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## Imaginings in/of Paradise: Bahamian Literature and the Culture of a Tourist Economy

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## Imaginings in/of Paradise: Bahamian Literature and the Culture of a Tourist Economy

But in our tourist brochures the Caribbean is a blue pool into which the republic dangles the extended foot of Florida as inflated rubber islands bob and drinks with umbrellas float towards her on a raft. This is how the islands from the shame of necessity sell themselves; this is the seasonal erosion of their identity, that high-pitched repetition of the same images of service that cannot distinguish one island from the other, with a future of polluted marinas, land deals negotiated by ministers, and all of this conducted to the music of Happy Hour and the rictus of a smile. What is the earthly paradise for our visitors? Two weeks without rain and a mahogany tan, and, at sunset, local troubadours in straw hats and floral shirts beating "Yellow Bird" and "Banana Boat Song" to death. There is a territory wider than this - wider than the limits made by the map of an island - which is the illimitable sea and what it remembers.

—Derek Walcott, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory"

In his 1992 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Derek Walcott expresses deep concern over the effects of tourism on Caribbean identity and culture.<sup>1</sup> As Walcott suggests in the epigraph above, tourism advertisements represent the Caribbean as an "earthly paradise," and the region is rendered available and ready to serve North America's (and Europe's) traveling (consuming) public(s). Hence, different Caribbean islands must sell themselves and their tourist product through "the shame of necessity." In order to attract much needed visitors to "island paradise," the region has to reproduce dominant colonial and neocolonial images of the Caribbean. He recognizes that the region has very few choices due to the far-reaching effects of neocolonialism of the United States, the "republic," which "dangles" its foot into the Caribbean Sea, and Caribbean postcolonial governments who are complicit in the exploitation of their countries. The image of various Caribbean countries as "inflated rubber islands," along with the iconic tourist scene of drinks and umbrellas, highlights his fear that there is a "seasonal erosion of their identity." Walcott's concerns resonated deeply in 1992 and remain a serious concern today for the island nations of the Caribbean, particularly with the far-reaching effects of globalization. But as he asserts, there is so much more to these islands than tourist advertisements could ever show—its seas and histories are boundless. Caribbean artists and intellectuals and writers continue to resist and write against the dominant colonial and neocolonial representations of paradise by unveiling the "illimitable sea and what it remembers" and by challenging the ways in which tourism affects identity.

This essay is a section of a larger project that investigates the literary and cultural production of a tourist economy in order to demonstrate the extent to which tourism affects identity, highlighting the Bahamas as a prime site for examining the effects of tourism on culture. My larger project combines an analysis of interviews with workers in the tourist and culture industries, the national festival Junkanoo, and selected literary works by Bahamian local writer Marion Bethel and Bahamian diasporic writer Christian Campbell. In my field work conducted in the Bahamas, I found that some cultural workers and artists work inside or with the tourist industry to produce viable national culture and alternative tourism models, specifically the educator and cultural activist Arlene Nash-Ferguson, through her organization and concept Educulture, who works to create a sustainable tourism model while resisting exploitative tourist

consumption.<sup>2</sup> While the longer study includes a detailed analysis of my field work and research on Junkanoo, this section focuses on an analysis of Bahamian Literature.

I focus on the Bahamas because the country has been devoted to tourism since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and its economy is overly dependent on tourism with over 5 million visitors annually and the industry accounting for 63% of jobs in the country.<sup>3</sup> By far the number one industry, tourism is the most important economic activity in the Bahamas. Tourism shapes Bahamian identity and national culture in a fundamental way because it is so important to the national economy; as a result, tourism is integrated into the education system and drastically influences how culture is produced. In my research and field work, I found that while many Bahamian people, including workers in the tourist and culture industries and artists, acknowledge the powerful role of tourism in shaping their identity and national culture, they have different strategies of negotiating tourism depending on their relationship to the tourist industry. Bahamian writers, those who are financially independent from the tourist industry yet deeply concerned about tourism, directly challenge tourism's influence on Bahamian culture and identity by exposing tourism's power in the country and the region.

I offer an extensive analysis of two Bahamian poets, Marion Bethel and Christian Campbell, and their criticisms of tourism and neocolonialism. Bethel and Campbell represent in different ways the racial, sexual, and gender politics of travel and tourism, rooted in the history of slavery and colonialism. They both deconstruct dominant colonial and gendered structures through a (re)writing of history, while at the same time, reimagining and resisting paradise discourse. Marion Bethel's poetry demonstrates the continuity of slavery and conquest in contemporary tourism, as she (re)writes Bahamian history and identity while Christian Campbell's poetry engages in the sexual and gendered aspects of tourist exploitation, as he (re)writes Bahamian identity and sexuality. These two Bahamian poets offer (re)imaginings in "paradise" as they (re)imagine "paradise" itself.

As critics of tourism have shown, the Bahamas is one of the most "successful" tourism destinations in the Caribbean region. In his important book *Paradise and Plantation*, Ian Strachan posits that the Bahamas tourist industry works so well because of its deep investment in the image of paradise.<sup>4</sup> The myth of paradise has a long and extensive history grounded in colonial rule, slavery, and travel narratives, and as he argues Caribbean tourism is a direct offshoot of the plantation system. Ironically, as Strachan explains, "the plantation economy never flourished in the Bahamas until tourism".<sup>5</sup> Where the Bahamas failed as a "viable" British colony in terms of the plantation system and the sugar industry (due to the poor soil and limestone rock across the island chain), it has benefited from the "unproductive" landscape and the perceived "perfect" picture of paradise – white sand, untouched beaches, clear ocean-blue seas, hundreds of islands in the sun. These images are continuously sold and packaged vis-à-vis the global tourist industry:

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 American and Europe.<sup>6</sup>

The product being exported is most often controlled by foreign companies and multinational corporations; therefore, what defines paradise and gets exported is determined for the most part outside the region.<sup>7</sup> While it is clear that the tourist-consumer then purchases this construction or myth and travels with the expectation of consuming paradise as a product, Strachan wonders how the propaganda and myth-making of paradise over the centuries, especially in the last 50 years, have affected people who live in these spaces.

In thinking about this question, I extend it to consider how this imagined paradise has become “real” with its ability to wield profit and to have a direct material influence on those who participate and facilitate its consumption—perhaps a “needed” paradise:

But can tourism shape self-perception of Bahamians through its presence? So pervasive and overpowering an industry must—through its physical presence, its economic presence, its social presence, and its media presence—impose itself on the imaginations of Bahamians, impose itself in such a way that it begins to affect how Bahamians imagine themselves as social beings, how Bahamians imagine the landscape of their community, country, and world.<sup>8</sup>

Strachan makes an irrefutable case for the prominence of tourism and the myth of paradise in the Caribbean, and establishes the overwhelming presence of tourism and its influence on Bahamian people and culture.<sup>9</sup> While he argues that Bahamians “must contend with a state-sanctioned and financed, industrially packaged brochure myth-reality,”<sup>10</sup> what he does not engage directly with *how* they contend with and respond to this “myth-reality” and the ways it affects culture and identity. I take a more specific look at the work of Bahamian writers and cultural workers in order to conceptualize *how* tourism affects culture and identity in a tourist-dependent economy. Strachan reflects upon the work of Bahamian intellectuals, writers, artists, and other cultural workers to explain that Bahamians are thinking more critically about tourism and its effects.<sup>11</sup> But he does not offer a detailed analysis of these works because his project is engaged with a historical analysis of the myth and metaphors of paradise (and connections to plantation) and how this is fundamental to tourism. In this regard I am extending, Strachan’s work. My project is concerned with how Caribbean writers, artists, and intellectuals resist this myth-reality, and *how* tourism affects identity within an over-dependent tourist economy; and more specifically, how Bahamian writers negotiate the culture of a tourist economy.

