by her US-centered history of West Indian dance.

The second chapter, "Federation Market," charts the stories of Jamaican dance teachers who traveled around the region in the 1950s, teaching rural communities in support of late colonial social welfare physical education development. I shape my periodization around the short-lived Federation of the West Indies (1958–62), a supranational framework for tracing the formation of a common West Indies dance pedagogy that has been all but erased from histories of Jamaican dance. I analyze the work of Jamaican modern dancer and social welfare officer Ivy Baxter, who created a pan-West Indian modern dance and folk dance curriculum taught

across the islands. Baxter's fraught performances of inter-island tensions and competitions over which island held the central "source" of West Indian culture reveal the lasting impact dance education had on Jamaicans' orientation within the Caribbean.

The third and fourth chapters explore the danced representations of racial politics in Jamaica between 1962 and 1970 concerning global Black Power and decolonization movements, shifting the scale of my inquiry from the West Indian region to queer diaspora formation. "African Scenario" covers Rex Nettleford's trips to West Africa and fieldwork with the emerging Rastafari religion, interactions that deeply impacted both official cultural policy and the NDTC's performance of embodied decolonization in the early years of independence. I analyze three ballets about Jamaica's African past and contemporary Rastafari demands for repatriation to Africa as a testament to Nettleford's queer diaspora intimacies and fraternal attachments to powerful male leaders of the decolonization movement. Chapter 4, titled "Jonkonnu," takes as its inspiration the *Plantation Revelry*, Nettleford's folk ballet about Jonkonnu festival culture and the plantation roots of Jamaica's culture. *Plantation Revelry* became the subject of controversy during the height of Black Power protests in Jamaica in 1968, when leftist intellectuals pushed against the NDTC representations of plantation life that used levity, camp, and satire. Using dancer/scholar Sylvia Wynter's cultural criticism and clashes with the NDTC to explore the shifting grounds of black authenticity, I historicize how Caribbean Black Power transformed what constituted liberatory black dance. The clash between Wynter and Nettleford reveals how the somatic mandates of late-1960s black nationalism in Jamaica were structured by gender, sex, color, and class performances.

Chapter 5, "Kumina," examines Jamaican responses to the Cuban Revolution and other Caribbean socialist visions of citizenship by studying Kingston's 1976 Caribbean Festival of Arts, a pan-Caribbean and Latin American anti-imperialist artist festival. This chapter grapples with the institutional legacy of the NDTC and its role in standardizing smaddification as a regional aesthetic. Moving beyond the concert stage, I analyze the planning, construction, and public relations used to promote the festival as a culminating performance of the vision of national identity that the NDTC helped to establish over the first 15 years of independence. I also employ an analysis of spectatorship and audience participation—particularly the crowd's unruly or enraptured responses to dance performance—to understand how West Indian audiences inserted themselves into or disavowed regional stories about revolutionary citizenship.

NOTES

Introduction. To Own Ourselves

- 1 Nettleford, “From Ted—Norway and Lasse—Sweden Rex Nettleford” (University of the West Indies, Radio Education Unit, May 7, 1989) UWI LSW.
- 2 Nettleford coined “smadditisation” in a 1982 article in which he attributes the “smadditisation of Jamaica” to the Democratic Socialist government of the 1970s. He says that he first heard this term used by a Mr. Anthony Liang who worked at the Popular Music Development program of the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC). As the Jamaican press and other scholars adopted this phrase, it morphed into its more popular rendering *smaddification*, which I adopt in place of the original spelling to honor the phrase’s popularization and evolution (after all, this book is committed to eschewing what is “correct” in favor of what is useful in the everyday in the spirit of Nettleford’s own approach to representing creole culture). I have chosen Nettleford’s spelling of the verb form: to smadditize. Nettleford, “Review of *Jamaica*”; Scott and Nettleford, “To Be Liberated,”; Mills, “Smadditizin,” 54–68.
- 3 See Lewis, “Mirror Mirror”; Bogues, “Rex Nettleford.”
- 4 Taylor, *Archive and the Repertoire*, 9.
- 5 Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*.
- 6 Nettleford, “Special Reports” 40–46, NDTCA.
- 7 Paton, *No Bond*.
- 8 The date when the British colonial period began is contested. Alternate dates include when Charles II made Jamaica a royal colony in 1661, and when the Spanish officially ceded the colony to Great Britain in 1670 by signing the Treaty of Madrid.
- 9 Mintz, “Was the Plantation Slave a Proletarian?”
- 10 Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*. The concept of moral economies or orders formed in parallel or opposition to the values of the plantation is a central theme in Jamaica’s history and cultural anthropology. On moral orders surrounding the politics and practices of death in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Jamaica, see Brown, *Reaper’s Garden*. On moral economies shaping

