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**Islands of Inequality: The
Environmental History of Tobago and
the Crisis of Development and
Globalisation in the Caribbean 1763
– 2007**

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March 2009

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted,
either in the same or different form to this or any other
University for a degree.

Signature:

University of Sussex

Doctor of Philosophy

**Islands of Inequality: The Environmental
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Caribbean 1763 – 2007**

Abstract

This thesis explores the origins and logic of the interplay between landscape and public policy in the Caribbean island of Tobago. Tobago is the location of the world's oldest protected tropical forest, established in 1763. This was the first but by no means the last occasion when particular policies have been formulated to regulate the relationship between land, commerce and people in Tobago. The thesis traces the emergence of particular ethics of land use and property in the Tobago from 1763 up to the present day and their interplay within the logic of policy.

The central research aim was to analyse the disjuncture between the intention of government development plans in Tobago, and the actual outcome of those plans for the people and landscape. This was approached both by ethnographic field study, and by archival and oral historical work that could discern the historical development of the language of modern policy. The project involved the writing of an environmental history of Tobago and an ethnographic account of debates and trends in contemporary environment and development policy in Tobago.

The fieldwork revealed many gaps in the existing literature with respect to Caribbean environmentalism and the history of Caribbean landscapes. The detailed archival research, coupled with a revised theoretical frame that it supports, should reframe and improve modern debates concerning environment and tourism. Drawing together the findings of the thesis research is intended to help form a new understanding of the origins of contemporary Caribbean policy processes, the beliefs from which they derive, the debates they generate and their interaction with the physical environment.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would never have been possible had Clare Rogers not pushed me through the office doors of Professor Richard Grove and Professor James Fairhead with the announcement that I was interested in writing a D.Phil. As it began with the encouragement of these three people it is only fitting that they come first in the list of acknowledgements. Thank you, James for constantly pushing for tighter redrafts and making me think about every single detail during that laborious final write up. Thank you, Richard for suggesting Tobago and giving me an early tour, if you hadn't found that old India Office envelope in your desk for the Leverhulme application then I'd have never got back to Tobago. It is a source of deep regret that you were not able to make the rest of the journey with me. Thanks to that peculiar piece of stationery that you found I can thank the Leverhulme Trust for the financial support that made the fieldwork in Tobago possible.

Without the moral and financial support of my parents, Corinne and George Woodcock, who kindly allowed a strategic withdrawal to their home during the period 2005 to early 2006, this would all certainly have not happened. During my fieldwork I am deeply indebted to the co-operation and friendship of a great many people in Tobago, most of who must stay behind the shroud of anonymity. I would add a special apology to Hema for my swimming off so abruptly when that shark appeared. I am especially grateful to Mr William John who was there to vouch for me at the airport and to help with house hunting during the first fortnight. I am also very grateful to Dr Rita Pemberton of the University of the West Indies (St Augustine) who encouraged me in my research and offered me advice on things Tobago as well as drawing maps to various points in Port of Spain with the injunction I shouldn't look at them too obviously in case I looked too like a tourist. I am also indebted to the ladies of the A-Level Politics class I taught at Northampton School for Girls. It was teaching them that gave me both the funds for the early archive work as well as a regular dose of lively conversation to keep the brain ticking over during the wilderness months. The same can be said for all those who tolerated my behaviour by buying drinks and listening to me spout nonsense. Those most senior in this order of merit are, Felix Marsh, Austin Haffenden, Timothy 'The Beast' Howells and Sarah Quinnell. After my supervisors the person who has most supported the academic side of the work and been a critical foil for ideas, also a source of G&Ts and coffee, and a regular nag to read a lengthening list of books about things I never thought would be significant, is Dr Vinita Damodaran, a true friend.

At this point I would like to say that I haven't forgotten Jennifer Jackson. You were a constant source of companionship in Tobago, whether it was your quick thinking during that botched carjacking or your general enthusiasm for chauffeuring me about the island, you were always around when most needed. In the two years from our return until the viva you helped organise, support, and generally focus my life in such a way as to make the impossible possible at every turn. As with so much in my life it was you who did everything to make it the joyous adventure it has been so far.

