

Constructing Paradise in the Western Imagination: Reflections on Colonial Legacies and Developing Nations' Tourist Industries

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Abstract

Enhanced with a few of my original paintings, this essay explores various notions of a tropical paradise in the Western imagination. Secondly, it traces some of the implications for the respective people and country. The work draws on my personal experiences, research and study in several Western arts institutions as well as in former, European colonies in the tropics. At the discussion's centre, are experiences and pursuits of Paul Gauguin, a noted seeker of paradise? The essay further explores how colonial perceptions and perspectives have influenced and continue to impact the socio-economic and cultural production of 'tourism products' in small island developing states (SIDS), such as Jamaica and some other countries in the Caribbean.

Keywords: Gauguin, colonialism, paradise, economic development, tourism, small island developing states

Introduction

This essay focuses on key notions and images in the West's imagination of paradise in Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean region. For comparative purposes, conceptions of paradise in a few other countries, are also highlighted. A few years ago, while visiting the USA to do an arts residency, I met another visitor from Sweden. Hearing that I was from Jamaica, she responded, 'I hope you know that you are living in one of the most exotic places in the world'. I replied that it was news to me because from my perspective, Sweden was an exotic country. On another occasion, visiting overseas, I met an American citizen, who hearing that I was from Jamaica, sung "JAHMAIIIIKKAH!" with a smile. These two vignettes, concerning questions about my country of origin, are not unusual. For Jamaican travelers, it is almost an expected occurrence. Considering that it is a very small island, Jamaica is well-known, internationally. The Swedish acquaintance provided one of the reasons. That the island nation seen to be exotic is not an accident. It results from the tireless work of the Jamaican Tourist Board's promotional campaigns and prior to that there were the images disseminated by the British, colonial governments. Accordingly, the positive images of Jamaica and Jamaicans are linked in the international arena and imagination to: the music, food, athletic prowess, the fervour of Christian faith and to off-shoot indigenous religions, to the creativity, national pride and the people's resilience. On the negative side of the coin, however, the country has received extensive media attention for its homophobic and aggressive male culture, high murder rates and high passions, drugs, over-sexualization and aggressive behaviours. Such are the country's portrayals in global pop culture, by the media and the popular, online platforms.

Gauguin, Paradise and Tourism (past and present)

When framing a comprehensive analysis of constructs of paradise, colonial legacies and tourism within the context of my visual arts practice and research, I decided to concentrate on the famous French artist, Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). Gauguin is often associated with the French Impressionist Movement, because of his participation in the group's later exhibitions. Throughout his life however, Gauguin moved between emerging ideologies and techniques associated with Symbolism and Post-Impressionism. Gauguin is often thought to have been one of the heralds of a Modernist approach to Art. His influence on other artists such as Vincent Van Gogh was major. They worked together when Van Gogh produced some of his most well-known art, and also, when Van Gogh experienced his most violent mental spells. Paul Gauguin's oeuvre is dominated by his work produced during the period spent in Tahiti, in the late 1800s to early 1900s. The work produced in French Polynesia depicts his pursuit and enchantment with the exotic and the primitive. In contemporary discussions of the artist and his work, however, there is the perspective that Gauguin's figures and landscapes in his paintings are not real depictions of the islands but what he hoped and dreamed to find. His paintings of exotic brown-skinned women and mystical landscapes, religious symbols and tropical scenes are beautiful with their bold, warm tones and free-flowing brushstrokes. Recent research by Susie Hodge (2015)¹ and Fabrizio Dori (2016)², for instance, devote entire portions of their discussions to describing the artist's myth-chasing activities: "If Paul Gauguin resembles a fictional hero, it's because he never passed up a chance to embroider his own myth," suggests Delavaux in Dori (2016, pp. 139).

In this essay, I have inserted several of my original works at strategic locations. My paintings were inspired by Paul Gauguin's, from his Tahitian sojourn. The illustrations entitled: "After Gauguin", form part of an important series produced between 2000-2016. The paintings represent, to some extent, my ways of speaking back from the periphery in the Caribbean to the centre in Europe, in order to disrupt dominant stereotypes of Caribbean people.

