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Reflections on the intersection between gender and race in tourism

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> That man over there says women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, and lifted [me] over ditches, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place. And aint I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And aint I a woman? I could work as much as and eat as much as a man – when I could get it! and bear the lash as well! And aint I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off into slavery, and when I cried with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And aint I a woman? (Sojourner Truth, 1851, cited in Carby, 1996: 112)

Introduction

I begin this essay on the intersectionality between gender and race within the context of tourism with the often-cited words of Sojourner Truth (an African American abolitionist and women's rights activist) who, at the 1851 Women's Convention in Akon, Ohio, highlighted how racism has resulted in the very different constructions and lived experiences of black women in contrast to white women. It is clear that even during the era of slavery, it was recognised that black women face multiple oppressions and that, since then, a series of terms have been coined to name these various oppressions, such as 'double oppression', 'interlocking oppression' and 'triple jeopardy' (the latter referring to gender, race and class oppression). However more than a century since Sojourner Truth's powerful statement, it is the term *intersectionality* that today best reflects the interlocking oppressions faced by black women. This term was developed by African American civil rights activist and scholar

Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, who used it to refer to the way in which racial and sexual subordination are inextricably linked. Through the prism of intersectionality, Crenshaw (1989) has been able to argue that it is the failure to recognise the reinforcing relationship between racism and sexism that has resulted in the erasure of black women's experiences from both the discourses of feminism and the discourses of anti-racism. In a similar vein, black British scholar Hazel Carby (1996: 112) has suggested that 'racist theory and practice is frequently gender specific', thus making it difficult to separate these two oppressive forces. Carby went even further to contend that white feminists wrote their 'herstory' and made it the story of *all* women, thus ignoring the lives of black women. In this way, Carby suggests, white women were acting within the confines of racist relationships and reproducing 'his-story'.

It is against this background that in this essay I bring to the fore my own subject position as a black woman academic in tourism originally from the Global South, because it is this positioning that has influenced my decision to seek to unpack the complexity of the socially constructed and power political concept of gender, which, according to West and Zimmerman (1987: 147) 'produces, reproduces and legitimates choices.' I seek to problematise gender through an exploration of the often ignored or bracketed intersection between gender and race in tourism gender research. Race is of course, like gender, a social construct which wields great political power and, like Anne McClintock (1995), I agree that gender and race are not isolated from each other; as a black woman in tourism, I do not experience gender and race as distinct and separate parts of my own lived experiences. I suggest, in similar vein to McClintock (1995), that gender and race are articulated together and have been integral to sustaining power relationships in tourism, particularly between the Western world and the largely developing countries of the Global South.

Gender intersectionality has not been often studied in tourism, although there is increasing recognition that this is a necessary and valid way of exploring issues of power and/or disadvantage (see for example Cole, 2017; Files-Thompson, 2013; Hamid-Turksoy, van-Zoonan & Kuipers, 2014; Mooney, 2018). In this essay, I want to present a more nuanced approach to tourism gender research which focuses on the gender/race intersection while being cognisant of the fact that gender has many different intersections with a host of other social categorisations such as sexuality, class, nationality and (dis)ability, among others. However, as a black woman in tourism I have become exhausted with discussions primarily by white tourism scholars of the 'Othering' of black women's bodies and their oppression and/or empowerment through tourism. I have become exhausted with, as Henry

(2019) has deemed it, 'the unspeakable whiteness of volunteer tourism' and the seemingly endless march of 'white saviours' across the countries of the Global South. I have become exhausted with sitting through endless conference presentations where predominantly white tourism scholars present anthropological and/or sociological accounts of their research in 'indigenous' communities in the Global South with a lack of reflexivity on their own motivations for embarking on such research and the effects of their research on these communities (see Tuhiwai Smith, 1989). Therefore, in this essay, which is concerned with the intersection between gender and race, I wish to take a different perspective by focusing on white female privilege rather than the traditional black female disadvantage. I do this through the prisms of black feminist theory and critical race theory and, specifically regarding the latter, the study of 'whiteness' which was developed in academia from the works of noted African American scholar and civil rights activist, W.E.B. Du Bois. Indeed, Henry (2019: 326), in the context of volunteer tourism, argues that it would be beneficial for tourism academics to 'engage with critical race theory in order to understand the power of white privilege.' I suggest in this essay that the study of whiteness is one way in which gendered power relationships in tourism can be understood. I support this argument with an analysis of two films which explore white female sex tourism to countries in the Global South.