Contents

DECLARATION	I
ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
CONTENTS.....	IV
INTRODUCTION.....	1
KEY THEMES AND CONSIDERATIONS IN THE HISTORY OF CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES.....	2
CHAPTER 1: AN ESSENTIALLY IMAGINARY PLACE OR JUST NOT THIRD WORLD ENOUGH? ATTITUDES TO CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY	13
THE SNAKE IN THE GARDEN: POSTCOLONIAL MORALITY AND THE CRITIQUE OF REASON IN RELATION TO NATURE	31
DEVELOPMENT IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF WHAT? DISCUSS	40
BELIEVING IS SEEING.....	50
BACKGROUND AND METHODS.....	54
CHAPTER 2: FROM COLONISATION TO UNION: A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE MORAL ECONOMY OF LANDSCAPE AND OWNERSHIP IN TOBAGO 1763 – 1900	63
PLANTING THE GARDEN: THE KINGDOM OF GOD OR THE KINGDOM OF I?.....	64
A VISION OF DEVELOPMENT AND EMPIRE: THE GORRIE RULINGS AND THE POST EMANCIPATION LANDSCAPE	69
WHAT’S IN A PLAN? THE 1897 ROYAL WEST INDIA COMMISSION AND TOBAGO’S UNION TO TRINIDAD	75
CHAPTER 3: THE PLAN TAKES FORM: THE AFTERMATH OF UNION.....	82
REBUILDING A PRODUCTIVE AND HEALTHY LANDSCAPE: 1900-1932	83
ESTATES AND VISIONS OF EMPIRE	97
AN OCEAN APART: SEA COMMUNICATIONS, ECONOMY AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH TRINIDAD	110
IMPROVEMENT’S IDEOLOGIES.....	121
CHAPTER 4: THE BUILDING AND REBUILDING OF PARADISE.....	123
TOBAGO LAND OF THE FREE: PLANNING FOR VISITORS.....	124
RENAISSANCE AND WELFARE: DEVELOPMENT AS WHOSE IDEOLOGY?	131
IMAGINING THE VILLAGE	142
THE FUTURE: THE IMAGINATION OF A NATURAL NATION.....	148
THE FUTURE: SEPARATISM AND SENTIMENTALISM.....	150
THE BEST LAID PLANS... ..	155
THE COMING OF A STORM.....	163
STORMS AND EMPIRES: THE AFTERMATH	169
CHAPTER 5: DIVINING VISIONS OF PARADISE	171
A REVOLUTION, A COUP AND TWO OIL BOOMS LATER... POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RÉSUMÉ: 1963-1998.....	171
SLAVERY AND THE UNDESIRABLE PAST	176
THE UNDESIRABLE FUTURE	179

THE DESIRABLE FUTURE: GAS OR HOT AIR?	184
INTENTION AND TRADITION: BRANDING DEVELOPMENT	190
LIVING CEPEP: THE MORAL CONSTITUTION OF WELFARE AND ENVIRONMENT	195
THE VILLAGE OF GERMANS: LAND, LAND USE AND IDENTITY	204
CONTRADICTIONS AND ASPIRATIONS	219
CHAPTER 6: MELTING INTO AIR: THE MORAL PERFORMANCE OF ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY	221
STRIVERS FOR SUSTAINABILITY: THE ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS OF TOBAGO	221
FOREVER BLOWING BUBBLES: THE ETHICS AND PRACTICALITIES OF ECOTOURISM	230
PERFORMING WITH ANIMALS: MORALITY, ANIMALS AND VISITORS	248
AFTER THE STORM: AGRICULTURE AND THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE	257
BELIEF IS A FRAGILE THING	267
CONCLUSION: PEOPLE SAY AND DO THE FUNNIEST THINGS	270
BIBLIOGRAPHY	278
THESES AND DISSERTATIONS	298
HMSO PUBLICATIONS AND BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS	299
UWI LIBRARY	299
UNPUBLISHED PAPERS AND REPORTS	300
THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES, PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD	300
THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES, KEW, UNITED KINGDOM	303
MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS	305
NEWSPAPERS	306
COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION REPORTS FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO SHELVED AT THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS	306
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (HANSARD)	306
ENVIRONMENT TOBAGO DOCUMENTS	306
THA DOCUMENTS	307
CITED INTERVIEWS	307

Introduction

The ethical critique and interpretation of land use policies in the Caribbean has a long, distinguished and complex history. This history is exemplified by critiques of the legacies of emergent transatlantic trade and modern capitalism that are to be found throughout the region. The ecological, social, demographic and economic transformation of Caribbean landscapes and societies following the first landfall of European travellers has been marked and dramatic. The debates around this transformation have continued to inform policy and the critique of policy in Caribbean states up to the present day.

The island of Tobago was colonised permanently by the English Government in 1763. This event was one that was planned and the plan embodied particular land use policies and preferences on the part of the colonisers. This plan resulted from a particular ethical vision of how the transatlantic economy, based on sugar cultivation and slavery, should be implemented and performed. Subsequent plans for development in Tobago have emanated from similar ethical concerns in so far as they have all sought to address the relationship between, environment, economy and society. If these plans are seen as being simply the product of an innately contemporary discourse of development then it is possible to miss the longer history of ethical deliberation of which they are a part. Likewise, situating the agency of plan authors explains the plan contextually yet fails to address why and how the agency of individuals creates the contexts in which their agency is subsequently performed. What follows is an attempt to explore how individuals have come to hold specific beliefs and articulated them throughout the history of development planning and policy in Tobago. In this sense the historical component of the study is an attempt to trace the intellectual genealogy of policies employed by the individuals with stewardship of the public and private institutions that have dominated the island's history. This is not a social history with any of the attendant risks of reifying the ordinary or obscuring the links between intention and action. Instead the aim is to comprehend the logic of relations between thought and practise within the personal cosmologies of those who sought to shape the relationship between landscape, society and economy in Tobago. The specific point of departure is to ask the question, what is the apparent disjuncture between knowledge and action in the history of development policies in Tobago?

