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United States Cultural Influences on the English-Speaking Caribbean during the Twentieth Century

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Resumen:

Starting from a definition of culture that emphasizes its material elements—as opposed to the semiotic approach used by Clifford Geertz and other social scientists—this paper examines United States cultural influences in the Commonwealth Caribbean. This influence has been parallel to U.S economic expansion in the Caribbean and forms thus an integral part of “Manifest Destiny.” In practice, this expansion has come together with the modernization forces that have swept the Caribbean nations in this century, making it often difficult to distinguish between “modernization” and “Americanization.” The British tradition and its Weltanschauung and social mores, and the different levels of economic development existing in countries like Jamaica or Barbados vis-à-vis the United States have tended to set limits to U.S. cultural influence—but powerful elements like Caribbean migration to the United States, U.S. tourism in the region, the communications revolution and the impact of U.S. economic assistance have all made their mark on Caribbean culture. The Anglophone Caribbean is steadily being Americanized; however, it is far from being American; “West Indians remain West Indians and not duplicates of John Wayne.”

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