Marion Bethel is arguably one of the most distinguished Bahamian poets today. She has one book of poetry *Guanahani, My Love* published in 1995, with a reprint edition soon to be released, and her work has been published widely in several Caribbean and international journals and publications.<sup>12</sup> She has recently completed a second manuscript of poetry, *Bougainvillea Ringplay*, published by Peepal Tree Press in 2009.<sup>13</sup> Bethel’s main profession is law—she is an attorney running her own law firm in Nassau. This reflects a reality of many Bahamian writers who more often than not have a main career outside of writing.<sup>14</sup> She critiques tourism in a number of poems, perhaps most stridently in a selection from her first book and in two poems from her new published collection of poetry.<sup>15</sup>

Bethel offers a challenge to colonialism by addressing the period of conquest in the Bahamas, the site of the first European contact in the New World. She begins *Guanahani, My Love* with a few poems that frame the Bahamas as exploited from the very first moment of European contact through the enslavement and genocide of the indigenous people (the Tainos, known as the Lucayans and Arawaks), and the subsequent enslavement of African peoples

through the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Her re-envisioning and (re)writing the dominant narratives of history and conquest continue through to her engagement with tourism and neocolonialism. In the poem “Of Pirates and Junkanoo,” she uses the figure of the pirate as a way to discuss consumption and exploitation, and she juxtaposes the image of the pirate with the Junkanoo figure as a sign of resistance. Capturing an image of Caribbean paradise in the opening lines, the poet says “I drum away a dream drunk / in pirated laughter and gold”.<sup>16</sup> This dream represents, what Strachan, refers to as the myth-reality of paradise, which is grounded in conquest and the search for gold; therefore, the Junkanoo performer in this poem attempts to “drum away” or forget this myth-reality that is soaked in stolen bodies and resources. Junkanoo provides a yearly escape from a sordid history and daily realities that conflict with the myth of paradise. The speaker continues, “I blow again my shell of conch / stripped of wax / chronicler of stacks / of raw sugar, tobacco and mould”.<sup>17</sup> The conch shell was traditionally used in Junkanoo as one of the horns that accompany the goatskin drums, cowbells, whistles, and bicycle horns. While the conch shell as a horn was used during slavery by slave masters and drivers to call in slaves to/from the fields, it was also used as a form of communication among slaves, particularly for planning rebellions and forming maroon communities.<sup>18</sup> Given the history of Junkanoo during slavery, the use of the conch shell connects the Bahamian festival to resistance. Thus, the conch shell can be seen as a complicated symbol of resistance because it is being used here by the Junkanoo performer “stripped” of its memory of “raw sugar, tobacco and mould,” and at the same time, the shell carries these memories as “chronicler.” The Junkanoo performer is attempting to forget, but at the same time forced to remember and understand this past in the present.

Bethel interrogates the history of the Bahamas by uncovering the past (slavery and colonialism) to better understand the present (neocolonialism). The nation is trapped under the weight of this history: the theft of resources; the abuse of people through slavery; and the lies of stability under colonial rule and domination. We can again envision the speaker as a Junkanoo performer (re)telling this history:

I sing acappella a nation sunk  
trapped in a piracy mould  
swaggering about a golden trunk  
of union jacks  
Americana pax  
found in a slaver’s hold.<sup>19</sup>

The nation is trapped in the mold of constant piracy of resources and people, and the dominant narrative of colonial history does not address this. This “piracy mould” could also refer to the nation of the Bahamas as a colonial construction—a mimic and former colony of ‘motherland’ England, “swaggering” in its reproduction, and under the neocolonial rule of “Americana pax” or American pox, U.S. Imperialism. Bethel ends the poem with a swift move from past to present as the speaker changes and speaks to the Junkanoo performer specifically and to Bahamian people more broadly:

Blow that conchshell shake them bells  
in junkanoo resistance bold  
pirates sell land like tourist shells

greased hands  
 in a trance  
 of lashes, myths of gold.<sup>20</sup>

The speaker is urging readers here to resist and use Junkanoo as it once was—as a form of cultural resistance to those in power—and to simply remember this form of “resistance bold” and speak out against the exploitation of the Bahamas. The pirates selling “land like tourist shells” represent the government and land-owning (mostly white and near white) elite of the Bahamas, who continue to perpetuate (consciously or unconsciously) a history of conquest, plantation, and myth-making of paradise. In this poem, Bethel denounces the exploitation of the Bahamas and calls for resistance in terms of (re)writing history, revitalizing Junkanoo as cultural resistance, and raising the issue of land ownership.

Land ownership and control have been major issues not only in the Bahamas but across the region, with multinational corporations, cruise lines, and tour companies (among others such as rich celebrities) buying their own piece of “paradise” for use in the tourist industry or for private use. This is a serious problem in the Bahamas with literally hundreds of small islands and cays for sale to the highest bidder. The Bahamas’ real estate is being marketed using paradise discourse to sell the islands. According to the International Herald Tribune, the islands of the Bahamas are the new ‘hot spot’ in real estate because of its number and variety of islands, proximity to the United States, and the Bahamas’ stable economy. On October 18, 2007, they ran a story titled “Tide of investment sweeps Bahamas”:

From the capital city of Nassau on New Providence to less sparsely populated islands in the chain, high-end residential projects are in development with amenities that almost routinely include golf courses designed by champions, equestrian centers, full-service marinas accommodating vessels as long as 200 feet, or 60 meters, private air strips, dive shops, spas, unspoiled beaches and turquoise waters. Almost anything built in the Bahamas these days is considered upscale, with developers courting clients who have multiple homes around the globe. But the prices, linked to the American dollar, look like bargains to anyone paying in pounds or euros.<sup>21</sup>

The upscale developments they are referring to here certainly do not include Bahamian working class or even middle class homes or businesses. Outside of the privately-owned homes, developments are owned and operated for the most part by multinational corporations. It seems that the real estate market is excited about “paradise” - all those “empty” and “deserted” islands just waiting to be “developed.” The article by stating that this “archipelago where Columbus discovered the New World and Hemingway fished has long been a winter hideaway for the super-rich, the titled and the famous, protecting their privacy and often their fortunes in lush enclaves far from the cruise-ship crowd”.<sup>22</sup> While the Bahamas certainly has a cruise-ship industry, the writer is referencing a long history of privately-owned islands throughout the Bahamas that are sold by the Bahamas government. During the 1970s and 1980s, this occurred most often through private purchases and to the super-rich, but now it is increasingly, as the article suggests, through development companies that are building resorts, marinas, and/or gated communities. This is what Bethel refers to in her poem when she writes “pirates sell land like tourist shells.” Unfortunately, this has only increased.

The relationship between tourism and neocolonialism is evident in her poem titled “On a Coral Cay,” where she connects the dependence on the tourist industry in the Bahamas to the “failed” industries of the past. The poem opens with the declaration, “On a coral cay where tourism is king / divine and banking, a silver prince / where sugar never was, no hardly / where cotton never was, not much”.<sup>23</sup> In the mid 1990s, tourism and banking reigned supreme in the Bahamas as the number one and number two industries respectively within a space where sugar and cotton plantations failed. The poem continues with references to other industries that flourished then failed in the Bahamas during the colonial period—whaling, wrecking, sponging, pirating, and rum running. The speaker then says “we do not grieve our loss / of the cassava Bahamians / to the Sargasso sea,” meaning those who died on failed plantations; “for we are the conch Bahamians / we do not pain for what / we do not know we have lost”.<sup>24</sup> The “conch Bahamians” or contemporary Bahamians have little knowledge of the history of plantation life in the Bahamas because of the lack of history books that address this subject. Bahamian history for the most part is told through the eyes of the colonizer and Bahamian white and near-white elite.<sup>25</sup> Here Bethel laments the loss of this history and the ancestors whose stories go untold, while at the same time (re)writing history in subtle yet powerful ways. She connects the “conch Bahamians” and their lack of knowledge to the success of tourism and banking.

