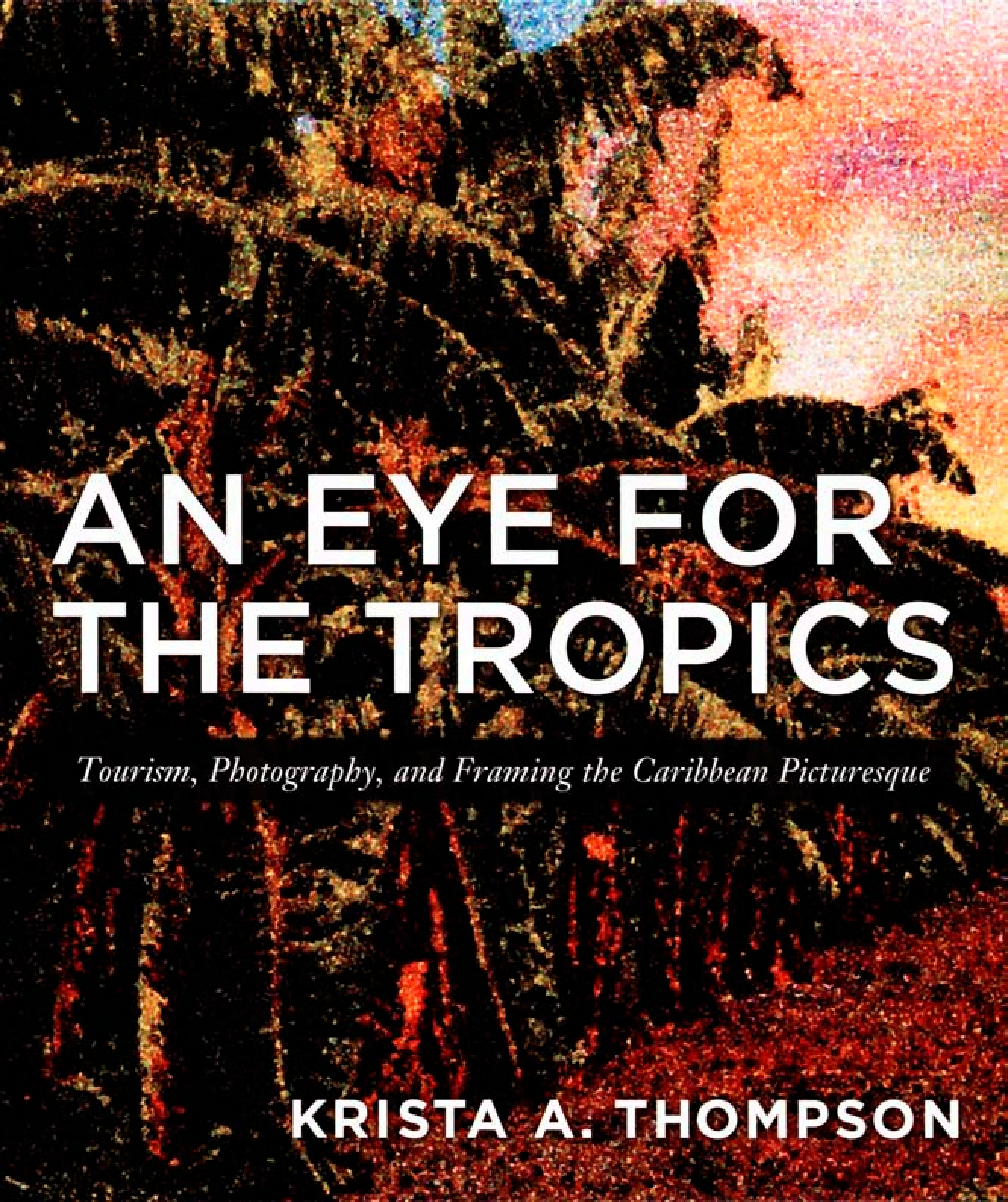

AN EYE FOR THE TROPICS

Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque

KRISTA A. THOMPSON

An Eye for the Tropics

OBJECTS | HISTORIES

Critical Perspectives on Art, Material Culture, and Representation

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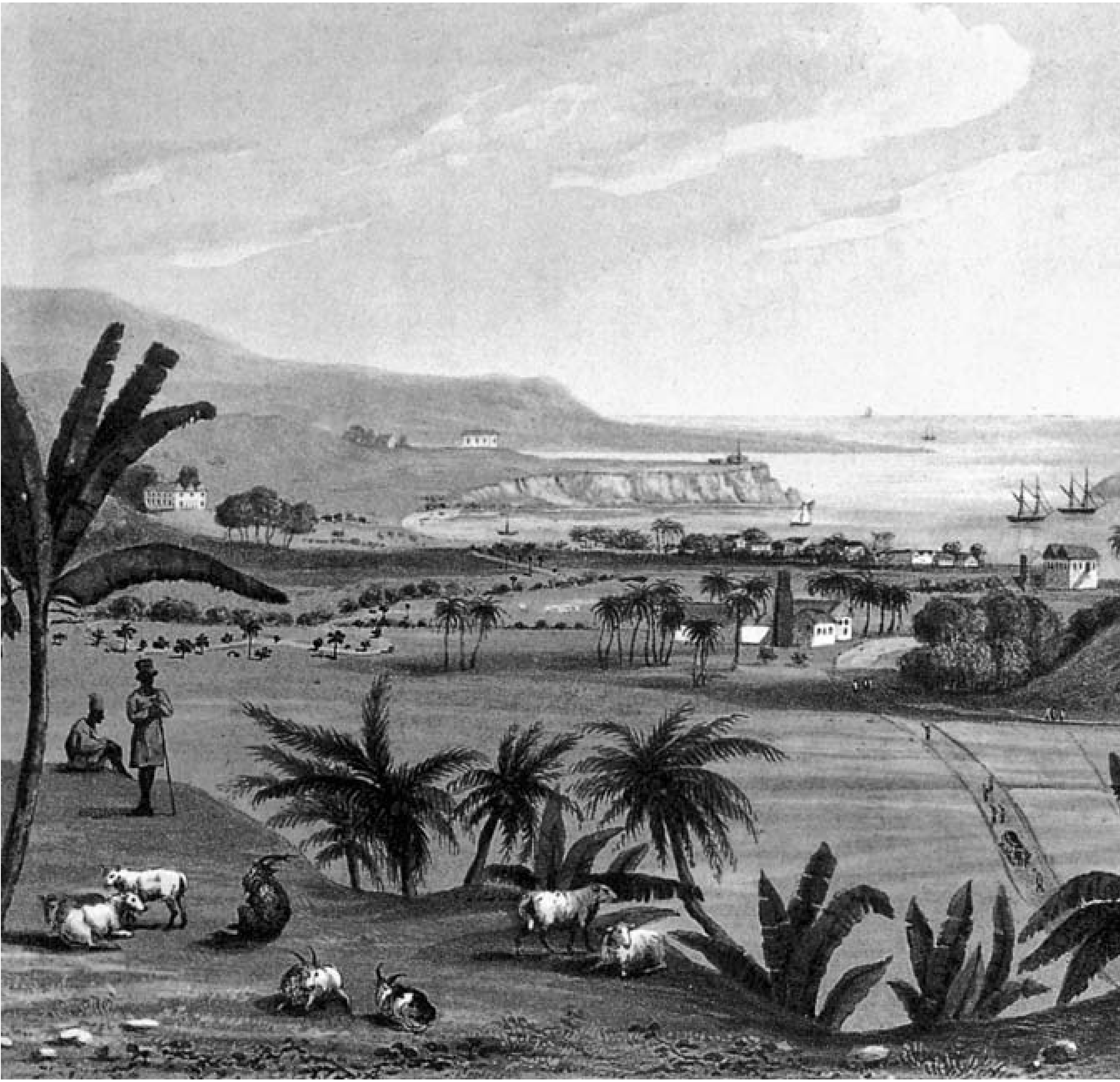

