Breaking the Chains:

A Dissection of the Caribbean’s Tourism Mirage

By

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Imagine laying on a white beach with a pina colada in one hand and a book in the other. The wind gently sways the surrounding palm trees creating a relaxing lullaby to your nerves and built up stress. Sweet scents of fresh fruit dazzle your nostrils and pull at your stomach. Relentless sunshine keeps you lackadaisical but still upbeat. Do you have the scene painted yet? When people are prompted to think about the Caribbean, it’s these exact notions that tend to come to mind. Interestingly enough, it is these so-called “icons” of the Caribbean that draw out thousands of vacationers annually to escape the doom and bore of their lives.

Yet, it’s all a mirage. The imagery we all conjure up is far from original, and ultimately a byproduct of colonialism. The Caribbean is a locale that has been conquered, exploited, and manicured to continuously benefit particular people. Moreover, those particular people have repetitively failed to be the locals who have ceaselessly endured struggle after struggle. The focal point of such a place has been slanted in the wrong direction for too long and now condoned by the “tourist veil”.

Through my research I hope to bring attention to how the local economies and people have been frequently transformed and transplanted. I will begin by examining the Euro-centric perspective that first modified the Caribbean from its original form to the mold it has taken today. With various literary and media resources, the “iconic imagery” will be discussed and dissected for its role in the pursuit of colonialism. From there I plan to provide a general map of colonialism’s ramifications in this besieged region (with special attention paid to the African Diaspora too). From there I will move towards the era of independence of the region, yet I will utilize my sources to draw connections.
between imperialism and the neocolonialism that still exists even today. My research will hopefully show a linkage between colonialism’s slavery and the tourism economy, and furthermore their detrimental effects on local agriculture, export crop production/dependence on imports and the migration of people. By connecting the dots between each of these subjects, I will attempt to present a particular perspective as to why the Caribbean’s development has been impeded.

With the completion of my senior project I hope to provide an informative background for those who have fallen for the “tourist gaze.” My paper will disband the so-called lush, exotic appeal of the Caribbean and highlight the façade for what it truly is. Too many people think of slavery as a remnant of the past, yet overlook the veiled imitation that underpins the Caribbean’s economy today. By looking “beyond the shore” of tourism, we can truly understand the dynamic cultural geography that exists in such a diverse and distinct region of the world. More importantly, the research will hopefully evoke people to advocate for the Caribbean’s development without the detrimental bonds of neocolonialism.
Outline

I. INTRODUCTION:
   a. Paper will open with a meaningful account of Caribbean tourism today and offer a forward as to what my paper will cover and why.

II. OVERVIEW OF CARIBBEAN’S HISTORICAL, ECONOMICAL AND LITERARY DEVELOPMENT:
   a. Brief Overview of Caribbean’s History (with focal point on economics):
      i. Highlight original inhabitants and their practices
      ii. Note the period of exploration and the connected massacres
      iii. Discuss colonialism and its realm of influence
         1. Transplantation of people
         2. Remolding the land
      iv. Abolition and the dismantling of plantations
   b. The Caribbean’s Euro-Centric Construct:
      i. Discovery/Exploration 16/17th century
         1. Documentation of the new landscape
         2. Transplanting flora
      ii. “Scenic economy” - 18th century
      iii. “Re-naturalization”
         1. A civilized “wildness” for the ‘armchair tourist’
         2. Root of contemporary tourism

III. TODAY’S TOURISM INDUSTRY:
   a. Basic Information:
      i. What it encompasses: hotels, cruise lines, tour agencies, etc.
      ii. Where? What islands experience the principal effects? Any that doesn’t participate as much as others?
      iii. Who’s involved: Local governments, MNC’s, IMF, and World Bank policies
   b. A Residual of Colonialism?
      i. Hotel as new plantation? (Paradise and Plantation- Stratchan):
         1. Plantation economy: Discuss how the tourism industry changes the economic focus of an area.
            a. Production for foreign market
            b. Reliance on cheap labor.
      ii. Modern Day Slaves:
         1. Looking at similarities between the African Diaspora (and indentured slaves) who were forced to work in a world foreign to their own and the modern day industry laborers who are restricted and underpaid.
2. Free at last? While seemingly a free people, I will discuss some main literary themes from the region that might hint otherwise: (employing Jurney, Kincaid, and Sheller’s work)
   a. Workers as part of the landscape and backdrop
   b. People of the Diaspora- no home to identify with
   c. Living in a place with a culture that’s not their own

IV. TOURISM INDUSTRY SPHERE OF INFLUENCE ON CARIBBEAN’S DEVELOPMENT
   a. Political Economy:
      i. Foreign entities influencing domestic policy
         1. Incentive offers for investors- duty free imports, tax breaks
         2. Interlocking of interests
      ii. Pressure to maintain “ecological bubble” for travelers, yet little attention to community development (Pattullo 40)
   b. Agriculture:
      i. Altering productive agricultural land into resorts or leisure areas
      ii. Decline in export crop importance (in overall economy), although still cash crop oriented more than domestic subsistence
   c. Social Issues:
      i. Unemployment- while tourism initially brings the number down, it hides the fact that the government isn’t doing enough. Need to diversify, create jobs on more than one industry that fluctuates.
      ii. Migration patterns: rural to urban and urban to abroad
   d. Environment:
      i. Poor land use planning
      ii. Wave motion erosion- natural movement and replenishment of sand has been disrupted by construction of piers and groins
      iii. Coral reef
      iv. Caribbean Sea- waste and spills

V. WHAT WE CAN DO (CONCLUSION): After the subject manner has been laid out and analyzed, here I plan on bringing it all together. I will revisit the correlated history and literary phases and how they yielded the present day Caribbean mirage. After we lift this veil, we can see how the tourism sincerely impacts the socioeconomic development of this manicured region. Once the “tourist gaze” is acknowledged, removed and replaced with the true reality, we can shift away from this daunting form of neocolonialism that impedes the Caribbean’s sustainable development.
Annotated Bibliography

Apostolopoulous, Yorghos and Dennis Gayle. *Island Tourism and Sustainable Development: Caribbean, Pacific and Mediterranean Experiences.*

**Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2002. Print.** As a collection of various writings, the aim of this work is to explore the concept of sustainability within the framework of tourism. With a focus in the Caribbean, Pacific and the Mediterranean, the issues of small islands and island states’ development are stressed. In the Chapter “Sustainable Tourism in the Caribbean,” author Bhoendradatt Tewarie analyzes different threats on various case studies in the Caribbean. By laying out the menacing troubles causing socioeconomic inequality, dependency and marginalization of people, the text advocates for a change in the global tourist paradigm. This resource will be crucial in identifying the steps needed to improve the tourism industry and make it sustainable in a variety of ways.