The last stanza of the poem, “On a Coral Cay,” returns to tourism with the speaker making a clear relationship between tourism and plantation slavery:

On a coral cay where we live  
on a tourist plantation, a banking  
estate where the air is conditioned  
and so are hands that do not know  
the fishing line or pineapple soil  
We produce nothing, or hardly and  
we service the world, or nearly  
In our air conditioned service  
We are blessed waiters of grace divine.<sup>26</sup>

Bethel asserts that the Bahamas is a “tourist plantation” and “banking estate,” where Bahamian people are “conditioned” to provide service for both the tourist and banking industries. As a result, very few Bahamians participate in other industries such as fishing and agriculture, which would allow the country to explore and utilize other resources. Fishing and agriculture are continuously undervalued as tourism and banking receive most of the government’s attention and support. When the poet proclaims “we produce nothing, or hardly,” she is not making a Naipaulian claim that “nothing was created in the West Indies,”<sup>27</sup> but rather she is referring to a literal lack of production of food and products in the Bahamas. She is comparing Bahamians’ servicing of the world with the very limited supply of locally-produced food and product; thus directly linking the plantation slavery, even though it “failed” in the Bahamas, to the success of tourism and banking. The poem offers an insightful critique of tourism that interrogates its neocolonial structure and suggests implicitly that the Bahamas invest in other industries that are more sustainable and will build self-reliance—hence, her poetry posits a postcolonial critique of tourism.

In Bethel’s more recent work, she maintains a critical eye on tourism and neocolonialism, and in so doing, (re)writes Bahamian histories and herstories. In other words, she is (re)writing

“history” from the perspective of the racialized and gendered subject that includes multiple stories from both female and male vantage points. Specifically in two poems, she addresses the figure of Christopher Columbus, the problematic history surrounding the Columbus landfall on San Salvador, the historical inaccuracies of the Columbus story, and how this narrative is used in Bahamian history from the perspective of a young Black female. Hence, Bethel (re)writes the Columbus colonial (racialized and gendered) travel discourse through two poems “Guh Morning, Columbus” and “Guh Night, Columbus”.<sup>28</sup> These (re)writings are vital to resisting paradise discourse because the Columbus narrative is deeply entrenched in the Bahamian tourist industry and the historical inaccuracies are played out over and over again in the Bahamian education system and cultural productions. Therefore, I see Bethel’s poetry as a much needed corrective.

In the poem “Guh Mornin, Columbus,” Bethel writes in the voice of a young girl attending primary school, who talks about her lunchtime ringplay games and the freedom and release she has in the dance and movements. She then tells of a story she has written at school, which she calls “my school of 1492 on School Lane”.<sup>29</sup> By calling the school 1492, Bethel draws attention to the moment that marks the beginning of European conquest, genocide, and colonization in the “New World.” It also marks the beginning of the “official” history of the Bahamas—“discovered” by Columbus, inhabited by the “peaceful natives” who welcomed Columbus and “happily” assisted him in claiming these lands for Spain. The idea and image of the landfall thought to be on the island of San Salvador remains an iconic symbol for the Bahamas, particularly in terms of national identity and its position in the global tourist industry. The Bahamas’ Ministry of Tourism promotes the country as the place where “Columbus made his first landfall in the New World on the island of San Salvador” (“The Bahamas”). Although historians and geographers have debated the exact island (all located in the Bahamas) Columbus first landed on, the country remains “the first” and this “fact” is used within the dominant narrative of history, which feeds tourism discourses. As Strachan argues Columbus has been deified and glorified especially in the tourist industry as “his ‘discovery’ of ‘paradise’ has become the centerpiece of the nation’s history”.<sup>30</sup> The celebration of Columbus is sustained and celebrated through education and national identifiers: the statue of Columbus, which stands in front of the Government House, and the October 12<sup>th</sup> national holiday (which was still celebrated as “Discovery Day” well into the 1990s, now officially called “National Heroes Day” but still colloquially called Discovery or Columbus Day).<sup>31</sup>

The Columbus story is powerful and even though people “know” about the Taino (Lucayan) genocide, Columbus is still revered and even worshipped.<sup>32</sup> As Caribbean historians and scholars have asserted, a more complete recording of this history would explain several points quite differently: the “natives” were called “Indians” by Columbus because he thought he was in the Indies, and henceforth, the indigenous people of this hemisphere have had to endure the misnomer “Indian” for over five hundred years; Columbus essentially began the practice of slavery; most of the indigenous peoples were killed post-European contact and conquest. But the dominant narrative of this history, one that proclaims “happy, peaceful natives” greeted Columbus with open arms, is taught in schools across the world; and in the Bahamas’ colonial education system, this story is taught as the Bahamian story, the Bahamian beginning. But as Strachan explains, “some local voices have challenged the privileged place Columbus is afforded in history and in the national psyche,”<sup>33</sup> and this is exactly what Bethel does in her poems that address Columbus. She directly confronts and resists the powerful place of Columbus in Bahamian history and culture by challenging and (re)writing the Columbus story.

“Guh Mornin, Columbus” closes with the young speaker’s story which reveals how a



young Bahamian girl understands the Columbus narrative, while also challenging it by inserting herself into this colonial and gendered narrative. Also, the speaker incorporates seemingly unrelated historical events, places, and people into her adventures, and this disrupts the dominant discourse of the colonial period:

I am captain of the pirate ship the *Santa Maria* and fight on the  
side of Anne Bonney at the Battle of Waterloo we capture  
Horatio Nelson land on Guanima wearing Edward VIII's  
bearskin cap and traditional red coat

we traded chiclets for cassava with the Lucayan children

before the end of the beginning with the blessings of Hatuey  
we unbury the hatchet<sup>34</sup>

The young Bahamian girl imagines herself as the captain of the *Santa Maria*, which was Columbus flagship, but she calls it a pirate ship. This displaces the normative historical rendering of Columbus as explorer or “discoverer” and moves his voyage into the realm of piracy, theft and plunder. Moreover, she then evokes a battle with Anne Bonney, a female pirate in the 1700s who lived in Nassau and traveled across the Caribbean, thereby (re)writing herstory. She continues by situating herself and Anne Bonney as shipmates who capture Nelson Horatio, a British Admiral during the late 1700s who helped to fight off Napoleon from invading Great Britain. Anne Bonney and our young girl speaker land on Guanima, the Lucayan name for Cat Island, which has been one of the debated islands for the actual landfall of Columbus in 1492. By wearing Edward VIII's bearskin hat and a traditional British army red coat, they are both pirates and British conquerors. Edward VIII was King of England in 1936 and named Duke of Windsor after voluntarily abdicating the British throne because of his relationship with divorcee Wallis Warfield; he was later assigned governorship of the Bahamas from 1940 to 1945 during World War II.<sup>35</sup> In these seemingly unrelated moments, Bethel brings multiple European histories together to tell her story of Columbus, perhaps to show how these histories collide and illustrate colonialism at work from the very first moment of contact.