Answering the initial research question requires an awareness of some of the idiosyncrasies of previous writings about the Caribbean. These can have far reaching consequences for any interpretive attempts and have necessitated a very particular line of theoretical reasoning. Understanding these theoretical challenges in more detail is central to the direction of argument taken in this thesis. For this reason the description and background of the research undertaken is located at the end of the literature review that constitutes the opening chapter. The second chapter is a brief thematic overview of land use policy in Tobago between 1763 and 1900. The aim is to re-examine the motives of early conservation policies. There is also a description of the background and consequences of the transition from planter dominated Assembly Government to Crown Colony rule and the subsequent union of Tobago with neighbouring Trinidad. Chapter 3 explores the impact of land use concerns on public policy and the relation of these to other aspects of policy, particularly health and sanitation. There is also a consideration of how broader concerns about nature, development and empire impacted on the world view and actions of estate owners. A concluding consideration of the contradictions in the logic of development policy shows how these were manifested in interisland markets for agricultural produce. Chapter 4 deals with the broader backdrop of Colonial Welfare programs and continued agricultural initiatives in Tobago. Against this background the themes of emerging Tobagonian nationalism and the aesthetic concerns of tourism are also discussed. The chapter concludes with a consideration of 1950s and 1960s development plans and describes the politics that underpinned reconstruction efforts following a disastrous 1963 hurricane. Chapter 5 begins by summarising the political and economic history of Trinidad and Tobago since independence. This is followed by an exploration of the logic that underpins key features of contemporary policy documents and the way that such documents reflect key aspects of political economy in contemporary Tobago. Chapter 6 provides an ethnographic and historical account of environmentalism, wildlife management and agricultural decline in Tobago. The goal is to put the competing beliefs that are concealed by these thematic headings into their broader social and historical context.

Key Themes and Considerations in the History of Caribbean Development Policies

The small islands of the Caribbean have served many purposes over the years and been the foil for numerous scholarly, literary, artistic and political points about the human condition. These sand fringed coral plateaus and lumps of volcanic rock, overhung with tropical foliage, have been used as metaphors and examples of everything from climate change, imperial stewardship, national aspiration and most notably as exemplars of human cruelty and

degradation. Arguments about how these places and their inhabitants should be seen and described have a history that dates back to the first landfall of Columbus as even the most basic reference texts will inform the reader. The centrality of slave cultivated sugar plantations to the birth of the modern world economy in the 18th Century makes it no surprise that many magisterial critiques of imperialism and capitalism were penned by writers from the West Indies and those who visited their shores. Despite all this, recent decades have seen the Caribbean move to the periphery of Development Studies and scholarship more generally, in an intellectual replication of the economic decline of the region a century earlier. What makes this quite so surprising is how many works by writers such as Eric Williams, CLR James, Walter Rodney and Arthur Lewis have been central to understandings of development policy and practice.

Concepts that are central within the debates around colonial policy in the Caribbean and its legacies have their origins in arguments over property¹. This means not just who owns property, but how it is owned and to what end ownership is put. These moral quandaries predate even the principle campaigns for the abolition of the slave trade. Before the calls for an outright ban inspired by a Christian universalism there were concerns about how the transatlantic commerce should be conducted. These concerns emphasised the broader virtues of particular forms of labour and relations of production as well as their economic consequences². These debates were in part a consequence of the difficulties that those calling for outright abolition had in proposing alternatives to the horrors they opposed. In a sense this was to be a moral economy driven by desires both for tropical products but also beliefs about how they should be obtained³.

¹ When Sidney Mintz argued that human beings sold as slaves were false commodities because, “a human being is not an object”, his moral liberalism got the better of his causal rationalism. The point is that planters needed to believe they were dealing with objects in order to prove their rights of ownership and this had to be done in specific way. Because, as Mintz observed, plantations derived their value as indivisible agro industrial units, planters had to make this moral claim to ownership in respect to a range concepts other than that of slavery itself. See Mintz, S. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* Penguin London 1986:43

² These various suggestions and schemes and their originators are dealt with in Christopher Leslie. *Moral Capital: The Foundations of British Abolitionism* University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 2006

³ In response planters and their allies were to pursue and promote various ideals of amelioration to show themselves as benevolent stewards of land, people and property. Central to this was this was an attempt to show themselves as sincere respecters of humanity and as scientific men of learning. This was no abstract discourse of improvement, it was a highly specific public relations exercise which fused moral and scientific claims to show planters as worthy owners of land and people and deserving flag bearers of empire.