Black, Stephanie, dir. *Life And Debt.* Tuff Gong Production, 2001. Film. Utilizing Jamaica Kincaid’s voice and novel, *A Small Place*, Stephanie Black gives viewers an alternative look at the Caribbean. Her film follows the experience of the tourist and then slams you with the other side. The reality of locals and their economy becomes quite shocking. Her documentary goes further than the resorts and right into the intricate web that surrounds it. By looking at the economy as a
whole, she emphasizes the changes that have been initiated. She leaves the viewer in thought and awe, and proposes how labor has become the new commodity in the Caribbean. Black’s work aligns quite well with the majority of my other resources and enables me to work with a distinctive type of material.

Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003. Print. Giving a whirlwind history of tourism, Gmelch sets up the reader for a multitude of narratives. Each chapter conveys workers’ unique relationship to the industry and their perspective. From a taxi driver to the captain of a cruise, their experiences offer a glimpse into the social reality of the Caribbean’s tourism economy. He does a very good job setting up his text with definitions and also touching on important problems connected to tourism. By incorporating the voices Gmelch relays, my research will be able to explore the social changes for locals a bit more thoroughly.

Jurney, Florence Ramond. *Representations of The Island in Caribbean Literature: Caribbean Women Redefine Their Homelands.* New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009. Print. By reviewing, dissecting, and comparing countless Caribbean authors, Jurney presents her readers with recurrent Caribbean literary themes. The subject manners vary from retelling history, negotiating exile, the Caribbean Diaspora, and globalization. By paying attention to the focal points of people deriving from the locale, Jurney’s work highlights key representations that tie to historical and economical events. Incorporating her work brings things full circle
for the rest of my research. Not only am I employing professionals’ work, but moreover will have the voice of the people to capture a more intimate outlook. Thus, my research will have a more wholesome perception on the literary development of the Caribbean and the themes attached to it.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux Publishers, 1988. Print. Through different sections, the author provides varied perspectives of the same place. She describes how an outsider (or tourist) might experience this “paradise” while then offering a juxtaposed perspective of the Antigua she knew growing up. From there, she brings to light the modern day Antigua and the residual effects of colonialism on her “sovereign” nation. Her text is fierce, yet boldly truthful. The style in the text resembles that of a “jeremiad,” where she incorporates prose and style into a passionate essay. Her tirade is a warning, yet also an invitation for change. Jamaica Kincaid’s text offers valid notions and ideas on development that will weave into my paper beautifully.

Furthermore, she examines five islands- Jamaica, Barbados, St. Lucia, Montserrat, and Dominica as case studies for clarification. After setting the foundation in my research, Klak’s work will be imperative in exploring the tangible effects of tourism that lie beyond the tourist gaze.

**Pattullo, Patty. *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in The Caribbean.* London: Latin America Bureau, 2005. Print.** Pattullo takes the tourism industry in the Caribbean and puts everything on the table for examination. She not only highlights the growth of the industry and its impact on the Caribbean’s economic development, but furthermore she presents the social and environmental ramifications. The underlying notions of her text help the reader to understand the flaws of the current system, and direct them towards practicing sustainable and alternative tourism. I will be able to incorporate numerous parts of her work into my own, and move towards disbanding the prevailing mirage of the Caribbean’s paradise.

**Potter, Robert, David Barker, Dennis Conway, and Thomas Klak. *The Contemporary Caribbean.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2004. Print.** *The Contemporary Caribbean* is an essential read for understanding the Caribbean today. The authors provide a thorough history in order for the readers to attain a strong grasp on the underpinnings of the cultural geography today. From the natural landscape to demographics, this resource covers the continual changes occurring in the Caribbean. Specific sections deal with tourism and the
environment begetting me with copious support. The whole text will be useful in
the development of my paper from beginning to end.

Sheller, Mimi. Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies. London:
Routledge, 2003. Print. The fascination with the Caribbean has been recurrent
through history. In her Consuming the Caribbean, Mimi Sheller’s chapter Iconic
Islands dissects literature and artwork from colonial to modern times. In doing
so, she proclaims three distinct periods of thought- “Exploration”, “Discovery”
and the return to “Nature.” Through her dialogue, readers can walk away with an
understanding of how literature influenced perspectives on the region. She links
the change of thought to the identity of the Caribbean today. This part of her
work will be instrumental in my paper for providing a literary background as to
how the Caribbean came to be viewed as it is today.

Strachan, Ian Gregory. Paradise and Plantation: Tourism and Culture In The
Print. The Caribbean repetitively has two concepts tied to it, yet they stand in
polarity. Strachan attempts to understand how the notions of the paradise and the
plantation have come to coincide despite their vast incongruities. Important to
note as well, he proposes an interesting viewpoint by suggesting the “Hotel” as
the modern “Plantation” which he elaborates on throughout his text. I really like
where he goes with this and feel that it will fit perfectly with my field of research.
Williams, Eric. *From Columbus To Castro: The History of the Caribbean*. New York: Vintage House, 1984. Print. While the Caribbean is composed of a multitude of islands all with differing colonial rulers, Williams offers a comprehensive history of the region. He connects the dots for his readers, showing them the linkage between colonial rulers, slavery, cash crops and the residual effects on today’s labor system. While his text follows a chronological route, he offers a holistic glimpse into the foundation for the economic situation that haunts the locale today. His timeline will be quite useful for my paper and allow me to draw connections to the residuals of past events that are still apparent today.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It’s another sparkling day in paradise. Just like the travel agent promised. You awaken to the crisp sounds of waves breaking on the white beach while the wind sways the palm trees evoking a gentle lullaby to calm your nerves. Later, you find yourself meandering towards an afternoon on the beach. Local hotel workers dote upon you, relentlessly ensuring you have a full pina colada in hand. You meet a spectrum of people. Fellow vacationers from New York all the way to London entertain you with constant tales. They persuade you to accompany them in their snorkeling endeavor. While you’re normally timid, you remember you’re on vacation. It’s your time to break free of your restraints, and why not? The Caribbean is amply supplied with new things for you to explore and do, right? Wrong.

Everything the travel agent painted for you is a reality, but only for you: you the traveler, the foreigner, the investor. The entire scenic landscape of the Caribbean is an image that’s been fine-tuned throughout the decades. Everything from the iconic palm tree down to the local hotel worker have all played their part in making this fallacy into your dreamscape. Yet, for the true Caribbean and its people, it’s all a mirage. The imagery we all conjure up is far from original. This picturesque vista and the attributes adjoined to it are nothing more than the outsider’s creation.