These collisions are particularly evident through the speaker's (re)telling of Columbus' landfall and the “exchange” that the dominant narrative of history says happened between the Europeans and the Amerindians. When the school girl explains “we traded chiclets for cassava with the Lucayan children,” she subtly critiques the “trade” by showing its inequity—the gum that the Europeans brought were unnecessary and offered no real sustenance; while the Lucayans shared food and knowledge of the land—providing nourishment and long-lasting necessary sources of sustenance. The final line of the poem resonates with a subtle (re)writing of history of the untold story of Taino (and by extension Lucayan) resistance. The legend of Hatuey describes him as a famous Taino Cacique (chief) who fled from Spanish rule in Hispaniola to Cuba with a group of his tribe to warn their island neighbors of the European invasion. He did this after seeing what Columbus and his fellow colonists had in store for the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean. Celebrated as the first Cuban martyr in the struggle for independence, Hatuey was captured and killed in 1512 by Spanish conqueror Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar.<sup>36</sup> The closing line of Bethel's “Guh Mornin, Columbus” leaves us with this image of unburying the hatchet with Hatuey, and inserting the resistance of Tainos into the Columbus story while also

acknowledging the genocide and enslavement of indigenous peoples across the Caribbean as an important and necessary part of Columbus' legacy that must be incorporated into the dominant narrative.

In "Guh Night, Columbus," Bethel writes again from the perspective of a young Bahamian child, who remembers Sunday drives with her family across the small island of New Providence. This poem works to not only (re)write colonial and gendered travel discourse, but it also (re)claims space and place at the time of Bahamian independence. The speaker (re)imagines these Sunday trips as adventures and places them within the context of literature she more than likely read in British colonial schools she tells us that "I had a place on top of the hill where the world began to be / there forever was my hope like rich mineral deposit set / deep in quarry stone / I also longed to travel the Silk Road to the court of Kubla Khan".<sup>37</sup> Bethel asserts, through her speaker, a Black female child's desire to travel, explore, and see the world. The poem also illustrates her understanding of independence: "what I learned as a child before the split the separation from / rock at ten was this: coloured colonial christian charitable in / prayer I was no interloper on this land my father drove us / on Sundays in every direction".<sup>38</sup> Before independence from Britain (July 11, 1973), the speaker explains what she has learned about colonial Bahamas and its people, being a Black person, a colonized subject, and a good praying Christian, ideas reinforced through the British colonial education system. But once "the split" or independence occurs, she knows that she is "no interloper"—she belongs to this land, on which her ancestors were enslaved. (While technically speaking all non-indigenous peoples in the Western Hemisphere are "interlopers," the speaker suggests a claim to this land through the complicated history of being both colonized and descended from Africans enslaved in the New World.) This issue of belonging and not belonging is directly connected to not only the period of independence, establishing who "belongs" to the nation, but it is also a reflection of the colonial mechanisms of control through slavery and the post-emancipation era.

The Sunday drives "in every direction" can be seen as a (re)claiming of land and space, and as the poem continues, the speaker describes different places throughout the island. As they drive down various streets, the speaker remarks upon landmarks, upper-class neighborhoods, and areas of the island where rich (mostly white) Bahamians and foreigners reside—Lyford Cay and Eastern Road. The speaker asserts herself as belonging to the island, "I was no trespasser no intruder in this land," as she moves through these areas that are reminders of the class divisions and socio-economic privilege of those living behind "the great wall of Lyford Cay... with castles and moats and towers" and on "the eastern road of more themostest citadels and strongholds".<sup>39</sup> Bethel is offering a locally-specific critique of space and land at the moment of independence in the Bahamas, with references to different areas and neighborhoods. A private, gated, and exclusive community on the western tip of New Providence, Lyford Cay remains to this day predominantly rich, white, and foreign, with a few exceptions in recent years of rich Black Bahamians residing there. Similarly, the area known as Eastern Road (not a gated community, but rather a stretch of land on the eastern coast of New Providence) is filled with mansions and high end residencies, and the people who reside there are often called the "Eastern Road White Knights." However, a number of well-off, middle to upper class Black Bahamians reside on and near Eastern Road; regardless, these neocolonial spaces in the Bahamas continue to represent the have's and the have not's, class status, and socio-economic privilege. Bethel's poem focuses on the independence moment, yet issues of land ownership and class divisions remain a concern of many Bahamians; this poem calls attention to the different spaces that exist on the island.

Therefore, this journey must also take them to the tourist spaces on the island as the family arrives in downtown Nassau where the cruise ships dock: “in the north we promenaded with our father along Prince / George Dock in Sundayschool clothes acted our part in / american showtime a scramble for pennies the bronze head of George Washington flung by bejeweled hands / from a cruise / ship”.<sup>40</sup> Bethel invokes a story (based on history) at the cruise ship dock, in which young Bahamian boys used to dive for pennies “entertaining” tourists to get money.<sup>41</sup> As the family watches, they too become apart of this “american showtime” from the perspective or gaze of tourists, the “jeweled hands” on the cruise ship. “American showtime” makes reference to the Bahamas’ participation in the tourist industry—being accommodating to the United States, making deals with cruise ship companies, and producing culture for tourism. The speaker continues with the scene: “we sang to the tourists under our breath with the barefoot boys / who sang loud for their supper we stretched our eyes wide / held out breath for the diving boys diamond-studded with sea / water indigo-blue barracudas a flash-in-the pan of sky”.<sup>42</sup> The family can’t help but join in on the singing, softly perhaps in shame, as they listen to the boys sing, dive, and perform for a few dollars thrown from cruise ship passengers. The family holds their breaths with the diving boys as they enter the ocean; this holding of breaths represent the anxiety and fear of the possibility of the boys drowning. The harbor is quite deep near the cruise ships (dredged to accommodate the massive ships), and so this fear is both real and symbolic of the dangers of what tourism has done to the Bahamas and Bahamian people. Bethel reveals how much tourism is a part of the everyday for Bahamians—even on a Sunday drive (re)claiming land and space, there are some spaces in Nassau dominated by tourism and tourists that are arguably un-reclaimable. The family leaves Prince George Dock and heads south for home as the speaker continues to describe the streets and the movements across the island. As she begins with the image of her hope “set deep in quarry stone,” she ends with an image of her reading “still and silent and grounded as the quarry rock that / encircled me”.<sup>43</sup> The quarry, with its opening and closing images, forge a connection to the land itself—limestone rock which the islands of the Bahamas are comprised—and also Black Bahamians claim to this land. Even as the family travels around the island and are reminded of so much that is not theirs, downtown tourist spaces and (white) rich neighborhoods and areas, the speaker emphasizes her claim and her family’s claim to space.

Their movements across the island enacts this claim just as Columbus and other European conquerors did during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries—in fact, landfall for them was claim enough regardless of the people living there already. Hence, the poem’s title “Guh Night, Columbus” indicates a letting go of Columbus’ hold/claim on the Bahamas and bodes him and his “legacy” farewell. She invokes in this poem a kind of travel discourse from the perspective a Black woman, which resists the dominant travel narrative genre so often used from the 16th century on to lay claim to the New World and prove that the “natives” needed to be colonized and Christianized. The long history of colonization and enslavement began with Columbus and the 1492 landfall, and still he and the iconic landfall image continue to be deified, celebrated, and commodified in the contemporary Caribbean tourist industry. The two poems “Guh Mornin, Columbus” and “Guh Night, Columbus” work together to account for and dispel the powerful discourse of Columbus worship and disrupt the place of the Columbus story in Bahamian history. Through her poems, Bethel directly engages in a (re)writing of history that seeks to challenge neocolonial and gendered discourses of travel and tourism that are firmly entrenched in the history of slavery and colonialism.