When this moral economy collapsed, no matter how it was reformed, in the face of various crises in the 19th Century, it stimulated earnest debate over the future of the Caribbean. Leading colonial policy makers at the close of the 19th Century included at least two leading members of the Fabian Society⁴. Amongst their other agendas the Fabians were extremely involved in developing a theory of rent that would advance the cause of socialism⁵. The Fabian theory of rent was part of a broader economic debate about the role and nature of ownership, consumption and production in a capitalist economy⁶. The leading writer on this issue was Sydney Haldane Olivier, at that time a Colonial Office clerk in the West India Department and an activist amongst the London poor. Olivier, at Shaw's urging, had seen the UK lectures given on the subject of land ownership by the American journalist and economist Henry George. George's theory of land advocated the return to an agrarian past in which all taxes save those on land were abolished and industrialisation and the accompanying flows of migration brought to an end. George was confident that this creation of an American peasantry would end all poverty, misery and exploitation and bring man and land once again into the harmony intended by the creator and natural right⁷. Olivier was less convinced, he saw property and the

⁴ The Fabian Society was a socialist movement that articulated a non revolutionary gradualism to social reform. It sprang from an apolitical spiritual group, The Fellowship of the New Life in 1884. Its key founder members came to be known as the 'Old Gang' and consisted of George Bernard Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. The Webbs in particular have been cast as mechanical and soulless rationalists in no small part because they later provided glowing reviews of Stalinism. Their belief in a positivist state was so extreme even H G Wells was appalled and he dedicated a sizeable work of fiction to satirising their approach to socialism. See Wells H G. *The New Machiavelli*. Duffield and Co. London 1910. Webb was to be the labour party's first Secretary of State for the Colonies and introduced the Colonial Development Act 1929. He and Sydney Haldane Olivier were both Colonial Office officials in the 1880s and 1890s. Olivier was to continue his Colonial career and held the following senior posts, Colonial Secretary of British Honduras, Auditor General of the Leewards, Secretary to the Royal Commission of 1897, Colonial Secretary of Jamaica, Governor of Jamaica, Secretary of the Board of Agriculture in Britain, Secretary of State for India, Chair of the 1929 West Indian Sugar Commission and his last public role was to be as the first witness called by the Moyne Commission into the West Indian labour riots of 1938.

⁵ For insights into early Fabian economic proposals and the ethics that informed them see, Bevir, M. Fabianism and the Theory of Rent *History of Political Thought* Vol. 10 No.2 1989 and Bevir, M. Sidney Webb, Utilitarianism, Positivism and Democracy in *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 74 No.2 2002. These articles sadly do not consider or appreciate the significance of debates around colonial policy in shaping the ethical stance of key Fabians like Olivier and prefer a more abstract approach. There is a need to more clearly understand why particular concepts such as land, landlordism and peasants held such particular meanings for writers like Olivier. For this see, Lee, F. *Fabianism and Colonialism: The Life and Political Thought of Lord Sydney Olivier* Defiant London 1988

⁶ For a broader study of the intellectual genealogy of this debate see, Trentmann, F. The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer: Meanings, Identities and Political Synapses in Brewer, J. & Trentmann, F. Eds. *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives, Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges* Berg Oxford 2006

⁷ Henry George had an enthusiastic and eclectic following around the world before and after his death. In addition to the British left his admirers would include George Perkins Marsh and later Milton Friedman. For his relations with the British left see, Jones, P d'A. Henry George and British Socialism in *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* Vol. 47 No. 4 1988

global relations of imperialism and capitalism that made it possible as being central to an understanding of land⁸. Throughout his Colonial Office career and beyond he wrote extensively in support of small farmers and land reform, especially in countries that he saw as having been overrun at the behest of rapacious capitalists like Cecil Rhodes. His impact on agricultural policy in Jamaica is not to be underestimated, but more importantly he was to introduce to the language of Caribbean development a particular concept of the virtuous peasantry⁹. It was a concept that also conveniently fitted with Joseph Chamberlain's plans for Colonial improvement¹⁰.

Caribbean nationalism was not without its commentators on development policy. Marcus Garvey was also a keen advocate of land reform and on his return to Jamaica even corresponded with Olivier¹¹. Amongst future generations, intellectuals like CLR James and Eric

⁸ This was a crucial component to the moral cosmology of the socialism advocated by Olivier. Olivier, Sydney Haldane. *The Moral Basis of Socialism* in Shaw, George Bernard Ed. *Fabian Essays in Socialism* Fabian Society London 1889 and Olivier, Sydney Haldane *Capital and Land*. Fabian Tract No. 7 Fabian Society London 1888

⁹ For a retrospective of Olivier's period in Jamaica see, Rich, Paul. Sydney Olivier, Jamaica and the debate on British colonial policy in the West Indies in Cross, M. and Heuman, G eds *Labour in the Caribbean: From Emancipation to Independence*. Macmillan Caribbean London 1988