Furthermore, in my own work, I have been involved in exploring the fascination with paradise demonstrated by Paul Gauguin, a late 19th century, colonizer and steward of Western visual culture. For the Series, "After Gauguin," my studio practice started with examining the nature and links between exoticism and the colonial, Western & European fascination with places like Tahiti and Jamaica. In observing the historical and contemporary relationships between France and Tahiti, or Britain and Jamaica, there are significant differences in perceptions of the other, for example, with regards to culture, political structures, race, ethnicities, geography, physical environment and climate. In Jamaica, there is a well-established perspective that: Britain, the colonial, for some, the 'motherland' is cold in climate; the people are reserved in culture and systematic in processes of thinking and acting; the country is rich in economic opportunities and more socially and culturally accomplished. This sentiment is accompanied by generalized Western notions that colonies and ex-colonies are warmer in climate, richer in indigenous or traditional cultures while being poorer in terms of established structures and systems, and lacking in the opportunities which mark the triumphs and achievements associated with Western civilization.

¹ Hodge, S. (2015). *Gauguin: His Life & Works in 500 Images: An Illustrated Exploration of The Artist, His Life and Context*. Leicester: Lorenz Books.

² Dori, F. (2016). *Gauguin: The Other World*. London: Self-Made Hero.



As Jamaica moves further along the path towards achieving economic development, and at the same time, Britain weathers serious economic, social and political crises, the generalization above, is changing. The polarized framing of the other is an aspect of colonial relationships which influence the ways that pop culture, visual culture and grand narratives become embedded in people's imaginations on both sides of the Atlantic. Such polarization also, influences the types of formal/informal communications and engagements we have with each other. The West, traditionally the more powerful player in this historically, asymmetrical relationship, seeks to define and control its relationships with the colony/ex-colony and to specify its benefits from the connections. On the other hand, the colony/ex-colony tends to identify and strives to meet what the West desires, and at the same time, attempts to benefit from relationships which remain asymmetrical.

Gauguin spent much time inhabiting one French colony or another, in search of a more primitive life. Initially, this search brought Gauguin to the Caribbean, to the French colony of Martinique where he spent some time seeking the true primitive spirit. To Gauguin, the Caribbean, like many island clusters must have appeared to be an enclave of exotic cultures; places where the uniquely, inherent and intrinsic, Indigenous energies may be discovered and possessed by him. We know that the appeal of the Caribbean for colonial Europeans and later on North Americans, was the economic gains from the region's rich range of natural and human resources and its strategic location (Taylor, 1993, p. 6).³ On the other hand, there is also a more fanciful, a romanticized promise which the Caribbean seems to hold for the Westerner - the promise of an experience in paradise. A place in which individual desires can be met and a sense of dominance can be re-affirmed. Gauguin is part of a tradition of Western wanderers, tourists, settlers and entrepreneurs travelling to the Caribbean and other tropical colonized regions to claim, discover appropriate and exploit the specific tangible and intangible cultural environments for modern 'high cultural pursuits'. The archaeological digs, in Egypt, in the early 1900s and the modern day religious pilgrimages to Bali, are examples of the range and scope of historical and contemporary types of colonizing, cultural activities.

In the personal vignettes described in the introduction, it was the mention of Jamaica which seemed to conjure up pleasant, nostalgic and romantic notions of the country. Though neither of the two acquaintances had visited the country, they drew on previous knowledge, memories or recollections of interesting images, sounds and impressions of a place like Jamaica. Their images of paradise may have been the same for any other SIDS dependent on tourism. Each acquaintance drew on information which allowed them to imagine and associate a certain cluster of romantic and sentimental concepts with the country. It was as though the moment that my brown hand reached out in greeting and I uttered the word 'Jamaica', that immediately, in the other person's imagination that the warm, soft, tropical sea breezes began to blow; the gentle, waves began lapping on the sand; the palm trees began to sway; the native hips began to echo the moving lush, tropical trees; and the drums began to beat. This is of course my projected estimation of what thought processes occurred for each acquaintance in each of the interactions mentioned.

