DOWN TOWN LADIES

INFORMAL COMMERCIAL IMPORTERS, A HAITIAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, AND SELF-MAKING IN JAMAICA

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FOR LAMERCIE LAFRANCE & JULIETTE MARIE JAVE

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CHAPTER THREE

Caribbean Alter(ed)*natives*: An Auto-Ethnographic Quilt[1]

Me don't want to talk. . . . I don't want to talk to you! I'm in a book already. —Miss Tiny

Once we pluralize the native, the category itself becomes untenable and the savage slot becomes open to deconstruction. —Michel-Rolph Trouillot

Expectations Here and There

. . . And when the "native" subjects have talked to one too many researchers, they know. They know that, despite good intentions, ethnographers arrive to collect information and stories about their lives, which will be reorganized and interpreted in a document with which the ethnographers will build their careers. It is a document that various scholars, who seek to "reinvent," "decolonize," or "recapture" anthropology, claim has the potential to intellectually, socially, and politically incarcerate subjects within yet another "savage slot," because anthropology depends on it.[2] My purpose here as both "native" and "ethnographer" (to use disciplinary terms) is to situate myself on the margins and write critically against that structure.

When I returned to Jamaica to begin dissertation fieldwork in October 1995, I was reluctant to meet with the United Vendors Association (UVA) officials and the traders I had come to know over the years, because I had told them I would return early the previous spring. I was unable to do so because of funding complications that delayed my departure. The primary trader in the project was surprised to see me.

"Me didn't think you'd come," she said.

"But I told you I would. I told you I would get a grant and come back to do this work," I replied. She did not hold it against me, but I was aware that she expected that I, like the white researchers she experienced before me, would not keep my word.

When I first began my conversations with the UVA officials, they pointedly asked me for money. This demand was eventually changed into a request to make a monetary contribution to the association. Since I had planned to volunteer my time and administrative skills, I offered them instead. I did not want to do a direct monetary exchange for a story; I was concerned about what kind of information money could buy. These officials quickly reminded me of previous researchers: "them never write, or come back or send the thesis like they say they will." The trader who I had the most contact with during earlier fieldwork made it very clear to me that she did not want to be part of my research since she was already in a book. After several visits and kept promises, she changed her mind.

I had to confront the fact that the traders and UVA organizers, as well as the government officials I interviewed, had a particular understanding of the social relationship between researcher and subjects. Indeed, one too many consultants, graduate students, and undergraduate students had come through the arcades, taken their stories, and told them they would come back, but never returned. Over time, a lack of trust inhered in these relationships. This mistrust had a profound impact on my work, because it determined the quality, and even the quantity, of data collected from narratives and field observations as well as the documents to which I was given access.[3] Based on previous interactions with foreign researchers, no one expected to see the end product of the research to which they contributed. But even more, this mistrust indicated their belief that the academy does not value, or even consider, researchers' relationships with subjects. Rather, in the cases when these relationships continue, it is primarily due to considerable commitment and effort on the part of the individual researcher. In the Kingston case, ICIs noted continual exploitative experiences by local and foreign researchers. Given numerous state-funded, development-oriented studies that yielded no tangible results, ICIs also critically understood institutional politics. Their complex knowledge resulted in deployments of agency by subjects in ways that Caribbean ethnography has yet to acknowledge.

Perhaps nothing asserts this agency more poignantly than this chapter's epigraph from Miss Tiny. It not only indicates the coevalness,[4] to use Johannes Fabian's term, that she (as subject) and I (as researcher) share;

it also shows how our coevalness compresses within the space we inhabit. In that sense as subjects, we coexist on the same temporal and spatial planes. Miss Tiny's initial reluctance was due to the fact that she was already in a book and, along with several other traders whom I interviewed, had been studied by others. At my insistence that she is but a chapter in that other book as opposed to the subject of a whole book, which I hope to write some time later, she proceeded to elaborate on the reasons for her disinterest.

"I don't want to talk about mi business because mi in a book already. I don't need another book." She enunciated every letter of every single word. Over the years, I learned that such articulation was an indication of her getting cross. "You no understand Jamaican?" she teased me, and then continued. "The book is sellin' everywhere, you know. I see it at the airport in Miami, in New York, Toronto."

"Even in Michigan," I added.

"But mi no get nothing. Mi no get no money."

In defense of the writer I responded, "I don't think anyone else gets anything, Miss Tiny. Everyone else in the book would have to get something, not just you..."

To that, Miss Tiny laughed.

Later, I inferred that she knew very well that there would be no financial compensation for her contribution. Yet she wanted me to know that she knows what happens with the work. Perhaps she wanted it clear between us that she did not need me as much as I needed her. And she never lets me forget this. This moment pointed to my dependency (as a researcher) on Miss Tiny, which created complex fieldwork dynamics that feminist anthropologists have been grappling with in their attempts to write culture against the discipline's hegemony.[5] The body of work by Zora Neale Hurston notwithstanding, it is only recently that Caribbean feminist ethnographers have begun to engage with this concern (Simmonds 2001, Slocum 2001).

My purpose in this chapter is to make an auto-ethnographic quilt that tells a nonlinear, polyrhythmic story. This quilt is made out of a series of reflections to position myself in relation to my fieldwork mediations and negotiations in Kingston and Ann Arbor to highlight the complexities inherent in the categories of native and native ethnographer, which were bestowed upon me. To achieve this, I will de-essentialize the black female subject by pointing to how, as with the ICIs, differences in my experiences varied on the basis of gender, class, color, age, marital status, maternity, and nationality. This will show that the subjects, St. Clair Drake's black folks who inhabit here and there, are in fact what Trouillot considers symbolic and material products (Drake 1991, Trouillot 1991). In so doing, my aim is simply to pluralize the native and to embark upon a deconstruction of the "savage slot," as Trouillot challenges ethnographers to do.

Destroying the Savage Slot

On October 2, 1995, I arrived in Kingston for my dissertation fieldwork. I descended from the plane wearing makeup (which I don't normally wear), dressed in a crisp, white linen shirt purchased from Banana Republic, a year-old pair of sage linen pants purchased from Garnet Hill, with a new pair of khaki suede Adidas sneakers. My posture bent by the weight of my well-worn Coach briefcase, which was stuffed with my wallet (large enough to carry a passport and an airline ticket), a vinyl case containing twenty-four of my favorite CDs, files of correspondence from the African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica and the Inter-American Foundation, and letters of introduction from the University of Michigan's anthropology department. My carry-on was filled mostly with books, including one on natural healing for women. It also had a bottle of Dr. Bach's rescue remedy (homeopathic flower essences), another bottle of stress relief aromatherapy, and a duty-free bag (containing Chanel Vamp lipstick and nail polish a medium-sized Jean Paul Gaultier perfume, and a small bottle of Gap Earth perfumes).

By this time, I had been to Kingston enough times to be well acquainted with the layout of the airport. I waited in line for an immigration officer, who gave me a two-week visitor stamp. Then I identified a porter to find my baggage. I was pushing my heaping cart of suitcases to get in line for customs when the airport exploded with screams of joy, loud stomping, pretend gun salute ("Pow! pow! buyaka, buyaka!"—verbal mimicry of gunshots that are usually done at dancehall sessions by the attendees to express satisfaction with performers) and high-fives. Several of the porters and the passengers were slapping the walls. Almost everyone was rejoicing: airport workers, returnees, Informal Commercial Importers, young, old, men and women of different classes in various types of apparel. I turned around, trying to determine the cause of this excitement. My heart was pounding against the wall of my chest, as I had no idea what was happening or why. I noticed that I was among only a few, including the white

people, who had blank or frightened looks on their faces and were not participating in this enjoyment.

The jury had deliberated and found O. J. Simpson not guilty. I had been so caught up in preparing for fieldwork, that I had forgotten what day it was. Great, I thought, as I became conscious of my own anxiety about getting through customs and self-conscious of the fact that my face was one of the blank ones, without a smile. I was confused and immobile and did not even try to sort the ironies that filled this moment. I thought of the differential value ascribed to white and black females and lack of attention paid to gender-based violence on this island. I thought of my overstuffed bags, my suitcases that were weighed down by the bottles of wine, the tape recorder, the audiotapes, the radio–CD player, the batteries, the shortwave radio, the beauty products, and the clothing. I thought of the paradox of Jamaicans, who become black in the United States but are brown, high brown, or red in their own country, identifying with a man who remade himself by distancing from his own blackness. I thought of the social worth of white womanhood knowing that there would not have even been such a high-profile chase, let alone a trial had Nicole been black. I suddenly felt the vulnerability of my being a young dark-skinned single female Haitian citizen with an unrecognizable family name.[6] I silently cursed, and then soon smiled as I quickly realized that I had just been given the distraction I needed to *pass* through customs without any difficulties.

I approached the young male customs clerk and greeted him with a broader smile than usual. He said he knew O. J. was innocent and that there was no way he would have been convicted.

"Especially not after Rodney King," I added.

He asked what was in my bags. I told him I had stuff I needed to conduct research on ICIs for eighteen months. Did I have electrical appliances? he continued.