¹⁰ Some have certainly asserted the link between Fabianism and the great campaigns of development in the early 20th Century and the post war period. Chamberlain was inspired in no small part by a similar rejection of rent seeking in favour of promoting production and innovation as a moral duty. Whilst many Fabians viewed the relationship between smallholder agricultural production and a better society in mechanistic terms that simply corrected the logical failings of capitalism they weren't all so inclined. Olivier's Jamaican experience gave him a practical lesson in why sweeping state centred land reforms wouldn't work and his writings often extolled the need for projects to take into account what was actually happening in terms of the relationships between cultivators, plants and soil, as well as higher questions of ownership and ethics. In regard to this Olivier rounded on critics of shifting cultivation, "Of course it looks higgledy piggledy. It is planted for succession. The cultivator studies the ground and sets each particular plant or seed where he or she thinks the soil will best suit it" see Olivier, S H. Progress of a Negro Peasantry. *The Edinburgh Review* January 1929 Vol. 249:105. There is a need to synthesise the morality that individual Fabians practised in relation to land and property with the particular understandings that informed their arguments. This practise of desired ends should not of course lead to the obscuring of consequences. The belief in a peasantry and its virtues, when combined with desirable beliefs about modernity and progress, could prove as devastating to complex production systems as the capitalism it was meant to correct. For a rare critique explicitly blaming the Fabians for creating an agrarian and technocratic bias in African focused development projects, indeed inventing development itself as a concept to justify the logic and practise of trusteeship, see, Cowen, M and Shenton, R. The Origin and Course of Fabian Colonialism in Africa in *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 4 No. 2 1991

¹¹ This correspondence highlighted the distinction between Garvey's insistence that policy be informed by an inseparable relationship between the virtue of race as a concept and the enactment of policy. It was a view starkly at odds with Olivier's universal humanism. Despite this there was common ground between Garvey's fourteen point manifesto for development when he stood for election in Jamaica in 1929 and the position of Olivier and the Fabians. For Garvey's manifesto and speeches in this regard see Hill, R A. Ed. Marcus Garvey Holds First Political Meeting at Cross Roads, *The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers Vol. VII* Berkeley 1990:328-340. Garvey's optimism in Olivier's involvement in the 1929 Sugar Commission was stimulated by Olivier's numerous publications and speeches on the rights of colonized

Williams made their own striking analyses. For James this was rooted in the imagination of an international nationalism by colonised peoples. Revolution was to be the means by which a psychological transformation would create a new society with a distinctive and locally rooted moral cosmology. For Williams the Caribbean was a region whose history had integrated into a global economy. No trajectory of escape from the legacy of that history was possible without breaking the economic strangle hold of foreign investment. William's experience of trying to balance the need to run an economy, whilst addressing the undesirable legacies of the history that predated it, was to set him at odds with the metaphysical visions of James and the two would fall out spectacularly¹².

peoples. He wrote to Olivier asking about what should be the future of the negro race. Olivier's reply, published in *The Blackman* was highly critical of Garvey's racial beliefs and proffered instead an insistence that race was irrelevant in the face of culture. Olivier described that culture as European, Catholic and Universal and therefore the pinnacle of human aspiration (but not the end point). Olivier seems to have believed that this culture was a climax of beliefs from around the world and throughout history and saw no contradiction in advising that its greatest assets were churches and universities. These in Olivier's view taught clear moral lessons and encouraged learning and would aid in the triumph over iniquity. As a consequence he advised Garvey to encourage people to visit them before signing off. See, Hill, R A. Ed. Lord Sydney Olivier to *The Blackman* in *The Marcus Garvey and UNIA papers Vol. VII* Berkeley 1990:446-447. Olivier's principle publications on race and capitalism are, Olivier, Sydney Haldane. *White Capital and Coloured Labour 2nd ed.* Hogarth Press London 1929, Olivier, Sydney Haldane & McDonald, Ramsey. *White Capital and Coloured Labour* Independent Labour Party London 1906.

¹² For James and Garvey's role in developing a specific imaginary of the Caribbean see, Stephens, Michelle Ann. *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962*. Duke University Press Durham and London 2005. For the ambiguous relationship that existed between Garvey's West Indian nationalism and his belief in pan African racial pride see, Patsides, Nicholas. Allies, Constituents or Myopic Investors: Marcus Garvey and Black Americans. *Journal of American Studies* Vol.41 No.2 2007. The classic works of Williams and James on the place of the Caribbean in world history are of course, Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. Ian Randle Kingston 2005 and James, CLR *The Black Jacobins* Penguin London 2001. If CLR James made the case for the desirable, indeed inevitable need for world revolution, and to tell the history of those marginalized and oppressed by property Williams was more practical and materialistic in his outlook. This outlook was to lead Williams to build a nationalist movement that saw Trinidad and Tobago's relations with the outside world as a historically constituted necessary evil at best. It was this cleavage of opinion that played its part in shattering the relationship between them during the early years of the PNM. James was to unleash his pent up vitriol against Williams as he described first what he saw as the logical psychological impact of colonialism on the desires of the West Indian middle classes, before describing Williams and his policies as the logical product of these vices and aspirations. Of Williams's failure to see the same psychological emphasis as himself he wrote, "Williams also knew George Padmore; Jomo Kenyatta; that monster, C.L.R James and others of the kind. He came to our meetings, read our books, magazines and pamphlets, took part in some of our conversations. He studied and wrote history. But he never joined anything". This parting shot can be found in James, CLR. *Party Politics in the West Indies* Vedic Trinidad 1962:158. For a retrospective on William's stature and impact on the writing of Caribbean history see, Drescher, Seymour. Eric Williams: Capitalism and British Slavery. *History and Theory* Vol.26 No.2 1987:194 and more recently, Drescher, Seymour. Capitalism and Slavery: After Fifty Years in Cateau, H & S.H.H Carrington Eds. *Capitalism & Slavery Fifty years Later: Eric Eustace Williams – A Reassessment of the Man and His Work* Peter Lang New York 2000