On whiteness

The concept of whiteness is relevant to our contemporary understanding of the location of power in tourism when discussing the intersection between race and gender. I contend that in tourism there has been little if any problematisation of the way in which whiteness shapes ways of knowing (epistemology) and ways of being (ontology). Whiteness provides a lens through which we can explore exploitation and subjugation in tourism without the traditional focus on tourism's effects on non-white 'Others'. My suggestion here is that in tourism studies, we have concentrated almost exclusively on racial *disadvantage* and, consequently, we have failed to adequately theorise the power that comes from racial *privilege.* Furthermore, we have failed to explore in tourism how whiteness can be understood through the lens of intersectionality to unpack white women's privilege. Indeed, there seems to be a discursive silence around the notion of white women's privilege in tourism studies.

W.E.B Du Bois, renowned African American civil rights activist, is said to have initiated the study of whiteness. He was particularly interested in issues of class and why it was that in the United States of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was no political coalition between blacks and poor whites given their commonalities in terms of

social disadvantage. DuBois argued that this was because of what he termed the 'public and psychological wage' possessed by poor whites which earned them valuable social status simply from being 'not black.' That is, whiteness was able to provide 'compensation' for poor whites who were otherwise themselves exploited within the capitalist system. In his seminal essay, *The Souls of White Folks*, first published in 1920 in the book *Darkwater* (DuBois, 1999), DuBois engages in a hypothetical exchange with a white person who he labels a 'sweeter soul of the dominant world'. In this hypothetical conversation, this 'sweeter soul' says to DuBois:

> My poor, un-white thing! Weep not nor rage. I know, too well, that the curse of God lies heavy on you. Why? That is not for me to say, but be brave! Do your work in your lowly sphere, praying the good Lord that into heaven above, where all is love, you may one day, be born – white!

To this, he replies:

> I do not laugh. I am quite straight faced as I ask soberly 'But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?' Then always, somehow, someway, silently but clearly, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth, forever and ever Amen. (DuBois, 1999: 18)

DuBois thus suggests that at the heart of white identity is a passionate belief in one's right to everything and anything or, as it were, the title to the universe. It was this sense of entitlement that underpinned colonial expansion and the exploitation of non-whites politically, socially, economically, sexually and, I would add, also in terms of research and knowledge.

Since DuBois' unpacking of 'whiteness' there have been several understandings and applications of the concept. In particular, Brander Rasmussen et al (2001) in their collection titled *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, identify six different though interconnected strands in studies of whiteness:

i. Whiteness as invisible and unmarked
ii. Whiteness as an 'empty' identity established only through appropriation from non-white others

iii. Whiteness as structural privilege
iv. Whiteness as violence and terror
v. Whiteness as the institutionalisation of European colonialism
vi. Critical whiteness studies as an antiracist practice

Alternatively, Ruth Frankenberg (1993), in her seminal text on the social construction of whiteness in which she problematises the role of white women in the feminist movement, used the term 'whiteness' to describe a set of three interlinked dimensions which includes whiteness as a location of structural advantage and as a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed (Frankenberg, 1993:1). She does, however, add a self-reflexive element by arguing that whiteness is also a standpoint or place from which white people look at themselves, others and society. Frankenberg suggested further that whiteness is not an empty signifier but is instead a 'daily experience of racial structuring' (Frankenberg, 1993:1).

More specifically Richard Dyer (1997: 4), in his treatise *The Matter of Whiteness,* argued that 'It has become common for those marginalised by culture to acknowledge the situation from which they speak, but those who occupy positions of cultural hegemony blithely carry on as if what they say is neutral and unsituated – human not raced'. He adds:

> In the realm of categories, black is always marked as a colour (as the term coloured egregiously acknowledges) and is always polarising. Whereas white is not anything really, not an identity, not a particularising quality, because it is everything – white is no colour because it is all colours. (Dyer, 1997: 4)

I suggest that in contemporary quotidian tourism practices and theorisations of power in tourism, whiteness has become normalised and is rendered invisible. For example, Henry (2019: 326) suggests that 'the (limited) data on the "race" of volunteers suggest a majority of international volunteers are white.' Indeed, whenever we speak about race in tourism, it is always seen as applicable only to those who are not white – white people are in this sense not racialised and therefore remain un-researched. In other words, there is, in tourism studies, largely silence around the power of whiteness as a racialised categorisation. According to Dyer (1997:18) 'in our time it is only extreme right and racists discourse, that has an acknowledged and clear concept of a white race…now however to talk about race is to talk

about all races except the white'. The invisibility of whiteness has meant that in tourism studies we have not yet sufficiently theorised the location of power.