"Just things I need for research," I replied, but this time batting my eyelashes and pouting my rouged lips, as flirtation has its methodological uses. Lastly, he asked if I was carrying food. "Of course not; I like Jamaican food as it is," I honestly responded. We smiled. He stamped my customs form. I left and found yet another porter, who got me a JUTA taxi[7] that took me to the Pegasus Hotel for tea, where I waited until I could join the "lady" with whom I would be staying until I found my own apartment.

Having been to Jamaica on research trips in 1993 and in 1994, I did not look forward to experiencing and confronting the subtle and aggressive forms of colorism, classism, and gender discrimination that I had been subjected to every day on previous trips. This was exacerbated because I failed to adhere to local customs. Prior to leaving Ann Arbor that October, I had decided that, this time, I would not only observe my social position, I also would behave accordingly. That is, I would perform the role of researcher with a U.S. dollars–sponsored grant. By observing class and color codes and some of their gendered components, I would perform my perceived class, which would allow me to mediate colorism and to some extent command respect at the outset. In assuming my expected social place, I was expected to do less work and to employ local workers. I was determined to make this return to Jamaica as painless as possible, the best experience that grant money could buy.

In truth, though I was thoroughly excited about the project, I absolutely dreaded being in Kingston. Because of its rigid class and color divide, dense population, fast pace, congestion, gender dynamics, and continuous territorial wars, I experienced Kingston as a tough environment and affectionately dubbed it "New York City to the hundredth power." Being there required extensive emotional labor that I had to minimize to carry on the work with limited distractions.

I leaned back in the air-conditioned taxi as we drove away from the Norman Manley International Airport towards central Kingston. As we skirted around the dilapidated houses, shops, and other buildings of Harbour View, I thought back to an evening in June 1994. I was in Kingston conducting archival research and reestablishing contacts when I came home after an outing to find the LAPD's infamous low-speed chase of O. J. Simpson in the white Bronco on two of the three local channels. In addition to the shock of the event itself, I remember being anxious and paralyzed, unable to reconcile feelings of being displaced by this "intrusive" U.S. media frenzy in "my" "field site" (in Kingston). At the time, I thought of nothing else. Looking out of the taxi window, I absorbed the stark contrast between the ostentatious, pillar-adorned mansions that formed the skyline of Beverly Hills, the garbage-strewn areas below in Mountain View, and the numerous LA-style apartment complexes that hid behind thick-gated walls that had sprung up like wildflowers in a year's time.

Characteristically, contemporary Jamaica is something of a trompe l'oeil (literal translation, "deceives the eye").[8] Since independence in 1962, governments have constructed the island's image to provide the local and global worlds with visions of Jamaica that are quite contradictory. The local nationalist version comprises a plural society of Jamaicans of various

races, colors, and classes that is united despite ongoing tensions. In the global arena, this description differs, as its primary purpose is to feed the island's tourism industry. This anachronistic image, which is seen mostly abroad, consists of happy-go-lucky blacks (sometimes with locks) on the coast eagerly awaiting visitors (Sheller 2003). This representation completely obscures the very plurality that underlies the local vision. However, in both cases, the relatively small white population is more or less barely discernible. Yet in reality, as most members of this population form the upper echelon, they are far from being invisible. Rather, they loom in the background, as the political and economic puppeteers of those in power.[9] These visions are not merely incongruous. As in a trompe l'oeil, the reality they purport to reflect is another illusion. Indeed, beyond the popular nationalist rhetoric, class and color divide this "one love" nation. As I discuss later, while the economic disparity among Jamaicans is less extreme than that of other countries of the region, the traditional middle class, who are the social gatekeepers of Jamaican "culture," continue to buffer the disparity between the small, mostly white and brown elite and the larger black masses. Yet this divide is entrenched and prominent enough to contradict the united plural population implied by the national motto, "out of many, one people."

Indeed, certain parts of the capital are reminiscent of North America, with peach-colored, terra-cotta-tiled malls and streets lined with the latest imported sport utility vehicles. The island's proximity to the U.S. facilitates both the import and export of cultural elements, albeit asymmetrically. Despite many visible similarities to the U.S., however, life in Kingston is a Jamaican experience. Pondering issues of distance, time, and space between east and west, north and south, I wondered what distanced "my" field site from the U.S., particularly since fiber-optic technology nullified almost any argument that stressed time.[10]

Time and a Multitude of Others

This site, "the field," where anthropologists conduct their research, is neither spatially nor temporally bound. "The field," as a concept, is defined once a site is chosen and researched in university libraries that house previous definitions of this site by established professionals who have made their careers on these very definitions. As grant proposals are written, this definition of "the field" expands. Indeed, when we decide to go, for how

long, what we take and don't take with us, and personal expectations of the place are all markers of "the field." What we do upon our return continues to impact the individuals from whom we collected data. As Deborah D'Amico-Samuels explains, terms such as "out in the field" and "back from the field" help to maintain the distance between anthropologists and their research subjects. She asks how one demarcates fieldwork as a location when her field research is on gender, color, and class in Jamaica, she writes her dissertation in New York, and participates in a seminar in Trinidad? Which of these, if any, is more legitimate? (1991:69–73). In that sense, I concur with D'Amico-Samuels's conclusion that "the field is everywhere." Hence, as a concept, it is not a fixed territory. It exists in our imagination as well as out there on the ground.

The different markers used to delineate this fictive space are rendered obscure in urban areas, especially since globalization manifests differently in rural settings (Behar 1993; Tsing 1993, 2005; Mendez 2005; Smith 2001; Yelvington 1995). As I show later, consumption patterns (as effects of global movements) occur in juxtaposed and contradictory ways that reveal the clash between local and global. These are particularly evident in urban settings where communication dissemination often originates. Talk radio shows, newspapers, and TV shows are all located in major cities in Jamaica. Capital cities are cosmopolitan areas where the seat of government is located. Trade and cultural interpretation of economic, political, and social flows occur on multiple levels in this setting (Sassen 1991). In addition, internal and external migration and telecommunications are often instrumental in connecting cities to their larger contexts. Furthermore, as Enoch Page has argued, telecommunications consumption is not only classed, but raced and instrumental in the dissemination of particular images of blackness that reinforce the dominance of white public space (1999). In the 1970s, the satellite dish invaded the country. It soon became a toy of the very rich. The dish, a class symbol, soon played a key role in the redefinition of Jamaican culture. Since becoming more affordable, the dish has slowly infiltrated every crevice left open by the absence of, or the limited appeal of, the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation (JBC), now called Television Jamaica (TVJ). Those who could afford to do so hired an electrician to run lines from the hill to smaller houses in the valley. Eventually, to compete with the dish, the television stations JBC and later CVM (a station founded by Community Television, Videomax, and Mediamix Limited) began to import television series and talk shows from the United States.

The mass media are crucial to the time-space compression. David Harvey observes: "Mass television ownership coupled with satellite communication makes it possible to experience a rush of images from different spaces into a series of images on a television screen. The whole world can watch the Olympic Games, the World Cup, the fall of a dictator, a political summit, a deadly tragedy . . ." (1989:293). As of late 1993, Jamaican television daily offered *The Today Show,* the *Oprah, Montel,* and *Sally Jesse Raphael* talk shows, and others. On the radio, excerpts of NPR and the BBC report were heard daily, as well as the American Top 40 on Sundays. The field, as Appadurai notes, must be analyzed within the context of these transnational cultural movements as a new cosmopolitanism that thrives, competes with, and feeds on these transactions (1991:192). To ignore these cultural movements is to deny the impact, however minimal or strong, they have had on Jamaica and Jamaicans as a result of both U.S. imperialism and other global processes.

Concepts of the field must consider the impact on the local social order of the flow of individuals as well as commodities. In Jamaica, rural dwellers are lured to urban areas and foreign lands. Urbanites are also fixated on, and actively seek, visas to Britain, Canada, or the United States in search of the opportunities, fame, or money that will distinguish a "special" individual from the masses. Indeed, for the majority of the population, migration (both internal and external) is the only means to a better life, other than increased income through higher education or illegal activities, and is thus the preferred choice for some. It is fair to estimate that most Jamaicans have a relative or a friend who lives or has lived abroad. The activities of ICIs take them to London, Miami, New York, Panama City, Port-au-Prince, and Toronto, among other cities in the Jamaican and Caribbean diasporas. Friends and relatives in these cities sometimes play a role in their businesses. Migration and travel have historically influenced local and transnational social relations. These days, according to Appadurai, the result is that more persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before. He notes, "Fantasy is now a social practice; it enters in a host of ways into the fabrication of social lives for many people in many societies" (1991:7–8). This is the reason that imagination is integral to my research, particularly since displacement and dislocation have historically been a part of Jamaican identity.