¹² Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. Ian Randle Kingston 2005

The beliefs that coalesced to describe the rights and wrongs of the West Indian past drew heavily from the writings of Williams and James as well as from colonial policymakers. These were not the only commentary to emerge. The economist Arthur Lewis began his intellectual career analysing West Indian Affairs for the Fabian Colonial Bureau¹³. Lewis wrote several treatises that clearly show him as a keen advocate of the agrarian policies favoured by the Fabian Society. One unpublished treatise also shows clearly that Lewis saw, in ways similar to James, that West Indian peasantries were the source of innovation and inspiration in the history of Caribbean political struggles¹⁴. Lewis took his Fabian emphasis on a technically superior modernity and used the peasantry within it as a stepping stone to a desirable future. This was to be the dual economy thesis advocated in *The Theory of Growth*¹⁵. Here the peasants were hailed for their virtues and then told to move aside for an even more virtuous industrialisation. Those deemed to be peasants in the rural Caribbean were part of the resistance to an undesirable past but they were still a part of it. They were the backward sector of the economy that would make way for industry by invitation¹⁶.

¹³ The Fabian Colonial Research Bureau originated in the 1940s (partly as a response to the way that the Depression had impacted on colonial societies) and was inspired by the writings of Olivier in particular. It drew together a number of left wing writers from around the world. The bureau was the main research body that sought to shift colonial policy from static management to active development. Its programme of thought was heavily bound up with the post war future of the British Empire and the beliefs and fears of the non communist left regarding American ascendancy. In the words of one post war article, "The bogey of 'British Imperialism' has for generations clouded the friendship and admiration which other nations have felt for Britain – it is the stick with which Britain could always be chastised with the sure applause of the rest of the world. Unfailingly, it arouses Americans to vehement moral indignation, and stirs Russian tongues to vitriolic abuse", the solution was to be development and the study of development. See, Hinden, Rita. *Socialists and the Empire*. Fabian Colonial Bureau London 1946:4. In addition to the rise of the United States Fabian writers sought to address fears and propose solutions to many threats and perceived threats to a moral and prosperous world, population pressures, soil erosion and urban planning, "These and other forces will reshape our Trader's Empire. A 'Development Empire' will have to replace it and act as the necessary preparatory stage for a free Commonwealth in which peoples of varying colour and cultural origin are freely and equally associated in lasting alliance" Silberman, L. *Crisis in Africa*. Fabian Colonial Bureau, Current Controversies Series London 1947:1

¹⁴ Lewis, W. Arthur. *The Evolution of the Peasantry in the British West Indies*. Typescript 30th January 1936. Better known is Lewis's published work for the research Bureau, Lewis, W. Arthur. *Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers Movement*. Fabian Society Research Series London 1939

¹⁵ Lewis, W. Arthur. *The Theory of Economic Growth* Allen and Unwin Ltd. London 1955

¹⁶ Lewis, A. *The Theory of Economic Growth* Allen and Unwin Ltd. London 1955. The unpublished treatise on peasants is vital for understanding what otherwise looks like a dramatic transformation of thinking. Lewis saw the history of the Caribbean peasantry in certain terms. He had no sympathy for sentimentality and the only psychological transformation he saw was the educational one that would produce a new economy out of a squalid agricultural backwater. In this regard Lewis had similar views to Eric Williams. Lewis's observations included an admiration for American New Deal policies in Puerto Rico. The United States policy was perceived as an improvement over British government efforts that looked to many observers to be archaic and compromised by repeated failures. The United States became yet one more moral object in the discussion of development policies in the Caribbean, albeit a