- black Jamaicans' interactions with legal structures in the nineteenth century, see Paton, *No Bond*. On the continuities of peasant religious moral orders in the twentieth century, see Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis*.
- 11 Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*.
- 12 Heuman, *The Killing Time*; Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery*.
- 13 In the process of attempting to curtail democracy for the formerly enslaved and their descendants, a coalition of white creole planters, merchants, and colonial officials decided they would rather surrender completely to imperial oversight than risk black political participation. Jamaica's House of Assembly voted itself out of power, and Jamaica became a Crown Colony under the direct rule of Great Britain to guide the final decades of political and economic reconstruction. Barringer and Modest, *Victorian Jamaica*, 1–48.
- 14 Gill, *Erotic Islands*, 1.
- 15 Paton, *No Bond*, 9.
- 16 Paton, *No Bond*.
- 17 See James, *Holding Aloft*; Goldthree, "A Greater Enterprise."
- 18 Stevens, *Red International*.
- 19 My historicization of *shay-shay* builds on Putnam, *Radical Moves*.
- 20 Buddan, "Universal Adult Suffrage in Jamaica."
- 21 Brathwaite, "Foreword," in Nettleford, *Dance Jamaica*.
- 22 Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power*.
- 23 Ellis, "Out and Bad," 12.
- 24 Mills, "Smadditizin," 2.
- 25 Nettleford does not cite Césaire as his inspiration, but I am not the first to draw connections between these two theories. Girvan, "Caribbean Integration," 258.
- 26 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.
- 27 Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet*.
- 28 Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet*, 23.
- 29 moore, *Fabulous*, 29.
- 30 Thompson, *Shine*.
- 31 Many of the performances that I have chosen for this book fit within Cuban queer performance theorist José Esteban Muñoz's robust theory of disidentification as both a world-making praxis and a survival strategy for minoritarian performance that relies on the epistemic tensions of working "from within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously," seeking to transform and alchemize racial stories and narrative power structures into critiques of dominant systems. Smaddification is distinct because of its enmeshment into a temporally bounded Caribbean mid-century national project (the very hegemony its aesthetics challenged) and its particular prizing of embodiment as the vector for negotiating a kind of dominion over self. Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 5, 78.
- 32 Douglass, *The Power of Sentiment*.
- 33 Bogues, "Nationalism and Jamaican Political Thought," 365.

- 34 I use the term “racial story” to refer to the ways that racial ideology is
encoded in narrative and performance scenarios that become inextricably
linked to personal and collective life-story-telling. See Alberto, “El Negro
Raúl.”
- 35 This has been well documented within Caribbean feminist studies. See
Rowe, *Imagining Caribbean Womanhood*; Edmondson, “Public Spectacles,” 1.
- 36 Bogues, *Black Heretics*; Meeks, *Narratives of Resistance*.
- 37 Scholarship on skin bleaching in Jamaica, particularly, has argued that ma-
nipulations of class performance and skin colors can be read as resistance
to the facticity of race and stunted social mobility. See Brown-Glaude, “The
Fact of Blackness?” and Thompson, *Shine*, 136–51.
- 38 Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees*; Putnam, *Radical Moves*; Stevens, *Red
International*.
- Additionally, I draw from historians of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean
who have long theorized how myths of racial democracy and nationalized
blackness function at once as regulatory regimes and as a form of politics
that can be manipulated from below. Benson, *Antiracism in Cuba*; de la
Fuente, “Myths of Racial Democracy”; Alberto and Hoffnung-Garskof,
“Racial Democracy.”
- 39 Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 7.
- 40 Ellis, *Territories of the Soul*; Gopinath, *Impossible Desires*; Gopinath, *Unruly
Visions*; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*. For a theorization of the black, queer
“otherwise,” see Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*.
- 41 Gopinath, *Unruly Visions*, 7.
- 42 Gopinath, *Unruly Visions*.
- 43 Borelli, “You Can’t Outdo Black People,” 519.
- 44 Srinivasan, “The Bodies Beneath the Smoke.”
- 45 In particular, West Indian feminist writers like M. Jacqui Alexander, Caro-
lyn Cooper, and Louise Bennett have pioneered queer and performance
historical methodologies for generating critical theory.
- 46 Agard-Jones, “Bodies in the System.”

Chapter 1. *Shay-Shay*

- 1 Dunham, *Martinique-Jamaica*, 1936.
- 2 Ryman, “Jamaican Heritage,” 13.
- 3 Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*.
- 4 Ramsey, “Melville Herskovits”; Kraut, “Between Primitivism and
Diaspora.”
- 5 Kraut, “Between Primitivism and Diaspora,” 450.
- 6 An exception is Putnam’s *Radical Moves*, which analyses how the circum-
Caribbean press wrote about the dance craze in the 1910s and 1920s and
charts its migrations around the West Indian diaspora.