Jamaicans' desires or fantasies about the U.S. determine their daily social practices and aspirations in several ways. The U.S. is where many

lower- and working-class individuals hope to migrate to find work and/or to get an education. Eventually, they return home with U.S. dollars as well as other material and social capital that gives them greater access to resources such as property and better schools for their children, which they could not have afforded on Jamaican wages. For the middle class, the Jamaican diaspora extends farther than Britain, Canada, and the United States to other parts of Europe and Africa. Abroad, they acquire a higher education that facilitates their socioeconomic mobility upon returning home and increases or stabilizes their social status. Among the elite, there are Miami Jamaicans with dual residences. They work, shop, and get their medical treatments in the Sunshine State and spend weekends socializing in their island homes. Indeed, the fact that opportunity is driving migrant movements need not mean that socioeconomic and political ties to homelands are severed. On the contrary, anthropologists have found quite the reverse (e.g., Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001, Ong 1999, Thomas 2004). As both Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Blanc (1994) and Rouse (1991) have found, such attachments create and maintain new diasporic communities. Such connections have strengthened concomitant with the increasing movement of capital, goods, and people or perhaps, it could be said, because of this flow (Dupuy 2001). Nonetheless, the global South remains highly dependent on the North, prompting us to (re)consider the era of globalization in terms of what Trouillot calls a "fragmented globality," a world in which "inequality both reflects and reproduces the economic polarization that divides continents, countries and populations" (2003:63). As poverty levels persist in the entire region, remittances (money sent home from abroad) and seasonal migrant labor account for significant percentages of the local GDP. In 1990, remittances represented 3.2 percent of Jamaica's local GDP. Within a decade, that number had increased to 13.6 percent (International Monetary Fund 2003). In this context, the U.S. visa, which is difficult to acquire on the island, has become yet another status symbol of social and economic position.[11] During my research years, the official number of Jamaicans migrating to the U.S. alone exceeded 40,000 annually. The number of immigrants who are illegally crossing these borders is not known, but it is estimated to be even greater due to the economic engine driving this process.

This relationship that exists between Jamaicans and United States citizens is not one-sided. An increasing number of North Americans flock to the island to, as Mimi Sheller terms it, "consume the Caribbean" (2003). They come in search of both sun and pleasure during music festivals, such

as the Reggae Sunsplash and Sunfest, during high tourist seasons and college and university spring breaks. An even larger population is familiar with the island through some knowledge of and/or consumption of the better-known symbols of Rastafari, Bob Marley and the "celestial" herb ganja (marijuana). Within the U.S., the presence of Jamaican migrants in African-American communities has led to reciprocal consumption of aspects of each other's popular culture, resulting in collaborative music projects between hiphop rappers and dancehall DJs. Independent international traders have been instrumental in this cultural exchange as importers, exporters, and consumers of popular culture.

The cultural movements that traverse Kingston, New York, and Miami are the result of Jamaican and North American desire for, and consumption of, different elements of dancehall and hiphop such as clothing, hairstyles, jewelry, and lyrics. Besides migration, this desire is partially fueled by the satellite dish and the VCR in middle- and upper-class homes. The VCR has made the rapid transportation of the latest styles in both countries possible. During my fieldwork in the mid 1990s, bootleg copies of Biggie's fashion shows (he was one of dancehall's top clothing designers at that time) made their way to Brooklyn in one day, or the latest Video Soul or MTV buzz clips could be seen before record companies formally released these albums on the island. Television plays an even more significant role in this transnational culture flow.

Telecommunications technology has influenced the transnational flow of hiphop and dancehall and its related economic transactions as carried out by participants in formal and informal economies. In this context, independent traders such as ICIs who distribute these popular commodities are contributing to this seemingly closing cultural gap between certain cities in the U.S. and Jamaica. They import clothing, shoes, and other accessories, which Jamaicans sport daily with uncanny resemblance to B-boys and B-girls (original term for break dancers) in the U.S. At times, despite the tropical weather and the architecture, certain streets of downtown Kingston resembled Flatbush Avenue or Fulton Street in Brooklyn.

Between 1992 and 1998, when I was conducting this research, I viewed these visible nuances as elements of the trompe l'oeil. As I stated above, parts of Kingston seemed like the United States. However, these similarities remain on the surface. Thick descriptions would reveal that this consumption and these transnational movements have had a rather limited impact on the national culture. Their effects on the old social order are infinitesimal, as I show later. As such, they fool the eye. These deceptions are

symptomatic of a larger analytical problem that renders the region difficult for anthropologists to place. Trouillot rightly argues that, with its predominantly diverse population, the Caribbean region is "not western enough to fit the concerns of sociologists. Yet it is not 'native' enough to fit fully into the Savage slot where anthropologists found their preferred subjects" (1992:20). Moreover, he notes, given a history of persistent contact with the old world, this new world was hardly the place to look for primitives. Needless to say, the Caribbean is undeniably complex, as its very existence questions the West/non-West dichotomy and the category of native that anthropology is premised upon (Trouillot 1992). It is this incongruity that prompts Trouillot to further claim that the region's inescapable heterogeneity has always posed fundamental questions for anthropological theory that anthropologists have chosen to ignore. Deborah Thomas and Karla Slocum push Trouillot's argument even further, asserting that the distinctive complexity of the region makes it an important site to examine the contradictory ways that the global manifests within the local (Slocum and Thomas 2003). Indeed, this characteristic of Caribbean heterogeneity is a conundrum that I attempt to decipher by exploring its particular consequences for me as a Haitian ethnographer.[12] Below, I explore more specifically how I negotiated the Caribbean diversity that I uniquely embody and positioned myself throughout the fieldwork process in Jamaica.

Regional Native, Local Outsider

Disavowal of the region's homogeneity had manifestations that influenced various aspects of my fieldwork process from Ann Arbor to Kingston. At Michigan, my Haitian identity and my interest in Jamaica were often confounded both inside and outside of the anthropology department. Usually, I was mistaken for Jamaican or individuals assumed that my research was in Haiti. This suggests a parochial view of native anthropologists, limited by the assumption that they study only their birth countries. Kath Weston, who is considered a native anthropologist for studying same-sex families, puts it very well: "the discipline is implicated in constructing the native as an internally homogeneous category. When she embarks on a career in anthropology, she is likely to be seen as native first and ethnographer second" (1997a:171). Indeed, being viewed simply as "native" proved to be the fulcrum of power, identity, and authority issues that I had

to confront at every stage of the project in both key sites. This perception stems from disciplinary views of the archetypal anthropologist as white and male. In turn, this influences the marginal position that women and people of color occupy in the academy.[13] An archeology of the project's development explicates the full extent of this dilemma and the complexities of my negotiations.

I identified my research topic as a first-year graduate student on a six-week study-abroad program in 1992. I returned to Jamaica in 1993 for six months as a Social Science Research Council (SSRC) predissertation fellow and then again in 1994 with my own funds (on credit). I went back in 1995 to conduct dissertation research funded by the Inter-American Foundation (IAF).

I returned in 1994 without outside funding because of the sensitivity of my topic, the importance of continuity in building relationships with the people I studied,[14] and the expectations I discussed earlier. Also, I had developed a sense of accountability and was rather naively determined to not re-create the cycle of exploitation, of which the traders and NGO workers never failed to remind me. Several of the ICIs explicitly told me that they expected more from me because I was black. They had different expectations and were wary of "the white people who come here ask questions and leave." I was often reminded, "Dem say they will return and show us the book but dem never come back." Though I worried about this new responsibility, I did not feel constrained by it. I quickly told them that I would write a dissertation and then a book from multiple perspectives that could contain information that they might not agree with or even appreciate. But I did stress that I would work to maintain my end of the relationship. I promised them that they would see the end results of my work and that if they found some of my arguments useful, they could use the work for their benefit.

Since the discipline is not premised on researchers maintaining relationships with their "subjects," to honor this commitment, I chose another path at an early point in my career.[15] This placed me in a situation where I became what reggae's great songwriter Robert Nesta Marley referred to as a "duppy conqueror"[16] (conqueror of ghosts) who would follow the often-silenced black anthropological tradition of questioning the discipline's Eurocentrism. The particular ghost that I chose to confront is bias towards native anthropologists and exactly what constitutes fieldwork for them. This preconception (in the field, the discipline and in the academy) manifested itself in many ways. What is of importance here is the assumption of an over-familiarity with Jamaica. It is worthy of discussion as it reaffirms Trouillot's assertion that anthropology does not know what to do with the region's heterogeneity (1992). Also, it reveals the complexities of situated knowledge (Haraway 1991) and conjures up questions about what exactly constitutes local knowledge when there are varieties of locals and knowledge.

Up until 1994, I had spent a total of seven months in Jamaica. I was quite far from understanding, let alone mastering, Jamaican patois, the language of most of the ICIs. Furthermore, those seven months did not grant me automatic "insider" status, nor did the fact that I was born in the region.

Indeed, this nativeness, as it had been bestowed upon me in Ann Arbor, seemed to transcend geographies and different colonial histories. I hailed from a former French colony that freed itself through what Trouillot (1995) calls an "unthinkable" revolution, two centuries before in 1804, while my work was on an island that had received its independence from the British only three decades ago, in 1962. This "nativeness" ascribed to me obscures the fact that participant-observation is (inter)subjective. My specific social location informs the processes I undergo to gather data. Since ethnography is premised upon methodologically driven data collection, the native ethnographer is viewed as having an advantage because this individual already knows local ways, and thus has easy access. While this notion has been textually defeated, it continues to undergird anthropological practices.