Ultimately, it all links back to one of the darkest times in humanity; colonialism. Upon the moment the first explorer set foot in the Caribbean, things were forever changed. Not only was the essence of this natural landscape decimated, but furthermore the seeds of priority were planted. The Caribbean has since been conquered, exploited, and manicured all to benefit particular people. Moreover, those particular people have
continuously been the outsiders and their descendents. While humanity has overcome the enslavement of countries and people, residuals are still tangible. Today, when people employ the Caribbean as a destination for leisure and freedom, they are perpetuating a form of exploitation that colonialism began. Thus, by exploring the intricate web surrounding tourism and all it entails, people can begin to break the chains of slavery’s legacy that is obstructing the Caribbean’s development.

This senior project explores the physical and cultural weathering the Caribbean has endured. By discussion of a range of topics, the paper brings attention to how the local economies and people have been frequently transformed and transplanted. It begins by giving an examination of the Caribbean’s history- the original environment, the aboriginal population, and then the consequential events that have occurred since. Using an economic premise as a common thread, the paper will highlight the influence of fiscal pursuits.

After digesting this background information, the research then focuses the readers’ attention on tourism in the region. The section will give a general overview of the industry today, and what it entails. Subsequently, the research then probes into the tourism industry’s sphere of influence in the region’s development. Looking at aspects such as the political economy, agriculture, physical environment and social issues, it highlights what tourism has done to the Caribbean. By connecting the dots between each of these subjects, the research presents a particular perspective as to why the Caribbean’s development has been impeded.

Finally, by using the literary development and modern themes, the paper will connect the region’s history with tourism today. The section will investigate the Euro-
centric perspective that first modified the Caribbean from its original form to the mold it has taken today. With various regional literary and media resources, the “iconic imagery” will be discussed and dissected for its role in the pursuit of colonialism and ultimately tourism today.

The completed senior project provides the reader with an informative background for those who have fallen for the “tourist gaze.” The paper disbands the so-called lush, exotic appeal of the Caribbean and highlights the façade for what it truly is. Too many people think of slavery as a remnant of the past, yet overlook the veiled imitation that underpins the Caribbean’s economy today. By looking “beyond the shore” of tourism, we can truly understand the dynamic cultural geography that exists in such a diverse and distinct region of the world. More importantly, the research will hopefully evoke people to advocate for the Caribbean’s development without the detrimental bonds of neocolonialism.
I. Physical Geography:

Forming a long, narrow chain of various sized islands, the Caribbean is a diverse physical landscape (see figure 1 below). “Geographically, however, all the islands fall into four major groupings- the Greater Antilles, the Bahamas archipelago, the lesser Antilles, and the southern islands along the South American coast” (Rogozinski 1994, p.3). Plate tectonics influenced the early creation of the islands, while erosion and weathering effects are more prominent today. With the North American plate subducting below the east side of the Caribbean plate, “the violent tectonic forces associated with Atlantic Ocean crust subduction created most of the islands of the Lesser Antilles, a process known as volcanic island arc formation” (Potter et al. 2004, p. 10). Also characteristic of the subduction zone is the crumpling of sediment, which yielded a few islands as well.

In contrast to the Lesser Antilles though, the Greater Antilles are subject to the transform boundary of the Caribbean Plate and North Atlantic Plate, all separated by the Cayman trough (Potter et al. 2004, p.12). Just within the Greater Antilles as well, there is even more distinction. “Jamaica, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico are geologically complex islands, composed of sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic rocks that have been folded, faulted and fractured, and subject to recent tectonic uplift” (Potter et al. 2004, p.13). Cuba on the other hand lies on the North American plate, and has more remote mountain ranges covering less surface area. While the area has and still gets generalized, each
island/grouping is abundant with varying resources and attributes that have made them each distinct.

Climate patterns and weather of the Caribbean islands are influenced by global atmospheric circulation (Azores-Bermuda anticyclone and the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone) and seasonal fluctuations related to El Nino (Potter et al. 2004, p.19). With a tropical maritime climate and various physical features on the landscape, the vegetation types on the island range from tropical rainforest all the way to cactus scrub. As the Caribbean region has been explored, conquered and settled, the vegetation and physical landscape has changed greatly. The environmental changes will be addressed later in the paper.

Figure 1. Provided by United States’ Central Intelligence Agency’s World Factbook. December 2009, Web.
II. Cultural Geography

Jumping from the formation and characteristics of the physical geography of the Caribbean, it’s now important to highlight the cultural roots of the Caribbean. While textbooks have paraded Christopher Columbus as the “discoverer” of the Americas, today there is a more realistic understanding that other humans were already settled in the New Americas. The original inhabitants of the Caribbean have been amply discussed in the writings and literature of the explorers, but “since none of these peoples had a written language, we rely on Spanish accounts and archaeological evidence” (Rogozinski 1994, p.14) for understanding these cultures.

Although biases may taint accounts, a general consensus has been that the original inhabitants migrated from South America and Middle America. Comprised of around three groups- the Ciboney, Arawak, and the Carib- the cultural exchange amongst groups was vast:

Tainos and Arawaks moved island to island in apparent stepwise fashion from South America with Tainos finally populating the island of Santo Domingo (present day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) in considerable numbers. Later, small fighting bands of Caribs also moved into the Antilles from South America, and they conquered the Arawak inhabitants of the Lesser Antilles, forcing the latter into assimilation. (Potter et al. 2004, p.49)

With limited surface area and resources, warring and interaction was a normal aspect of life. The Arawak and Carib were more similar in lifestyles than with the Ciboney (who are thought to be the oldest and most primitive). Through the eyes of the Europeans who encountered them, the Arawaks were noted as more passive and friendly, while Caribs were dubbed warlike. “(Arawaks) were agricultural, pottery-making Indians and lived in permanent villages rather than camps…they had a hereditary aristocracy; elaborate songs, dances, and ceremonies; and an emphasis upon religion” (Rouse 1951, p. 249). While the
Arawaks may have had distinguishable institutions similar to the Europeans, Rogozinski pointed out “because the Caribs fought attempts to enslave them, the Spanish described them as bloodthirsty savages.” Rouse (1951) notes that the Caribs may have relied on agriculture more in their semi permanent villages, and also had a societal power structure deriving from fighting rather than inheritance or religion (p.249). Their migration up the chain of islands is thought to have occurred just prior to Columbus’ voyage.