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TO ELLA

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ABBREVIATIONS

CT	*Citizens' Torch* (Nassau, Bahamas). 1951.
DE	*Daily Express* (London). 1953.
DG	*Daily Gleaner* (Kingston, Jamaica). 1889–1915.
ED	*Entertainment Design* (New York). 1994.
GC	*The Golden Caribbean* (Boston). 1903–7.
JP	*The Jamaica Post* (Kingston, Jamaica). 1889–1915.
JR	*Jamaica Record* (Kingston, Jamaica). 1988.
JT	*The Jamaica Times* (Kingston, Jamaica). 1889–1915.
LP	*The Liverpool Post* (Liverpool, England). 1900–1905.
NG	*The Nassau Guardian* (Nassau, Bahamas). 1885–1940.
PIN	*Paradise Island News* (Paradise Island, Bahamas). 1994.
PO	*Public Opinion* (Kingston, Jamaica). 1930–50.
PP	*Planters' Punch* (Kingston, Jamaica). 1920–50.
RCW	*Record Christian Work* (East Northfield, Mass.). 1894.
SP	*Spotlight* (Kingston, Jamaica). 1930–50.
TR	*The Tribune* (Nassau, Bahamas). 1885–1940.
TTR	*Trinidad and Tobago Review* (Port of Spain, Trinidad). 1991.
UT	*USA Today* (Washington, D.C.). 1994.
WIR	*West Indian Review* (Kingston, Jamaica). 1930–40.

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AN EYE FOR THE TROPICS

INTRODUCTION

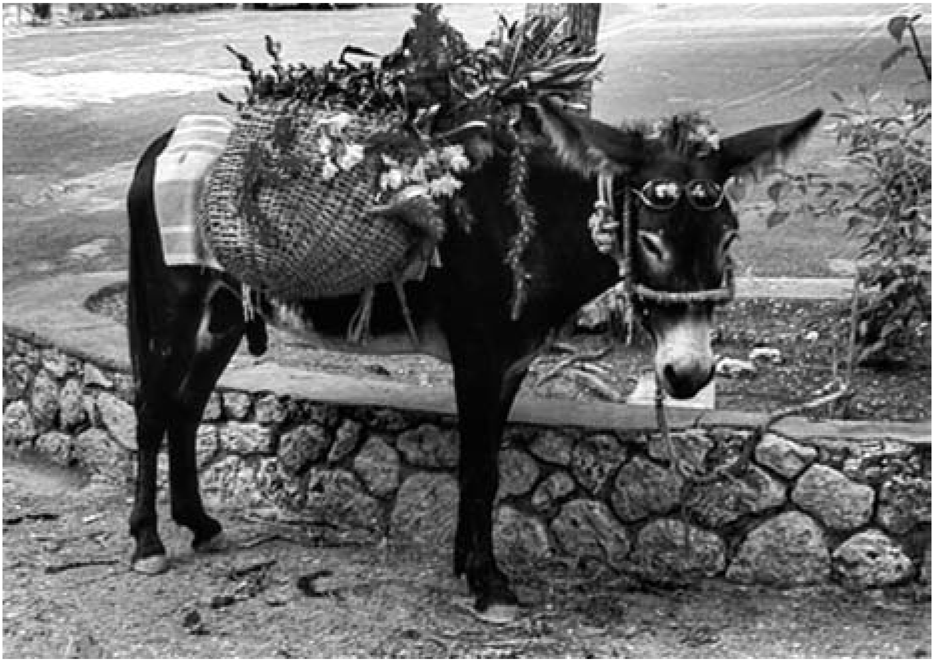
TROPICALIZATION

The Aesthetics and Politics of Space in Jamaica and the Bahamas

> Our landscape is its own monument: its meaning can
> only be traced on the underside. It is all history.
>
> Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 1989

> Clad in fearful and wonderful garments, which they fondly imagined to be ordinary tropical clothing, . . . they came ashore in the spirit of explorers and seemed quite disappointed to find we wore clothes and did not live in the jungle.
>
> O who would be a tourist
> And with the tourists stand,
> A guide-book in his pocket,
> A Kodak in his hand!
>
> "Our Friends the Tourists," *Daily Gleaner*, Kingston, 18 January 1901

On a trip to Dunn's River Falls in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in the summer of 2000, the hordes of tourists and locals alike who had flocked to the falls encountered an unusual sight. Half-clad bodies of every size and variety crowded the scene. Gaggles of children and guide-led human chains of sun-reddened tourists moved by in every direction. Out of this confusion of people, a single element stood still in this heat, haze, and people-filled environment. Like a frozen film frame, against a foreground filled with bodies swooshing by in blurred hurriedness, an older black Jamaican man and his donkey appeared along the side of the walkway. The donkey was no ordinary ass; it had hibiscus tucked behind its ears and sported sunglasses (figure 1). Woven baskets brimming with flowers straddled the animal's back. Its owner lingered close by, with an enormous hat of his own, bellowing into the passing human tide that a photograph with the donkey and/or himself could be bought for the minimal cost of



1 Donkey, posed for photographs, at Dunn's River Falls, Jamaica, 2000

40 Jamaican dollars (then approximately US$1). The spectacle of the man and donkey drew the quizzical looks, pointings, and giggles of many passersby, for within the wider north coast resort town of Ocho Rios the sight of a donkey, especially one clad in shades and flowers, was indeed a rare spectacle.

The strange sight recalled a vision from years ago. The "native man with donkey" was a stock character in many photographic representations of the Anglophone Caribbean taken during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth. The icon had been imprinted on numerous photographs and postcards since the start of the tourism industry in the 1890s, in an effort by the colonial government and tourism interests to constitute a new idea of Jamaica. More than a century later, the man at Dunn's River Falls made his living by transforming himself and his donkey into this age-old image (itself likely based on past representations) in order to elicit the interest of tourists, who would then, in turn, render him into yet another photographic image. In this process the decades-old “man and donkey” icon continued to proliferate in the visual economy of representations that imaged the island both locally and abroad.