The native researcher is in a no-win situation. Everyone thinks they know. Ironically, as Delmos Jones (1970) found, the general assumption of locals was that the native ethnographer already knows the rules. Feminist anthropologist Kirin Narayan (1995) makes a different point that pushes my argument further. She asserts that class and other differences increasingly widen the divide and purported shared experiences between native subjects and researchers; moreover, these native scholars are often trained elsewhere, in universities in the North, away from their sites of research. Those scholars who assumed I was Jamaican shared the assumption that I worked at home. This assumption had various implications that I return to later. Having an entrée in the field is still perceived unfavorably by the discipline because investments in the "culture" category reinforce participation-observation as the primary method of data collection (Trouillot 2003). In principle, fieldwork is about collecting, a vestige of its imperialist past, which often entailed grueling processes of negotiations between researchers and their subjects to gain information. Hence, having

easy access to material raises fundamental questions about constructions of the field, the fieldworker, and the making of ethnography. The implication is that the native ethnographer does not have to work as hard.[17]

Renato Rosaldo offers a humorous explanation with his notion of the Lone Ethnographer. The rise of classic norms in anthropology, he notes, is almost synonymous with the arrival of the "Lone Ethnographer who rode into the sunset in search of 'his native.'" After undergoing a series of trials, he encountered the object of his quest in a distant land. There, he underwent his rite of passage by enduring the ultimate ordeal of "fieldwork." After collecting "the data," the Lone Ethnographer returned home and wrote a "true" account of the "culture" (1989:30). For this Lone Ethnographer, field research required the eventual conquering of every space. It is a moment during which the anthropologist is tested by the natives and eventually overcomes obstacles. For the native ethnographer, already familiar with the society, fieldwork lacks the challenges that make this project about conquering. In truth, it was me who was outmaneuvered by interactions in the field. What I learned, I learned through trial and error. In addition, my collection of data was almost always about negotiating my own sense of being out of place. Sometimes, I was viewed as a Jamaican. Initially, fieldwork was about establishing my identity—first, as an anthropologist, then as a regional native who is also a local outsider. As a young black female who eschewed class codes, I did not live up to "the deep-seated archetypal images of the 'real fieldworker,' or the 'real anthropologist' that constitute a significant part of the common sense (in the Gramscian use of the term) of the discipline" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:12). My conversations with Jamaican individuals across class lines revealed more about this.[18] Furthermore, I hardly felt the sense of belonging or the ease of being a "native" that I feel, only in certain contexts, when I am in Haiti, despite an initial seventeen-year absence.

Another disciplinary bias is disregard for the emotional labor that accompanies the work of anthropologists. In the past, cultural anthropologists struggled to acknowledge the impact of this aspect of working with subjects. In recent years, anthropologists have attempted to address this complex issue.[19] While the varieties and specificities of this dilemma have been revealed, for black female ethnographers reflexivity abounds with career risks. Given our historical positions within the discipline (Harrison and Harrison 1999), it is not accidental that phases of our careers were not comprehensively engaged until recently (Bolles 2001, Harrison 1999, McClaurin 2001b). Indeed, reflecting (which is viewed as telling by positivists and others invested in the order of things) on disciplinary constraints and fieldwork practice is cautiously undertaken, as critics still question the validity of raising such epistemological questions (Salzman 2002). There are still partial silences, which require analysis, as they are but manifestations of the persistent power of race (Harrison 1995), racial formation (Omi and Winant 1994), and the possessive investment in whiteness (Lipsitz 1998) within the discipline.

For black females, reflexivity carries its own set of implications. In "Theorizing a Black Feminist Self in Anthropology," McClaurin writes, "contrary to Marcus and Fischer's argument that native scholars lose critical insights when we become trained, we cannot form the voices of critiques they so desire primarily because the discipline does not want to hear us—and so many of us languish in silence, hiding our critiques" (2001b: 59). In spite of Audre Lorde's warning that silence will not protect us (1984), our historical silences on certain subjects have allowed many to be taken seriously and, in some ways, have sheltered careers. Simultaneously, these survival strategies have also reified gendered ideals and reinforced the stereotype of the black superwoman. There is a political economy to reflexivity (Ulysse 2003). Indeed, who is reflexive, what they reflect on, where they reflect, and at which point do they begin to reflect are all subject to professional evaluation in the process of making careers. This monitoring of disciplinary ways not only upholds conventional forms, methods, and writings, but in the process also influences decisions about what types of work black anthropologists do or ought to do. As in Jamaica, where there is a possessive investment in hegemonic ideals, in the U.S.—the other site where I work—there are also ideal constructions of black anthropologists.

Indeed, those who seek to attain tenure as well as those with the power to bestow it (as the main marker of professional achievement) uphold these constructions. This is a structural practice that has had significant impact, especially on up-and-coming black anthropologists. Often, they do not seek to produce creative ethnographies. Their projects that blur genres and are more humanistic are usually kept distinct from their scientific works; reflexive works in particular are published only after the publication of the more conventional work necessary to secure promotion. This reveals and reinforces the value ascribed to more conventional ethnographies, especially those that do not reflect on the political (within the discipline). Such works are the foundation for career building; they are more likely to be cited and recognized. The policing occurs on all fronts and

manifests itself in different ways. Junior scholars like me are protectively encouraged to observe professional dictum and not air our private structural struggles in public or in print, where they will have lasting effects and repercussions. Even though well-meaning, this advice also maintains the pattern of erasure. Silence is just another structure of power. Therein lies the frustration of black anthropologists who must then, generation after generation, re-expose the continuities of these patterns (Baker 1998, Harrison and Harrison 1999). Their works are often viewed as "too angry" and "emotional" and less objective than conventional works that uphold academic authority, thus reinforcing the myth of objectivity.[20] Since the marked are usually seen as representative of their race, not only are black anthropologists homogenized, and homogenize themselves, but similar to the ICIs, we are professionally confined by constructions that obscure differences among us. The multiplicity of our positions, subjectivities, and voices accounts for the differences in our works.

Nonetheless, among black anthropologists, those who are heard usually speak in the dominant language using the widely accepted form. Overtly political projects are seen as less scholarly, which disavows the black tradition of knowledge production for racial vindication (Baker 1998, Harrison and Harrison 1999, McClaurin 2001b). Black anthropologists in the U.S. and elsewhere in the black diaspora have historically engaged in conducting work purposely aimed at correcting racial misconstructions and misrepresentations. Indeed, the primary work was Antenor Firmin's monumental *De L'Egalite des Races Humaines* (The Equality of Human Races, 1885), which was a riposte to Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'Inegalite des Races Humaines* (The Inequality of Human Races, 1853–1855). Firmin wrote this work to debunk the nineteenth-century racist practices of anthropometry and craniology that dominated his time (Fluehr-Lobban 2000). This work would be silenced and disavowed until over 115 years later. In the twentieth century, other Haitian scholars and writers such as Jean Price-Mars ([1928] 1983) and Jacques Roumain (1978) wrote political novels on problems of race and class, based on extensive fieldwork and archival data collection. According to Leith Mullings, it is the time spent revisiting issues deemed illegitimate that keeps black anthropologists from pursuing new concerns (1997). Thus, in addition to field research, native anthropologists who engage in corrective work are often burdened with other responsibilities as well (Jacobs-Huey 2002).

Yet the assumption is that native ethnographers do not face hardships nor have to make the sacrifices that nonnatives do. During my preliminary research phase in 1993, my daily experiences in Kingston attested to how the "fieldwork" process was at best inconsistent, as I embodied more identities than I was aware of, let alone knew how to negotiate. At worst, it was an intellectual nightmare as the theoretical approaches and methodological tools I brought from graduate school often failed to capture the subject under research. And within this never-ending nightmare, I was often emotionally overtaxed. I attempted to transcend the limits of various social positions ascribed to me while juggling the theoretical concepts of "insider," "native," and "Western feminist," which I was ascribed by virtue of being a black female from the region pursuing a research project on females. In reality, while I had more than general knowledge of the region, I lacked familiarity with my specific settings.

One of my challenges was to refrain from making suppositions about Jamaica based on what I know of Haiti or other countries in the region. My most fruitful approach, which I eventually took after many small blunders, was to simply pretend that I know very little. However, feigning ignorance was not always easy especially as I was, periodically, regionalized and even localized. At times I faltered, as I discuss in chapter 5, and I was amazed by similarities and contradictions. The parallels between Haiti and Jamaica were particularly significant given that the former is often viewed as such an oddity in the region. When I sought detachment, I reverted back to my graduate training. I had been trained to become a (white) gentleman (Guinier, Fine, and Balin 1997), so I behaved like a white male ethnographer—that is, as if my social location did not matter. More often than not, however, I was not accorded the impunity that usually comes with white skin.