Liked or disliked, both the Arawak’s and the Carib’s population experienced a diminishing return in numbers with every European they encountered. “There can be no question that the Spanish occupation totally destroyed Arawak society and led to the extinction- literally the genocide of the Arawak race” (Rogozinski 1994, p.31). Although the Spanish were the first Europeans in the Greater Antilles, the Dutch, English and French were also active pursuers of the new territory. Their varying approaches dramatically influenced the cultural changes that occurred. While theories have identified disease and warfare as major causes, researchers cannot definitively state one particular reason that led to the demise of the native population. Yet by highlighting the economic pursuit of the European explorers, the impact and influences on the Caribbean cultural makeup cannot be minimized.

III. Economical Development

After Columbus’ mistaken landing on the modern day Bahamas Islands things were forever changed. With the first sight of gold and metals on the locals, the European explorers’ became mesmerized with the possibility of riches. They declared the land full of abundant deposits, setting in motion centuries of migration, exploitation, and warfare.
While Hispaniola was the first to entice Columbus and then dictate his reporting of wealth, the truth was soon discovered of the locale. In *From Columbus to Castro* (1984), Eric Williams elaborates on the series of events set in motion by this “gold rush:”

…the early exhaustion of its deposits by the primitive methods of the time sent the Spaniards up and down the Caribbean seeking new deposits. It was gold that determined the location of Spanish settlements, which led to their concentration on the Greater Antilles and to neglect the Lesser Antilles, except those which had strategic significance for the protection of the trade routes. (p.24)

After an expanse of time that proved the new land as unprofitable with gold, the economic focus changed. Central and South America offered vast supplies of silver and gold, pushing the Caribbean to act only as “a staging area and source of supplies and fresh meat” (Rogozinski 1994, p.35). Throughout this time, various European crops were introduced to the Caribbean in an attempt to provide for the new colonists. Most did not flourish as well, but one crop reacted quite favorably to its new environment—sugarcane.

Small productions of sugar began to see a rewarding return and soon expanded to larger mills. As more and more “would-be entrepreneurs” wanted to join the movement, they found little support from the Church. With the Church’s wealth being tied up in other causes, subsidies and protection came from the State instead (Williams 1984, p.27). Competition was soon rife across the islands and between Europeans nations as they vied for economic control of the Caribbean. “The Dutch, driven out of Brazil, arrived in Barbados, at the time when the tobacco economy was in difficulties, to teach the inhabitants the secrets of sugar cultivation and manufacture” (Williams 1984, p.112). The “expulsion of Jews from Brazil” resulted in a great stimulus for the French West Indies production of sugarcane as well (Williams 1984, p.114). Not to be left out, the
English employed Jamaica as their main platform for sugar production and ignited decades of rivalry.

Thus, the fast growth and ample competition formed particular characteristics within the sugar industry. The various owned, fragmented plots of land created an expensive endeavor. Hence, the industry saw a tendency of few conglomerates annexing various productions all under a few leaders. This concentration of power and wealth allowed the leaders to dictate all production: export sugar and import food. Essentially a “plantation economy,” this monopoly of economic and political rule would come to play important role in the future of the Caribbean.

While wealth was the main concern of the explorers, the Church of the Spanish had an additional objective. After Columbus’ third voyage brought hundreds of natives back with him, the Pope became adamant about the conversion of the aboriginals into Catholics. If they submitted to Spanish sovereignty, they were treated as subjects of the crown. If not, enslavement was in their future. Some locals abandoned their land, fled or outright gave up, but some acquiesced to the tribute system forced upon them. Soon, greed overcame the new leaders of the land. Utilizing the feudalism concept from their homeland, “encomiendas or repartimentios” became a commonality. Instead of receiving material wealth from the Caribbeans, they now demanded labor:

The Spanish Crown, torn between the desire to satisfy the colonials’ need for labor and the desire to protect the Indians as far as possible, agreed to the encomienda system on condition that the Indians were treated as free men, not servants, and that the grantee of an encomienda instructed them in the Catholic faith. (Williams 1984, p.33)
With little supervision or consequences, the humanistic concern was soon bypassed for profit matter. Subsequently, aboriginal population numbers dwindled with an alarming rate leaving a huge labor deficit.

Surrounding the domestic labor problems, the Spanish empire was consistently threatened by peripheral attacks. Soon enough though, Northern Europeans made permanent colonies in the “New World”- first in the Lesser Antilles and later in the Greater Antilles. Without the Church’s constraints, the British, Dutch and French were able to settle more independently. “European rulers during the 17th and 18th centuries were chronically short of the revenues needed to obtain their goals (at home), and were content to leave the exploration and settlement (of the colonies) to private enterprise” (Rogozinski 1994, p.57). Every wave of new Northern Europeans generated a gradual perceptual change on the Caribbean. Without all the social institutions and government oversight in place back at home in Europe, the latest capitalists were free to mold a new structure of rule in the colonies. The (at least slightly present) Spanish humanistic concern for acknowledging and improving the original inhabitants was overlooked with the newcomers. The region became nothing more than a financial investment opportunity and, consequently, their economic lenses treated the land and people on it only as commodities. The Caribbean became rife with competition and more importantly short on labor.

The depleted local labor source, the deadly disease-ridden environment for white indentured laborers, all compounded with the growing sugar industry forced investors to examine other sources for the much needed labor. As a result, licenses were granted to legalize and instigate the trade from Africa. The commencement of the African slave
trade to the western colonies created a vital link in the triangular trade. While laborers were transported to the Caribbean, raw materials produced by the laborers in the Caribbean were then in turn shipped to Europe where they were manufactured into products. Those products were then sold not only in Europe but also more importantly, were traded with slave capturers in Africa.