³ Taylor, F. F. (1993). *To Hell with Paradise: A History of the Jamaican Tourist Industry*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.



Jamaicans and citizens of the Caribbean are very familiar with the patterns of expectations and images that are conjured up and associated with specific islands. There is a typical response once the island's name is stated, and one identifies and declares oneself, to be a proud native. This may apply also, to contemporary citizens of Tahiti and French Polynesia. Tourism campaigns have, for the most part, proven highly effective in spreading messages of paradise. However, in Jamaica and the Bahamas, for example, local inhabitants usually experience very different realities from the tourists' experiences. Both islands have built their tourism industries on the popular model, of the all-inclusive hotel resort. In Jamaica, even though only 54 properties of 1,847 hotels identified on a commercial tourist website are listed as all-inclusive properties, their dominance defines the industry.⁴ In the Bahamas, only 7 of the 1,234 hotels in the islands are listed as such on the same website, but the popularity of the Atlantis Paradise Island hotel with its all-inclusive rates and experiences are a core part of the country's media promotions. Accordingly, through television, travel agencies, online and magazine advertisements, and increasingly through tourist websites, prospective guests are often sold notions of paradise in tropical islands which offer a variety of entertainment, leisure activities and exclusive, personal services.

Working in Paradise

The local employees are mainly responsible for maintenance of the ideal tourist environment. This invites the question, how do the native employees move between their often, problem-riddled, living spaces into the idealistic constructions of the paradise environments offered at hotels? To move effectively between the two places, the employees must perform some levels and types of code-switching. Currently, with contemporary films like 'Get Out'⁵ and 'The Hate U Give'⁶ generating discourse and scholarship, code-switching practices have gained considerable public attention. The concept is borrowed from African-American linguistic practices in the USA and has been applied to the working classes and anyone who is mostly of African descent in the Caribbean resort areas.

Code-switching involves the abilities to shift behaviours and language rapidly between the dominated and the dominant cultures. It is a matter of performing, in order to make one's self more acceptable, to members of another group. It can also act as a form of self-preservation by preventing members of the privileged, dominant cultures from having access to the inner, more authentic self of a member of the dominated culture. By code-switching, marginalized people subvert any sense of dominance, ownership, deference and privilege that tend to accompany more vulnerable, unbalanced socio-economic relationships. Code-switching relies on how a member of the less empowered group, due to necessity, changes language and physical expressions, in order to present the desired, more acceptable persona in particular socio-economic and cultural contexts such as at resort hotels.

Workers in the tourism industry are constrained by the demands of creating a welcoming atmosphere for visitors. The burden must be felt even more when deferential, compliant behaviours and attitudes are required in order to maintain the hotels' artificially constructed, environments which are significantly, different to the employees' lived realities. In such circumstances, code-

⁴ [Expedia.com](https://www.expedia.com) search results (March 14, 2019).

⁵ Jordan Peele, 2017.

⁶ George Stillman Jr., 2018.

switching becomes a way to survive. It ensures that the prescribed appearance and conduct meet the tourist industry's restrictive behavioural and dress codes. For effective delivery of the tourism products, the stark realities of communities experiencing severe economic hardships cannot be presented to the guests in hotels promising paradise experiences. A local, hotel worker earning low wages must always switch back and forth between their lived realities and the constructed environment of the hotel world. In summary, code-switching in the Jamaican tourism industry often means to choose to comply with the management's and tourist's expectations, by changing individual and collective behaviours. However, an employee may code-switch, or chose to resist by refusing to meet the expectations of being the warm, friendly, smiling island native. Bullen, as early as 1905, sums up the passive resistance of hotel staff in the following manner:

“Viewed from a perspective of years later, the ignorance and impudence complained of time and time again by guests would seem to have been but manifestations of passive resistance by black hotel staffers...The deportment of these black servants was in a way unmistakably denoting that they were revenging themselves for the indignity of having to accept service.” (Bullen as cited in Fonda Taylor, 1993, pp. 90)

Jamaicans are notoriously code-switchers. For example, it is not uncommon for a local person checking into an all-inclusive hotel as a guest, to hear the reception desk employees, switch effortlessly, from a distinctly Jamaican accent, to standard Jamaican English, and back again. The employee's language and accents adopted depend on their perceptions of the guest's speech.