Whiteness, like other racial categorisations, is of course constructed and according to Lipsitz (2006: vii) a 'scientific and cultural fiction…that has no valid foundation in biology or anthropology'. Indeed, whiteness, as well as other racial identities, has no essence and, according to Nakayan and Krizek (1995: 293) 'there are only historically contingent constructions of [their] social locations'. However, while recognising the fabricated nature of all racial categorisations, this is not to deny that they do nonetheless have a material reality and real social consequences for the way in which wealth, prestige and opportunity is distributed. Indeed, Lipsitz (1995: 371) stated that 'race is a cultural construct, but one with sinister structural causes and consequences'.

Krista Ratcliffe (2005) indicates that while gender classifications have a long history, tropes of race (including of course whiteness) have a much shorter but more complex history. The racial category 'white' has come to occupy a position of privilege and advantage even if all white people do not 'share identical social and economic privileges' (Ratcliffe, 2005:14). She states further that, like gender, race 'is always a question not only of difference but of unearned privilege and power – and the lack thereof' (Ratcliffe, 2005: 16).

I now borrow from black feminist literature to suggest that hegemonic whiteness is often portrayed almost exclusively as hetero-patriarchal and, as such, has paid insufficient attention to women. In tourism research in particular, there is a dearth of studies which investigate the racial meanings attached to being a white woman, such as in the context of tourism to the postcolonial countries of the Global South – to countries in Africa, in the Caribbean and in Latin America. This is despite the existence of several studies which, for example, examine Western female solo travellers as subjects and others which have investigated the way in which Western women are objectified and sexualised by the (black) male gaze through the tourism experience. The issue of race does emerge in a very few of these studies (for example, see Brown & Osman, 2017; Wilson & Little, 2008) but it is not conceptualised in terms of studies of whiteness. The question which preoccupies me here is: how do white women 'perform gender' in liminal postcolonial tourism spaces?

Vron Ware (1992) has suggested that in feminism, the representation of white women has been in terms of gender, class and sexuality while eliding the dynamics of race. Ware (1992: 38) indicates that a potent symbol of colonial repression was the 'threat of real or imagined violence toward white women' which became one of the most dangerous forms of insubordination. A colony was secure to the extent that it was able to keep its white women

protected from the fear of sexual assault. Indeed, she argues that 'white women provided a symbol of the most valuable property known to white man and it was to be protected from the ever encroaching and disrespectful black man at all costs' (Ware, 1992: 38). More broadly, Ruth Frankenberg suggests that race shapes the lives of white women in similar fashion to the way men's lives are shaped by gender, and sexuality shapes the lives of heterosexuals. However, in our contemporary world, the financial, emotional, sexual, and legal advances occasioned by feminism for largely white, Western women has meant that they are now capable of performing whiteness, a status which has provided them with resources, power and opportunity even if only in the context of the liminal spaces of postcolonial tourism which are necessarily fleeting.

We can unpack white female privilege in the tourism context through a critical analysis of female sex tourism. In this activity, primarily middle-aged white women from Western countries travel to countries in the Global South in order to engage in sexual relations with normally young black men often perhaps derogatively termed as 'beach boys', 'rent a rastas' or 'cowboys'. In one of the first tourism articles on the subject of female sex tourism, Pruitt and La Font (1995: 427) suggest that 'these women are able to explore more dominant roles in the tourism relationship due to their economic and social status which invests them with an independence that translates into power and control over these men'. However, in their study, Pruitt and LaFont failed to articulate a theory of race which might provide a useful explanatory framework for the source of the women's economic and social power, especially in the context of these postcolonial tourist destinations. I suggest that such power and control is fundamentally underpinned by conceptualisations of whiteness. Franz Fanon (2004: 31), in the *Wretched of the Earth* speaks to the colonial situation by noting that 'in the colonies, the economic superstructure is also a substructure. The cause is the consequence. You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich'. And as Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor (2001: 761) has suggested, 'focusing on gendered power can easily slip into accepting gender essentialist models of sexuality within which the sexual behaviour of women is interpreted and judged differently from that of men simply because they are women'. Such an approach tends to privilege the power of gender, occluding the power of race (and following on from Fanon's statement above, also the associated characteristic of economic power which is rather loosely encompassed by class), and specifically of whiteness which I argue here is fundamental to female sex tourism to the countries of the postcolonial world.

