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MARKETING PARADISE, MAKING NATION

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Abstract: An analysis of themes and images used to market the British Virgin Islands to tourists focuses on assumptions about sexual desire, nature, and sexual difference underlying references to its untouched and natural beauty. A comparison with themes and images used by British Virgin Islands residents in conceptualizing their connections to the islands reveals important differences and similarities. While the themes and images of the British Virgin Islands draw upon notions of difference, and difference is stabilized by positing it to be a fact of nature, what tourism marketing campaigns represent as the exotic object of sexual desire is constituted by the British Virgin Islanders as motherland and nation. **Keywords:** sexual difference, national identity, British Virgin Islands.

Résumé: Vendre le paradis, faire la nation. Une analyse des thèmes et images utilisés pour vendre les îles Vierges britanniques aux touristes se concentre sur des suppositions du désir sexuel, de la nature et de la différence sexuelle, qui sont à la base des références à la beauté naturelle intacte. Une comparaison avec les thèmes et images utilisés par les habitants des îles Vierges britanniques pour conceptualiser leurs liens aux îles révèle et images publicitaires font appel à la différence, qui est stabilisée en l'énonçant comme un fait de la nature, ce que les campagnes publicitaires représentent comme l'objet exotique du désir sexuel est constitué par les habitants comme la mère patrie et la nation. **Mots-clés:** différence sexuelle, identité nationale, îles Vierges britanniques.

INTRODUCTION

Oh, Tortola, oh how you blew my mind.
Oh, Tortola, with your gay sunshine.
Oh, Tortola, I couldn't get you off my mind.
So I came back to be with you
For a long, long time.
So I came back to stay with you
For a long, long time (Rymer 1987).

The above is the chorus of the ballad-like song *Tortola*, a song about the largest and most densely populated of the islands making up the British Virgin Islands (BVI), a British dependent territory of over 52 islands, rocks, and cays in the eastern Caribbean. A love song to an island, *Tortola* is a much-requested tourist favorite, and both the chorus

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of the song and the British Virgin Islands man who wrote it are featured in a video promoting the British Virgin Islands as a tourism destination. In fact, the yearning for a special object of desire that is expressed in the chorus of *Tortola* is duplicated in the promotional video's opening narrative introducing the British Virgin Islands to potential travelers:

> Surviving intact through centuries of man's excess, the islands look now much as they did when the first visitors arrived. Today's visitors say this pristine beauty calls them back again and again. Will the British Virgin Islands cast their spell on you? Take a closer look.

This narrative and *Tortola's* chorus combine in the video to romanticize and particularize otherwise generic visuals of dramatic Caribbean sunsets, empty white-sand Caribbean beaches, and crystal-clear Caribbean waters. Along with other scenes of British Virgin Islands environs and people, these visuals are presented to viewers as "nature's little secrets," and offered as enticements to "come to the British Virgin Islands. It's time you discovered nature's little secrets for yourself" (Nature's Little Secrets 1991).

Since 1962, when the government officially targeted tourism as a major development strategy, tourism has been a mainstay of the economy, and has contributed to a pattern of remarkable growth and prosperity. From 1962 to 1965 tourism was responsible for a 40% increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), from US$2,251,000 to $3,157,000. By 1970 visitor expenditures and construction associated with tourism development had pushed the GDP to $15,947,000 (O'Neal 1983:113); and by 1992, the government was reporting a GDP of $105.7 million (Development Planning Unit 1992). From 1969 to 1988 the tourism industry grew at an average annual rate of 12.1% (Encontre 1988), and from 1976 to the present tourism has been the leading sector of the economy.

The prosperity of the British Virgin Islands tourism economy is based on a development strategy of controlled growth, according to a 1972 report (cited in O'Neal 1983), with an emphasis on the development of marine resources over the development of mass land-based or cruise-ship tourism. This strategy is highlighted in advertising campaigns that stress the "freshness" of the British Virgin Islands as a major promotional asset (PKF Consultants 1992:II-19). Representing the BVI as a natural and political rarity untouched by forces that have defiled other Caribbean nations, promotional materials stressing "freshness" draw extensively on sexual imagery to pique desire for their product. Thus, for example, the promotional video's invitation to tourists to discover "for yourself" an "intact" landscape and a "pristine" beauty links the allure of the British Virgin Islands to the allure of virginity and sexual possession. It sells the islands as a tourism destination by appealing to sexual desire.

Sexual desire is, as Enloe has noted, a central component of tourism ideology in general. According to Enloe, the desire to know another place is conflated in the touristic imagination with women "as the quintessence of the exotic . . . something to be experienced." In travel,

the tourist seeks to be "freed from standards of behavior imposed by respectable women back home," to indulge in the imagined pleasures of the exotic "other" (Enloe 1990:28). Moreover, as a manifestation of sexual desire for an exotic other, tourism is not just about escape; it is also about power (Enloe 1990:40). Not only is tourism embedded in the economic inequalities between the countries from which tourists originate and the countries of their destinations, but the sexual ideology underlying tourism's representations of destinations such as the British Virgin Islands draws its effectiveness from notions of the naturalness of sexual difference and inequality.