Amid the autocatalytic effect of demand and supply, the slave population in the Caribbean increased dramatically. “By the 1750’s, almost nine out of ten men and women were slaves on all the islands where sugar was grown” (Rogozinski 1994, p.122). Yet, the Caribbean slaves did not transition as easily in the Demographic Transition as the North American slaves. “Before about 1800, death rates among Caribbean slaves always were much higher than birth rates” (Rogozinski 1994, p.122). Thus, the Dutch West India Company, who held a monopoly on the Atlantic Slave Trade, was in constant warfare with the British and French empires (Second and Third Dutch Wars) for control of the high demand trade:

During the war of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748), the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and (in its international aspects) the War for American independence (1776-1783), Great Britain and France fought to gain commercial and colonial supremacy throughout the world. (Rogozinski 1984, p.140)

Interestingly enough, the actual colonies themselves were hardly touched in these wars. Looked upon as desired properties only valuable in tact, the islands themselves were not destroyed. The various wars transferred the islands back and forth between powers multiple times, yet the change in economies rarely happened. “Sugar dominated the economies of all the islands, and the planters in turn influenced local governments under both the French and the British” (Rogozinski 1994, p.141).
During the time of crusading governments, a philosophical movement was stirring. The enslavement of fellow humans evoked a spectrum of emotions from Europeans. In *From Columbus to Castro*, Eric Williams (1984) highlights the entrepreneurial outlook on slavery:

> The acrimonious controversy retained no trace of the pseudo-humanitarianism of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century that Negro slavery was essential to the preservation of the Indians. In its place was a solid economic fact, that Negro slavery was essential to the preservation of the sugar plantations. (p.139)

Yet the disparity between what was acceptable in Europe and of that in the Caribbean prompted legislature. The French *Code Noir* made particular policies on the slave that prohibited the production of their own profit (from selling produce) and placed extreme consequences if there were an attempt to run away, attack their master or steal from him.

> “It made the slave a chattel and denied him the most elementary rights of men” (Williams 1984, p.185). Of all the colonial powers, only the Spanish theoretically acknowledged the slaves as more than property. Over time though, precedents prompted a digression in standards and enabled slave owners even more control.

The cruel and inhumane slave treatment and trade continued until various events shook the moral underpinnings of the entire system. Great thinkers like Adam Smith and Jean-Jacques Rousseau fused with the French revolution and British religious revivals all combined to form powerful anti-slavery sentiments. As quoted by the French novelist Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in *From Columbus to Castro*, the dissonance between materialistic needs and the true cost of their production seeped into scrutiny:

> I do not know whether coffee and sugar are necessary to the happiness of Europe, but I know well that these two vegetables have caused the unhappiness of two regions of the world. America has been depopulated in order to have a soil in which to plant them; Africa is being depopulated in order to have a people to cultivate them. (Williams 1984, p.214)
Stressing sin and spiritual rebirth during the 18th century, the religious revival of the Methodist movement and Evangelical reformers finally brought the ultimate pressure on the government (Rogozinski 1994, p.179). Their ideas turned into demands and then into action. While implemented change occurred in incremental steps (for an attempt at economic balance), “Parliament finally abolished the import of slaves into British colonies as of March 1, 1808, and imposed large fines on transgressors” (Rogozinski 1994, p.180). Following suit, Holland banned the trade in 1814, France in 1818, and Spain in 1820 (Rogozinski 1994, p.178). With the trade outlawed, the actual banishment of slavery in the Caribbean was to occur throughout the rest of the 19th century.

The economic development that occurred after the downfall of slavery varied from island to island. New labor costs impacted planter’s overall costs, all the while facing stiff competition from various world locales:

When prices fell by half- as they did between 1840 and 1848- planters had to double their output to merely stay even. But cane production fell after emancipation- by 50 percent on Jamaica- as the former slaves fled from harsh routines of field labor. Many plantations operated at a loss, and government revenues plummeted. (Rogozinski 1994, p.185)

Further affecting the sugar economy, technologic advancements around the world enabled new providers to out-compete the Caribbean industry. Without the profit surplus and taxes to invest in the land, little infrastructure was built to support the burgeoning population.

Occurring at different time intervals, different colonial powers relinquished the colonial autocracy governance rule and allowed the Caribbean islands to move towards a semi self-representative type of governance. During the world wide economic depression of the 1930’s, the Caribbean’s reliance on one or two export crops generated immense
issues. Locals faced the tribulations of poverty, but out of that resentment grew strong social and political movements. “New leaders emerged who organized effective unions and mass parties, which demanded first self government and then independence” (Rogozinski 1994, p.259). These new voices for change resounded in the Caribbean until independence was finally granted. “By the 1980’s, virtually all the British colonies had become independent states” (Rogozinski 1994, p.257). Although independence was seemingly the beginning of growth and prosperous times, the economic situation of the Caribbean did not change dramatically. The world market still set the prices for the few export crops that dominated the islands’ economies. As Eric Williams (1984) disgruntling discussed in his work:

> The economic policies pursued by the governments- both independent and non independent- also serves to strengthen ‘vertical’ ties between the individual territories and metropolitan countries and frustrate the creation of ‘horizontal’ ties between the countries of the region. The individual territories all vie with one another to entice metropolitan firms to establish branches and subsidiaries in the region. (p.499)

The economic development in the Caribbean region has been influenced in every form and manner. It’s been an experiment in globalization and as Eric Williams fiercely states “West Indian history is indeed nothing but a record of the follies and foibles of mankind” (Williams 1984, p.229). Once an autonomous, pristine region, the Caribbean had been transformed into a plantation economy overridden with a mix of alien ethnicities and races.
CHAPTER 3: THE TOURISM INDUSTRY OF THE CARIBBEAN TODAY AND ITS SPHERES’ OF INFLUENCE

I. Introducing Tourism:

The Caribbean’s economic legacy of reliance on export production created an volatile development situation post independence. Throughout history, external factors dictated fiscal matters by manipulating demand and price constructs while also placing trade restrictions. Thus, when tourism came into the picture, regional leaders optimistically accepted this medium for change. “(Tourism) was associated with power and prosperity; it was touted as the tool which would carry Caribbean peoples into ‘development’ and ‘modernism’ and out of their poverty on the periphery of the world” (Pattullo 2005, p.6).

While today almost anyone has access to time away in the Caribbean, the original visitors tended to be from the upper echelons of society. The elite of colonial powers sought out novel experiences while royalty were frequent tourists in their dominion. Yet with the accumulated wealth of the 1700’s and 1800’s from the slave trade and industrial revolution, developed nations began to witness the beginning of the “middle class”. By the 20th century, higher standards of living allowed more people the opportunity to travel:

Before World War II, the annual number of tourists who came to the region was hardly more than 100,000; by 1959, the region received 1.3 million visitors, by 1965 close to 4 million, by 1985 10 million, and in 2000 over 17 million. (Gmelch 2003, p.9)

The influx of foreigners each year has had the industry in constant growth and evolution. Modes of transportation have made the connection easier and more efficient as time has progressed. Yet, the 1960’s dramatic increase in foreigners put enough strain on the local accommodations that regional governments had to look to private investors for
further development. Maturation of the industry led to local demand for more construction, food production, local artistry production and so on. Thus, it has generally been believed and promoted that the tourist industry was an “engine for growth:”

International bodies such as the World Bank, which financed large hotels in the 1970s, and the United Nations endorsed tourism for the Third World; an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) publication had reported in 1967 that tourism was a ‘promising new resource for economic development.’ (Pattullo 2005, p.6)

Another supportive entity, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) supported the industry through its structural adjustment programs that helped direct local money to building productive infrastructure.