It is possible to understand the intersection between gender and race through an examination of female sex tourism as it is represented in film. Gross (2018: 508) suggests that 'engaging with film, media, and other forms of cultural production is a key feminist approach to understand how representation and politics operate as interlocking structures of power'. Several films have been released since the new millennium about female sex tourism to the postcolonial world. Here, I focus on two films primarily owing to the complex colonial histories of the destination countries involved and their continued problematic postcolonial presents – *Heading South*, set in the Caribbean island of Haiti and released in the UK in 2006, and *Paradise Love*, set in the sub-Saharan East African country of Kenya, which was first screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 2012 and on general release in 2013.

Before proceeding with the analysis of both films, however, it is important to acknowledge that two previous publications have examined both films – the first is by Shirley Tate (2011), who undertook a critical exploration of *Heading South* through the lens of Achille Mbembe's necropolitics which refers to the 'subjugation of life to the power of death' (Tate, 2011: 46). As such, Tate was interested in the way in which the people of postcolonial societies (such as the central black male character in the film) used death as a form of colonial resistance and liberation and as their prime means of exerting agency in their fight against their own alterity and the power of the former white colonisers (embodied in this case in the white female sex tourists). The second, by Zoë Gross (2018), examines *Paradise Love* as a representation of the intersecting power structures of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class that 'shape and transform transnational interracial intimacies within economies and geographies of eroticized exchange' (Gross 2018: 508). Gross draws on the literature on sex tourism and feminist geographical frameworks as key underpinnings for her work. My analysis of the films in this essay furthers the conversations contained in these two previous publications, but my exploration is different in three respects. First, I provide an analysis of both films showing the synergies between them but also highlighting where they differ. Second, I draw much more explicitly on critical race theory and, specifically, studies of whiteness along with black feminist literature. Third, my personal situatedness as a black woman from the Global South provides a reflexive lens through which my interpretations are expressly filtered. That said, I have drawn on insights from both publications where they are relevant to illuminating aspects of the discussion.

Exploring Whiteness through film

Heading South, directed by Frenchman Laurent Cantet, is based on three short stories written by Haitian American author Danny Laferriere, and is set in Haiti in the late 1970s when the country was ruled by dictator Jean Claude Duvalier (nicknamed Baby Doc). Haiti obtained its independence from France in 1804 and was the first slave colony to stage a successful revolution against its white colonisers to establish an independent state in the Caribbean ruled by former African slaves. The country was invaded and occupied by the United States in 1915 under the guise of restoring the country to democracy after the assassination of the then president – this occupation lasted for 19 years until 1935. In fact, Haiti has a long history of political and economic turmoil, whilst a series of natural disasters and crises which have devastated the country and affected its development. These have contributed to it being for some time one of the poorest countries in the world. The continued political instability in Haiti in the late 1970s provides the setting for *Heading South*, which tells the story of three North American women (two from the United States and one from Montreal in Canada) who travel to the country purposely to engage in sex with the local men – the main protagonist, Ellen, is played by renowned English actor Charlotte Rampling.

Paradise Love is the first in a trilogy of films by Austrian Director Ulrich Siedl and recounts the story of a German, middle aged, divorced woman (Teresa), who is played by Austrian actor Margarethe Tiesel. Teresa, who is the main protagonist of the film, travels to Kenya for the first time for a holiday but willingly initiates a series of sexual encounters with several local men, ostensibly to find romance to fill the emptiness in her life occasioned by her divorce and a challenging teenage daughter. Kenya's colonial history can be said to have started with the European scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century and with its declaration as a British colony in 1920. Just over two decades later, overt resistance to British colonial rule emerged in the form of the Mau Mau Movement which staged a series of violent liberation struggles until independence was declared in 1963. Hence, the colonial history of Kenya bears some similarity to that of Haiti in so far as both engaged in violent struggles to unseat their colonial masters and to gain their independence. Unlike Haiti, however, Kenya is one of the more economically developed countries in sub-Saharan Africa although there is also severe poverty and unemployment. Nevertheless, like Haiti, Kenya has also suffered from major political and economic turmoil which has also affected the country's development.