The man’s vocation as an object to be photographed highlights the complex ways that images and icons from the past, many of which were themselves visual constructions created for the tourism industry, survive in some English-speaking Caribbean islands. The spectacle of the man and donkey in Ocho Rios is not an isolated occurrence, especially in those islands with tourism-driven economies. For nine years a Rasta man, who calls himself “One Love,” and his donkey have frequented the main commercial port of St. Thomas, posing for money (One Love 2001).[1] A Junkanoo figure (derived from the local annual masquerade of the same name) also walks the docks of Freeport in the Bahamas, posing year-round for pictures. These characters, who perform a role inspired by early photographic icons of the Anglophone Caribbean, demonstrate that such representations continue to inhabit an intrinsic part of the islands’ visual culture and local imaginary, remaining embodied (or even disembodied) within the Caribbean landscape.

In one of those dissonant moments of academic life I snapped the picture. Although self-conscious of my own participation in the visual economy of people as images, on that day in Ocho Rios my scholarly ambitions dictated that I document the “photo-gentrified” donkey. As I did so, I could feel the uneasiness of many Jamaicans as I visually recorded the spectacle. Their displeasure registered in their stares and the audible “kissing of their teeth.”[2] A passerby murmured the protest that when such a photo left the island, it would surely make Jamaica seem primitive and backward, like “we livin’ in a past time.” My critics were concerned that the image—which was being staged solely for the purposes of becoming a photograph and was fairly atypical of contemporary society in Ocho Rios—would in the translation of geographic location become representative of Jamaica as a whole today. I hope to prove them wrong. They were correct in one sense: the image would travel and circulate outside their country. However, my work had the opposite aim. Indeed, this book sets out precisely not to confirm touristic notions of the island’s primitiveness or timelessness through this and other photographs but to illustrate the historical roots and the long-term effects of touristic representations on the island and its inhabitants, while more broadly investigating the implications of tourism on ways of seeing the Anglophone Caribbean and the lived experience of space for local residents.

The incident highlighted several of the aspects of tourism in the Anglophone Caribbean and the politics of visual representation (particularly photographic images) that are central concepts under investigation in this book. What elements of the local populace and landscape were seized on as representative of the West Indies, and which ones have persisted as visual icons of the islands over time? How have such images informed notions of the region as they circulate across geographic boundaries? And importantly, what impact have such representations had on both the physical landscape and "social space" of the West Indies (Lefebvre 1991)?

The origins of how the English-speaking Caribbean was (and is) widely visually imagined can be traced in large part to the beginnings of tourism industries in the British West Indies in the late nineteenth century. Starting in the 1880s, British colonial administrators, local white elites, and American and British hoteliers in Jamaica and the Bahamas embarked on campaigns to refashion the islands as picturesque "tropical" paradises, the first concerted efforts of their kind in Britain's Caribbean colonies. Tourism entrepreneurs faced a formidable challenge. Beyond the region the West Indies were widely stigmatized as breeding grounds for potentially fatal tropical diseases.[3] Yellow fever, malaria, and cholera had claimed the lives of many white civilians and soldiers who ventured to the islands, ensuring what historian Philip Curtin describes as "death by migration" (Curtin 1989). As one industry supporter recognized in 1891, "to many old-fashioned people at home [Britain] to book a passage for Jamaica is almost synonymous with ordering a coffin" (Gardener, quoted in Hanna 1989, 19). Despite the availability of preventive medicines for "tropical" diseases in the 1880s, tourism promoters had to dispel the fear of the islands, which haunted the imaginations of potential tourism clienteles in Britain and North America. They had to radically transform the islands' much maligned landscapes into spaces of touristic desire for British and North American traveling publics.

Photographic images played a constitutive role in this process. To create new and alluring representations of the islands, the colonial government and British and American corporations in Jamaica and the Bahamas (most notably, the British firm Elder, Dempster and Company and the American United Fruit Company) enlisted the services of many British, American, and local photographers, artists, and lantern lecturers, including James Johnston, James Gall, Bessie Pullen-Burry, W. H. Hale, and Joseph Kirkpatrick in Jamaica; and Albert Bierstadt, Jacob Frank Coonley, Fred Armbrister, William Henry Jackson, James Sands, John Ernest Williamson, and Stephen Haweis in the Bahamas. Collectively, through photographs, postcards, photography books, illustrated guides, stereo-views, and lantern slides, these image makers created a substantial repertoire of visual representations of the islands. These pictures were instrumental in imaging the islands as tropical and picturesque tourism destinations.

These photographs of the islands, created and circulated by tourism promoters, generated what the sociologist Rob Shields defines as a "place-image," a set of core representations that form "a widely disseminated and commonly held set of images of a place or space" (Shields 1991, 60). Kye-Sung Chon uses "destination image" in a similar vein to characterize a place-image created precisely for the promotion of tourism (Chon 1990). Place-images or destination images can become viewed as representative of the essential character of a place, despite the specificities of, and changes in, local geopolitical environments (Shields 1991, 47). This book is concerned with how certain visual icons of the Anglophone Caribbean created in a particular sociopolitical context—the beginning of the twentieth century in Jamaica and the Bahamas—circulated over time and across geographic boundaries to become symbolic of specific islands and an entire region. Photographs of Jamaica and the Bahamas were particularly significant in that they provided models on which other local governments in the region based subsequent tourism campaigns.[4] Thus, they set the stage for the perception of the wider Caribbean in the popular imagination of British and North American publics. A genealogy of images of the Anglophone Caribbean that continue to inform representations of the region can be traced back to this seminal period in tourism development.

In exploring the creation of place-images as they relate to the Anglophone Caribbean, I use the terms *tropicalization* or *tropicality* (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 1997; Dash 1998; Arnold 2000).[5] *Tropicalization* here describes the complex visual systems through which the islands were imaged for tourist consumption and the social and political implications of these representations on actual physical space on the islands and their inhabitants. More specifically, tropicalization delineates how certain ideals and expectations of the tropics informed the creation of place-images in some Anglophone Caribbean islands. It characterizes how, despite the geological diversity within "the tropics" and even in a single Caribbean island, a very particular concept of what a tropical Caribbean island should look like developed in the visual economies of tourism.

The term *tropics*, from which *tropicalization* is derived, denotes the horizontal band on the earth's surface between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn in which many Caribbean islands are located. This region receives the greatest intensity of direct sunlight on the planet. Tropicalization then appropriately draws attention to light in the geography of the Caribbean and, by extension, vision and visual representation in the imaginative geography of the islands. Appropriately, in a region renowned for light, photography—a medium based on the chemical reaction of light particles on sensitive film or glass negatives—would become an important instrument in the imaging of the islands.