The various islands of the region entered the tourism game at different times, yielding an assortment of themes for each to build their own utopia around. Some islands promote their casinos and exclusive resorts, while others stand behind the natural landscape. Important to state though, ownership has been an issue from the start. While there has been some locally owned and controlled hotels and tours (including government owned), the larger percent of the tourism industry of the Caribbean is controlled by external players. Transnational companies not only dabble in hotel ownership but also in the other pieces of the game: travel agents, airlines, and tour operators. As a capitalist, it’s strategic to have influence and control in all steps of the industry. “Sometimes, though vertical integration, they are corporately linked, controlling every stage of the tourist’s holiday. The bigger companies continue to buy up smaller ones, thus weakening competition and choice” (Pattullo 2005, p.21). So while these elements do work together to obtain the high number of visitors each year, their share of benefits is not always equal
to the Caribbean’s itself. The revenues generated on the islands don’t always stay around long enough to make a change.

In *Behind The Smile*, Gmelch (2003) explains the concept of “leakage.” “The real economic benefits of tourism to a country are not revealed by gross foreign exchange earnings but by what is leftover after deducting the amount which stays or returns oversees” (p.10). So due to the all-inclusive and/or the monopolized components of tourism, there ends up being no significant spending in the Caribbean. The money of the tourist being spent is going exclusively to the resorts. Furthermore, since the manufacturing sector of the region has been historically been suppressed, these same industry powerhouses import their own goods needed to please the tourist. In contrast though, Gmelch believes lower end tourism, such as hostels and backpacker spots, endure less leakage and rely on domestic items. Amidst the entire industry though, that sector is not large enough. “In the Caribbean, on average, for every dollar earned in foreign exchange, seventy cents is lost oversees- the antithesis of the Pan Am press release that predicted 80 percent of every dollar earned would stay at home” (Gmelch 2003, p.10). While the islands lose out on their share, the industry has stayed afloat and not without its consequences.

**II. Tourism’s Impact On the Political Economies Of The Caribbean:**

As mentioned previously, tourism has been promoted as the key to “the engine of growth.” Yet due to the opening of the industry to foreign investors, the industry is run by a variety of international powers. When transnational companies looked to partake, they required certain standards. Big names such as Hilton, Holiday Inn and Sheraton are
all a brand name. Customers of these entities expect to find the same level of quality at each hotel. Thus, the foreign hotel chains required the local governments to provide infrastructure that made it possible. The Caribbean governments, not in a state to turn down the monetary gain, adhered to most requests. Transportation mechanisms such as airports, roads, and electricity are constructed for the corporate hotel, instead of for locals. Furthermore, Polly Pattullo (2005) points out in her text that despite environmental assessments, “governments, with re-election in mind, and with a personal interest in the development or under pressure from foreign developers, can find ways to ignore the conclusions of such assessments” (p.47). The political sectors of the islands don’t always have their people or environment in mind when it comes time for decision-making.

With all the infrastructural development for the tourist industry, the source of money for which pays for it is quite the concern. When Caribbean governments provide these amenities and incentives, they rely on the tax revenue generated by the same industry. It becomes an autocatalytic system of interdependence:

Tourism affects government policy in fundamental ways, as (did) the plantation. It requires that the government ministry or department responsible for tourism is run almost in the same manner as a business: free from the bureaucratic machinery typical of public institutions. In a sense, government tourist ministries and boards become extensions of foreign enterprises because they routinely serve to protect and facilitate the growth of a foreign owned and managed industry. (Strachan 2002, p.8)

The colonial governments of the past have not completely gone away. Economic interests can manipulate local politics. Since “the locus of economic decision-making and the dynamics of economic growth continue to rest well outside the territorial boundaries of the Caribbean territories” (Williams 1984, p.501), it stirs up a situation
reminiscent of colonialism. The interests of the government and tourism industry have become quite intermingled, sometimes shadowing the local peoples’ voices and needs.

III. The Changing Agricultural Sector In Response To Tourism:

The Caribbean is comprised of various sized islands, all with arable land restrictions. Thus with the growing industry of buying land for private use, land ownership becomes a huge inhibitor to agricultural production. Linked again to colonialism, land ownership patterns in the past were skewed. “Plantations and large estates were owned by the wealthy class and geared to commercial export crops. They occupied the best and largest quality of land, whilst small farmers usually cultivated poorer quality land under insecure forms of tenancy, yet constituted the majority of the rural population” (Potter et al. 2004, p.106). Today, this division is still tangible. As the large, mono-crop, export oriented agricultural sector has still thrived, there is now the other competitor as well. Rich foreign investors don’t incorporate the arability of the land as a deciding factor when picking locations to build their resort. Hence, the vying poor farmer will be out-competed for the land access. Developers sometimes forget about the local population when constructing their paradise. “There is much that locals make little use of, such as large tracts of land turned into golf courses and large international airports which offer little benefit to poor locals who do not travel” (Gmelch 2003, p.10). The amenities not only encroach on arable plots, but at times take the best land from those who deserve it.

Originally, global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank suggested growth in economic sectors of the Caribbean, including agriculture. The thought was with
tourism, more demand for food would increase the production. Yet, most researchers have found that there has been no such relationship. “Unfortunately, there is little evidence to suggest that the international tourism industry has been successful in developing backward linkages to local agriculture sufficient to stimulate growth in the agrarian sector” (Momsen 1998, p.118). Most all-inclusive resorts, cruise lines, and conglomerate hotels end up importing foreign food to please their clientele. Some researchers have even dubbed the foreign-owned hotel chain (with their strong links to overseas food suppliers) themselves as the barrier to developing links with domestic suppliers (Momsen 1998, p.118). Thus it may be perceived as a step backward instead of forward in the Caribbean’s independence challenge.

IV. Environmental Concerns Associated With Tourism In the Caribbean:

As people come and go in relation to the islands, the repercussions of their choices and actions are rarely thought about. To the outsider, the paradise is seemingly timeless and cannot be harmed. Yet there are incalculable environmental issues that arise due to this overuse of the land. Conglomerate hotels not only depend and use a tremendous amount of natural resources, such as water, but they also emit an un-proportionate amount of trash. Amenities such as golf courses can sometimes steal water from locals, whilst the waste produced by the tourist can sincerely test the islands’ limit. “Water pollution from hotel sewage and detergents is killing the reefs and eroding the beaches,” explains Gmelch, which is problematic for the industry since the reefs protect the same beaches the industry is selling as their product. If sunlight is blocked, the living reefs sometimes begin to break down. Without this reef barrier, beaches become highly
susceptible to erosion through the impact of wave energy. Further straining the perpetuating cycle of beach construction is the physical construction of hotels too near the shore. “At high tide, the waves strike the hotel’s seawall instead of the beach, preventing the sand particles that would normally drop out as the waves run up the beach from doing so” (Gmelch 2003, p.20). Interrupting natural processes can and will be detrimental the islands’ sustainability.