In reality, I occupied the margins as what I call a regional native and local outsider. I was as difficult to place in Jamaica as I was in Ann Arbor. Numerous times, Jamaicans would automatically speak to me in patois, assuming I was a local. Other times, higglers at the Coronation Market would ask me where I was from because, as they say, "You look like we, but you no Jamaican." This pleased me, as it gave me a sense of belonging. When I responded I was from Haiti, I was shocked by the response "You don't look like one dem boat people dem." These reactions were often classed. My working- and lower-class interlocutors downtown were familiar with Haitians only through media portrayals. Several times, during the course of more extensive fieldwork (in 1994, 1995, and 1996), a number of Haitians washed ashore the island's north coast on their desperate voyages to Miami. I was not one of the boat people. Far from being a refugee fleeing political persecution, I came to Jamaica (with class

privileges) to pursue an intellectual enterprise. What made my experience different from that of a white or black person? To answer the question simply, it is our respective positions as these have been historically defined. For example, a black female (of my skin tone and same social position and class lineage) from the U.S. is of higher status than I because of the increasing value of her citizenship.

My experiences were distinct, I would argue, for two interrelated reasons. I was some sort-of local in a society where remnants of colonialism (e.g., the stigma associated with blackness, as symbolic of enslavement, inferiority, and inequity) persist. In addition, as a Haitian, I occupied yet another category. I was marked predominantly as a refugee by the lower classes and to an unknown class by the middle and upper classes. My acquaintances and friends among near-elite Jamaicans, at some point, thought my father was a diplomat. What connected the various responses and perceptions of me was the fact that I disrupted class and color codes. I have an unfamiliar surname and I am dark skinned, yet I possess social, material, and cultural capital that are associated with those of the upper classes.[21] Since my class identity was not written on my body, the discord between my class and color required that I strictly observe the codes on which performances of identities are founded historically if I wanted my class to be known.

My first trip to Jamaica was in 1985, as a bona fide sun worshiper—a tourist. When I returned in 1992, with the UM Center for AfroAmerican and African Studies program, I was randomly reminded by sneering remarks from the hotel staff (especially the darker-skinned waitpersons) that people as dark as I am do not seek the sun. Also, I became more aware of uses of umbrellas and hats to preserve one's lightness. One of the program's assignments was to unpack the local meanings of color. Through this exercise, I became more sensitized to color and class categories. Middle- and upper-class interviewees (of light shades) noted that class was the most important category of identity in Jamaica. The lower the class of individuals I interviewed, the more they stressed the prominence of color. A dark-skinned waiter noted that his family encouraged him to seek a light-skinned girl for marriage to achieve status by "lifting up" the pigment of his children. With lighter skin, his children would have greater opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. At this point in the research, my sample was far from representative. The differences in their responses may have been indicators of social class, but they also revealed how color and class operated depending on the individual and the researcher.

"Out of Place" in Papine

In 1993, I returned to Kingston for predissertation fieldwork. I lived in Papine to observe and document the day-to-day activities of the agricultural market of the same name. This area also has access to transportation through its bus terminus. Papine is a working-class neighborhood, part residential and part industrial, that is located north of the university and at the foot of Upper St. Andrew, one of the wealthiest areas in Kingston. There was a Gillette factory and warehouse, a car garage, a plaza, a medical clinic, a jerk center (eatery), a Chinese eatery, a soft drink depository, a couple of bars, and several small shops where "bun and cheese" and the local Red Stripe beer and cigarettes could always be found. The neighborhood was always lively, especially in the morning and late afternoon as buses rushed back and forth to all parts of the capital. In my backyard, the more destitute lived in shacks scattered in the ravine below. The residences adjacent to mine each housed several families. In the remaining houses, rooms were rented mostly to single men. I lived in this neighborhood in a two-room apartment with running water, a kitchen, and a verandah. Rose, whom I employed to wash my clothes, told me she lived in a room the same size as my living room with her three kids and her boyfriend.

I was living an upper middle-class life in a predominantly working-class neighborhood. Given the exchange rate at the time, the SSRC fellowship afforded me a comfortable life. My daily activities included courses at the University of the West Indies during the day and frequent visits to the arcade where the ICIs I knew worked. I also went to the gym regularly. For entertainment, I attended art exhibition openings, a few dancehall sessions with friends, theater productions at the Creative Arts Center, concerts at local hotels, and university events. Initially, I used public transport, but after three months of unpleasant experiences (harassment) on the bus and at bus stops, and after a bus blew up a block from my street, I began to use taxis. The efficient way to use taxis is to become familiar with specific drivers and request them from the dispatchers. I chose drivers using various references. At the Papine market, I bought fresh produce several times a week from the same higgler and her daughter. For other items, I shopped at Sovereign Mall, a supermarket, which then epitomized middle-class consumption in Jamaica. The store itself is over eight thousand square feet and has an extensive wine shop (though the best wine is still available from embassy personnel and expatriates who are invisible

ICIs) and a deli with an ice cream bar. Two television screens showed the latest music videos all day. Shoppers could find most items available in the U.S. Both socially and economically, this life was quite different from the one I led in Ann Arbor, especially as a graduate student, since here I could afford more with the hegemonic U.S. dollar.

The life I led in Papine set me apart from people in the community where I lived, though it did not set me apart from most of the ICIs with whom I worked. These individuals aspired to a higher class, that is, to be bourgeois. In my daily activities, the discord between my imputed and subjective positions was foregrounded, making me more aware of my fragmented selves. My socioeconomic status was constantly challenged in various temporal and spatial contexts, whether I was on the streets, on the way to school, at the university, at the gym, at the Consortium, in the arcades, at Carlo's Cafe, at Sovereign Mall, in taxis, at the market, in the museum, or at the bank. Individual responses to me were so inconsistent that I rarely experienced a sense of continuity in my daily encounters. While these encounters left me frazzled and at times bitter, I remained committed to the project hoping that at some point I would expose and address these moments. The "Afrophobia" that I experienced and witnessed impacted me ambivalently, yet violently. In its popular use, the term "Afrophobia" refers to the hairstyle. I use it here in the same way as Dennis Greene (1997), as analogous to blackness and to refer to both a fear of black people and of being black.[22] Wherever the location in Jamaica, these occurrences varied and were no different from incidents of race-based discrimination practices that would occur in the U.S. They were, however, much more frequent and quite overt. On the one hand, I was demoralized.[23] On the other, I became more dedicated to pursuing the project to get answers, to understand the particularities of Jamaican society that incubated, bred, and continues to breed what I then viewed simply as persistent self-deprecation. During these initial trips, I clearly did not comprehend the dialectics of class and color dynamics.

After I left Jamaica, I had numerous conversations with individuals from the region about my experiences. Through these dialogues, I learned that although the symbolic violence of these encounters was, as I sensed, informed by color, they were exacerbated by inconsistencies in my performance of class. The discontinuities in my interactions were the result of my failing to adhere to existing boundaries and codes as observed by people of my obvious color and perceived class. I came to understand responses to these as evidence of disjunctures in my everyday self-making practices.

"Why You Do Dat to Your Head?"

In Kingston, with the SSRC grant, I was in a much higher economic class than I occupied as a graduate student in the U.S. However, by Jamaican standards, I seldom presented myself or behaved as a member of the black middle class. For dark-skinned females of the middle class, color is mediated through observance of the culture of femininity and dress discussed in chapter 1. One of the ultimate symbols of ladyhood is her well-groomed hair. At the time, my hair was permed or "colonized"—a term I used much to the shock of the females I encountered.

I decided to stop processing my hair after a self-loathing experience at a middle-class beauty salon in upper Barbican. For years, I had been ambivalent about processing my hair. At times, I would go months without a touch-up, a reapplication of the perm to keep my hair straight. That summer, I waited the longest I ever had. At the salon, the hairdresser berated me for this. "Why you wait so long for a touch-up?" she asked. "Look it how tough your hair is," she commented as she pulled and pulled my tresses to get rid of the kinks. By the time she was done, my hair, fashioned in a bob, was bone straight. I looked in the mirror and was not at ease with what I perceived as a disjuncture. Several months later, in early December 1994, I got my hair cut to a low Afro at another salon in Liguanea. None of the female hairdressers would agree to cut my hair, which at the time was about shoulder length. They were concerned about what my reaction would be once the hair had been cut. Finally, the barber on duty agreed to cut it. In the barber chair, I sat contently and became a spectacle as workers and patrons alike came to the front room to see that silly "Yankee gal" cutting off all that pretty hair. Each comment became more frustrating. "Do you know how long it will take to grow back?" an older client asked me. "I don't want to have this hair," I responded apologetically. My reply fell into an abyss. Soon after the cut, a female hairdresser stopped by and asked if I was going to "texturize" the new 'fro, that is soften it with more chemicals. Yet I had cut off the hair precisely to get rid of all of the chemicals.

At that time in Jamaica, this natural hairstyle had a greater symbolic significance, one that went beyond aesthetics. Because of both Rastafari and the black power movement of the 1970s, natural hair had value as an anti- and postcolonial symbol. Individuals, across classes, were amazed that I had cut off all that hair. Many perceived my new short hair as a sign of social resistance to gender norms because it defied the hegemonic standard of beauty, femininity, and even sexuality. For dark-skinned females,

the texture and especially the length of one's hair was a charged signifier. At the time, lower-class women who had low (cropped) hair were often labeled rebel women, as they did not adhere to the more "respected" gendered norms, instead adopting a more masculine persona. This breaking of gendered norms, which in some ways celebrates a black nationalist identity (through the acceptance of natural, i.e., unprocessed, hair), also exacerbates the local Afrophobia. It reïnforces the old colonial stereotype of the black woman, which is often juxtaposed against the brown middle-class ideal of lady (cultured or refined).