Through the exhibition of photographs internationally, the presentation of images and people at colonial expositions, the distribution of photography books, the creation of postcard and stereo-view series, and the delivery of lantern lamp lectures (a precursor to slide lectures) across the United States, Canada, and Britain, tourism promoters literally used photographs to project a new vision of the islands before the eyes of North American and British traveling publics. In these photographs tourism propagandists often visualized and promoted what they deemed to be the islands' picturesque qualities. They typically identified as picturesque parts of the landscape that most readily exhibited ideals of a "tropical island"—those areas of the islands' environments that contained exotic, strange, or grandiose forms of "tropical nature."[6] At the time, tropical nature did not so much signify the geographical derivation of a plant form as it did a "species with strange or 'prehistoric' characteristics . . . prized as exotic, regardless of [its] actual geographical or climatic requirement" (Preston 1999, 195). Hence, numerous photographs of royal and coconut palm trees, silk cottons, and banyan trees, with their enormous wide-spreading roots, became the pictorial focus of early advertising campaigns. In addition, promoters often pictured forms of tropical nature that seemed cultivated or perfectly manicured into orderly displays (banana plantations, coconut groves, and botanical gardens). Human bodies also joined the parade of the picturesque. Many representations also featured "picturesque natives," black and Indian (in the case of Jamaica) inhabitants who seemed loyal, disciplined, and clean British colonial subjects. Such photographs, which commonly pictured washerwomen, policemen, or prisoners, aimed to convince primarily white travelers to the majority black colonies that the "natives" were civilized.[7]

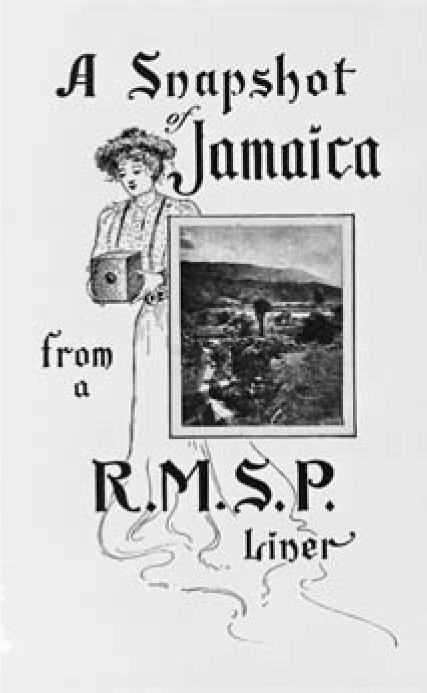
In the late 1920s and 1930s, when the touristic interest in tropical forms of vegetation receded somewhat, promoters focused on the islands' seascape as a repository of their "tropicalness." At this time representations of coral reefs, surrounding marine life, and later the beach became increasingly popular. Images of the islands' transparent waters emphasized another tamed aspect of nature in the Anglophone Caribbean, in this instance, the ocean. In sum, while tourism-oriented representations of the Bahamas and Jamaica, whether of land, sea, or human-scapes, often heightened the tropicality of the islands, they also conveyed a domesticated version of the tropical environment and society. Such photographs of tamed nature and disciplined "natives" ensured potential travelers of their safety in a tropical environment. More generally, these images served as visual testaments of the effectiveness of colonial rule and naturalized colonial and imperial transformations of social and physical landscape.

Jamaica and the Bahamas, with their geological differences and particular colonial histories, make compelling case studies through which to understand and complicate the notion of tropicalization. Both colonies were filtered through similar representational lenses, which imaged both landscapes (and even seascapes) as picturesque tropical gardens and as exemplary and disciplined British colonial societies. The Bahamas is an archipelago of flat limestone islands and Jamaica is a more rugged volcanic landmass dominated in parts by some of the most mountainous regions in the Caribbean (reaching heights of up to 7,000 feet in the Blue Mountains). The Bahamas and Jamaica also had very different plantation and colonial histories, despite the fact that they were both British colonies. Whereas Jamaica had extensive sugar plantations since the 1600s, colonists in the Bahamas never successfully sustained a comparable profitable plantation economy on the coral isles in the long term (partly because of the paucity of the topsoil on many islands in the archipelago). However, regardless of these distinct histories and geographies, at the beginning of the twentieth century both islands looked strikingly the same in photographic representations, as a consequence of tropicalization.

PHOTOGRAPHY, TOURISM, AND PLACE-IMAGE AS IMAGE

Photography and the new tourist trade were even more intimately intertwined. Not only did tourism promoters use photographs to reconstitute an image of the islands, but they marketed their landscapes and inhabitants as picturesque, more specifically, as "like photographs." In doing so, they promoted the touristic activity of creating photographic views. "The tourist who goes to Jamaica without a camera will sadly regret it," one United Fruit Company booklet forewarned visitors, "as the island is one continuous succession of pictures" (United Fruit Company 1904, 17). Industry enthusiasts capitalized on the new innovations in photography, spearheaded by Kodak's development of paper-based photographic film and the invention of celluloid film (replacing cumbersome and fragile glass plates) in 1898, which allowed travelers to tote portable and inexpensive cameras. The first mass-marketed cameras produced at the start of the twentieth century, such as the Browning, put travelers in charge of visually recording their experiences. Indeed, the cover of one guidebook, aptly titled *A Snapshot of Jamaica* (circa 1907), featured a tourist steadily aiming her handheld camera (figure 2). An actual photograph, of an old sugar mill, appeared pasted next to her outline, presumably giving readers an instant snapshot of the scene she framed in her viewfinder. By the turn of the twentieth century, local photography stores on the islands, like Aston W. Gardener Company in Kingston (see advertisement published in Johnston 1903a), doubled as both tourist agencies and Kodak supply stores, demonstrating how closely tourist travel and photography became wed. Photographers opened studios (some only during the tourist season) to cater to this new tourist market in "scenic views" (Boxer 2001, 15–16; Thompson 2003). They stocked a set of images through which travelers could compile their photographic records of the islands and developed tourists' own photographic impressions of their sojourns.

Many travelers hired local men to direct scenic tours of the island, on which they frequently took their cameras (Brassey 1885, 214; Leader 1907, 114). Black male guides often carried the photographic and artistic equipment that tourists needed in "the labor of capturing the perfect view," to use the expression of one traveler to the Bahamas (Brassey 1885, 214). These escorts also sometimes became photographic subjects (Leader 1907, 114) or directed tourists to their own ideals of artistically worthy sites



2 *A Snapshot of Jamaica,* guidebook cover, ca. 1907

(Williams 1909, 48). In sum, travelers' "laborious" quests for the picturesque were frequently based on the labor, expertise, and participation of local inhabitants.