In making the connection between the allure of women-as-exotic and the pleasure of travel, Enloe illuminates an important feature and function of the precept of sexual difference. That is, not only does the precept of sexual difference constitute male heterosexual desire as normative, but normative sexual difference can and does mark and normalize difference in general. Williamson's reading of print advertisements marketing tropical products and locales underscores the significance of precepts of sexual difference in stimulating desire and in marking and normalizing difference. According to Williamson, advertisements use images of women with light brown (as opposed to very dark) skin to stand for "exotic" products. Such images stimulate desire for an exotic "other" while masking any actual difference in race, power, and history between that "other" (who is not too much "other") and the Western subject (1986). These images thus trigger desire for an exotic "other" even as they contain the danger inherent in freedom "from standards of behavior imposed by respectable women back home" (Enloe 1990:28).

In a similar fashion, constructions of national identity draw centrally upon notions of difference. As Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaerger point out in their introduction to *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, "[i]n the same way that 'man' and 'woman' define themselves reciprocally (though never symmetrically), national identity is determined not on the basis of its own intrinsic properties but as a function of what it (presumably) is not" (1992:5). Moreover, while gender differences in power and access to resources characterize the institutional structures of nations, gender difference also operates ideologically to ground conceptualizations of the nation as a unified whole and to sanction internal difference. As one scholar has recently noted,

> . . . gender difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between men. Excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit . . . (McClintock 1993:62).

This overlap in the operation of precepts of sexual difference has particular relevance for the British Virgin Islands, where tourism development has fostered radical demographic and social change and has gone hand in hand with a growing sense of a distinct national community. While tourists visiting this destination may be enticed by the sexual innuendoes in the invitation to "discover nature's little secrets,"

the discourse of naturalized heterosexual desire that eroticizes British Virgin Islands geography as a commodity for Western consumption also animates local constructions of BVI citizenship. Thus, even these representations of a place open for possession appeal to a desire for power and control, claims to being a natural British Virgin Islander are grounded in references to having "a piece of the British Virgin Islands," and local practices and knowledge linking citizenship to belonging to an originary motherland are deployed in formulating exclusionary conceptualizations of the British Virgin Islands as a nation.

This article illuminates some of the assumptions about sexual difference, desire, and nature drawn on in marketing the British Virgin Islands to tourists, and looks at how these assumptions relate to representations of the British Virgin Islands that, like the song *Tortola*, are generated from within a more local context. In particular, the article looks at how representations of the islands as pristine and natural converge and diverge with local systems of knowledge and discursive practices relating to issues of citizenship and national identity. Focusing on the precept of sexual difference that eroticizes British Virgin Islands geography and animates a love song to an island, it looks at how the powerful trope of naturalized difference is drawn upon to construct British Virgin Islands citizenship as a natural fact, at how Tortola—as the exotic object of Western desire—signifies from a local perspective "the respectable woman back home."

CHARACTERIZATION OF TOURISM

According to the most recent census data, the present-day British Virgin Islands population stands at just under 18,000 (Development Planning Unit 1991). Until 1965, however, the British Virgin Islands population seldom exceeded 8,000, and averaged closer to 6,500 throughout the colonial period (Dookhan 1975; Harrigan and Varlack 1988). This dramatic increase in population is a direct consequence of the development of the British Virgin Islands as a favored destination for elite tourists (Smith 1989), and in particular yacht chartering vacationers from North America (Lett 1983; O'Neal 1983).

Tourism development in the British Virgin Islands traces to the 1953 Hotels Aid Ordinance that provided tax incentives to potential investors in tourism-oriented enterprises, and to a 1966 government-commissioned report targeting tourism as the most viable development option. The construction in 1964 of the Rockefeller-owned Little Dix Bay resort on the BVI of Virgin Gorda marks the beginning of the activity that has resulted in the prosperous tourist economy of the British Virgin Islands today (Bowen 1976; O'Neal 1983). However, since the opening of the first yacht chartering firm on Tortola in 1969, yacht charter tourism has been the mainstay of the economy.