For both Kenya and Haiti, agriculture is the mainstay of their economies although in the case of Kenya, tourism also plays a significant role with over 1.3 million tourist arrivals in 2016 (Kenya Tourist Board, 2017). In Haiti, while tourism has existed for many decades,

tourism as an industry is still in its infancy although it is the expressed desire of the Haitian government to make tourism the second largest economic activity on the island (Dodd, 2017). In *Paradise Love*, unlike in *Heading South*, there is no indication of the politico-historical period within which the film was set. Instead, here the political environment in the country is more of a subtext, although we are provided with an insight into the poverty which pervades the lives of the Kenyans.

The exoticisation of the black male body: eating the Other

In both films, black male bodies are exoticised and objectified by the white women from the outset. In *Heading South*, although the women are from North America where there is a significant minority of black men, they suggest that they are not interested in these men. The following is a conversation among the three women in the film, Brenda, Sue and Ellen. Sue (the Canadian) is asked why is it that given that there are so many black men in Montreal she had never dated any of them:

Sue: At home black guys don't interest me. They are very very different
Brenda: It's true. I don't know why? Is it because they are closer to nature? Is it the sun? Anyway, they're more gracious.
Ellen: The big difference sweetheart is that here you see them stripped to the waist. …think of these cute guys, they are a dime a dozen, take your pick…if you are too shy to pay them, just give them gifts…

In *Paradise Love,* not long after the main protagonist Teresa arrives in her holiday resort in Kenya, she meets a white female sex tourist at the hotel bar. The conversation between the two women is as follows:

Woman: Do you like it?
Teresa: Incredible. It smells so different. It's so…you feel different. Don't you feel different?
Woman: I always feel that way here. I'm dripping. You have to smell their skin. Its unforgettable.
Teresa: Whose skin?
Woman: The Negroes…it smells of coconut. I could lick and bite them forever. It's amazing, you'll see.

Teresa: They are nice. I met two but the problem is, they look alike. I thought they were the same person. They look the same.
Woman; It's like that at first.
Teresa: Really?
Woman: You can tell by their size…if they are big or small…mine's really big…everywhere!

In these conversations in both films, the postcolonial black male body is exoticised and differentiated from those of black men at home. They are seen as more primitive (the notion of closer to nature), less dangerous (they are more gracious) and, in the liminal space of the tourist resort, the white women feel free to treat these men like cheap commodities, to be bought either with cash or with gifts. Indeed, one black man is easily substitutable for another as after all, not only are they plentiful but they all look the same until of course one is able to distinguish them by the size of their penises. According to Gross (2018: 515) in reference to *Paradise Love*, this exchange references bell hooks' (1992) theory of 'eating the Other', and 'illustrate the ways in which racial and sexual scripts become mutually reinforced between female sex tourists and local men. Paradise: Love confirms: sexuality is racialized and race is sexualized'.

The objectification of the female body by men is a mechanism of power and the female sex tourists in both films engage in the same practice as a demonstration of their power over the black male body. It is, thus, in the liminal space of the tourist beaches that traditional patriarchal roles are inverted.

One of the most disturbing scenes in *Paradise Love* occurs when Teresa is provided with a birthday present of a young black male stripper by three other female sex tourists who she has met at the resort. The stripper, who looks like just a boy, does a striptease for the women in Teresa's hotel room while the four women ogle him. One of the women says 'That's Africa, that's wild for you'… After a while another woman says 'Let's put the beast into action. Whoever gets him hard is the winner'…The young boy starts to gyrate on top of one of the women who says 'Like a predator. Hear him? Like a gorilla. No like a tiger.' According to Margarethe Tiesel, the Austrian actor who plays Teresa in *Paradise Love* in a press interview in which she was asked about the storyline of the film , 'It's about female loneliness that takes hold when you reach a certain age and no longer look like someone from an advert. The exploited begin to exploit in a place where they have power'.

According to Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor:

> where at home they might feel stigmatised for having relations with black men, younger men, 'womanisers' or for having many sexual partners, in holiday resorts…they are permitted to consume the black male, the younger boy, the playboy or as many men as they desire while maintaining their reputation back home. So for once they can experience feeling more powerful than a man – and particularly a black man, a person who they may stereotypically think of as 'dangerous' at home (cited by Wheat, 1999).