Some travelers published accounts of their tropical sojourns through the islands, as was the case with British travel writer Alfred Leader, who published *Through Jamaica with a Kodak* (1907). The title of his account draws attention to the importance of creating and taking photographs in the islands and, more generally, to a touristic way of seeing them, as promoters billed the colonies, as a series of photographic images. Other travelers to the islands showed their photographs in exhibition spaces provided in local hotels. Between 1900 and 1920, more than 200 such exhibitions of travelers' photographs and other art work took place in hotels in Nassau alone.[8]

This promotion of the picturesque landscape in tourism campaigns, of course, did not only happen in the context of the Caribbean. Travel industry supporters have long sold locales as picturesque, and tourists have clamored to represent these places at least since the popularity of British travel to Italy on the Grand Tour (Redford 1996; Hornsby 2000) and picturesque tours of the British countryside inspired by William Gilpin in the eighteenth century (Gilpin 1792; Andrews 1989; Taylor 1994). Other geographic locations, including the French Riviera (Silver 2001), the South Pacific (Smith 1969), Latin America (Pratt 1992), and New England (Brown 1995), also served as photographic and artistic muses for travelers (Urry 1990; Osborne 2000). Although this kind of pictorial imaging, this place-image based precisely on the islands' ability to become like representations, was not unique to the Anglophone Caribbean, it would distinctively impact the islands' environments and their inhabitants.

Tourism promoters in the islands did more than create an image of Anglophone Caribbean societies solely in the realm of visual representation. Indeed, almost from the inception of tourism industries on the islands, hoteliers, colonial administrators, and local white mercantile elites (re)created or tropicalized many aspects of the islands precisely in the image of these representations. They physically transformed areas of the islands through planting campaigns or cleanliness drives, in efforts to make the islands appear as they did in photographs—orderly, picturesque, and tropical. The importation of "tropical" trees from different parts of the world, for instance, was one way governments in the colonies attempted to re-create a visual ideal of the tropical Caribbean landscape on the islands' environment. Botanical gardens, hotel landscapes, and tourist-frequented ports, in particular, became spaces where ideals of the picturesque tropical landscape were re-created in miniature. Once the islands had become tropicalized in the realm of photography, such representational ideals informed the physical appearance of the islands.

By examining the physical effects of touristic images in Jamaica and the Bahamas, I shift the analytical focus in postcolonial studies, which has developed on how "the West" imagined other cultures and regions, particularly the Orient, Africa, and India.[9] This scholarship has provided keen insights into how colonial representations often supported claims of Western superiority, adversely reflected ideals of Western societies, and justified colonial missions and imperial campaigns. Many of these studies, however, generally conclude that representations of other places reveal more about the West than they do the locations or peoples pictured and described in colonial discourses. As Peter

Mason acknowledges in *Infelicities: Representations of the Exotic*, the "story told here, for better or for worse, is a European one" (Mason 1998, 5). Such interpretations have led to a kind of scholarly narcissism, wherein examinations of images and discourses about "other" places are preoccupied solely with Western ideologies or notions of colonial power. Researchers often look past the subject matter represented or described as if gazing through a mirror's surface, seeing only Western ideologies reflected in these sources. With very few exceptions (Schick 1999; Kahn 2000), these approaches seldom examine the representations as they impacted the environments they sought to represent.

Looking at colonial representations against the backdrop of the specific geopolitical environments they pictured, I direct the analytical gaze of inquiry onto the places and peoples depicted in the representations. By espousing such an approach I am not advocating comparisons between colonial representations and a prerepresentational truth or "reality" of a given society.[10] Rather, I explore how colonial representations became interwoven within the texture of colonial societies. So-called imaginative geographies frequently shaped the physical contours of the very "social spaces" that they "imagined." French scholar Henri Lefebvre uses the phrase "social space" to describe the dialectal relationship between representations of space, the usage of space, and the physical creation of space. It is this dialogic or mutually defining relationship between the spheres of tourism, visual representation, and space in Jamaica and the Bahamas that I examine in this book. Not only did representations inform the subsequent material re-creation of parts of the islands' landscapes, but photographs of these areas naturalized these "tropical" forms of fauna and flora as representative parts of the islands' landscape. In short, colonial representations were frequently not just reflective of colonial views but became constitutive and iconic parts of the colonies' landscape.

"AS OTHERS SEE US": LOCAL RESPONSES TO TOURISTIC REPRESENTATIONS

By focusing solely on the "European story" of these representations, scholars have seldom examined how different local constituencies interpreted and used these images toward their own social, political, or aesthetic ends. Even scholars who call attention to the multiple audiences and complex, heterogeneous, and even ambivalent meanings of colonial representations frequently restrict their analyses to the reception of colonial imagery in Europe and Euro-America (Lowe 1991; Melman 1992; Lewis 1996), with a few exceptions (Mitchell 1988; Pratt 1992; Lippard and Benally 1992). Few scholars appreciate that colonial representations had widespread visibility within the colonies. In the case of the Bahamas and Jamaica local groups were hypersensitively aware of these images. Before tourism promoters sent photographs abroad to colonial exhibitions, for instance, they would on occasion display the images in the islands.[11] Newspaper articles, particularly a column entitled "As Others See Us," provided a forum through which local elites reviewed prospective international photographic exhibitions, critiqued travelers' representations, reported on the reception of lantern lectures, and assessed the successes or failures of local representation at colonial exhibitions. When the United Fruit Company, an American corporation, embarked on an extensive advertising campaign on Jamaica, a four-page spread appeared in *The Daily Gleaner* in which "many representative men" scrutinized the "scheme to advertise Jamaica abroad" (*DG*, 30 January 1904).[12] Not only were touristic images seen in the colonies, but locals paid acute attention to how these representations were in turn seen by "others," the outside world. In short, images created to project an image to the outside world also shaped how local communities learned to see themselves and their environments.

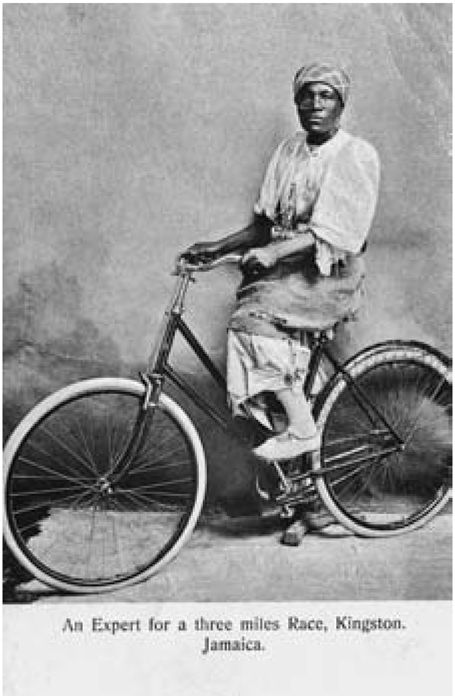
Tropicalization, however, was a continually negotiated process, supported or critiqued by colonial, local elite, and "subaltern" constituencies. Groups at the top of the islands' social hierarchies—the politically powerful British colonial officials and local white elites—valued tropicalization, for instance, for the modernity they hoped it would bring to the islands. By marketing the islands as premodern tropical locales, and thus attracting modern tourists (and potential white residents) and their capital, elites prophesized that tourism would bring modernization to the islands. An examination of the white elite investments in tropical images will reveal that touristic and colonial images could serve very oppositional purposes. What tourists frequently treasured as tropical, elites often valued as modern. That the islands' tourism promotional boards were often called "Development Boards" testifies that British colonial and white local elites' visions for the development and modernity of the colonies became intrinsically tied up in tropicalization. This wedding of tourism and national progress continues in the contemporary Anglophone Caribbean. While this phenomenon is not restricted to the