Typically, tourists charter yachts in the British Virgin Islands for a 10–14 day period, provisioning and skippering yachts rented from chartering firms located on the main islands of Tortola. In 1973, annual visitor expenditures totaled $8,300,000, with 30.5% attributed to yacht charterers and the remaining 69.5% to hotel guests. In 1981, annual visitor expenditures totaled $74,277,00, with 74.2% attributed

to yacht charterers and only 25.8% to hotel guests (O'Neal 1983:115-116). Statistics for the period 1977-1988 reveal that from 1979 onward yacht charterers continually outspent land based-tourists, with the total visitor expenditures for 1988 amounting to $118.5 million (Encontre 1988:88-89). In 1991, charter boat arrivals outnumbered hotel and rented accommodation arrivals 2 to 1 (Ministry of Finance 1992:112).

In 1981, the British Virgin Islands had the highest tourist per capita ratio of all island countries worldwide. In 1989, annual tourist arrivals (177,074) exceeded by 10 times the total BVI population (Encontre 1988:98). Despite such activity, its representations disseminated through tourism industry promotional materials constitute it as unspoiled, a natural and political rarity. Consider, for example, the description with which *Fodor's Caribbean* opens its section on the British Virgin Islands:

> Serene, seductive, and spectacularly beautiful even by Caribbean standards, the British Virgin Islands are happily free of the runaway development that has detracted from the charm of so many West Indian islands (1993:159).

With its characterization of development as "runaway" blight, this and other such claims can be read as so much hype targeted at the tourist who, in the words of the British Virgin Islands Chief Minister, "[has] the inherent need to get away from the pressures of city and business life to escape to paradise, even if for only a short while" (FCB/InterMarketing 1989). On the other hand, tourist responses to a recent tourism consulting firm questionnaire that rank the British Virgin Islands highest as "a good place to relax at the beach," "a visually attractive island," and "a safe place to visit" (PKF Consultants 1992:V-33) suggest a certain correspondence between this characterization and tourist experience. Indeed, underlying such claims to the serenity, beauty, and charm of the British Virgin Islands is a conscious policy, backed by legislation impeding land speculation and prohibiting large-scale development to, in the words of a 1972 government-commissioned report, "strike a balance between the need to develop . . . tourist attractions for the benefit of the economy, without at the same time destroying what make them attractive in the first place" (Shankland and Cox 1972:43, quoted in O'Neal 1983:114).

To ensure continued and proactive development of tourism, the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board conducts numerous workshops throughout the year that serve, for example, to instruct taxi drivers on customer relations, to work with secondary school teachers on ways to incorporate tourism studies into the curriculum, and to provide promising secondary school children training in tourist-related occupations. In 1989, the annual week commemorating secondary education in the British Virgin Islands was organized around the theme, "Tourism Awareness Through Education." One of the major consequences of 25 years of British Virgin Islands tourism development has been the attainment of a per capita income exceeded only by the per capita incomes of the Bahamas, Bermuda, and the Cayman Islands, and a sophisticated technological infrastructure that has facilitated the devel-

opment of the British Virgin Islands in recent years as a center of international banking (Financial Times 1990).

These long-standing efforts to direct the development of the tourism economy that would seem to fly in the face of the industry's representations of the British Virgin Islands as pristine and untouched are offset by historical accounts that occlude the backdrop to the present-day situation. The British Virgin Islands was formally settled and colonized by the British in 1672. With the break-up of colonial rule in the Eastern Caribbean, the British Virgin Islands declined both independence and membership in the now defunct West Indies Federation, and elected instead to remain a British dependent territory. In the historical literature, it is described as having been economically and politically marginal throughout its long history of colonial rule, a condition that is conventionally marked by reference to the British Virgin Islands having no internal colonial government structure from 1902–1957 (Dookhan 1975; Harrigan and Varlack 1988). Of course the dictum of marginality and neglect is itself a construction. Throughout the colonial period people lived on and worked the land, participated in complex social and economic exchanges, and managed their communities (McGlynn 1980). Nevertheless, in conceptualizing as marginal and undeveloped this lengthy history "before" today's economic prosperity, such accounts render the British Virgin Islands' past as "untouched" as the "natural" landscape being marketed to tourists. The tourism industry accounts conflating British Virgin Islanders with the landscape they inhabit have a similar effect, as in the case of the press release below, which obliterates any sense of an active past by constituting its residents and their activities as yet undiscovered, unknown:

> Although peopled by some of the friendliest faces in the Caribbean, the little known British Virgin Islands and its many little secrets of nature have yet to be discovered by the traveling masses (Discovering Nature's Little Secrets 1991).

In a similar fashion, the particular pattern of site use associated with tourism works to obscure from tourist's view most signs of the variety and intensity of activities contributing to the British Virgin Islands successful tourist economy. Accommodations for land-based tourists are for the most part available only at upscale resorts located on isolated islands or beaches. Steep, narrow, and winding roadways keep most Tortola-based tourists from traversing the high mountain ridge that runs the island's length and separates the rural north shore, with its white-sand beaches and lush mountainsides from the rockier, drier, and more built-up south shore. Bareboat charterers tend to spend their days at sea sailing from island to island, and their nights at anchor in quiet coves and protected bays. In either case, BVI-bound tourists seldom even see the capital of Road Town, which, a bustling center of government, commerce, and international banking located on Tortola, constitutes the "civilization" that is nature's antithesis (Cohen and Mascia-Lees 1993).