Certainly, the popular colonial representation of black men as dangerous and as sexual predators constantly desiring and seeking to consume white female bodies is not played out in the context of the postcolonial tourism resort where the female sex tourists see the local black men as unthreatening, as docile. Indeed, in these postcolonial tourism resorts we see a subversion of representations – here it is the white female tourists who, comfortable in the structural privilege their whiteness affords them in these resort spaces, are at last free to consume the black male body without fear of consequences.

Whiteness as violence

In the tourist resorts, whiteness is also associated with violence. In *Heading South*, a series of auto-biographical vignettes are used as a way of telling the stories of the three women. In the first such vignette, Brenda recounts her first visit to Haiti three years earlier with her then husband in which she engaged in a sexual encounter with one of the black boys on the island who she and her husband had taken 'pity on' as he appeared to be starving. During the course of this holiday, they basically took the boy under their wing. It was Brenda who seduced the boy on the beach and, in her autobiographical vignette, she describes their first sexual coupling:

> his body fascinated me. Long, lithe, muscular, his skin glistening. I couldn't take my eyes off him…I slipped two fingers into his bathing suit…I threw myself on him. I literally threw myself on him...It was so violent I couldn't help but scream, I think I never stopped screaming. It was my first orgasm.

At the time, the young boy was 15 and Brenda 45. Yet in recounting this story, Brenda makes no mention of any personal regret at the exploitation of a 15-year-old boy which in her own

American society would be deemed as paedophilia, a criminal offence. In Haiti she suffers no penalty. Brenda is emotional in the telling of the story, not because of any remorse or any feelings of guilt, but because of the intensity of the memory, a repeat of which she had travelled to Haiti three years later to experience but which she is afraid will be out of her grasp as the young man, Legba, now 18, had been 'purchased' by 55-year old Ellen, on what seemed to be an exclusive contract.

In *Paradise Love*, Teresa finds out that her 'beach boy' Munga has been dishonest about his marital status, as the woman he claimed was his sister was actually his wife and they had a son. Teresa confronts him on the beach where he is apparently enjoying bathing in the sea with his wife and young son. She grabs him by the hair and abuses him both physically and verbally. Munga does not retaliate, he does not fight back, but instead starts whimpering and tries to protect himself from Teresa's rage. Interestingly, none of the Kenyans in the sea, including Munga's wife, intervenes while this is playing out – they look on dispassionately as if they have seen it all before. After Teresa finishes venting her anger, she says to Munga, who is still whimpering, 'now get lost.' It is, therefore, Teresa who decides when and how the relationship ends.

The spatialization of Whiteness

In both films, there is a clear spatial demarcation within the tourist resorts. The female sex tourists are free to traverse through all the spaces of the resort but the 'beach boys' who service their sexual needs can only occupy the beach; they are not permitted to venture beyond the confines of the beach. Ironically, to do so would be to transgress established boundaries. In fact, the black male sexualised body is only allowed into the non-beach spaces of the resort with the permission of the white female sex tourist. In other words, it is white female privilege which acts as a passport to entry to non-beach resort spaces. In *Paradise Love*, Teresa's sexual encounters with the black men occur predominantly in the impoverished local spaces outside of the resort. In these local spaces, as a white woman she is not in danger but is protected.

However, when she invites one of the male hotel employees called Yosef to her room for sex the man is clearly uncomfortable in the space and is unable to perform sexually, even though Teresa is trying her best to seduce him. When she questions what is wrong, he says 'it is hard for me'. Teresa asks him to leave as he is unable to satisfy her sexual fantasies and desires but not without warning him not to take any money from her purse.

In *Heading South*, Brenda invites her beach boy Legba (who she is now sharing with Ellen) to have dinner with her and Sue in the hotel restaurant. The head waiter Albert refuses to serve him and indicates that he is not allowed in the restaurant according to hotel policy:

Sue: He eats with us every day on the beach
Albert: on the beach it is no problem. You do what you want. But this is the restaurant.

It is only after Brenda insists that Albert relents and allows Legba to eat at the table. What is interesting here, though, is that Brenda then says to Sue: 'It's incredible how racist they can be'. Clearly Brenda, by projecting racism onto the black waiter, is unaware of or failing to acknowledge her own racism.