If the concept of a West Indian peasantry had acquired vices in relation to modernity it also acquired defenders for the same reasons¹⁷. The thinkers of the New World Group would return the emphasis to a moral economy¹⁸. This moral economy would see the influence of foreign control as a malign force throughout West Indian History. The agent of this malignant change was to be the plantation¹⁹. If the past critics of economic activities in the Caribbean had objected to slavery rather than sugar per se then the New World authors objected to the plantation that had necessitated one to produce the other²⁰. In this context it was participation

highly ambiguous one. The plethora of projects in Puerto Rico included considerable ethnographic research. In 1948 students included Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf, who would both make their careers writing about the history and implications of plantations and condemning the European empires and desires that had necessitated them. For a retrospective on the impact of these Puerto Rico Ethnographies see, Scott, David. *Modernity that Predated the Modern: Sidney Mintz's Caribbean. History Workshop Journal* Vol.58 No.1 2004 Peculiarly some reappraisals of Lewis argue that his characterization of peasant societies was a renewed articulation of the view of the lazy African male without wondering why a St Lucian born economist might be so motivated. Whatever the legacy of Lewis's work in interpreting rural production systems and labour markers in Sub Saharan Africa, it must be argued forcefully that his writings about peasants are squarely rooted in West Indian history and in moral judgements about West Indian society. The description of the backward peasant cited in one recent review of his work (incorporated in a broader study of gender and labour in Africa) read awfully like CLR James's critique of the consumption practices of the West Indian middle classes or Eric Williams's attack on the culture of the plantocracy. Lewis's desire to see peasants incorporated into a reimagining of the world economy makes a lot more sense in the context of West Indian history. The plantation and all its vices had been, for a time at least, the success story of early capitalism. It seems logical that Lewis would argue that the virtuous interventionist state should take the place of the plantation, combining its economic merits with the dynamism and nationalist virtues of the peasantry through large scale land settlements. Such settlements had been a key part of Colonial Policy in the West Indies since the 1890s, long before Lewis or the Colonial Office was to advocate their establishment in Africa. For the aforementioned critique of Lewis that overlooks these complexities see, Whitehead, Ann. *Continuities and Discontinuities in Political Constructions of the Working Man in Sub Saharan Africa: The Lazy Man in African Agriculture. The European Journal of Development Research* Vol.12 No.2 2000

¹⁷ An early example would be, Beckford, George L. *Agricultural Development in 'Traditional' and 'Peasant' Economies. Social and Economic Studies* Vol.15 No.2 1966. Other commentaries of the same period on the social implications of the Caribbean economy include, Braithwaite, Lloyd. *Social and Political Aspects of Rural Development in the West Indies. Social and Economic Studies* Vol.17 No.3 1968

¹⁸ Probably the best known work to emerge from the new world group would be, Beckford, George L. *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World*. UWI Press Kingston 1999. For overviews of the New World Group's theoretical perspectives see, Figueroa, Mark. *The Plantation School and Lewis: Contradictions, Continuities and Continued Caribbean Relevance. Social and Economic Studies* Vol.45 No.4 1996 and Bernal, Richard, Figueroa, Mark and Witter, Michael. *Caribbean Economic Thought: The Critical Tradition Social and Economic Studies* Vol.33. No.2 1984

¹⁹ Beckford was somewhat sceptical of anthropologists but drew heavily on their work. In addition to the more obvious influences of the Latin American dependency theorists. The principle works that Beckford relied on were, Mintz, Sidney and Wolf, Eric. *Haciendas and Plantations in Middle America and the Antilles. Social and Economic Studies* Vol.6 No.3 1957, Mintz, Sidney. *The Plantation as a Socio-Cultural Type in Plantation Systems of the New World*. Pan American Union Washington D.C. 1959, Geertz, Clifford. *Agricultural involution – The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia*. University of California Press Berkeley 1963

²⁰ What Sidney Mintz termed reconstituted peasantries were both a by product of the history of the plantation as well as an alternative. This was because of their supposed distance from and resistance to, the vices of European colonization. This sometimes gave a mechanical typology of history that certainly

in the world economy itself that became a fundamental wrong. The quest for a new moral economy alighted on the peasantry as an innate good by virtue of its local origins and its social character. These social benefits stood it in opposition to the mechanical discipline and rigid hierarchies deemed to be engendered by the plantation's functions. As a concept the plantation, and any economic activity equated to it through shared characteristics, became the ultimate symbol of moral failure and external oppression. These wranglings over the desirability of particular economic forms past, present and future shaped the meanings of concepts utilised by authors describing the Caribbean landscape²¹. These concepts were to continue a physical transformation of the Caribbean landscape that was founded in the appreciation, performance and critique of the vices and virtues of progress, property, science and commerce.

Why Tobago?