Tourism publication representations of the British Virgin Islands as

a special kind of place, a natural paradise untouched by civilization, are mirrored in the long-standing Tourist Board Motto, "Yes We Are Different," and in the oft-repeated invitation to tourists to "discover nature's little secrets." In fact, this invitation to discovery is the slogan of an $800,000 advertising campaign, launched by the Board in 1989 (The BVI Beacon 1991) and focused on marketing the British Virgin Islands as "virgin holiday territory," "one of the few remaining outposts of the old British Empire" (FCB/InterMarketing 1989). In drawing upon the concept "virgin," the promotion constitutes a Caribbean of singular natural beauty, of pure white sands and crystal-clear water. Simultaneously, in its references to Empire, it constitutes this Caribbean anew as a site of discovery. Thus, for example, a BVI Press Information release entitled "The British Virgin Islands—Discovering Nature's Little Secrets" is subheaded, "Waiting to be Discovered" (FCB/InterMarketing 1989).

Yet insofar as the historic "discovery" of the Caribbean and its peoples marks the moment when "the West" became a conceptual entity—for these were the West's first genuine overseas colonies" (Mintz 1989: xxi; Segal 1991), what is being held out for discovery is as much a sense of a powerful knowing self as of an exotic natural other. To be among the first to know the British Virgin Islands is to recapture that moment when local histories were obliterated, rewritten to stabilize the West as the center of power and knowledge (Hulme 1986). It is in this sense that the pristine British Virgin Islands constituted in tourist industry representations also works to "cast its spell." Naturalized within relations of sexual difference as female and eroticized through references to the allure of virginity, the British Virgin Islands is rendered a site where to "discover nature's little secrets" is to achieve the transcendence of the knowing (male) subject (deBeauvoir 1953). This aspect of British Virgin Islands allure is reinforced in the words with which the promotional video closes:

> Xeno, a famous Greek philosopher who lived more than 2,000 years ago, once said that the goal of life is living in agreement with nature. It may well take us another 2,000 years to achieve that goal. But isn't it worthwhile starting to work on it right now? Come to the British Virgin Islands and discover nature's little secrets for yourself (Nature's Little Secrets 1991).

The island of the song *Tortola* also seems to be constituted as a place of discovery and transcendence. The song's chorus anticipates this possibility, in the sense of surprise and disquiet expressed in its phrases "how you blew my mind . . . /I couldn't get you off my mind . . ." This sense of surprise is amplified, and the disquiet is transcended, in the bridge of the song, a verse that celebrates the singer's pleasure upon returning to a particular British Virgin Islands locale:

> And oh what a happy day
> when I got back to Cane Garden Bay
> Snow white sand and blue green sea
> Is good enough for me (Rymer 1987).

The similarities between this verse's images of "snow white sand and blue green sea" and tourism's representations of the British Virgin Islands as a place of "pristine" beauty, between its expression of happiness and the transcendence promised in tourism brochures, are likely what make the song a tourist favorite and what account for its being selected as musical background for the promotional video. Nevertheless, the sensibility of *Tortola* diverges from the sensibility underlying tourist representations of the British Virgin Islands: Where tourism's object of desire is something "pristine" and "intact," *Tortola* constructs the object of desire as something that is already known. While the allure of the destination of the song *Tortola* is strong, and while it is capable of casting its spell from afar, the transcendence that it offers is not absolute, but transitory and relative, a condition signaled with the phrase "good enough."

These differences relate in some measure to differences in the process and site of production of the video and song respectively. The representations in tourism brochures and the promotional video are largely self-conscious constructions. Originating in a Manhattan advertising agency, they are presumably created to be representative enough of what is being marketed to ensure consumer satisfaction upon purchase, while sufficiently idealized to attract—and perhaps even to construct—a particular tourist gaze (Urry 1990:66-67; see also MacCannell 1976; 1993). The song *Tortola*, on the other hand, was written by a native upon returning to his home island of Tortola in the late 70's, after years spent laboring abroad (personal communication with Quito Rymer). While drawing for its imagery upon conventionalized notions of the "Caribbean" and "paradise," the song also "sees" the British Virgin Islands from the point of view of a local, who constitutes it from within the very particularized experience of a majority of natives throughout the first ⅔ of the 20th century: the need to migrate to other countries for wage labor. The main verse of *Tortola* recounts this experience:

> Packed up and I roamed
> searching for a new home
> Now I sit and wonder leaving you
> How could I ever?
> But the grass always look greener
> on the other side
> Oh me oh my eyes
> took me for a ride (Rymer 1987).