My nationality is not the only marker used to associate me with the Western imaginary of paradise. Ethnicity and race are also important factors. Accordingly, the question: ‘Where are you from?’ could be shaped as: ‘Where are you in relation to us? What is your relationship to Europe or the West?’ A Caribbean national's accent, of course, immediately signifies that they are not from Western Europe or North America. However, if one chooses to switch codes, as one might have learned to do for survival under colonial systems, the words and accent adopted will not be the dialect expected or associated with tropical natives. If a Jamaican does not comply with stereotypical expectations, she/he is often told that they don't sound Jamaican. The implication is that the individual does not fit (in terms of, speech or appearance) with the Western media images of Jamaicans. The use of standard English might also act as a form of intentional resistance. When a Jamaican national is speaking standard English overseas, she/he deliberately shifts discussions and interactions away from the narrative of being: ‘the local’, ‘the native’, ‘the exotic other’. The abilities to switch between the local language codes to that of ‘the colonial mother tongue’ will afford small but important forms of agency and power. Caribbean natives and people in every country colonized by Western Europe, surely practice this sleight of hand. It is a way of keeping back some of who and what we are for ourselves.



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What is Paradise?

When a location is described as paradise in tourism campaigns, it often targets the potential tourist's desire to escape and to indulge his/her senses. The Islands of the Bahamas use the slogan 'Fly away' in their advertisement campaigns as a way of luring the Western tourist to its shores. The invitation is to leave cares, worries and stresses of the modern world behind. 'Paradise' means a place where the visitor can rest, recuperate and find pleasure. The word also portrays a place which offers itself up for consumption. A place designed to fulfil all the visitor's needs and wishes. With promises of a tourist's utopia, paradise is linked to the strong possibility of experiencing sensory delights. For Gauguin, it meant discovering the authentic, natural and raw self, unfettered by the cares of the technologically, advanced European world.

Caribbean countries brand and market themselves either as island or tropical paradises which neither promise nor seek to expose the tourists to the country's culture or heritage. The difference in the type of product offered is explicit when one compares how Western European countries market themselves. In marked contrast, a tropical paradise promises the tourist, rustic, or pristine hidden treasures associated with the land and environment rather than descriptions of the people and culture. In offering unspoiled and authentic experiences, such places offer local services for the tourists' consumption. For example, the workers are trained to assist tourists in the pursuit of pleasure, enjoyment and relaxation. The notion of paradise and visiting it require a certain detachment (on the part of the tourist) from seeing the realities of the employees' lived experiences. To threaten, to reveal any other kinds of realities and significant issues of the employees and country inhabitants and to further provide information to the tourist, which makes the place appear to be a multi-dimensional entity, would unfortunately, reveal some of the same complexities and problems associated with the tourist's home. Accordingly, one cannot play at escaping life in the West if one recognizes that the problems of home, also plague paradise in the SIDS but with even greater intensity.

There is a tacit contract between the tourist and the tourist industry which agrees not to burden the tourist with unpleasant sights, sounds and landscapes. When and if, this contract is broken by the tourism worker, it may be met with disdain or shock, on the part of the tourist, at the worker's impudence and passive resistance (mentioned earlier). Sites of/in paradise by necessity, are required to be rare, special and away from the normal systems, structures and perceived higher level stresses of the Western world. Places in paradise are mysterious and far away. One goes to paradise to be rewarded, after a period of conforming to the rules, restrictions, and regulations of everyday life at home. One could argue that without paradise, tourists might not be able to bear the burdens associated with its own man-made systems and structural socio-economic and political problems.