Individual males perceived this hair as an affront to their masculinity. In my discussions with other females with similar hairstyles, I learned that random men had a tendency to react violently to their cropped hairdo. Indeed, I was often asked "Why you do that to your head?" or "Why a pretty girl like you do a ting like dat?" The interrogators were always men, whether in taxis, in offices, or on the streets. Since long hair (regardless of form: natural, permed, locks, or weaves) is the decisive symbol of femininity, sometimes there were follow-up questions concerning my sexuality. "Do you have a man?" suggesting that I was a lesbian. This association is a crucial indicator of the politics of visibility given the rampant homophobia that keeps gays and lesbians more or less closeted from the gaze of the heteronormative state and civil society. This comment also suggests an unnaturalness, as an unfeminine female is danger, to use Mary Douglas's (1966) metaphor, among the pure. "Him like it? What him say?" they would ask, in turn, questioning the masculinity of any man who would be with me. The tone of the query is evident. Gender norms being what they are in the region, what type of man would desire an unfeminine or masculine female with short hair, without the main symbol of femininity? In any case, such questions point to hegemonic ideals used to discipline dissent.

Occasionally, I responded to these comments. Other times, I did not, keeping my interlocutors guessing. When I chose to engage, my riposte was a lingering distasteful cut-eye.[24] Until low hair became fashionable later in 1994, the females who wore this style were either lower- and working-class rebels or middle-class artists, conscious deviants, and "yardies," a term once used to refer to Jamaicans who have returned home from abroad. Since the 1980s, "yardies" has come to connote criminality (Skelton 1998). It was these moments that forced me to question to what extent unambiguously dark-skinned Jamaican working-class females were scrutinized and policed by others when they disregarded the social order. Because of the ICIs' recurring disruption of the order of things, I wondered if they experienced the constant policing I did and, if so, how it was manifested for them and how it affected their demeanor. As black females have done historically, did they also perform other identities to facilitate their everyday life? To make do with their demanding business? Did these performances extend to the arcade? When they traveled abroad? How, if at all, were their responses informed by their new access to capital and material accumulation?

My love for the sun and this cropped hair gave me yet another identity in Jamaica. Too often I was asked, especially by working-class individuals, if I were African, implying that "black" and "natural" are synonymous with Africa. Sometimes, I purposely replied "aren't we all?" which pleased the Rastas and discombobulated the more European-identified inquirers. That my natural appearance was equated with being African is quite ironic as people on that continent also suffer from the same "white bias" that plagues the Caribbean. Bleaching creams, hair straighteners, and hair extensions are just as popular in Africa, indicative of white bias and Afrophobia there too. As I discuss in the remaining chapters, white bias and Afrophobia are, and have been, historically linked to a fear of economic ostracism and, in most cases, social ostracism as well. For disrupting the old colonial order of things has its price. Such action could lead to a social death, or what Walter Rodney refers to as class suicide (1969).[25]

Field Methods: Cross-Dressing-Across-Class

In 1993, unbeknownst to me, in certain circles, I was on the verge of social self-termination. I had failed to perform class, that is, to wear the locally recognized symbols that would properly signal my socioeconomic position. Without this mediation, my class identity was fixed by my skin color and its concomitant stigma. Hence, I was placed on the lower rungs of the social ladder, particularly in those spaces that were more rigidly policed by social gatekeepers. Yet my North American-accented English, foreign mode of dress, and overall demeanor were inconsistent with the class position I assumed, working-class, and the one that was ascribed to me, upper middle-class. Living where I did in Papine, yet dressing as I did, I was a walking contradiction.

In January 1994, I had a conversation with Trouillot in which we discussed the dilemma of black anthropologists and the point at which they enter the field. He recounted his experiences in Dominica, where he conducted

his dissertation fieldwork. He spoke of the difficulties he faced in getting appointments with ministers for his research. He noted that he would arrive at the ministries dressed in accord with the weather and proceeded to wait in line to see these officials. While waiting, he wittingly observed twelve Frenchmen, ten Americans, and three British students, casually dressed, who would proceed up the stairs to the offices of the same ministers who were "unavailable" to him. Once he ceased cross-dressing-across-class and changed his clothing to a formal three-piece suit, those ministers were no longer occupied.

Similarly, I was in another country in the region where members of the black middle class habitually display their economic status, often ostentatiously, depending on the aesthetic, in order to be ascribed a particular position and to be treated with basic respect. Trouillot had cautioned me to enter the field from the top and not from the bottom. Then I would reaffirm my class position based upon my education and source of income. The fact is that I am a dark-skinned, single female who looked even younger than she was in a region that valued status and its myriad manifestations. Entering at the top would have facilitated my research and helped me mediate the multiple intersections that I embodied. Indeed, race, color, class, gender, marital status, and generational stratifications, which are indices of station in the region, also determine the larger context within which one's research occurs. This was confirmed when I returned to Jamaica in 1994. Patricia Anderson, a sociologist at the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI) questioned me about how I presented myself during that first trip.[26] In her final analysis, she exposed me to the consequences of the disjunctures in my self-making practices. Through her, I learned that as I dressed down or cross-dressed-across-class, my mediations of capital were invisible. She concluded that for locals, I simply blurred too many boundaries, which rendered me totally out of place. Both Trouillot's and my experience attest that the blurring of boundaries has its dangers for blacks.

Given the experiences recounted above, I prepared for the final phase of fieldwork in 1995 adamant about minimizing any visible inconsistencies. Knowing that skin color must be mediated with the "appropriate" class markers, I specifically requested funding (which I did not receive) for status symbols on several of my field research grant applications. I wanted to document the fact that as a dark-skinned female in Jamaica, my negotiation processes differed from those of others with more privilege. I entered the field racially stigmatized without the political or social

luxury ascribed to whiteness. Indeed, as discussed earlier, whiteness is property. The cultural capital (education and elite university affiliation) and symbols that I did possess were invisible markers, and hence had limited value. In addition, though I am a native of sorts, individuals often localized me. I was expected to "know better" and, as a result, to act accordingly. This perception of me was specific to context. It revealed the spatial organization that underlies social relations. In other words, it depended on whom I was with and where we were.

After weeks of sun worshipping, my skin became quite dark. I was often addressed as local, especially when accompanied by whites, who were automatically perceived as tourists or foreigners. This occurred constantly, especially during my study-abroad programs in 1992 and 1993. In uptown and downtown Kingston, Port Antonio, and on the north coast, waiters and others in tourist areas addressed me as the local tour guide of white North American colleagues. Once at Coronation Market in Kingston, street vendors approached me, asking me to entice my white Jamaican friends to purchase their wares from them. These examples not only highlight the pitfalls of my failure to visibly assert my socioeconomic status, but they also indicate how the visibility and invisibility of various forms of capital operate in conjunction with cross-class and -color fraternization. I return to this issue in the final chapter. Hence, my request for certain items was an early attempt to engage in what I call a reflexive political economy in praxis. My goal was to forecast the influence of the researcher's socioeconomic position on different aspects of the project and to point to anthropology's normative notions of the "researcher," "the field," and "methods" (Harrison 1991b, Gupta and Ferguson 1997) in order to unpack some of the intersecting gender, class, and racial codes embedded therein.

These biased concepts unquestionably perpetuate race and class privilege by ignoring and even exploiting existing baseline inequalities on the ground in the field. In the Caribbean and elsewhere in the black diaspora, white skin has been upheld across racial lines as the ultimate status symbol, allowing individuals a range of privileges including gender and class. Most will have access to resources and the advantage of flaunting ignorance of social expectations with little to no consequences. Without a doubt, these are different for a black female depending on her shade. In the region, particularly among the middle and lower classes, white anthropologists are ascribed immediate social status and power regardless of presentation. Generally, reflexivity is not a common practice among Caribbean ethnographers. While anthropologists of color tend to cross the boundary,

their white counterparts working in cultural settings where color/race matters rarely (with the exception of Goldstein 2003) reflect on how their whiteness operates in the field.[27] White anthropologists may be ridiculed for their foolishness (disregard of social order), but they are often forgiven for not adhering to these social norms. The socioeconomic status of white anthropologists and their abilities are doubted differently, if at all, as Edwidge Danticat noted "their skin itself is their three-piece suit."

In addition, as I indicated above, native anthropologists in these circumstances not only must adhere to social norms, but are often also expected by subjects to be more responsible and ethical. There may be a gender component to this. To diversify black anthropologists, let me note that individual positioning and choices ultimately determine the character of researchers' relationships with subjects and how these are ultimately presented textually.[28] For those who practice more engaged research, the negotiations differ. Racial and color proximity when working among one's "skinfolk," to use Zora Neale Hurston's term (1979), sometimes heightens the possible dangers of anonymity that could make data gathering in certain contexts improbable.[29] Initially, I had tremendous difficulty getting access to certain high-ranking government officials on my own. I am certain that the work I carried out with Metropolitan Parks and Markets (MPM) would have been virtually impossible had it not been for my upper-class networks. This inevitably highlights the class-based access that I had as an outsider compared to the more restricted resources of the marginal masses.