Like narratives that idealize the British Virgin Islands as a place of pristine beauty through a contrast with civilization's "runaway development," this verse also sets up a contrast, between *Tortola* and "the other side." In its references to greener grass and being taken for a ride, however, the verse transposes the opposing terms, establishing civilization as the idealized object of desire. It is from within the perspective of a failed search for this object, expressed as the search "for a new home," that the British Virgin Islands of the song *Tortola* is constituted. This destination is constituted not as the exotic, natural other of

the tourist gaze, but as something that is seen anew, not as a site of discovery and transcendence but as a site of rediscovery and return.

The British Virgin Islands as Homeland

> Come on down they say, come on down,
> We can take island in the sun.
> Oh, it makes their poor hearts bleed,
> When they find out they can't lead.
> Tears inside, like a raging flood,
> Being the boss is in their blood.
> But they don't seem to understand
> This is my father's land.
> This is my father's land (Rymer 1991).

The above verse opens the *This Is My Father's Land* song, which is by the same person who wrote *Tortola*. Unlike *Tortola*, which stimulates desire by romanticizing the British Virgin Islands, this one demystifies it as object of Western desire. In the verse's first two lines, for example, the self-other dichotomy that grounds conceptualizations of an exotic "other" is destabilized by the indeterminacy of the identity and location of "they" and "we." In the second line the connection between sexual possession and power is unmasked in the double entendre contained within the phrase "we can take island in the sun." Finally, as a contrast to narratives that situate the British Virgin Islands and its residents in nature, exotic objects to the West's subject, the sixth line of the verse constructs an essentialized Western subject whose urge to dominance is constituted as being "in their blood."

The use here of an essentializing discourse to turn the tables on tourism representations of a naturalized and sexualized British Virgin Islands also signals the message contained in the closing two lines of the verse. These lines asserting that "This is my fathers land" press a claim to belonging to the British Virgin Islands through lineage or blood. Presumably excluding the bloodlines of those who would "come on down . . . to take island in the sun," this intervention in tourism's construction of a pristine destination of virginal allure constitutes the British Virgin Islands as the homeland of a people with natural rights to it. In this, it mirrors local practices and knowledges that link family name and land ownership with citizenship, a status given the legal term "Belonger."

Following provisions of the 1981 British Nationality Act and of the British Virgin Islands Constitution, citizenship is acquired in one of two ways: one may be made a citizen, or one may be born a citizen. One is made a citizen by being granted "Belonger" status. This is usually a long and complicated process preceded by long-term residence (and prior legal "Residence" status), and requiring demonstration of moral integrity and productivity. One is born a citizen through birth to parents in a legal marriage union, when one of the parents is a British Virgin Islander, or through birth, legitimate or otherwise, to a British Virgin Islands woman. A child born outside of a legal marriage union to a non-native woman and a native man is not a citizen. In fact, because a child from such a union becomes a "Belonger" only if

the man signs legal papers acknowledging paternity and requesting citizenship, this type of citizenship may actually slide into the category of made citizen. In this algebra of citizenship, the only constant is a female British Virgin Islander: it is only her offspring, whether legitimate or illegitimate, who are unmediated "natural" citizens (Maurer 1992).

By law, citizens have the unimpeded right to buy and hold land, and they are given preference in hiring and in the awarding of trade licenses, college scholarships, and low-interest development bank loans. Of the present-day population of close to 18,000, however, almost half are nationals from other Caribbean countries. Most of these individuals migrated from other Caribbean countries during the early 80s to work in the rapidly growing tourism economy (The BVI Beacon, 1994); only a small number have applied for or been granted citizenship (Development Planning Unit 1992). Not surprisingly, legislation that places differential restrictions on land ownership and employment on the basis of citizenship results in a strong sense of disaffection within this British Virgin Islands population of non-citizen residents.

Recently, the government has begun to loosen up restrictive labor practices such that, as one public official put it in an interview, "those people who have gone to primary and high school here, you will have no problem finding a job because you have been assessed as someone who has been integrated into the system and you might get resident or become naturalized." At the same time, the number of people being granted naturalization under the British Nationality Act is on the increase, with 106 naturalized in 1991, and 109 naturalized in 1992 (Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs 1994:21). Nevertheless, there persists a strong sense of difference between a "natural" and a naturalized British Virgin Islander.

This difference is articulated in the oft-heard expression, "you can't be a British Virgin Islander without a piece of the British Virgin Islands." Like tourism narratives that represent the islands as virginal paradise whose "secrets" await discovery, this expression characterizes citizenship in terms of sexual possession. But the expression also uses "piece" literally, to refer to land and to blood. In this sense, the expression, "you can't be a British Virgin Islander without a piece of the British Virgin Islands" refers not to a sexual object that is up for possession, but to motherland's birthrights.