...but where is Paradise?

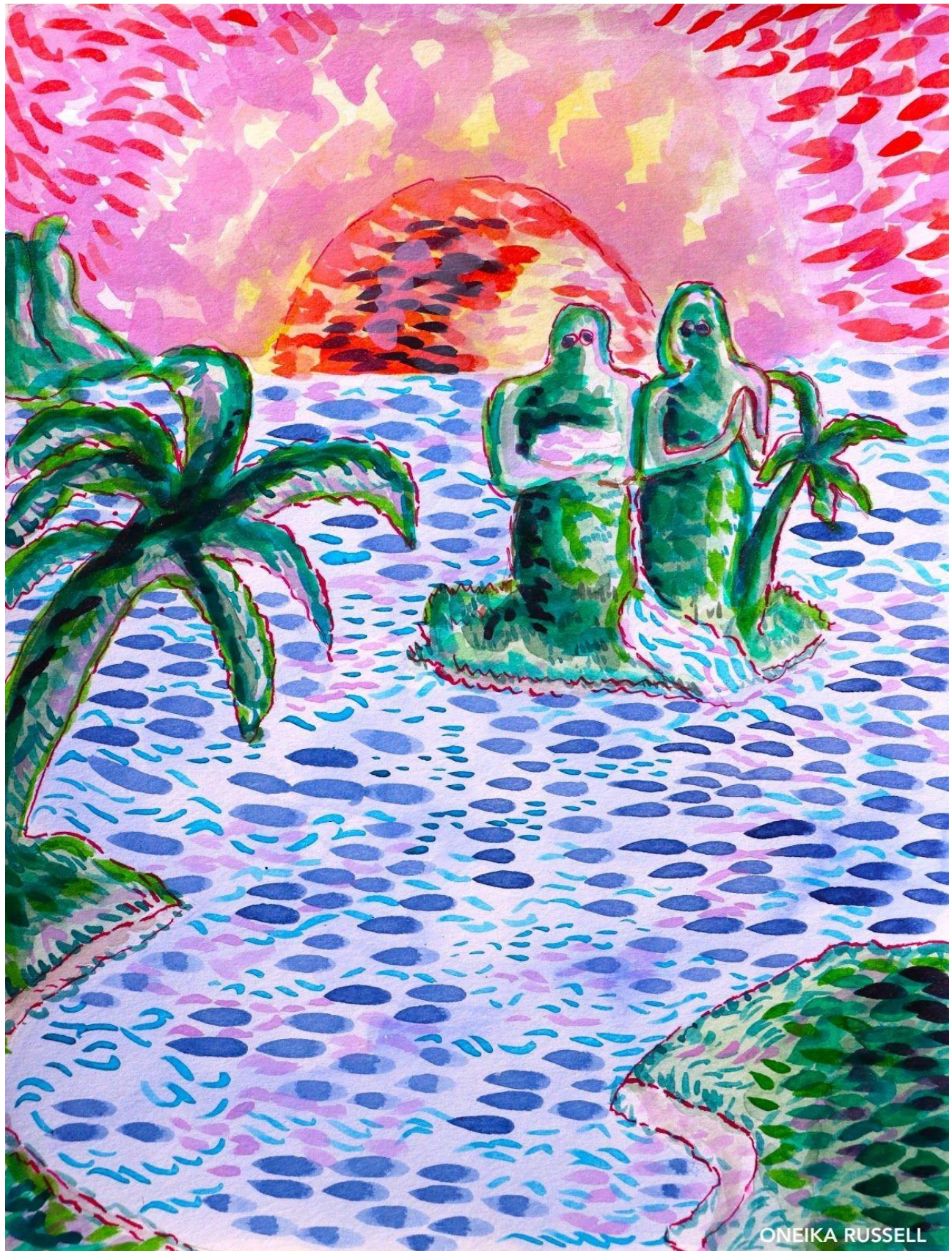
Gauguin, famously, ran away from his banking job and middle class family in France, to pursue his dream of finding paradise; firstly, in Martinique, a Francophone colony in the Caribbean. Eventually, he ended his search across the world, in Tahiti, another Francophone colony. Evidently, Gauguin had seen various travel posters of the French colonies of Martinique and Tahiti and was convinced that the unspoiled way of life would soothe his wild artist's soul. When he arrived in Tahiti he was disappointed. It was too colonized and settled. It was not quite the primitive land of his dreams. France's promotional literature, at that time, presented images of its colonies that were