In 1995, prior to leaving to pursue my fieldwork, I purchased power.[30] These material and symbolic items included silver jewelry with lapis lazuli and Giorgio Armani designer glasses that were clearly "foreign" and costly. The clothing included numerous tailored pieces (especially for the interviews with upper-class government officials) and simple skirts and pants, as well as other items that symbolically affirmed a stable middle-class position. These objects, carefully chosen, comprised a particular classed aesthetic. I observed and respected certain gendered rules and brought back a rather stylish "ladies" wardrobe, several pairs of high-heeled shoes, perfume, make-up, etc. Similar to the colored and black females who sought symbols to assert their denied femininity during slavery, these items allowed me to perform class and mediate the ways that blackness has been stigmatized. I also brought a pair of Adidas loafers for those long days when living in Kingston became unbearable, as they did in 1993. Indeed, performing the lady entails high heels, which require a

presence and comportment that could become taxing over time. Instead of renting in Papine, I sought housing in a middle-class neighborhood. I lived in the New Kingston area, halfway between the university and downtown, in a studio that gave me physical comfort and a sense of safety. My choices were reflexive consumption practices meant to present a mediated self to counter the myriad manifestations of class and color stigma.

At the arcades downtown, I wore long floral skirts and linen shirts or blouses that covered my arms. I tied my head with a scarf. This got me the respect of the older men and the socially conscious younger men (who dubbed me their African Princess or Roots Lady).[31] Simultaneously, this mode of dress annoyed several of the ICIs, who thought I must be soft (spineless) because I hid my body under all those clothes; I did not accentuate it like many of them do. Both of these responses suggest a sexualized construction of the black female based upon the lady/woman binary discussed in chapter 1. Yet I was never referred to as a woman by either of these two groups. While ladies may accentuate their bodies, they do not cover their figures. Such practices are associated with religious observances. It is precisely this affinity that the ICIs were objecting to. When I wore anything that revealed even my calves, I dreaded going downtown, especially to my primary field site, where numerous young men worked and lingered around the arcade posing. They would grab me, demanding that I talk with them because "dem like me." I would have to assert myself by performing tuffness in a manner I resented. In chapter 5, I examine the embodiment of a corporeal shield as a necessary component of self-making among those who work or live downtown.

To complicate matters, the UVA was managed by two older Rastafari who were not pleased when I tried to dress in accordance with the tropical weather. They objected when I wore pants or anything that showed any skin and when I continued to get my hair cut very low. Their disdain for my cropped, rebel hairstyle stemmed from Rastafari doctrine, which honors one's locks as a crown of glory and prohibits the cutting of one's hair. They wanted me to become a Rasta, especially since they felt I showed a lot of potential: I often openly expressed my politics, and my research wardrobe consisted of long skirts and blouses, which reflected a Rastafari aesthetic.

Sometimes I conformed to these gendered self-making sensibilities. This conventionality highlighted the complexities of the multiplicity of gendered identities that are the result of class and color crossings. Sometimes, I tied my head with a scarf and went downtown, which meant I had

to decide to not go to certain places uptown such as the bank, the super market, the university, or the café, where this accessory was usually frowned upon because of its class code. Historically, the head-tie or tie-head (scarf) is an accessory, a marker of working-class status in the English-speaking Caribbean (Robertson 1995:113). More recently it has been associated with certain social or religious groups (popular with Rastafari and Pentecostals among others). Headscarves are visible uptown among more Afrocentric and black nationalist middle-class females, especially in various African cloths. Like any other ethnic-identified accessory, this headdress has different significations for black or brown, Chinese, Indian, or white females. The darker the skin, the more this accoutrement necessitates the "appropriate" jewelry and clothing to mediate an unquestionable middle-class and/or uptown identity.

When I did wear head-ties, several of the ICIs I knew expressed their disapproval: "You like dem Rastas too much." They were very concerned that I was getting too close to the dreads. For these black females of working-class or lower-class lineages who do not possess the social and cultural capital that I do, visible mediations of color and class codes are even more crucial. Their constant warning regarding my proximity to Rastafari also signified their own recognition of this association as a form of class suicide. My devaluation would inevitably impact them, as my questionable class position would lessen the status they derived from my research interest in them.

These issues made me increasingly conscious of the symbolic politics of the ethnographer's identities, especially with regard to the limits and problems of how, through appearance and embodiment, one navigates the racialized spatial orders of field sites. These issues are brought under analysis here to give greater consideration to what Emma Tarlo (1994) refers to as the problem of what to wear. I wish to complicate this question even further by emphasizing another aspect. Where does one go because of what one is wearing? The visibility of clothing renders dressing a significant component of class performance and negotiations. As a result, a dressing method is required. My tendency was to rebel by cross-dressing-across-class.

Like gender cross-dressing, which disrupts the social categories of male and female, cross-dressing-across-class confounds socioeconomic orders.[32] Whereas the former has long been considered an anomaly, Marjorie Garber (1992) has argued that transvestism is an uncanny intervention that represents a space of anxiety about fixed and changing identities and throws into question gender norms. She locates transvestism "at the juncture of 'class' and 'gender,' and increasingly through its agency gender and class were revealed to be commutable, if not equivalent. To transgress one set of boundaries was to call into question the inviolability of both, and of the set of social codes—already under attack—by which such categories were policed and maintained" (1992:32). In that sense she argues, the transvestite (also a trompe l'oeil) represents not just a category crisis, but a "crisis of category" itself. Indeed, cross-dressers offer a performance of the performance. By this I mean that they are performing a gender that they are seeing performed. Their aesthetics, which also fall in between categories help to illuminate some of the manifestations of my cross-dressing-across-class. More specifically, how did I collapse class? Where did I fit in this ordered world? As I show below, nothing highlights the social construction of both gender and class more than when this performance is exaggerated. As a result of my dressing methods, I also represented a crisis in category as I stood at the intersections of the crossroads of class, color, gender, sexuality, and nationality constantly in flux because of my ability to manipulate different types of capital. Indeed, I disrupted existing hierarchies. I caused class trouble as I confounded various codes and their concomitant historical ideals.

Sometimes I simply did not adhere to local class and gendered expectations. I wore what I would on a college campus in Ann Arbor to try to maintain some sense of equilibrium. By not always conforming, I did not lose myself as Kondo (1990) did and found some solace in the process of living against the culture. During these times, my senses were more acute. Reactions to me were evidence of my disruption of class and color codes. Nevertheless, I was not always aware of the basis of my cultural faux pas. Did wearing Doc Martens with faded jeans and a kente wrap cause a stir at the National Dance Theatre Company performance lobby because they were pitchy-patchy,[33] to use local vernacular? Indeed, these items were respectively symbolic of dancehall, punk, and Afrocentricity. I was forced to figure out what caused the reaction (the frowns, glares, stares, and even whispers). Was it the untidy aesthetic? Was it the mixed capital signs? Was it how these intersected with my color and/or perceived class? Regardless, my "inappropriate" performance created a disorder. To appropriate Butler, it was causing class as opposed to gender trouble. My "playful disruption" of the categories reinforced their severity (Butler 1990). While my performance went against the norm, it did force me to see and experience Jamaica from a range of classed perspectives. However, all of

these occurrences differed depending on context. While the disruptions varied, responses to them were consistent. Without a doubt, they were systematically specific.

These reactions reveal that the "native" position ascribed to me in Ann Arbor certainly did not translate smoothly to Kingston. As a result of my appearance, my ability to immerse myself in the field or "go native," as they say, was inhibited or compromised by the fact that I am simultaneously a regional native and local outsider as well as an ethnographer. This forced me out of place, which inevitably had methodological implications. The numerous sites where fieldwork was conducted required that I shift among multiple positions at various times in different spaces that emphasized the incongruities in the intersections of gender, race, color, class, sexuality, nationality, and generation. In other words, I was actively code switching. My corporeal performances were determined by my context. They depended on who my interlocutors were, where I was, and what I wanted to find out.

Alter(ed)*native* Ethnographer

Given the persistence of these discontinuities in my interactions, eventually I began to use them as a research tool. Through a process of trial and error, I sought to research informal commercial importers and the broader environment that created them. Knowing the difficulty that both local and foreign researchers have in collecting data from ICIs, I considered several methodological approaches. In terms of participant-observation, I briefly considered becoming an informal importer for a year to gain firsthand experience of the trade. This option and others were challenging on multiple levels. Foremost, in becoming an ICI, I would be perpetuating the belief that ethnographic authority can be gained only by becoming an insider—that is, that insider privilege is an actual condition of nativeness and that knowledge gained in this fashion is superior to others.[34] Furthermore, given the overt and subtle nuances of Jamaican self-making practices, there are raced, classed, and gendered obstacles that limited the possibility of my partaking in all parts of this process.[35] Going native in my case, as a black female, where the majority of the population is also black, becomes a rather complex endeavor. There is no native, but a plurality of locals in different colors, classes, genders, and gendered identities. The question remained, if I were to follow my training, which of these would I be? Which type of native could I become,

given that there are different classes and multiple shades or color gradations of natives?