Caribbean, the region depends more on tourism as a "development" scheme than any other part of the world.[13]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, local white elites (who I distinguish for the sake of clarity from British colonials) consisted primarily of two groups: the plantocracy and the mercantile elite. The planter classes (descendants of the sugar plantocracy) held the majority of wealth and land in Jamaica and the Bahamas, but in the case of the crown colony of Jamaica their political power was limited. In the late nineteenth century, local white mercantile elite (whose families were originally Loyalists who fled from the southern United States after the War of Independence in the case of the Bahamas and from Syria and Scotland in Jamaica) gained a newfound economic wealth, social prestige, and political clout; this group had the most to gain economically from the anticipated tourist dollar. Both groups, along with British colonial administrators, pursued the industry beyond what it offered as an economic alternative to the islands' formerly agriculturally based economies: they invested in tropicalization as a means to transform the islands from colonial outposts to modern societies. Tourism offered local elites on "the skirts of modern civilization," as one contemporary described the marginal status of Jamaica in 1890, participation in the "civilized world" (*DG*, 28 September 1889).

In the early twentieth century, black working classes and emergent black middle classes (or "brown" in the case of Jamaica) at times contested tropicalized images, precisely because these representations typically imaged blacks as rural, exotic, primitive, and unmodern, despite their modernizing efforts. A turn-of-the-twentieth-century postcard by photographer H. S. Duperly, for instance, pictures an old black woman balanced precariously on a modern bike—a motif in tourism-oriented photographs from the early twentieth century (figure 3). The very juxtaposition of the new (mode of transportation) and the old (woman) simultaneously spoke to the unnatural and even comical relationship between modernity and black Jamaica. Many touristic images portrayed blacks' marginalized relationship to the project of modernity.

Different local groups also variously related to the "tropicalized" spaces that industry benefactors constructed for tourists, particularly hotel landscapes. Significantly, hotels, although marketed and landscaped to appear as tropical enclaves, frequently represented the epitome of modernity to many elites. As the first spaces in the islands to have


An Expert for a three miles Race, Kingston. Jamaica.

3 H. S. Duperly postcard, Kingston, Jamaica, 1907–14

many modern amenities, hotels attained a prized local status and became the center of social life for local whites. Since the turn of the twentieth century, colonial and local elites spared no expense in pouring resources into promoting, creating, and sustaining spaces that were officially for tourists. Areas tourists frequented, in particular, were subject to modernizing schemes: new roads, water and sewage systems, and telegram services.

Tourism supporters encouraged modern improvements in designated locations but not at the expense of "picturesqueness"—its tropical image. They constantly negotiated the relative virtues of implementing modern innovations (for the comfort of the tourist) and their potentially harmful aesthetic effects on the landscape (valued by tourists as premodern and preindustrial). Although elites claimed that tourism would bring modern improvements to the islands, modernization was continually based on and masked by tropicalization. In sum, while tropicalization was a forward-looking project for elites, a re-visioning of the modern future of these societies, it was based on a reconstruction of the islands as existing in the past.

A cycle developed whereby ruling elites invested in modern and picturesque improvements in tourism-oriented locations but neglected the rest of the island, especially the colonies' black districts. This was especially true in the Bahamas. "Public policies [were] . . . shaped by consideration of the traffic's priorities, so that millions have been granted to the Bahamas Development Board for expensive tourist promotion schemes while everything else languished for lack of funds" (Lewis 1968, 327). Despite the advances in health and material conditions in downtown Nassau and the fantastic revenues from tourism in the first half of the twentieth century, sanitary and health conditions for the majority of the population remained dismal (Saunders 1997, 29; Lewis 1968, 320). As historian Gordon Lewis tersely puts it, "For the Negro majority this all meant a grim struggle for existence in a deceptively idyllic Eden" (321).

In societies historically stratified along the lines of color and class, hotels and select tourism improvement and "tropicalization" schemes exacerbated existing racial divisions in the islands. Historian Gail Saunders attests, in relation to the Bahamas, that "in economic terms, the wealth of the white elite, gained through modern developments in tourism and finance, created a wider than ever cleavage between the races" (Saunders 1985, 502). The influence of American hoteliers, valued contributors to "modernization" schemes on the islands, and the presence of American tourists deepened racial fissures in the British colonies. In Jamaica (where inhabitants prided themselves on the absence of race discrimination) and in Nassau, American investors imported practices of race segregation into the islands, throwing newly stringent and *preexisting* racial hierarchies into sharp relief. While Americans were not the sole architects of racial discrimination in the colonies, local elites, particularly in the Bahamas,[14] capitalized on what they identified as American tourists' racial preferences to justify widespread segregation throughout the islands.

As such, many prominent tourist-oriented spaces became off-limits to the island's black inhabitants, including hotels and famous beaches. The most celebrated hotel in Kingston, the Myrtle Bank, for instance, remained closed to the majority of the population until the late 1940s. As one resident recounted to historian Elizabeth Pigou-Dennis, "a little apartheid ruled at the Myrtle Bank in those days" (quoted in Pigou-

Dennis 1998, 6). Similarly, in the Bahamas hotels like the Royal Victoria Hotel and Hotel Colonial remained off-limits to blacks. In Nassau racial segregation was so enforced at the Hotel Colonial that white employees were brought in annually, from New York, for the winter season until the 1940s. The hotel was one of the last spaces on the island to be desegregated in 1956 (*NG*, 26 January 1956). In sum, blacks in the Bahamas and, to a lesser degree, Jamaica were denied access to the spaces that represented tropicality for tourists and modernity for many elites.

Paradoxically, the locations promoted as most characteristic of the islands in photographs became sites where the majority of the colonies' populations could not venture, segregated enclaves from which black inhabitants were restricted or barred. Many of the spaces or places popularized in representations, particularly hotel landscapes, swimming pools, and beach spaces, became designated as exclusive sites for tourist (and elite) occupation only. A complex and obverse relationship then resulted between "sacralization" (when a site is made sacred, the literal and figurative focus of tourists' pilgrimages) (MacCannell 1976, 45) and segregation. The very sacralization of certain spaces through their mechanical reproduction contributed in part to their closely guarded status.