Christian Campbell’s poetry also creates this challenge but does so in different ways—

through subtle metaphors that reveal the profound influence of tourism on Bahamian identity and culture through an engagement with the sexual and gendered aspects of tourist exploitation. Specifically, Campbell's poems "Groove" and "Welcome Centre" offer poignant critiques of tourism and its affects Bahamian culture and identity. Through poetic renderings of two sexualized and racialized figures often used and stereotyped in tourism discourse, the "rent-a-dread" or "beach boy" in "Groove" and the "straw market woman" in "Welcome Centre," Campbell (re)writes Bahamian identity and sexuality by demonstrating the extent to which tourism influences cultural production and self-perception. Moreover, he challenges tourist exploitation by confronting the asymmetric relationships that emerge in sex tourism and the ways the Black female body and sex are sold in tourism.

The poem "Groove" deals with the difficult (and often taboo) subject of romance and sex tourism with what many in the Caribbean call the "beach boy" or "rent-a-dread"—generally described as local Black men who spend time with and have sex with female tourists in exchange for money, food, lodging, and other material items.<sup>44</sup> In sex tourism studies, these "exchanges" are sometimes called "romance" tourism because of the time spent together, and it is often described as something different from prostitution.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, like Kamala Kempadoo and Denise Brennan, I see romance tourism as a form of sex tourism that illustrates the unequal power dynamics and asymmetric relationship between locals and tourists.<sup>46</sup> The epigraph of "Groove" reveals the speaker as "the other voice of Winston Shakespeare from *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*".<sup>47</sup> The popular novel by Terry McMillan (which was also turned into a film) details the journey of a 40 year old, African American woman who travels to Jamaica on vacation and falls in love with a significantly younger Black Jamaican man. A subsequent visit to Jamaica ensues and Winston moves to the United States to be with Stella. This romance story traffics in the myth of paradise and shows how African Americans have also been fed and consume stereotypical images of the Caribbean. The novel (and film) are based on the author's own experiences and journey to Jamaica, which brought public attention to "romance" tourism—even though these kinds of "relationships" have been ongoing across the region for many years and have been an inextricable and unspoken component of tourism. But what is different about this film and novel is that both the tourist and the local are Black, while the perceived "usual" pairings for sex/romance tourism tend to be white tourists with Black locals.<sup>48</sup> The novel and film do not represent Winston as a "rent-a-dread" or "beach boy," but rather as someone who Stella just happens to meet at the hotel on her vacation. Hence, the "other voice" of Winston in Campbell's poem is referring to the other side of this story—perhaps a more realistic vision of the local who makes a living through sex tourism.

The opening lines of the poem focus on the ways in which the Black male body is fetishized and used within consumer culture generally, and more specifically, in the tourist industry: "I never born. / I walk out the water one day, / gleaming and black. / I walk out the water one day, / between Atlantis and The Shack".<sup>49</sup> While this scene can be thought of as reminiscent of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, beauty, and pleasure, who sprung from sea foam, it also closely invokes the image from the film in which Stella and Winston meet for the second time as he dives into the hotel pool and emerges "gleaming and black." Although *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* is set in Jamaica, Campbell's poem is set in the Bahamas, as the speaker makes reference to the hotel Atlantis on Paradise Island and other cultural markers, yet the speaker could be in any number of places across the Caribbean. The poem continues with the speaker explaining where he comes from, not being born, but rather created:

Me, I come from conch-songs  
and fire and under limbo bars,  
wooden monkeys in barrels  
where huge dicks spring out,  
clapboard houses, goombay,  
a raggamuffin's bop, the Ministry  
of Tourism. My thing, my thing.<sup>50</sup>

The speaker is a product of tourist songs and limbo and fire dances where Black men perform “native” dances in skimpy costumes that showcase not only their flexible bodies but also their “huge dicks” during shows that are mostly for tourists. He also comes from clapboard houses, made out of wood based on African designs, a vestige of slavery, and generally found “over the hill.” This area includes poor, working class neighborhoods in Nassau, and so this reference to houses subtly brings attention to the speaker’s working-class status and the class divisions that exist in the Bahamas. He also comes from Goombay, a summer festival during the 1980s created by the Ministry of Tourism specifically for the tourist industry, a raggamuffin’s walk (tough guise—rude boy), and the Ministry of Tourism. By placing these seemingly unrelated items together, Campbell shows how much tourism and the production of culture for tourism affects “self-perception.” This placement is significant because the speaker’s identity has been forged through tourist cultural productions and his class status, which is reinforced through the tourist industry and exploitation.

The male speaker understands his masculine identity, sexuality, and place in his country through the workings of tourism. Not only does the speaker define himself through tourism, but he also describes his body and his “thing”<sup>51</sup> (dick) through tourist motifs and colonial structures: “I make of muscle / and rum and straw. / tiny umbrellas and beads. / and the Bible and Shakespeare / and Africa”<sup>52</sup>. Rum, straw, tiny umbrellas, and beads all have significant placement in the tourist industry—from drinks and souvenirs to hair-braiding materials—that can be found in and near hotels and on hotel beaches. The speaker also defines himself through the Bible, Shakespeare, and Africa; in other words, the speaker understands himself as made not only through tourism but also through colonization and slavery. He has been forged through Christianity and a British colonial education system in which memorizing Shakespeare is almost as important as Bible class and attending church; and yet he is aware of his Blackness and that this Blackness has something to do with Africa and enslavement. By placing all these identity descriptors together, Campbell emphasizes the pervasiveness and profound influence on identity formation as colonialism and slavery because tourism erupted out of those institutions and travel and tourism discourses are immersed in colonial (racialized and gendered) discourses.

The speaker also understands himself and his identity through different jobs in the tourist industry, and he aligns these jobs with sex work. It is no coincidence that these are all low-paying service/entertainment jobs in the tourist industry; and while they are indeed gendered, they are for the most part jobs that poor and working class Bahamians do. He explains that he was also a number of people—a Market woman, a Banana man, a fire dancer, a glass-bottom boat operator, and a jet ski renter on the beach—before he became a “rent-a-dred.” The speaker compares these tourist workers and their jobs with the sex work that he is doing now—drawing a stark connection to the selling of souvenirs, food, performances, guided tours, and water rides with the selling of the body. Also, these jobs are gendered, yet he includes them together to show how sexualized both male and female bodies are in tourism; hence, his sex changes from

job to job, being female most obviously as Market woman and perhaps as fire dancer which could be male or female. Campbell creates a compelling vision that forces readers to confront the ways in which the Bahamas is selling itself through service, culture, and sex.

The speaker's voice is juxtaposed to that of other tourist workers, thereby aligning sex work with more "acceptable" jobs in the tourist industry and comparing these more "acceptable" service jobs to his sex service. The speaker describes his work as service: "I could fuck / like a goatskin drum. ... All day long I lift plenty / legs. I prowl. I ride".<sup>53</sup> He is using his "thing" (his body, dick, gleaming and Black) to uphold his masculinity, which is strengthened and assured through fucking and lifting "plenty legs." The speaker then says "somebody pounce a white gyal, / leave her in the bush to dead. / I lift plenty legs. I prowl. I ride".<sup>54</sup> He has heard about a white female tourist being raped and killed, but he cannot be too concerned as he continues his sex service, which is to "lift plenty legs" and prowl and ride. But this death is a threat to tourism and his economic future because it can damage the reputation of the Bahamas as a "safe" tourist destination. However, it is almost as if he can disconnect from the news of this rape/death because he implies that his sex acts are consensual, and he is desired by the female tourists—he is not like the "somebody" who committed this horrific act. But this disconnect is troubling and disturbing as female tourists become objects for his "prowl" and "ride"—a means to his end of asserting his manhood and sex skills, yet this is how he earns a living. Although this work as his livelihood, he derives power from being a male sex worker, perhaps because of sexism and in spite of racism, which he glorifies even as he hints at the problems in sex work. He seems able to separate himself from concerns of subjugation through his masculinity and ability to fuck well. He appears willing to play the part and be "the native" and this extends to all tourists regardless of race.