Despite my color, my middle-class position set me apart from the working-class individuals in the arcades. As I stress above, and will discuss in greater detail in subsequent chapters, my complex positioning at times limited the extent of my participation. As my interest was in documenting and analyzing the experiences of ICIs of a particular social location and economic position, I could not fully participate as one of them.[36] Had I become an ICI, the knowledge gained would, in fact, be inconsistent with what I sought to learn. My actual experience would be based upon responses to the incongruity between who I am and who others perceive me to be. I could have abided by my social position, but that would have hindered different aspects of the data-gathering process unless I attempted to pass by performing yet another class identity. I could have chosen to alter my speech, mannerisms, and presentation and sold goods on the street or in an arcade like a working-class ICI. Taking on another identity would soon make me even more suspect and would highlight yet another ethical problem, my real motive for conducting the research.[37]

Undoubtedly, the traders would likely perceive this approach as a mockery of their reality, since the majority of them did not have my options. Most ICIs enter this occupation to survive and gain respect. I would be viewed as yet another researcher who sought their knowledge entirely for personal gain. Given the copious research projects undertaken in the Greater Kingston Metropolitan area, the general consensus regarding researchers is that they do not reciprocate. This is reconfirmed every time I return to Kingston and mention my respondents by name. Individuals are surprised that I maintain contact with traders. Local scholars are even more distrusted by traders, as they often consult for the state.[38] Another popular opinion among locals is that the data collected is for the U.S. government. To address this concern, I explained that dissertations are public documents that I could not control, though I would choose what would be included in this work. I had been encouraged by my mentors to find ways to give something back to the traders and the UVA. Throughout fieldwork and beyond, I became active in the UVA. I attended meetings and, on occasion, even spoke on their behalf. Hence as a participant-observer, I used a methodological approach, which at times entailed conscious interactions and interventions.

My decisions were informed by my purpose in undertaking this project. I sought to diagnose the basis of social inequality in Jamaica and to interpret the various causes of its persistence in order to understand how these

can be redressed. From that perspective, while I remained troubled by the category "native," I was dedicated to the activist component of the native anthropology project first outlined by Delmos Jones (1970). More specifically, Jones wrote, "I am an intrinsic part of the social situation that I am attempting to study. As part of that situation, I must also be part of an attempt to forge a solution" (1970:255). As I stated earlier, my decision to enter the discipline was politically motivated and is tied to my commitment to Haiti. I shared Jones's ideals and believed that solutions could be found by going beyond Geertz's native's point of view (1976). I wanted to engage all of the natives (informal commercial importers, government officials, and local and regional scholars who have been formulating theories of their condition, as well as popular commentators and other organic intellectuals) to the extent that this was possible.[39] Given that native voices are often limited in anthropological texts, engaging locally produced scholarship and organic intellectuals entailed embarking on a more politically engaged anthropology that must extend the parameters of ethnography to include the very context of its production, which facilitated disavowal of such knowledge.

Building on the Du Boisian legacy of work and praxis in anthropology, Faye Harrison suggests that ethnographers turn their heightened and intensified different sensibilities, visions and understandings into a useful research instrument (1991b). From this place of multiple consciousnesses, she argues, the researcher can play a strategic role in the struggle to decolonize anthropology and the imperialist project from which the discipline arose. While I worked in Jamaica, my logic and intuition were "rooted in some combination and inter-penetration of national, racial, sexual, and class oppressions," as Harrison describes it (1991b:90). This awareness did not disappear when I returned to Michigan. I was living, working, and conducting my work in Anzaldua's borderlands (1987); the margins that I occupied were constantly shifting. This space, bell hooks suggests, can be used strategically to develop a critical black voice and to build feminist solidarity for political work (1990).

When I cross-dressed-across-class or performed class against culture, my senses and sensibilities about self-making and social relations in Jamaica were quite heightened. This in turn fostered greater understanding of the environment in which I conducted my research, as well as the socioeconomic and political economy of the ethnographic project itself. In addition, my performance highlighted how the research process is an embodied endeavor, one in which lived and felt experience, through all the

senses, is integral to both the data collection process and the knowledge produced (Stoller 1989, Weismantel 2001). For U.S.-based black feminist anthropologists, acknowledgment of this relationship between knowledge and experience has been somewhat limiting. By this I mean that those who focus on such concerns are often constrained to reproduce hegemonic (or tenurable) ethnographies if they are interested in professional advancement within the discipline. Thus, work on epistemological questions is often addressed in separate articles that reflect upon fieldwork experiences.[40] Regardless of this choice, as Bolles has aptly argued, in the citation game that propels careers, black feminist anthropologists remain the least cited, especially by white feminists who tend to regard their work mostly as experiential (2001). In "New Voices of Diversity, Academic Relations of Production, and the Free Market," Harrison takes this point even further. She contends that theoretical contributions of black feminists are continuously erased through consistent devaluation of writing that does not reinforce disciplinary hegemony. These exchanges, she asserts, are symptomatic of the division of labor within academic relations of production (1999). Black feminist anthropologists occupy a position as "outsiders-within" the discipline (Hill-Collins [1991] 2000). Unsurprisingly, as a result, historically, many have turned to other disciplines and/or to the arts to extend the full range of their expression (Harrison and Harrison 1999). In general, such works have been neglected and brought under the rubric of humanism, or adopted altogether by other disciplines.[41] In part, because of what Catherine Lutz calls the gender of theory (1995), reflections on the intersections of embodied knowledge are still relegated to the margins, outside of dominant discourses. When the object of reflection is race and class within the academy, and the larger politics that shape intellectual production, such discussions are treated as trivial, and not ethnographic. The panoptic lens extends only so far when the self is the object of the gaze.

As Bruce Knauft stresses, disregard for the cultural politics within anthropology is duplicitous. It neglects the fact that the academy in general, and anthropology in particular, also has its own culture. The representation of cultural contestation is not simply a concern for the field among the people we study. Hegemonies (of voice and perspectives) are maintained by disciplinary practices as well (1996:250-252). I use a reflexive voice to consider the interconnections between aspects of fieldwork often hidden in conventional ethnographies as well as the broader political environment in which ethnographies are made.

Indeed, as Ruth Behar asserts, reflexivity is susceptible to the charge that it is simply self-serving and superficial. This, she argues, "stems from an unwillingness to even consider the possibility that a personal voice can lead the reader to the enormous sea of serious social issues" (1996:22). This, I argue, extends to reflections on the discipline as well. For black feminist anthropologists, the implications of this dismissal are even shoddier.[42] According to Narayan (1995), native anthropologists do face a particular dilemma (as both products and subjects of the discipline), which they must maneuver and that also constrains them. Kath Weston (1997a) puts it quite simply:

> social relations inside and outside of the profession pull her [the native ethnographer] toward the poles of her assigned identity, denying her the option of representing herself as a complex, integrated, compound figure. Instead of writing as "I, Native Ethnographer"—or some equally compound subject position—she ends up positioned as either "I, Native," or "I, Ethnographer." The nuance of the two as they are bound up together is lost. (1997a:171)

To retrieve this complex voice, I use auto-ethnography to reflect on my interactions and relations with subjects and the dynamic power that binds us. As Irma McClaurin notes, "auto-ethnography is simultaneously autobiographical and communal, as the self encounters the collective" (2001b:69). The above reflexive moments make explicit the connections between the immersed subject (I, native) and the purported detached observer (I, ethnographer). It also begins to forge the intimacy Anzaldua (1987) suggested. With the particularities of how my Haitian nationality played out in Jamaica, I have revealed some of the complexities inherent in the category of the native.

As I stated in the introduction, my goal is to pluralize the native. I have done so by interweaving a tale out of various auto-ethnographic reflections. First, by pointing to the reasons for the ICIs' expectations of me (as a group that has been overstudied), and mine of them, I have revealed that we shared time, space, and place. Second, as a regional native and local outsider, I occupied a state of displacement on the border, as Haitian national and U.S. resident, that informed my interactions with diverse groups of locals.[43] Third, I was initially oblivious of the gendered components of the articulation of class and color codes. My disregard was most evident in my early dressing methods, which revealed my class performances to be incongruous in ways that symbolized class trouble or what I

call socioeconomic disorder. Later, I will show how my use of codes notably diverges from that of most ICIs due to our different social positions.

Through these observations, I seek to de-essentialize black female subjectivity to show divisions based on class, color, age, and nationality. Whether I was with higglers, ICIs, government officials, scholars, and others on the street, at the arcade, on buses, in taxis, at the university, or at the supermarket, I constantly crossed shifting class and color lines. My crossing required performances that informed aspects of the various methodological approaches used in this project. At times, the boundaries between native and ethnographer were obscure. The lines were blurred as the categories I embody necessitated conciliations of class and color codes that have both historical and contemporary referents. Thus, these mediations compelled my temporal crossings at various times in ways quite different from the ICIs whom I studied.