so appealing and persuasive to the French artist that it enticed Gauguin to search for paradise. He availed himself of some of Tahiti's promises by having two adolescent Tahitian mistresses. He also created a series of famous paintings which illustrated his idealism about the island paradise and its native people.

Current media portrayals of paradise: The popular, cable television channel, Home & Garden TV's (HGTV) program: 'Beachfront Bargain Hunt' features families searching for paradise. The premise of the show is to assist buyers from the USA to purchase their dream home in one of the many paradise locations in the tropics. The challenge is to remain within the buyer's budget while finding paradise. In the TV program, sometimes the buyers purchase houses in Mexico, Columbia, Costa Rica, the Bahamas, or Belize. Though the countries and cultures change, the TV program presents the properties in the standardized way that realtors would. The premise of the show is that the buyers purchase a property, and begin a new dream-life in an ideal location near the beach. There is often little concern or engagement with the people, the natives/locals who live in the specific culture, and country. In other words, the TV program presents a homogenous, detached approach to purchasing a dream home in paradise. The focus is often on showing that ordinary families and couples are able to purchase their own slice of paradise, namely, the beachfront or the beachfront-adjacent home or property. This is only one, of similar TV programs, currently aired. Others include: A Wealth of Entertainment (AWE) channel's, 'Private Island' and HGTV's sister show 'Island Hunter'.

Paradise in the Caribbean? Typically, each country promises the same kind of paradise experience to its overseas clientele. The differences in marketing strategies are minor. For some, it is a specific mountain range, or a particular lagoon that allows the tourists to differentiate the islands. Each Caribbean country is packaged and offered as an island that has just enough difference but not too much to become a threatening place. Whenever crime rates are discussed, it is often within the dominant rhetoric of how spiraling crime rates will affect the tourism industry.

More recently, in order to enhance the package offered, culture has been included as an important asset in the tourism advertising and marketing campaigns. It may not be a coincidence that music and regional cultural events, such as Carnival, Dancehall and Reggae festivals, have become major generators of tourism dollars. Any discussion regarding the location of paradise leads us back to the ever popular, all-inclusive, Caribbean hotel resorts. Such hotels allow visitors to avoid the difficulties of finding suitable restaurants, identifying desirable, social and recreational activities, and coping with specificities which can often complicate the tourist's abilities to buy into and accept the aura, safety and allure of visiting paradise.



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The recent development of modern tourist economies in Jamaica, and several other Caribbean countries, may be attributed to the connections and proximity to the USA rather than to the historical colonial relationships with Britain. The economic and political relationships with the USA, for example, strengthened after British colonial rule weakened when Jamaica gained its political independence in the early 1960s. Despite being less tangible than the earlier period of British colonial rule, USA's power in the Caribbean has been pervasive. The relationship developed as the USA saw the opportunities for tapping into the resources of the islands. As importantly, it was a way to maintain political and economic hegemony in the Americas. In order to create the Caribbean islands as safe sites for US tourists to enjoy and consume, in the collective US imagination, vivid media images about the people and places have been developed and sustained. Even today, the local people are rarely shown in tourist advertisements as three dimensional humans going about their daily lives. Contrary images, to stereotypical expectations and tropes, would negate pictures of spaces/places which are no longer untouched, ownable, and merely awaiting the visitor to enact and fulfil dreams and fantasies of paradise. Thompson, for example, states:

‘What is particularly fascinating in North’s general recollections of her experience of the physical space of the island is that she constantly used the trope of “a dream” or an “imaginary land” to convey her encounter with Jamaica.’ (Thompson, 2006, p. 44)⁷