The spatial privilege enjoyed by the white female sex tourists in both films is also evident in their unfettered ability to not only move across space but also across time within resort spaces and also between these resorts and their home countries. This freedom is not enjoyed by the beach boys and their liberation can only arguably occur through death, as happened to Legba in *Heading South* (Tate, 2011). That is, Legba and his Haitian female friend are murdered as they were apparently embroiled (wittingly or unwittingly) in the volatile politics of Haiti in the late 1970s. Ellen, who it will be recalled was sharing Legba with Brenda, had passionately implored him to escape the violence of Haiti by returning home with her, but Legba had refused her 'protection' and was subsequently gunned down in an apparent organised killing. The murderer dumps the bodies on the same beach resort where the female sex tourists have been staying. According to Tate (2011), the death of Legba might be deemed as symbolising resistance to white female privilege and the wider sex tourism industry in which it is embroiled. Indeed, Tate (2011: 47) argues that:

> Legba's necropolitical agency emerges in his choice of death rather than Ellen's rescue through which emerges his position as a subject who resists both state terror and white female 'race' and class sovereignty. His refusal to engage with the capitulation of the male love object and the 'happily ever after' of White Western romance speaks back, from a position of alterity…[his] is a spirit that says he would rather die a free man in Haiti than be an unfree man back in the United States, domesticated by white love.

However, this resistance by the subaltern to white female privilege and power might also be interpreted as pervading the wider Haitian society. That is, Legba's murder and the dumping of his body on the beach of the same resort where the sex tourism is enacted perhaps also symbolises the defiance of a fiercely independent nation to the new form of colonialism that white female sex tourism increasingly represented.

Ellen briefly blames herself for Legba's death and is perplexed at the casual behaviour of the policeman who comes to investigate the murders and who does not ask her any probing questions. She questions whether her own life and that of the other tourists is in danger. In response, the policeman utters three powerful words which attest to the privileged nature of the tourists' existence and the value placed on their lives as opposed to the lives of the locals who dare to engage in this activity: 'Tourists never die….'

The ambivalence of Whiteness

In both films, we are not made to feel empathy for the black men but rather for the white female sex tourists. All the, women are middle aged, some are overweight, divorced, lonely or unable to find a suitable partner at home. In *Heading South*, Ellen indicates that: 'If you're not as dumb as a fashion model, the only guys that are interested are natural born losers or husbands wives are cheating on'.

We are made to feel these women's lack of fulfilment in their lives at home and to imagine with them that what they are looking for in their touristic journey is love or romance which legitimates their behaviour and perhaps distinguishes them from white male sex tourists who are often portrayed as being interested only in sex or the physical. Indeed, the coining of the term 'romance tourism' to refer to female sex tourism is a manifestation of this distinction as it negates the exploitative nature of the relationship between the white women and the beach boys and denies the existence of their white privilege. In *Heading South*, Ellen appears to be conflicted about whether what she is seeking is actually love or sex. She says 'I'm crazy about love. Sex and love. I'm not really sure anymore.' In *Paradise Love*, Teresa indicates that she wants to find someone who: 'Really looks at you as a person. Not just the surface. Deep into your pupils, into your soul. Seeing what's inside, past your crow's feet and fat bum. Into your eyes, right into your eyes'.

Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor makes a potent argument about female sex tourists from the West and the power that they exercise:

> Although men involved in tourist related sexual exchanges and their female clients are often equally concerned to ignore or downplay the material inequalities that divide them, and to construct their relationships as if they were based simply and solely on mutual desire and/or romance and/or friendship, their motives for constructing a fiction are different, and have different consequences. Black [Caribbean] men who provide sexual services as an economic activity are performing their 'otherness' in ways that are desired by tourists…this means reproducing racist stereotypes about the 'Other' and having to subjectively experience sexualized racisms as empowering. The tourists' economic survival does not depend on them performing any particular version of 'femininity', and tourist resorts [in the Caribbean] actually provide them with a stage on which to perform their femininity in any way they choose. (Sanchez Taylor 2006: 56)

Final reflections

Through female sex tourism to the postcolonial world, the traditional gendered power relations between men and women is reversed through the intervening factor of race – the women, racialised as white have privilege and power while the men, racialised as black, do not. While it might be that the situation is not so clear cut and binary – that is, white women can sometimes be vulnerable and exploited by 'foreign, exotic others' and black men are not always dependent and 'passive objects of women's desires' (Hamid-Turksoy et al, 2014) – an intersectional approach, it is argued, allows for the 'fluidity of power exertion, acknowledging that not all oppressions function oppressively in all situations at all times' (Files-Thompson, 2013: 139). I would contend that in the context of white female sex tourism to countries of the Global South, historical power political colonial relationships, which are both sexualised and racialised, still have a very potent force in the dynamics that play out between white women and black men in the l sexual encounters inherent in tourism as a spatial and temporal phenomenon. Yet, when race is spoken about in tourism, it is often focused on race disadvantage and not on race privilege. This is further problematised when one adds a gender dimension. Through sex tourism then, white power is reproduced and re-inscribed in the Caribbean and other parts of the Global South not only by Western men but also by Western women.