In the local context of daily practice and cultural knowledge individuals are classified, positioned, and otherwise "known" by reference to their surname and its association with a particular locale. Thus, a "Belonger" is also marked literally by who one "belongs to": by what family and part of the British Virgin Islands one comes from, and even by one's physical—and frequently behavioral—characteristics. While it is conventional to carry the surname of one's father (except in instances where the father refuses to acknowledge paternity), one is assumed to "belong" to the lines of their fathers and mothers. "Belonging" thus means being locatable in a local system of knowledge: for example, it is quite common for one's parentage and place of origin in the British Virgin Islands to be identified on the basis of physical characteristics alone.

This conflation of place and face, presumably based on the genetic

insularity of communities creates the impression that for "natural" citizenship one merely needs a BVI family name and its connection to a place—and not necessarily British Virgin Islands Birth. In this more generic sense, "belonging" also means being *of* the British Virgin Islands. For example, individuals born on the nearby United States Virgin Island of St. Thomas, but of British Virgin Islands parentage, will use "I from here" or "I belong here" to mark their sense of belonging, through family name and the connection to a particular British Virgin Islands place that is presumed to follow from this. Thus, while *This is My Father's Land* asserts a claim of possession through the rights of the fathers, it is the land, standing metonymically for the mother, that establishes an unalienable connection to the British Virgin Islands as homeland.

In the terms set up in these discursive practices, non-British Virgin Islanders have no means of "belonging" to the British Virgin Islands. Apart from the fact that few of them actually own land, there is no direct association between a non-BVI name and a particular British Virgin Islands place. With the possible exception of Santo Domingo-born individuals whose BVI grandparents migrated to Santo Domingo in the early decades of the 20th century, non-British Virgin Islanders thus have no claim to the symbolic place of origin of "natural" British Virgin Islanders.

In contrast to these claims to being of the land, the discursive practices of non-British Virgin Islanders make claims to rights of citizenship through birth *on* the soil of a British Virgin Islands nation. Thus, for example, children born of noncitizen parents will signal their sense of equality with their BVI peers by claiming "I born here." A popular calypso song, written by a long-term Kittitian resident asserts that "where you born is where you from." Similarly, another long-term Kittitian resident dramatizes a song about his sense of affiliation, by displacing a symbol of his Kittitian grandmother with a map of Tortola.

Speaking directly to a law that constitutes different types of "mothers" by defining different types of citizens through birth, these claims that all births upon British Virgin Islands soil are equal have, in fact, no grounding in any current or pending citizenship legislation. They are nonetheless effective in pointing up the contradictions inhering in claims to citizenship, where a person *of* the British Virgin Islands may not necessarily *be* a British Virgin Islander. Moreover, in rhetorically contesting the terms by which birth leads to rights, they disrupt the seamless flow from homeland-to-nation embodied in claims to natural citizenship through "belonging"; they counter images of the British Virgin Islands as motherland with British Virgin Islands as nation-state.

The British Virgin Islands as Nation

In the context of economic prosperity and immigration, historic associations between a British Virgin Islands name, place, and a face are becoming blurred. As people of BVI parentage return to the British Virgin Islands to live and work—frequently after a one or two genera-

tion absence—and as BVIslanders and non-BVIslanders intermix, one "knows" with less reliability who a British Virgin Islander is. Of course, what one ever "knows" with certainty is always contingent, constituted within very particular systems of knowledge, structures of power, expectations, and interactions. Thus, for example, a British Virgin Islander was observed to "test" the knowledge of another: Pointing to a person of mixed Afro-American/Afro-Caribbean heritage, but with no links to the British Virgin Islands he asked, "who does she belong to?" When his respondent replied that on the basis of her facial characteristics she had to be "a ______ from the East End of Tortola," he exclaimed, laughing at the trick he had played, "correct, exactly correct."

A tourism brochure narrative makes a similar sort of mistake, in characterizing the attention that tourists can expect to receive in the British Virgin Islands:

> Learning water sports takes on a new dimension, and not just for unmatched scenery and top-flight facilities. Instructors make the big difference. Typical BVI citizens, they care a lot. Teaching you to enjoy the water is not just what they do, it's what they *are*. You'll appreciate the difference (Discover Natures Little Secrets 1991).

Like the respondent in the above incident who conceptually placed a woman in a particular British Virgin Islands locale because she looked like members of a particular family, this narrative conflates an assertion about natural characteristics—"it's what they *are*"—with a legal status—"BVI citizens." The adjective "typical" turns this conflation into a statement about national character—"they care a lot." At the same time, the closing statement reiterating the difference that being this way makes—"it's not just what they do, it's what they *are*. You'll appreciate the difference"—suggests that this national character is inherent, something natural.