For the most part, tourism employees tend to appear in tourism promotions as willing attendants and friendly strangers who assist the visitor to enjoy the islands. In island paradises, the culture and people are also often kept on the periphery of tourism imagery and advertisements. If portrayed, the culture is primal, ancient, traditional or uncomplicated. Unsurprisingly, promotions and marketing remain the photographs of isolated land and seascapes, awaiting the first footsteps of the seduced visitor. Should locals appear in tourism imagery, they are depicted as holding the secrets to access special pockets of paradisiacal enjoyment. The locals are presented in such roles as servants. They help the visitor to unlock the means of fulfilling his/her hidden desires. Tourism involves actively selling the site of paradise by excluding the island’s inhabitants completely, or presenting them as compliant with the tourists’ desires and expectations.

The Jamaica Tourism Board’s campaign of the late 2000’s promised that visitors are pampered and parents are released from childcare. In the ad, a native girl rocks in the swings with tourist children who are vacationing in the island. The slogan ‘Once you come you know’ serves to further bolster impressions of safety and welcome. In some instances, rural folk are represented as charming, smiling reminders of the quaintness of island life. Tourism then, in Gaugin’s time and today, has meant far more than enjoying the sun, sand, and sea -- it also meant enjoying the people, consuming their culture, their bodies, their energies. Tourism imagery extends beyond the officially-generated advertisement campaigns, videos and visuals from local tourist boards and government bodies but also includes, for example, beautiful photographs in coffee table books, souvenirs, clothes, gifts, commercial artwork, etc. that Thompson (2006) describes as ‘the visual economies of tourism’.

⁷ Thompson, K. A. (2006). *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Yet, some locals have demonstrated their resistance to the tourist tropes. Dixia Ramirez (2006)⁸, in her essay 'Against Type', speaks about the native dwellers of the Dominican Republic who were photographed by Americans in the early 1900s. In interpreting the photographs of the natives, she argues that they used their posturing and expressions as opportunities for resistance, against the dominant narrative that was being constructed about the people of the Dominican Republic. The subjects, knowingly, made no attempt to smile or appear pleasing or amiable in their photographs. If photographers wished to create images which confirmed and supported the colonial tourism's agenda, the subjects appeared to be surly and uncooperative. Accordingly, the photographer couldn't exploit the people to create his images of paradise. However, the photographer pushed back by inserting on the photographs, patronizing captions and an imagined dialogue in Creole.

Understandably, there are non-Caribbean tourism paradises too, such as Mexico's East and West Coasts, parts of Central and South America, the Hawaiian and Polynesian islands, the Maldives, Thailand, the Philippines, and several other places including Australia's Gold Coast. (A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this essay). As discussed earlier, the dominant North's/the West's abilities to create sites of paradise included ways of locating, mapping and tapping the resources of the former colonized peoples and their lands. As importantly, there is the North's/the West's abilities to tailor, manufacture and brand places and their resources (human and physical), in order to create and meet the West's seemingly, insatiable desires, dreams and demands for new opportunities to own, consume and exert power.

⁸ Ramirez, Dixia. (2018). "Against Type: Reading Desire in the Visual Archives of Dominican subjects". *Small Axe Journal: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 56, Volume 22, No.2, pp. 144-160. Duke University Press, North Carolina.



In summary, Jamaica offers beautiful beaches, the sun, sand, sea, as well as the rage of legal and illegal personal services, but it too has its underbelly, similar to other tropical resorts and countries. It has its growing economic development issues, such as poverty, a garbage mountain (Riverton City, Kingston), an epidemic of bribery, corruption and criminal activities and other historical and structural, social and economic complexities, dilemmas, and accordingly, within the stereotypical notions which the paradise brand relies on, it is easier to suppress the multiple dimensions and complexities of the country and its people. It is simpler to depict and narrate the story of paradise with its pristine beachfronts, gently, lapping waves, glistening, blue seas, and empty beach chairs waiting to delight the tourist's senses and be consumed.