In this essay, I have thus provided an interpretation of white female sex tourism to the countries of the Global South such as those in the Caribbean, Latin America and in Africa, and I have suggested that we need to examine the sources of power in this tourism

phenomenon. I argue that the sources of power are inextricably intertwined with racist notions of white privilege which are exercised by both men and women. An intersectional approach which recognises the interplay between gender and race, and which acknowledges the potency of 'whiteness' enables a more critical unpacking of the power inherent in these sexual encounters within liminal postcolonial tourism spaces.

It is important to state nonetheless that this discussion on whiteness is not intended to create a simplistic dichotomy between black and white; it is not intended to homogenise whiteness. Rather, like Gayatri Spivak (2006) I am calling for a problematisation of positionality. As a black woman from the Global South who has become accustomed to tourism narratives that focus on the racialised 'Other' largely espoused by Western scholars, I am encouraging white people to (re)consider myopic understandings of racial power within tourism by refracting their epistemological lens onto themselves. Using the lens of whiteness theory, white people and, in this case, white women, are implored to reflect on their own racial identities, the privileges that accompany them, and how this serves to legitimate racial inequalities in tourism.

However, Sara Ahmed (2007) questions whether by focusing on whiteness we are at the same time enabling its continued power. She questions whether:

> speaking about whiteness allows it to become an 'essential something'? If whiteness gains currency by being unnoticed, then what does it mean to notice whiteness? What does making the invisible marks of privilege more visible actually do? Could whiteness studies produce an attachment to whiteness by holding it in place as an object? Such questions are addressed by scholars not in order to suspend the project of whiteness studies, but to consider what it means for a project of critique to be complicit with its object. We could say that any project that aims to dismantle or challenge the categories that are made invisible through privilege is bound to participate in the object of its critique (Ahmed, 2007: 149-150).

This is indeed a very valid point, but I agree with Richard Dyer (1997: 10) that 'the point of looking at whiteness is to dislodge it from its centrality and authority, not to reinstate it (and much less, to make a show of reinstating it, when like male power, it doesn't actually need reinstating)'.

While the main thrust of this essay has been on the intersection between gender and race with a focus on white female sex tourism, implicit in the discussion of whiteness is also

a class dimension where class is seen in an economic context. However, it is clear from the films that not all the white female sex tourists are either middle class or wealthy; for instance, Teresa from *Paradise Love* is portrayed early on in the film as a working class divorced mother. What is important here, however, is the fact that they are white and, according to Franz Fanon, whiteness implies richness from the perspective of the colonised. That said, there are also several other intersections that are evident in both films that could be added to the gender/race nexus to better illustrate the complexity of the intersectionality at play in both films which have not been discussed in this essay, such as the characteristics such as age, nationality and sexual orientation. But this is for a future project. In addition, while recognising that the lived experiences of black women are different from those of white women, as Sojourner Truth reflected at the beginning of this essay, I have not explored the position of black women within the context of female sex tourism neither in the sense of black female sex tourists (albeit they are only a minority) to the Global South nor in terms of the way in which black women in the films have been represented. Indeed, in both films we only see black women in traditional roles – as mothers, as wives/girlfriends, as lowly paid workers in the hotels– and it would be interesting in a future project to apply critical race theory and black feminism in order to understand more fully the extent of their agency within this context.

Finally, in this essay I hope I have demonstrated how whiteness is pervasive in relationships in tourism to the developing world, including in the context of female sex tourism. However, it has thus far remained largely unnamed and therefore its wider implications for tourism development and indeed for tourism research, have been ignored. It is however important for Western tourists to developing countries to reflect deeply on their positionality of racial privilege, as this has consequences for how tourism is practiced and performed. In the two films explored in this essay I have noted how performances of female sex tourism to the developing world are underpinned and enabled by white privilege. I suggest that exposing the power of whiteness (including its gendered dimension) allows for an excavation of a central source of exploitation that persists in all forms of tourism including in research. Such an exercise is a necessary endeavour for the sustainable and ethical development of tourism in the Global South.

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