For the region amongst one of the wettest climate zones, the interrelationship of deforestation and soil erosion is an important one. Take away the lowland marshes and trees, and the soil fertility will diminish. Topsoil can easily be washed away, and bombard local water sources. “In the Caribbean, tourism-induced intrusions have included the deforestation and erosion of upland forests for condominium clusters and road works, as well as beach loss, lagoon pollution, and reef damage from sand mining, dredging and cruise ship anchoring” (McElroy 2002, p.16). In addition, the tourist activities themselves, such as snorkeling or boating may disrupt aquatic life, ultimately changing eco-systems.

Although the negative influences are imperative to point out, it’s just as crucial to note that the industry has provided some benefits to the physical landscape. The newer movements of eco tourism promote the natural resources and support national reserves and/or parks. People who spend the majority of their time locked up in an office back home can be exposed to nature again. This reconnection back to nature can awaken more environmental awareness in the tourist, which they will hopefully take back with them.

V. Tourism’s Negative Social Impacts On The Islands:
Unraveling the layers of influence, surface level social ramifications can easily be pointed out. For example, overall, the tourist industry is vulnerable to fluctuations. It has its high and low seasons, thus requiring at times more or less workers. Local employees therefore may experience job insecurity. Furthermore, the continual exposure to the tourist and their cultural standards can evoke social changes in the locals’ cultures. “In this context, the supposedly malign influence of tourism ranges from the corruption of local youth, changes in consumption (burgers and supermarkets rather than bammies and coalpots) to the mimicry of western styles of entertainment and architecture” (Pattullo 2005, p.106). Cultural contact can be beneficial to societies, but it can also be sincerely detrimental.

With tourist desiring their ultimate get away, sometimes including illegal activities, certain informal economies have arisen to accommodate these. “Sex tourism flourishes in the region and is subliminally promoted through the sort of advertising which associates the Caribbean with ‘letting your hair down’ and hedonism” (Pattullo 2005, p.108). Formal prostitution has gained such a footing, that it is now considered a significant problem. Trafficking and crime circles are only a few of related problems. Alongside sex tourism, drug use is another high sought out on vacation. With the coming and going of planes and cruise ships daily, the trafficking of drugs has been made easy (Pattullo 2005, p.115). Again, associated crime networks are intertwined with the trade. Informal economies, such as prostitution, drug trafficking, and crime networks, offer a source of quick cash and income. The growth of such economic sectors may be good for the individual, but as for the community as a whole, they lose out on any hypothetical tax revenue.
Digging a little deeper, we can observe some underpinning racial issues in tourist industry. As I previously discussed, most of the aboriginal populations of the Caribbean have disappeared. Today, the locale has an unprecedented span of demographics. A mixture of African, Asian and Europeans descendents compose the cultural landscape of the region. These three continents are not only represented individually on the islands, but also have interbred yielding distinct cultural diversity. Thus each island entails extremely unique cultural productions depending on the historical origin of their colonizers and slave/indentured labor force. The prevailing diversity on the landscape has long been troublesome. In the past, skin color was a dominant factor in the treatment of individuals. “…The Caribbean economy was divided into the European sector and the Negro sector; the slave was debarred from the European sector” (Williams 1984, p.187). Although humanity has banned colonialism and shunned the practice of slavery, the residuals of such practices still linger. The tourism industry’s track record highlights this:

Tourism reinforced the social superiority of whites, encouraged black subordination and servility, and fed white prejudice and narcissism. The barring of blacks from hotels and beaches frequented by whites is only one example of how tourism rigidified class divisions and enhanced social snobbery. (Strachan 2002, p.10)

Whereas today blatant racism is looked down upon, a more concealed form sometimes occurs. For example, George Gmelch (2003) highlights the disproportionate amount of whites in management positions (p.27). With the “black” being in the servitude role, and the “white” being in the served role, some declare it a byproduct of colonialism.
I. The Literary Development of the Caribbean

Throughout the entire conquest of the Caribbean, additional elements condoned such treatment of the region. One important aspect is the continuous portrayal of the Caribbean culture in colonial literature. The few who experienced the Caribbean took back with them, to Europe, bias accounts that would forever tarnish the true Caribbean situation. This Euro-centric perspective not only took root, but even more, is still employed today in the tourism industry. Thus, it’s imperative to also consider the literary development of the Caribbean perception that developed alongside its era of European colonialism.

Although the Caribbean has been scarred from various atrocities, the European sentiments attached with ‘discovery’ have had their ill effects. In her text “Iconic Islands” Mimi Sheller looks into the Euro-American attitudes on their encroachment of the Caribbean, and in turn how they are linked to today’s notion of the territory’s identity. Paying attention to three key periods, Sheller pinpoints the underpinnings for the “tourist gaze” that entices naive travelers each year. In the initial stage of “discovery” for Europeans, the abundant new vegetation of the land offered never imagined bounties of color, shapes and edibles. Excited with their cataloged finds, their mind raced with “imagery of tropical fecundity, and excessive fruitfulness, which conjured up utopian fantasies of sustenance without labor, even though this was manifestly at odds with the difficult experience of survival” (Sheller 2003, p.42).
This excitement and spread of novel experiences became linked to the subsequent shift towards fascination with landscapes and the usefulness of its byproducts. In turn, the crafted scenery and landscape “operated as an allegory of colonial progress and productivity through the harnessing of nature for the production of wealth” (Sheller 2003, p.66). With this ‘cultivation’ of land came the pairing to slavery. Sheller (2003) pointed out how “ignoring the ugliness of the slave labor that went into making these ‘beautiful’ scenes of well cultivated land (became) a justification for slavery” (p.51). The Caribbean became a place of ambiguous truth, allowing the believer to pick and choose what they wanted to observe.