The speaker is aware of the ways in which his Blackness is made desirable through the tourist industry, and at the same time, he is also aware of how Black tourists may want to make Diasporic connections with him through his Blackness: "the black ones believe we / family, but I don't know / them niggers from Adam".<sup>55</sup> In other words, he says here that African Americans may think they are the same because they are Black, but to the speaker, they are not "family" simply because of skin color and race. His assertion ignores the shared history of enslavement and the commonalities across the African Diaspora and exposes how differences of class and nation can prevent Black Diasporic subjects from connecting—especially in the tourist industry. Moreover, Bahamians are in many ways taught to view African Americans as different even as they recognize their shared skin color. Bahamians are educated through the prism of tourism—"the tourist" is a visitor, a guest, who has money and is paying for service. As the poem closes, the speaker leaves us with images of who he is/must be for the (sex) tourist industry, for him to make money and be in the hotel space to solicit or be solicited:

You have to be barefoot.  
 You have to dance.  
 You have to have chest.  
 When my locks start to sprout,  
 I will make double.

O I have too much  
 to want.

America, America. Yes, America,  
I run the islands. You come.  
Look for me.<sup>56</sup>

The speaker explains the ways “the native” has to act and be within tourist spaces and the hotel: a well-shaped body, barefoot, and dancer, ready, willing, and open to act the part. All the assumptions and representations of “the native” come into play here as the speaker understands that he must perform and “be” these things in order to be pleasing to the tourist. And as the speaker explains, locks will be an added bonus to his cultural and “native” capital—he “will make double” once they “sprout.” Dreadlocks across the Caribbean and within promotions for tourism have come to signify the Caribbean Black man, the Rastafarian, the Beach Boy, and the Rent-a-dred. He understands the sexual desire of tourists for Blackness, locks, and a kind of masculine “native” performance, all found in the “rent-a-dred.” Furthermore, this highlights the ways in which “the islands,” and thus Blackness and Black maleness, are homogenized in the tourist industry with dreadlocks being indigenous to Jamaica and not the Bahamas.

With the refrain, “I have too much / to want,” the speaker expresses his own desire for more, but in a very ambiguous way, perhaps a desire for material possessions and socio-economic mobility; and so he sees his performance and sexual labor as the way too get what he wants. On the other hand, he could also be saying that he has had “too much” tourist women, thereby reflecting on what it means to desire and be desired in the context of consumption and sex work. The final lines of the poem reveal the ways in which this speaker sees himself as having power and agency; this is reflected in his telling “America” that he “run the islands”—he’s in charge, he has power. His directions to American tourists (since they comprise the majority of tourists in the Bahamas) are clear—“you come” and “look for me,” or rather the image of him. He will bring fantasies to life while earning money to work towards his dreams; we are not privy to his dreams or goals because he is performing “the native” role, which is dehumanizing on the one hand and on the other it has the illusion of power. But this is all a part of the fantasy—that he has any power of consequence is wrapped up in the fantasy and myth-reality of paradise. Nevertheless, he still views tourists as a way to achieve some status and earn money. He has been created through tourism and constructions of “the native” and sexual desire for the Other, and as a result, the gaze upon his body is projected back onto “the tourist” and desire for the tourist dollar. Campbell’s poem reveals the extent to which Bahamian local identities and culture are forged through tourism and conceptualized through tourist sexual desires even as the male “rent-a-dred” derives power from this position and hence has some albeit limited agency. This reflects the complicated negotiations that Bahamian people have to make within the culture of a tourist economy, specifically in terms of sexuality and the often unspoken and inextricable connection between tourism and sex.<sup>57</sup>

Sexual desire and sexuality are very much tied to the tourism package, not only directly through sex or romance tourism, but also through performance. In the poem “Welcome Centre,” Campbell writes about the tourist welcome center at Prince George Warf, downtown Nassau, where cruise ships dock and cruise ship passengers disembark. The Ministry of Tourism created this center specifically for tourists who arrive on cruise ships, for the purposes of greeting and giving information. “Welcome Centre” describes a Bahamian’s experience at the center upon seeing fellow Bahamians perform for tourists, and within this description, Campbell critiques the production (and fabrication) of Bahamian culture. The poem opens with the speaker explaining that he ended up at the welcome center looking for a Bahamian-made straw bag for his aunt: “I

went down Bay Street, downtown, / past the Queen Victoria Statue / and out near the water, to where / Bahamians don't go" (lines 6-9).<sup>58</sup> Bahamians may not "go" to the welcome center, but of course Bahamians are there working. There is an "old man in a palmtree shirt" playing the guitar and singing "Bahamas experience, you can find true romance..." (lines 10 & 14).<sup>59</sup> Wearing what many call the tourist industry's uniform, short sleeve, button down shirts with "paradise" motifs, from palm trees to flamingoes, he sings about the fantasy of "true romance" thereby confirming for tourists that they have made the right decision to visit "paradise." The Bahamas itself is romantic, and one can also "find" romance while visiting.

Along with the guitar playing and singing, there is also a dancing "straw woman" described by the speaker as a "solid woman rigged as a straw / doll in Androsia and pigtail wig" (lines 15-6).<sup>60</sup> She is dressed up in Androsia print, which is a Bahamian hand-made fabric, and a pigtail wig to make her look like a doll, probably to resemble the straw dolls sold along Bay Street and the straw market. She is "teaching tourists to dance, / greeting them with a high-pitched voice: / Welcome to the Bahamas!" (lines 17-19).<sup>61</sup> As she says her greeting, the speaker notices how she "popped her eyes when she said it, shook / her huge bottom as if / its own broad life" (lines 21-24).<sup>62</sup> She performs for the tourists; she is a dancing, "straw doll," with a shaking bouncing bottom with a life of its own. Her body is on display and her bottom is part of the show—Black female sexuality is promoted and consumed as part of the tourist experience in the Bahamas. This is certainly different from the "rent-a-dred" because there is no exchange of sex in this performance but rather the promise of sex; and yet they both sell their bodies, which have become part of the tourism product. The Bahamian speaker, suspicious of her bouncing bottom, remarks, "but somehow it was too ripe / inside the pink and white skirt. / Real flesh don't bounce like that. It was fake, an extra shelf / If I could touch it, I'd prove it" (lines 31-34).<sup>63</sup> The Bahamian speaker feels discomfort not only in watching this performance, but also in wondering how far this act really goes for his fellow Bahamian woman. What does she have to do to become the straw woman everyday? Perhaps she understands all too well the tourist sexual fantasy of "the native" and the female Black "native" more specifically, with "extra" bottom being an asset for this performance, what tourists expect to see, or rather what has been promoted through the global tourist industry.

Fascination and preoccupation with Black women's bodies is certainly nothing new given the history/herstory of the Hottentot Venus and Sarah Baartman's body parts and genitals being put on display in a museum in Paris (from 1815 to 1974). She was the object of Europe's gaze because of what Europeans saw as her extraordinarily large buttocks and genitals. Campbell's poem illustrates the continued fascination with Black women's bodies and how this operates in the tourist industry in the realm of performance and entertainment. The "straw woman" and the speaker's eyes meet, and he thinks they are both thinking the same thing, but then he wonders if she may just assume he is a tourist: "When our eyes caught, / she knew I knew. Or did she think / I was a tourist too?" (lines 36-38).<sup>64</sup> As this question lingers in the air, the speaker implies the extent to which sexual desire and sexuality are bound up in the tourist/local exchange. The tourist industry supports this and, in certain ways, facilitates these kinds of exchanges; this "straw woman" performance and the welcome center are fabricated, state-sanctioned operations, with Bahamians behind its design and construction, in spite of the fact that these images and ideas about "the native" were constructed through slavery and colonialism and perpetuated through neocolonialism. Campbell's poem works on multiple levels of critique—primarily regarding the current manifestation of these "native" performances, while also hinting at the root of these ideas and reflecting on what they mean.