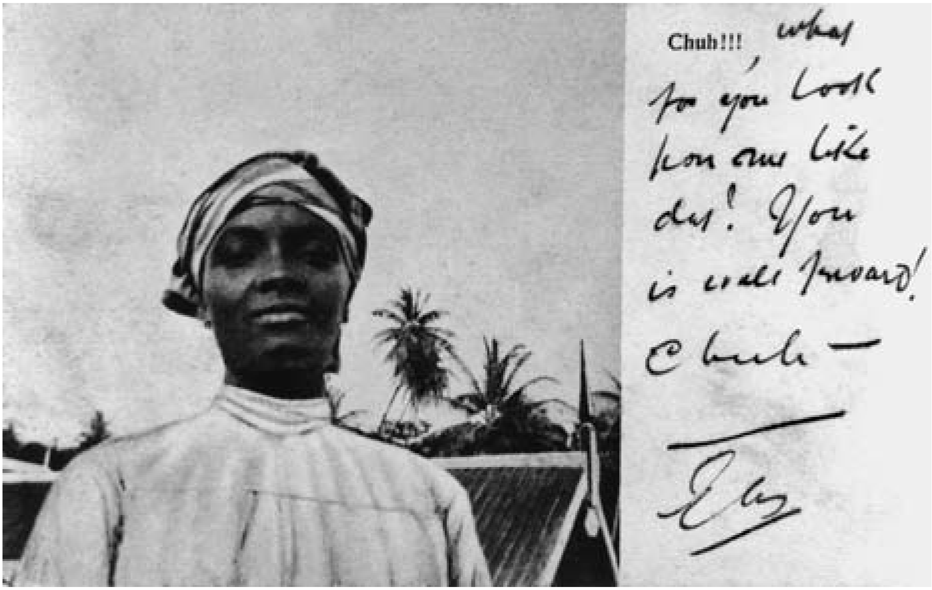
"CHUH!! WHA FOR YOU LOOK 'PON ME LIKE DAT": PHOTOGRAPHY, VISUALIZATION, AND SOCIAL DISCIPLINE

Photography and the process of making parts of the islands "like pictures" were intrinsically related to the control of space. Much has been written in recent years on photography as a tool of social discipline and regulation. Some historians of photography have viewed photographs as an extension of modern institutions of surveillance and the social control described by Michel Foucault (Foucault 1980, 1995; Crary 1990; Poole 1997; Ryan 1997). Through photographic representations, for example, law enforcers extended a disciplinary gaze beyond the walls of penitentiaries, using the medium to document, visualize, and control criminality (Tagg 1988). Surprisingly, few scholars have examined photographs generated in or for tourism in light of their panoptical and disciplinary potentials (Rosa 2001, 459). Attention to photography's relationship to social hegemony will prove essential to understanding touristic representations of the Anglophone Caribbean.

Tourism promoters' use of photographs and their attempts to maintain the islands' place-image all wrought social controls. In the name of tourism the British colonial and white mercantile elite at various historical moments imposed social regulations based on the rationale that the islands had to sustain their touristic image. The ruling elites often did everything in their power—from the legislation of social policies to the use of the police force—to ensure that the islands presented the best image to travelers. Thus the making of the landscape into "image" was intrinsic to social and spatial control on the islands.

The stated interest in the islands' "picturesqueness" for tourism, however, often masked another motive. Colonial officials and local elites, by enforcing and institutionalizing "picturesqueness," could safely airbrush unwanted, threatening, and undesirable elements, including people, out of the social frame in the name of maintaining the islands' place-image. Photography historian Peter Osborne characterizes this process best when he concludes, "As in the painting's visual descendants, tourist posters, postcards, the resort itself with its themed services and entertainments, it has been made safe and made into image—made safe *by* becoming image" (Osborne 2000, 109). Although Osborne directs his comments at hotel landscapes, in the context of the Bahamas and Jamaica, society as a whole, for the ruling elite, was thus made safe, not just for tourists but for the status quo, by becoming like a picturesque photographic image.

Significantly, one aspect of the islands' picturesque image that promoters had to maintain was precisely the colonies' reputations as disciplined societies. The medium of photography itself became central in the perpetuation and maintenance of this disciplined image; it served as a form of discipline. The very process of representing and deeming parts of the landscape and inhabitants as picturesque marked their incorporation into a disciplinary society. That the islands and their native populations were fit to be photographed offered an additional degree of assurance to travelers that "the natives" and the landscape were tamed, safe, and framed for their visual consumption. Hence, before tourism associations and local governments could transform black Bahamian traditions like Junkanoo (an event where photographing masked participants had long been taboo) into a tourist spectacle, they had to make the masquerade photographable (placing photographs of unmasked participants on the front of the newspaper and in travel guides). In other words, tourism was central in extending a kind of disciplinary gaze onto these colonial societies. The photographs popularized in tourism promotion


Chuh!!!
what for you look 'pon me like dat! You is well forward!
Chuh —
Ely

4 Photographer unknown, "Chuh!!!," postcard, 1907–14

functioned as both evidence of a disciplinary society and a means of exerting social control.

The handwritten captions on several postcards from Jamaica provide several glimpses at how inhabitants may have responded to the "tourist gaze" or, more accurately, the colonial and elite circum tourist gaze. One postcard of a black Jamaican woman who stares down into the camera's lens, carries the printed and added handwritten commentary, "Chuh!! Wha for you look 'pon me like dat? You is well f[o]rward[?]! Chuh—Ely[?]" (figure 4). Another postcard bears a similar statement: "If you look 'pon me so, I gwine choke." Such commentaries, written in dialect no less, suggest that some tourists may have heard such remarks on their own photographic excursions. It is possible that the captioners encountered persons, who, for whatever reasons, did not want to be photographed. These occurrences were not uncommon. Chronicled in travelers' and newspaper accounts, several camera-wielding tourists came on reluctant inhabitants who variously demanded monetary compensation for their photographic inscription,[15] engaged in "staring contests" (and often won) (*WIR*, 3 December 1949, 13), or physically attacked the photographer (biting the ear of the picture-taker, by one account, literally consuming the tourist devoted to visual consumption) (Defries 1917, 78). Despite these challenges, that commentaries about not wanting to be photographed appear at all on the above postcards (next to snapshots of these persons) suggests that some protests fell on deaf ears. Even in the face of objections, inhabitants could be violently inscribed against their will as objects in tourism's visual economy. The postcards thus encapsulate some of the complexities and tensions that developed in a tourism industry based on viewing and visualization as a form of social discipline in a society where some inhabitants did not want to be "looked 'pon so."

THROUGH NEW CLAUDE GLASSES: THE PICTURESQUE IN THE WEST INDIES

In addition to examining the social and political effects of touristic representations, I pay attention to the very particular aesthetic criteria tourism promoters formulated to image the Caribbean islands as picturesque. What did the picturesque mean in the context of the British West Indies, and how did it differ from the definition of the picturesque in Britain, where the term originated? How did the Anglophone Caribbean fit into or disrupt the visual language and touristic expectation of the picturesque? Through such an investigation I aim to expand the large art historical literature on the English picturesque landscape tradition, which examines how these representations related to wider social and political issues in Britain, from the dispossession of the rural poor to enfranchisement.[16] These studies testify that landscape traditions can become "operational" (Mitchell 1994) in shaping class relations, social and national identities, and even physical environments. Rosenthal notes, however, that despite the wealth of literature on British landscape, British colonial landscape in the West Indies has yet to be explored (Rosenthal et al. 1997). This book extends the analysis of the picturesque in Britain by testing the elasticity and operation of the term as it spread to Britain's colonies, exploring in turn what its redefinition suggests about the meaning of the picturesque in Britain and other geographic contexts.