The final alteration on attitude toward this ‘exotic locale’ referenced in “Iconic Islands” returned the islands to their “natural” states as a playground for adventure. Although seemingly innocent, “such a reinvention of nature, however, requires either a vigilant removal of ‘local’ people from the staging of nature, or their scenic incorporation into the natural paradigm” (Sheller 2003, p.66). So although free from slavery, the people of the Caribbean were again to be shadowed by the land. Importantly noted by Sheller (2003) too, this ignoring of ‘local’ people “allowed tourists to move through the Caribbean, and to see Caribbean people simply as scenery” (p.62). The compounding of these three collective periods of thought came to build the foundation for modern day tourism and its treatment of Caribbean locals. The mindset of colonial manipulation and value of wealth is still alive. Even though slavery has ended, the harness of the Caribbean is still strongly controlled by the reigns of international tourism.

II. Modern Themes in Literature and Media
The narrow scope of the Caribbean has long been refined. People use a certain lens to see what they desire. While probably subconsciously, most tourists simply still perceive the locals as a component of the paradise. It’s much more comfortable to tune out the dissonance of the Caribbean. Whereas most local voices go unheard, today some are speaking louder. Literature from the Caribbean has now resonated to the corners of the earth, and cannot be ignored. By examining the themes and subject manners addressed, one can gain an idiosyncratic take on what is truly felt in the region.

Through the eyes of one who has endured colonialism and its legacy, we can see the importance of going beyond what one senses as reality. In her text *A Small Place* (1988), Jamaica Kincaid navigates her readers through the contrasting Antigua(s) that seemingly exist. She highlights the draw for tourist, and the feelings attached to those who seek relaxation and freedom. Subsequently, her juxtaposed account of living in an oppressed and corrupt nation stresses the perceptual incongruity. From these contradictory experiences we can realize how perpetuating one’s insularity acts to keep the mind at ease. More over, it’s an attempt to exonerate tourists from the misdoings that are truly occurring.

Kincaid depicts this interestingly in her discussion of slavery. “The unreal way in which (Antigua) is beautiful now that (Antiguans) are a free people is the unreal way in which it was beautiful when they were slaves” (Kincaid 1988, p.80). Giving Antiguans their freedom or independence did nothing to affect the beauty of land. The so-called “beauty” colonialism desired was artificial, and its ruthless legacy still affects Antiguans today. Kincaid (1988) urges people to see how this has even blinded Antiguans. “…For an institution that is celebrated in Antigua is the Hotel Training school, a school that
teaches Antiguans how to be good servants, how to be a good nobody, which is what a servant is” (p.55). Her powerful words force readers to connect the dots between perceptions of freedom and manipulation of the tourist industry:

In Antigua, people cannot see a relationship between their obsession with slavery and emancipation and their celebration of Hotel Training School… people cannot see a relationship between their obsession with slavery and emancipation and the fact that they are governed by corrupt men, or that these corrupt men have given their country away to corrupt foreigners. (Kincaid 1988, p.55)

As a voice of the Caribbean experience, she cannot get over the past because the past is till tangible in the present. In Paradise and Plantation, Strachan (2002) elaborates on Kincaid’s thoughts. “The descendents of African slaves continue to be exploited by the descendents and heirs of those who were masters. They are working for them; they are still exposed to their racism; and they are still generating profit for them” (p.228). Jamaica Kincaid’s jeremiad compels readers to understand that even being a passive player such as an “innocent tourist” implicates you as a link in the Caribbean colonialism’s deceptive legacy.

Giving a picture to the words, Stephanie Black, the director of Life and Debt (2001), unveils the actuality of this so-called paradise to her audience. While she addressed various economic components, a portion of her documentary stems from the ramifications of tourism. By jumping back and forth between the real Jamaica and the one presented to travelers, a huge discrepancy is revealed. Secluded to their “pristine paradise,” tourists have a clearly demarcated region marked by barbed wire. Although Jamaicans are allowed to enter the property if they are workers, other locals do not have access to this portion of island. Furthermore, labor is the only commodity associated with Jamaica; foreign multi national corporations suck the profits right out of the country.
*Life and Debt* builds upon the idea that tourism is another form of plantation economy. The economy is structured around one or few commodities that hinge on foreign markets and foreign powers. With this undiversified structuring comes the vast instability of a nation’s economy and their government as well. Hence the development and growth of these Caribbean nations is obstructed by foreign value of land over local people.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The similarities between the Caribbean’s history and the dominant tourist industry today cannot be denied. The novelties and excess wealth obtained by the Europeans during the triangular trade came at the cost of the not only the African Diaspora and genocide of aboriginal peoples, but the complete alteration of the Caribbean. The colonial era reaped immense profits from the triangular trade, which in turn fueled the growth of the mercantile class in Europe. The class provided a demand that kept the system of imperialism in place. Today, “...The Caribbean finds itself again coveted for its natural resources—this time, though, not for gold, silver, pearls, tobacco, cotton, or sugar, but for sun, sand and sea” (Strachan 2002, p.2). The region has obtained political sovereignty, yet is in a way now enduring neocolonialism:

No longer is the imagined Caribbean paradise a site where wealth can be attained in the money form (gold) or acquired via the export of commodities (sugar, tobacco and cotton). The site is now a sight. Now the Caribbean paradise is wealth; it is the commodity for sale; and it is profit. The paradise is now both myth and material good. Like the plantation that gave birth to it, Caribbean tourism is rooted in export, the export of paradise to North America and Europe. (Strachan 2002, p.112)

Time and time again, these islands have been transformed into what works best for their “discoverer”, “owner” and now “investor.” While tourism has had some benefits, it’s crucial to understand the residual it actually is. The Caribbean will never flourish by means of dependence on the “core” nations of the world. It must strive to break the chains that limit its growth and development. By understanding how the history of the area and the tourist industry today create such a detrimental environment, people can work towards empowering the Caribbean. This paper is in no way a
promotion of the complete removal of island tourism, yet is instead advocating for changes.

Global leaders should not and cannot fall for the fiscal trap that corporate tourism truly is. If they desire and support a prosperous future for the Caribbean region, they need to encourage economic diversification and a build up of new, local industries. Furthermore, travelers should gain a better understanding of the serious ramifications their actions instigate. Tourists have a voice. By choosing where to spend their money, they can make a conscious choice to support local industries instead of foreign ones. Ultimately, severing the mass reliance on foreign transnational companies will give the Caribbean the push in the right direction.

The exploitation of the region has gone on for too long, enabling tourism to mask the horrific past that still lingers today. Toni Morrison once said, “definitions belong to the definer, not the defined.” Her words like so many others encourage us to challenge and break free of constructs placed upon people, and cherish the diversity and freedom of identity. If we ever want to finally put the evils of colonialism and slavery behind us, its time to stand up to the historical, social and economic manipulation of this invented “exotic” appeal of the Caribbean.
Works Cited