According to the poet everything that happens at the welcome center is a fabrication that is disingenuous—it is created deliberately as a part of the tourist package. The speaker explains that this center is “another refuge / for Yankees, island music / that didn’t make me dance, / a lady in a culture-bustle. / Not a thing happens here” (lines 39-43).<sup>65</sup> But something is happening—nothingness and a mimicry of the white colonial gaze on the racialized and gendered object. Bahamian culture is being produced for cruise ship tourists, and Black female (read as “native”) sexuality is on display with “a lady in a culture-bustle,” dressed as a “straw doll” in this performance. What the speaker implies then is that this performance, this production, is meaningless:

What I hate bout Home  
is in that look,  
me to her, her to me,  
The poem is the glance  
right there. Or that she kept  
dancing, is that the poem?  
That I can leave, that she can’t leave,  
that tourist come and go?  
The next shipload come in,  
confusion of ants,  
and I left without a dance,  
still wandering town for the gift. (lines 44-55)<sup>66</sup>

The poet hates what the glance between him and the dancing woman mean, “that look,” which is knowing something is not quite right with this picture, a kind of shame perhaps on both sides, embarrassed at what has become of their culture. But then even “that look,” is called into question the spark for this poem, the glance upon which the poem may be based. The poet questions his own motivation for writing as he says “the poem is the glance” but then asks, is the poem the fact “that she kept / dancing.” He reflects upon her lack of mobility on the one hand, and his mobility on the other hand as a Bahamian not dependent upon the tourist industry: “that I can leave, that she can’t leave.” She is working, while he can continue his walk downtown looking for a gift; but “leave” works on two levels here, not only leaving the center but also the ability to leave Nassau. But he also wonders if the poem is about the tourists who come and go, on and off the cruise ships—the tourist who is in transit compared to the local who works at the center. Yet the poet appears to be in between the two, a local who has mobility and can travel. This poem represents the complexities involved in Bahamians’ participation in creating the tourism product, as well as all Bahamians complacency in producing fabricated culture that is devoid of organic origins. Campbell engages in a critique of tourism and its effects on culture and identity, and (re)writes identity and sexuality as a challenge to tourism.

Bahamian poets Bethel and Campbell offer ways to reimagine “paradise” through (re)writing and interrogating identity, history, and sexuality within a space whose culture is thoroughly impacted by tourism. They are participating in a necessary, yet difficult, resistance to paradise discourses. They represent through their poems the complexities of Bahamian identity as it is troubled and shaped through the tourist industry. Their works are also a reflection of the complicated negotiations that Bahamian people have to make within the neocolonial terrain of tourism and a tourist economy that has so much control over the production of culture. Given

the enormous pressures to maintain and sustain tourism, Bahamians have not only had to endlessly perform and smile for tourism, but they have also had to develop new strategies for creating and supporting cultural productions that are funded through a state-sanctioned tourist industry. Arlene Nash-Ferguson's *Educulture* (which I discuss in the larger project) can be seen as a model for developing sustainable heritage tourism for the Bahamas. Her work also resists paradise discourse by educating Bahamian children about their culture and history, which can effectively intervene in what Walcott calls the "erosion of their identity".<sup>67</sup> This kind of work operates within and uses the tourist industry, and it can lead to more sustainable forms of tourism that benefit Bahamian people. The erasure of history must be fought against and the Caribbean must be re-forged through memory:

All of the Antilles, every island, is an effort of memory; every mind, every racial biography culminating in amnesia and fog. Pieces of sunlight through the fog and sudden rainbows, arcs-en-ciel. That is the effort, the labour of the Antillean imagination, rebuilding its gods from bamboo frames, phrase by phrase. ... Decimation from the Aruac downwards is the blasted root of Antillean history, and the benign blight that is tourism can infect all of those island nations, not gradually, but with imperceptible speed, until each rock is whitened by the guano of white-winged hotels, the arc and descent of progress.<sup>68</sup>

Bahamian writers are working on the level of memory to rebuild and develop what Walcott calls "the labour of the Antillean imagination." As Walcott suggests in his Nobel Prize speech, the work of Caribbean writers is to uncover and rebuild minds and bodies out of the "amnesia and fog". This erasure and forgetting is perpetuated through the tourist industry that appears as "the benign blight that is tourism can infect all of those island nations." Walcott warns that tourism (seen as harmless) can all too quickly take over: "until each rock is whitened by the guano of white-winged hotels, the arc and descent of progress." Tourism is a benign blight because it masks itself as the marker of progress and development with the ultimate sign being the hotel and each island being "whitened" through the hotel. But what Walcott asserts here is the flip side to the arc—the descent of progress in terms of identity and culture for countries across the Caribbean. Poets Bethel and Campbell, along with a number of other Caribbean writers and intellectuals (producers of Antillean imagination) are participating in the necessary labor of reimagining and rebuilding memory "phrase by phrase."

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Derek Walcott, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory," *Nobel Prize*, December 7, 1992. [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1992/walcott-lecture.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1992/walcott-lecture.html).

<sup>2</sup>Arlene Nash, (personal interview, 3 July 2007). Bahamian artists (including writers, visual artists, musicians, performers, and other cultural workers) particularly those who are not directly dependent on tourism for their livelihood, express the strongest criticism of tourism. In contrast, artists who produce for the tourist industry directly and even for local consumption within the Bahamas tend to be (but not always) more accepting of tourism; while workers in the industry who are not engaged with cultural production are inclined to be the most accepting. Many workers and artists directly involved in the industry express desire for tourism improvement, and they believe that increasing the amount and quality of culture in the tourist industry will bring more profits to the Bahamas.

<sup>3</sup>"Introduction to Tourism: Tourism Facts." Bahamas Hotel Association. 2010. <http://www.bhahotels.com/public/introduction-to-tourism.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup>Ian Gregory Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation: Tourism and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean*, (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2002).

<sup>5</sup>Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation*, 94.

<sup>6</sup>Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation*, 112.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 114.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, 132-135. While the culture and people of the Bahamas have been significantly affected by tourism since the mid 19th century, it is particularly during the post-independence era and the proliferation of tourist propaganda in brochures, slogans, and posters that Bahamians begin to believe in the myth of paradise. This also fuels the desire for certain kinds of lifestyles or "playin tourist" because as Strachan suggests "some Bahamians try to live vicariously through the tourist experience" and work to perform "paradise".

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 125.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 143.

<sup>12</sup>Marion Bethel, *Guanahani, My Love*, (Cuba: Casa de Las Americas, 1994).

<sup>13</sup>Marion Bethel, *Bougainvillea Ringplay*, (Great Britain: Peepal Tree Press, 2009).

<sup>14</sup>Marion Bethel was awarded a major year-long fellowship at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute of Harvard University and Radcliffe College in 1997. She was the 1994 recipient of the most prestigious regional literary awards—The Casa de Las Americas Award (a literary prize competition in Havana, Cuba, which publishes the winning book in Spanish and English). Also, Bethel was special editor for an issue of *The Caribbean Writer* in 1999 on Poetry from the Bahamas. More recently, she was invited as a guest poet at the XVI International Poetry Festival of Medellin in 2006 hosted in Columbia.