These rhetorical strategies that naturalize nation and national character are consistent with an ideology that postulates as natural the opposition between an exotic other and a civilized self as well as with representations of the British Virgin Islands as a secret of nature. In all cases, meaning is constituted in terms of relations of difference, and the contingencies and particularities of histories and experience are fixed as natural. Moreover, like magazine advertisement or tourism brochure narratives that mask difference in power by evoking the naturalness of attraction to an exotic "other," constructions of the nation as a "natural" community establish a basis for the differential allocation of political and economic resources, while attributing such difference to accidents of birth.

While present-day BVIslanders might yet trace their family to a particular place on Tortola or to a particular BVI island, they do so in the context of public discourse and cultural practices that attend increasingly to issues of national character: "what is the British Virgin Islands, what is a British Virgin Islander?" Such questions stem in part from legislative policies of the 60s that changed the status of the British Virgin Islands *vis àa vis* Great Britain, and in part from the economic

growth and the development of the transportation and communication systems that also make national consolidation possible. In both respects, questions directed toward determining what constitutes a British Virgin Islander reflect an effort to constitute a BVI nation. In large measure, however, these questions are posed in response to the perceived consequences of the economic and demographic changes of the past 25 years, as hinted in this recent headline: "B.V. Islanders Outnumbered: Socio-economic Horizon Cloudy" (The Island Sun 1993).

In the simplest terms the answer to the question, "who is a British Virgin Islander?" is someone who is not a *non*-British Virgin Islander. This category may be marked by racial difference, as tends to be the case for Canadian, British, and United States nationals residing in the British Virgin Islands (and who are, for the most part, white), by ethnic difference, as tends to be the case for Guyanese nationals, by language difference, as tends to be the case for nationals from Santo Domingo, or by national difference, as tends to be the case for individuals carrying names that are readily associated with a particular nation of origin. In the case of all these categories of non-British Virgin Islanders, further distinctions are frequently made based on the presumption of "natural" differences in character as well, as, for example, when the verse from *This Is My Father's Land* asserts "being the boss is in their blood."

At the other extreme, all such distinctions are flattened by a tendency to lump the different types of nonBritish Virgin Islanders together, and as a group to associate them with a decline in morality, and an increase in crime and various other social "ills" that are perceived to have accompanied rapid economic growth. In some respect, this association represents a simple matter of logical slippage: as the British Virgin Islands economy has changed, so, too has its population, and so too have certain other aspects of social life. More crucially, it provides a context for homogenizing differences within the population of British Virgin Islanders, by imputing to recent arrivals negative characteristics. Thus, for example, headlines of a 10th anniversary issue of a British Virgin Islands newspaper that project a sense of alarm about current conditions—"Territory Coping With Rising Crime" and "Growth Brings More Social Ills to the Territory" (BVI Beacon 1994)—also construct a British Virgin Islands population that is unmarked by the "impurity" introduced by immigration.

In their work on nationalism Handler (1988), Segal (1991), Segal and Handler (1992), and Williams (1989, 1993) have pointed to the importance of notions of racial purity and "shared blood" in providing ideological grounding for conceptualizations of "the nation as own kind" (Williams 1993:153). The findings of a Territory-wide survey conducted in 1993 as part of a process of constitutional reform underscore the centrality of a connection between immigration and "impurity" to the process of consolidating a sense of the British Virgin Islands as a nation:

> In general, we found widespread fear that the influx of persons from abroad if not adequately monitored could lead to the indigenous

> population being outnumbered to the detriment of the preservation of the local heritage and culture (Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs 1994:21).

Of particular significance in this summary is its emphasis upon heritage and culture. For while the term "indigenous" calls up images of a population with shared connection through blood and land, reference to a single heritage and culture in need of protection and preservation overrides any differences *among* islanders who may be ascribed on the basis of family name or place of origin within the British Virgin Islands. Occluding these differences while retaining in place the conceptual grounds on which difference between BVIslanders is constituted, this summary of expressions of national concern effects a transformation from British Virgin Islands as homeland to British Virgin Islands as nation.

Aspects of the song *This Is My Father's Land* effect a similar transformation. For example, where "blood" is used in the first verse of the song to symbolize lineage and birthrights to a homeland, "blood" in the chorus of the song marks a connection to the British Virgin Islands based upon shared hardship and suffering:

> Sweat and tears,
> blood sweat and tears,
> That's the price they paid.
> So I won't be leaving,
> I won't be running away (Rymer 1991).

The focus of this chorus is on ownership and control, and it invokes a strong sense of self-determination grounded not in ancestral blood carried, but in ancestral blood spilt. In this sense, the spilt blood of ancestors provides a spiritual link between their descendants and the land, even as a shared bloodline limits this spiritual heritage to "natural" British Virgin Islanders alone.