Who lives in Paradise?

Are native people waiting in the designated sites of paradise to be used/abused and photographed by the traveler from afar? In Gauguin's paintings, his portrayal and interpretation of the people of paradise were based on his perspective as a European man and the types of experiences he exposed himself to in his travels. His version of paradise was to work and live with the people, and then to create paintings in order to achieve the true heights of his artistic ambitions. If you are like the people of the Wahgi culture in the "Views of Paradise" exhibit at The Museum of Mankind, in London (1993-95),⁹ or the Puma and Mursi tribes as seen in "Natural Fashion: Tribal Decoration from Africa" (a book with photographs by Hans Silvester, 2008), then your role seems to be to wait around. You wait to be photographed. This is not to say that the people depicted are not real people who have developed their own social, economic and cultural practices and live in complex societies with the associated problems. In fact, such photographs and exhibitions create impressions of a group of people who are not at ease and do not wish to express and represent themselves and aspects of their lives for the foreigner's gaze. In the photographs, people are portrayed as human objects/the subjects of the other's gaze. Accordingly, the camera and the ways the images are framed and composed have become parts of the colonial gaze. To the arm chair tourist, such images present ownable places and people where one can desire and dream of exotic experiences that are enchanting, at times even a little dangerous, but always, thrilling and enlivening.

Within tourism-driven economies, the locals participate in an economic system from which they benefit minimally. They may be expected to grudgingly co-operate with the use/abuse of their bodies and time, and to express little resistance; or secondly, to become knowing manipulators of the system in an attempt to gain personal, financial independence. These tourism scenarios are depicted in many films about the marginalized, underclasses in Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and other former colonies and developing nations. More specifically, in the Caribbean, recent short films like Michelle Serieux's 'Sugar' (2017) and Shadae Lamar Smith's 'The Resort' (2015) show central characters choosing between using their bodies for economic gain in their hotels, or toting the line of maintaining their dignity without receiving any economic perks for services rendered. In the films, there is always a demand for the workers' services by the hotels' guests but the local characters must decide whether to participate or not. Usually, economic considerations always win out. These films of exploitation of the locals, by the tourists, are modelled on true stories and local knowledge of the tourist industry. It is not always a question of providing sex tourism, however, as

⁹ Hall, S. (1997). "Introducing Paradise". In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall (pp. 169-184). London: Open University Press.

various factors have influenced the emergence of a tourism black market. The employee may decide to become a code-switching trickster, others become bitter and leave their hotel jobs. All are affected in, admittedly, different ways. It is an implicit and sometimes an explicit, and unfortunate, part of paradise tourism that people become reduced to commodities to be bought and sold. A trip to any beach paradise or even to a cultural paradise site will reveal (with a little detection and sensitivity), that the consumer/visitor/tourist consumes space and place but unfortunately, also, the people and their lives.

Conclusion

Capitalist, and neoliberal economic models, when applied to tourism, at the micro level, highlight two players. One player wants to access some economic gains by selling a product or service. The second player wants to purchase the product, service or experience. In reality, what is being bought and sold is not restricted to the physical place. What is at stake, are the lives and futures of the people who provide services as well as their bodies, their labour and their abilities to cloak, mask and dissimulate information about their everyday lives to the tourist who wishes to experience a tropical paradise. The tourism industry adopts a presumption of fairness and fair play inherent, in capitalist models. In SIDS, there are economic opportunities from tourism, upon which much of the plans, hopes and dreams for a country and its people rest. However, when we think about the tourist industry in the context of the people's long-term, social development, welfare and well-being, there is tremendous uncertainty. Given the geographic location of a typical, tropical paradise, the tourist resorts are likely to be periodically devastated, by natural disasters such as hurricanes, tsunamis or earthquakes. As importantly, with the relatively, inexpensive costs to holiday in all-inclusive hotels and the sizeable increases in mass travel, paradise, in many ways is a commodified, artificial construct. With tourism, the tropics experience yet another wave of colonization.



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