In the history of art the picturesque denotes an aesthetic approach to seeing and representing landscapes that first began to be articulated in the 1760s and 1770s, reaching the height of its popularity in the 1790s (Andrews 1994, 3–4). The Reverend William Gilpin popularized interest in the picturesque in his first tour book, *Observations on the River Wye* (1782), in which he encouraged travelers to the English countryside to "examine the face of a country by the rules of picturesque beauty" (quoted in Andrews 1989, 56). In the context of Britain in the eighteenth century, seventeenth-century landscape paintings of Italy by artists like Claude Lorrain and Gaspar and Nicholas Poussin provided the rules or ideals of picturesque beauty, the preestablished pictorial model through which Britain's landscape was re-presented. While this interest in what art historian Malcolm Andrews describes as the "formalist Picturesque," inspired by Italian landscape paintings, remained popular throughout the eighteenth century, another "more complicated Picturesque, associated with decay" also emerged (Andrews 1994, 5–6). Lovers of the latter form of the picturesque were interested in landscapes that displayed the aesthetically pleasing signs of natural decay, wilderness, rugged terrain, and ruins. While both forms of picturesque beauty did not necessarily reside in the natural world, by looking at the countryside through an optical device known as Claude Glasses,[17] by representing it according to Gilpin's pictorial formula, or by creating gardens, seekers of the picturesque could literally transform any landscape into a picturesque one (Crawshaw and Urry 1997, 185).

Unlike the influence of Italian landscape traditions in picturesque images of Britain, photographers and painters of picturesque landscapes working in Britain's Caribbean colonies (and other "tropical" British possessions) drew on a very different set of aesthetic or representational models.[18] In contrast to historian Jeffrey Auerbach (2004), who maintains that British artists represented landscapes across the empire through the same picturesque lens, I show that ideals of the Caribbean picturesque, the picture-perfect tropical island landscape, were based on another set of artistic, fictional, and imaginative notions of the tropics popularized in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Dash 1998; Arnold 2000; Stepan 2001). Popular travel accounts, like African explorer David Livingstone's adventures through Africa (which were quoted extensively in Nassau's local papers), fictional sources like Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan* (1912) or French artist Henri Rousseau's "tropical landscapes" (Stabenow 1986), all ignited visions of the tropics as a place of utter difference. Rousseau's naive nocturnal jungle landscapes, populated by a dense frieze of exotic vegetation and inhabited by lurking wild animals, epitomize these tropical ideals (plate 1). In one painting a woman lies in a flowering landscape, one eerily alive with the eyes of animals visible in the brush. Evident even in the title of the artist's painting, *The Dream* (1907), Rousseau's tropical world was the imaginative concoction based in part on his dream-inducing visits to Paris's botanical gardens. The Frenchman never visited the Americas, as he claimed, before realizing his tropical vision on canvas. Such artistic sources, along with fantastic representations of tropical nature from the natural and human sciences (Stepan 2001), helped to construct an imaginative notion of the tropics or a "dream" of tropical abundance, to use a term travelers frequently employed, which provided a model for the picturesque in the Anglophone Caribbean. One traveler arriving in St. Thomas made this point explicit when she measured the island according to "the ideal we had formed of the wealth and luxuriance of tropical vegetation—an ideal almost unconsciously derived from the old geographies of our childish days in which the picture of a dense jungle, with serpents gracefully festooned from tree to tree and a monkey in one corner, always was a symbol of the torrid zone" (Day 1899, 29). Picturesqueness in the British Caribbean referred to the landscapes' conformity to these exoticized and fantastic ideals of the tropical landscape. The picturesque denoted a landscape that seemed like the dream of tropical nature.

Crucially, "picturesqueness" also frequently characterized parts of the islands that had been transplanted, ordered, or "tropicalized" variously by the British colonial government, planters, British and American corporations, and tourism promoters. As such, the picturesque in the context of Jamaica and the Bahamas denoted the landscape's conformity to these colonial, imperialistic, or touristic ideals of the tropics. Picturesqueness signaled that the islands realized the "dream" of tropical nature. Unlike eighteenth-century travelers who learned to see the landscape as picturesque (as created by Gilpin) (Crawshaw and Urry 1997, 185), in the context of the British West Indies at the threshold of the twentieth century, the picturesque signified a landscape made into the fantastic vision of the tropics. The perceived realism of photographs of the tropics offered tourists a confirmation and reinforcement of the very truthfulness of their cultural expectations of the islands (Lutz and Collins 1993, 29–30). Such images were only realistic inasmuch as they were consistent with travelers' dreams of the tropics.

In contrast to art historical critiques that maintain that the relationship between picturesque representations and "actions on the land" are "questionable" (Michasiw 1992, 77), the tropicalization of Britain's Caribbean colonies demonstrates that the picturesque undoubtedly shaped physical transformations of parts of the islands' landscapes. In Jamaica and the Bahamas the aesthetics of the picturesque were intrinsically connected to the politics of space, the colonial state's governance and control of land and society. Indeed, the case could be made that within the context of British rule the picturesque (the geographically specific meaning of the picturesque) shaped "actions on the land" and its inhabitants more so in British West Indian colonies than in the metropole.

FOREGROUNDING THE CULTURE AND CAPITAL OF VISION IN CARIBBEAN STUDIES

This book investigates the significance of visual images and visuality generally in the Anglophone Caribbean, an analytical blind spot in studies of the British West Indies (Cummins 1999).[19] As Barry Higman attests in *Historiography of the British West Indies*, "Academic historians [of the British West Indies] . . . rely on words on paper, . . . seeing pictures as mere illustrative devices rather than appropriate vehicles for analytical discourse" (1999, 20). Higman's critiques may be directed across disciplinary boundaries. While scholarship critical of the colonial or travelers' texts on the Anglophone Antilles are commonplace, from the study of history to English literature, no comparable body of contemporary scholarly criticism has deconstructed visual representations of the region.[20] Photographs especially, as I examine in chapter 5, have not only been undertheorized but overly naturalized as transparent representations of the islands' past. Even more commonly, scholars have bypassed visual images altogether in their investigations of the region, even when such materials are pertinent to their subject of study. Peter Hulme, for instance, in his examination of the indigenous people of Dominica, acknowledges that the period covered by his book (1877–1998) is "the era of the camera," yet he restricts his analysis to texts (Hulme 2000, 4). Hulme's work is but one recent example of the analytical neglect of visual images in historical and cultural considerations of the Anglophone Caribbean.

Despite the lack of contemporary scholarly attention to the culture of vision, throughout the first half of the twentieth century Caribbean critics of colonialism, racism, and Western hegemony in the region frequently centered visual representations and touristic ways of seeing the islands in their analyses. No less than the outspoken Jamaican-born black nationalist Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement As-