CONCLUSIONS

In pointing to the possible "detriment of the preservation of the local heritage and culture," the summary of the constitutional review survey establishes an opposition between "persons from abroad" and possessors of British Virgin Islands heritage and tradition, based on an opposition between impurity and purity. In this, it is like tourism brochure narratives that construct the British Virgin Islands as a Caribbean destination of special allure, an allure related to its pristine and natural beauty in opposition to civilization's blight. However, where the pristine British Virgin Islands of tourism's constructions invites discovery and possession by stimulating desire for an eroticized and sexualized "other," the British Virgin Islands of local accounts is constituted as a motherland whose respectability—framed in terms of cultural integrity—must be safeguarded against outside influence. In this respect, representations of the British Virgin Islands as woman that ground assertions of British Virgin Islands identity are reflective of a general tendency to depict the nation as a female body whose violation must be

defended against. Further this tendency "depends for its representational efficacy on a particular image of woman as chaste, dutiful, daughterly, or maternal" (Parker et al 1992;6; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989).

Their superficial differences notwithstanding, each construction of the British Virgin—as an exotic female "other," as a nation of "own kind" with autochthonous origins in a single motherland—is embedded within a conceptual framework that works to naturalize the British Virgin Islands, and thus to normalize and homogenize differences in history, race, ethnicity, and power. In the case of its touristic construction as an exotic other to the Western self, naturalizing the British Virgin Islands stabilizes historic relations of exploitation and power. In the case of its construction as the symbolic birthplace of a people of one blood and one heritage, naturalizing the British Virgin Islands as nation blurs differences among British Virgin Islanders, fixes as absolute difference between BVIslanders and non-BVIslanders, and hence establishes fixed categories of people who may or may not lay claim to its prosperity and rewards. In both cases, it is by constituting the British Virgin Islands as female—as sexual object or as primordial mother—that difference is naturalized.

While several recent studies have made good use of poststructuralist insights to reveal tourism's embeddedness in systems of cultural production and consumption and in structures of power (Dorst 1989; Fjellman 1992; MacCannell 1992; Urry 1990), they have tended to overlook the role of sexual ideology in maintaining and reproducing these systems and structures. Moves to situate tourism more centrally within what Gallop characterizes as "a long phallic tradition of desire for those with less power and privilege" (1988:169) expand the scope and relevance of tourism studies. For example, and as the foregoing analysis demonstrates, questions asked about tourism's construction of the exotic have a direct bearing on work oriented toward illuminating the place of sexual difference and desire in the genesis of nationalist ideologies. Notwithstanding the contribution such an expansion can make to reshaping thinking about power, culture, and history, there remains a tendency to orient studies of the relation between notions of sexual difference and structures of power from within Western experience, and as a consequence to assert this experience as universal (Haraway 1988; Mani 1991; Mohanty 1991).

The brief analysis of the *Tortola* chorus and the promotional video narrative with which this essay began, for example, looked solely at the ways in which these productions reflect Western desire for an exotic "other." To the extent that the song and narrative are used in a video marketing the British Virgin Islands as a destination for Western tourists, asking how they play on Western desire for an exotic "other" is both appropriate and necessary. Yet while both the chorus of *Tortola* and the video's opening narrative articulate a desire for an "other," each constitutes the object of desire in different ways. In like manner, the Tortola of discovery and transcendence that is evoked by ballad-like music played over video images of white sands and crystal-clear waters is not the same as the Tortola yearned for by a British Virgin Islander who, after years spent laboring abroad, sees it as an originary

homeland in which he has a vital stake. In this regard, finally, it bears noting that neither is the same as the Tortola that, as a cardboard cutout map, is used to cover a replica of a "foreign-born" grandmother, in a performance by a calypsonian from St. Kitts dramatizing *his* claim to a contested British Virgin Islands citizenship.

To fail to see these differences is to engage in a strategy that, as Hooks notes with regard to the absence of recognition of racial difference, "facilitates making a group 'the Other'" (1992:339). To ascertain what difference these differences make requires a complicated reading of the meaning residing in tourism's constructions of the exotic, a reading that shifts between questions originating from within the experiences and epistemologies of "dominant culture" (personal communicatiom with Lugones) and questions originating from within the experiences and epistemologies of people who are constituted by that culture as "the raced non-Nationed others" (Segal and Handler 1992); Williams 1993). More generally, it requires that one relinquishes the ideology of coherent subjectivity that is the perquisite of power and privilege, in favor of an approach that acknowledges the "entangled differences" (Clifford 1994:310) engendered by globalization and transnationalism. For not only is such an approach crucial to understanding the complex structures and interconnections animating such seemingly diverse projects as marketing paradise and making nation, it is in fact the conceptual space occupied by most communities today. □□

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