<sup>15</sup>Marion Bethel, *Bougainvillea Ringplay*, (Great Britain: Peepal Tree Press, 2009).

<sup>16</sup>Bethel, *Guanahani, My Love*, 16.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Michelle Cliff, *Abeng*, (New York: Crossing Press, 1984), Preface. In the epigraph of Michelle Cliff's novel *Abeng*, Cliff cites the word "abeng" as an African word meaning conch shell. As it is commonly known, the conch shell was used by slave drivers to call the slaves into the fields; Cliff asserts the conch shell as having another use "it was the instrument used by the Maroon armies to pass their messages and reach one another".

<sup>19</sup>Bethel, *Guanahani, My Love*, 16.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Nancy Beth Jackson, "Tide of Investment Sweeps Bahamas," *International Herald Tribune*, 18 October 2007, <http://www.ihf.com>.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Bethel, *Guanahani, My Love*, 26.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation*, 125.

<sup>26</sup>Bethel, *Guanahani, My Love*, 26.

<sup>27</sup>V.S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2002).

<sup>28</sup>Bethel, *Bougainvillea Ringplay*, 45-48.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, 45.

<sup>30</sup>Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation*, 126.

<sup>31</sup>Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation*, 127. Strachan asserts the 1992 Quincentennial Anniversary of Columbus'

landfall as an example of how the Columbus moment continues to be glorified and commodified by the tourist industry and the Bahamas government. The celebration of this anniversary included vehicle license plates with 1492-1992, Bahamian dollar bills with an image of Columbus, a special Junkanoo parade, and a reenactment of the Columbus' ships arrival in San Salvador with actors playing the roles of the Taino and the Spaniards. "The three ships of Columbus' first voyage and the meeting of the Taino and the Spaniards on a beach at Guanahani were viewed to be sacred images, and they graced school walls across the nation".

<sup>32</sup>Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation*, 126-127.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Bethel, *Bougainvillea Ringplay*, 45.

<sup>35</sup>British Prime Minister Winston Churchill is said to have dispatched the Duke to this post as governor because he wanted to get him out of Europe because of the Duke and Dutchess support of Nazi Germany and Hitler. The Duke of Windsor is the only British monarch to ever hold a civilian political post, and he expressed dislike for the position and called the Bahamas a third-class colony.

<sup>36</sup>Irving Rouse, *The Tainos: Rise and Decline of the people who greeted Columbus*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>37</sup>Bethel, *Bougainvillea Ringplay*, 46.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, 47.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation*, 102. A number of travel books and brochures about the Bahamas written from the late 1800s to the early 1900s include a similar scene in which Bahamian black boys are diving for coins thrown by tourists into the ocean. See William Drysdale's *In Sunny Lands* published in 1885. These kinds of scenes were described more often than not in order to show the "docile" nature of the Black Bahamians and how they never fought and were friendly. Strachan writes extensively about the birth of travel brochure discourse from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and how it continues to affect Bahamian tourism today. He argues that the travel writing during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century deliberately focused on how "docile" and "civil" the "natives" were in these places, so that the wealthy travelers would feel safe.

<sup>42</sup>Bethel, *Bougainvillea Ringplay*, 48.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Christian Campbell, *Running the Dusk*. (Great Britain: Peepal Tree Press, 2010), 66-67.

<sup>45</sup>See Kamala Kempadoo Kempadoo, "Continuities and Change: Five Centuries of Prostitution in the Caribbean," *Sun Sex and Gold: Tourism and Sex Work in the Caribbean*, Ed. Kamala Kempadoo, (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 3-36 for extensive and important essays about sex work in the region, specifically the following essays: "'Come to Jamaica and Feel All Right': Tourism and the Sex Trade" by Shirley Campbell, Althea Perkins, and Patricia Mohammed, and "'Fantasy Islands': Explore the Demand for Sex Tourism" by Julia O'Connell Davidson and Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor.

<sup>46</sup>There are a number of scholars who do work on sex tourism and sex work consider "romance" tourism to be sex work, and sometimes prostitution, but do not make a distinction between sex and romance tourism. See Kempadoo's "Continuities and Change: Five Centuries of Prostitution in the Caribbean," and the Campbell, Perkins, and Mohammed study and O'Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor's essay in the collection *Sun, Sex, and Gold*. Also, see Sanchez Taylor's "Tourism and 'embodied' commodities: Sex Tourism in the Caribbean" who argues against the term romance tourism, and Denise Brennan's *What's Love Got to Do With It?: Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic* who also uses sex tourism over romance tourism. Conversely, Deborah Pruitt and Suzanne LaFont in "Romance Tourism: Gender, Race, and Power in Jamaica" do make a distinction between sex and romance tourism because of the intimate and potential long-term relationships that can (and often do) emerge. They argue that "In a unique conjunction of need, hope, and desire, the romance relationships between tourist women and local men serve to transform traditional gender roles across cultural boundaries, creating power relations distinctive from those existing in either native society" (331). However, they do acknowledge that there still exists an asymmetric power dynamic between tourists and locals and that the economic status on the part of tourists still allow for tourist to dominate the other regardless of gender, and locals continue to be "Othered" (332-33).

<sup>47</sup>Campbell, *Running the Dusk*, 66.

<sup>48</sup>However, the Stella/Winston narrative is now very prominent and reveals the extent to which African Americans do travel to the Caribbean for "romance" and sex tourism. See the website *Girlfriend Tours* for an idea of how established this industry is—*Girlfriend Tours International* is run by two older African American women who

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organize vacations for women in Jamaican. See <http://www.girlfriendtours.com/about.htm>.

<sup>49</sup>Campbell, *Running the Dusk*, 66.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>In Bahamian English, “thing” (ting) is a popular word often used as a noun to describe a person, place, thing, or idea. It is also used to refer to private parts and sexual organs.

<sup>52</sup>Campbell, *Running the Dusk*, 66.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, 67.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>The edited collection, Stephen Clift and Simon Carter, “*Tourism and Sex: Culture, Commerce and Coercion*,” Eds. Stephen Clift and Simon Carter, (London: Pinter, 2000), explores this relationship in a number of essays on tourism and leisure across the world. In the introduction, Carter and Clift argue that sex and the promise of sex has always been an intricate part of tourism and travel.

<sup>58</sup>Campbell, “Welcome Centre.” *MiPOesias*. Special Issue. “Quest.” Ed. Evie Schockley. (Feb 2007).

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Arlene Nash-Ferguson’s concept of Educulture (personal interview, 3 July 2007) and use of Junkanoo can be seen as doing a kind a rebuilding and needed change to tourism in the Bahamas. With experience in both education and Junkanoo, Nash-Ferguson has combined these to create Educulture, which is a cultural and educational consultancies company offering “true-true Bahamian experiences for both visitors and Bahamians” (personal interview, 3 July 2007). Their programs include ‘ride & learn’ tours for primary and high schools, Junkanoo workshops, and Junkanoo presentations. These programs are designed to teach the history and roots of Junkanoo to both Bahamians and tourists. The Junkanoo museum also sets up a display museum for the Junkanoo Summer festival every year. Nash-Ferguson explains that it is important and necessary to have the history and culture of the Bahamas at the festival (personal interview, 3 July 2007). The museum display is one of the only features of the festival that highlights the historical, social, and political context of Junkanoo. Educulture and the museum demonstrate a primary example of how Bahamians contend with a state-sanctioned Ministry of Tourism and find resistant strategies for negotiating tourism and its influence on Bahamian culture. Nash-Ferguson has created a sustainable model of heritage tourism through Educulture and Junkanoo.

<sup>68</sup>Walcott, “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory.”

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