The island of Tobago, part of the twin island unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago, lies at the southern end of the Caribbean. Alexander von Humboldt only had a brief glance at Tobago's north coast before his vessel caught sight of a hostile warship and tacked toward the safety of

overlooked the fact that beliefs about peasantries had had as much of an impact on the rural Caribbean as beliefs about commodities. See, Mintz, Sidney. *The Origins of Reconstituted Peasantries* in Mintz ed *Caribbean Transformations*. Aldine Chicago 1974. Mintz was to express passing surprise when he noted that peasantries and their emergence had been of importance to previous writers. This seems to belie the self belief of American liberals that they were the first since the abolitionists to take a moral stand on the state of Caribbean societies which U.S. policy makers spent much of the early 20th Century eyeing with unease. When taking issue with the neglect of the region it became necessary to translate its virtuous peasants for a domestic US audience, "The reluctance of North American anthropologists to study Caribbean peasants was compounded by several factors. First of all, the Caribbean was not considered properly anthropological, for its peoples were merely poor, instead of being primitive. But beyond this, North Americans have never been very comfortable with the word, let alone the concept, of, 'peasant'". Mintz, Sidney. *Reflections on Caribbean Peasantries* in *New West Indian Guide* Vol.57 No. 1/2 1983:3 As far as the plantation went Mintz's most famous work was to be directed at the principle product, sugar. In this case sugar was sometimes portrayed as an agent in its own right and sometimes as an object of desire. Mintz's fondness for inverted commas is often suggestive in his history of sugar. Sometimes it is sugar itself that brings 'westernisation' 'development' and 'progress'. Sugar becomes an object whose cultivation and history are portrayed almost as a moral geography of colonisation with sugar's first domestication being virtuous by virtue of being non European but rapidly becoming tainted through its associations with crusaders and slave traders. This moralising geographical perspective tends to sit at odds with the broader understanding of the role of beliefs about sugar impacting on the origins of capitalism. Indeed it is this tendency that is often as distracting as giving agency to the inanimate for rhetorical effect. This tension emanated from Mintz's pursuit of the commodity rather than the specific social relations surrounding the commodity and provoked one of the few critical reviews that the study received. See, Mintz, Sidney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* Penguin 1986. For critical response and counter claims see, Taussig, Michael. *History as Commodity* in *Some Recent American Literature*. *Critique of Anthropology* Vol. 9 No 1 1989. and Mintz, Sidney and Wolf, E. Reply To Michael Taussig. *Critique of Anthropology* Vol. 9 No 1 1989

²¹ They would also emphasise a generational gap in intention and meaning amongst West Indian economists. For Lloyd Best's plea that the New World Group, never sought to 'murder' Lewis, see, Best, Lloyd. The Contribution of George L Beckford. *Social and Economic Studies* Vol 41 No 3 1992

open water. In this brief glance he correctly surmised that Tobago, like Trinidad, was geologically linked to the South American mainland rather than the northern islands of the Caribbean. Tobago may not have been the birthplace of a human consciousness of the natural world but it was the place chosen for the first major attempts at environmental regulation. The Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations planned the island's landscape to include a protective forest reserve when English colonists made their first stable settlement plans in 1763. This is the oldest area of protected rainforest on the planet.

As a result of its place in the origins of conservation, the history of Tobago makes an intriguing place to study the role of landscape and environmental concerns in economic and social planning. The forest reserve was meant not only to protect natural resources in the face of nascent capitalist growth but to make that growth work in accordance with natural processes. This was to be an environmentally sustainable slave economy utilising the latest techniques in cultivation and enlightened proprietorship. At least this was the ideal on paper for both London based officials and some of the more enterprising local magnates like the Young and Robley families. The important point to make is that they envisioned a world run in accordance with nature that not only tolerated but advanced the cause of economic activities underpinned by slavery. In the eyes of writers like Young slavery itself would be enhanced as a system of production by virtue of scientific and responsible practices in management and horticultural science.

This makes the history of Tobago and the performance of environmental ideals, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, intimate companions of property. The collapse of the West Indian sugar industry in Tobago was a slow decay. The great promises of wealth for colonists never came to fruition. In 1847 a hurricane devastated the island and paved the way for a system of sharecropping that would radically impact on land use practices. When the flimsy and dubious financial arrangements holding up the sugar producing businesses of the island finally collapsed in 1884 its victims were amongst the few to be surprised. A decade of legal turmoil followed as the sharecroppers and the estate owners battled in the courts over access rights, obligations and the niceties of customary versus statutory law. As matters worsened the decision was taken in London to amalgamate various smaller islands and Tobago was paired with Trinidad. The matter of land rights was brought to the attention of Colonial Office officials through the interventions of Sir John Gorrie, Trinidad's activist Chief Justice. Gorrie took a sharp line with Tobago's landed proprietors and was vilified for his attempts to create case law

that would serve as the basis for an alternative understanding of ownership and the reciprocal obligations between proprietor and tenant.

The moral basis for land ownership would, less than a decade after Gorrie's death from ill health compounded by vindictive law suits, become the signature of Colonial Office policy in the Caribbean. This is a largely forgotten story that links the centre left thinkers of the British establishment with their Tory rivals and local political activists. The West India Royal Commission of 1897 hammered home the moral imperatives of overseas development as much as the economic benefits for probably the first time in a British Government publication. It was a document that relied heavily on a particular set of beliefs in a desirable future and was intent on eradicating the injustices of an undesirable past. Its recommendations were very much the product of the particular arrangement of these beliefs, their genealogy and grammatical structure. In short the 1897 commission and its successors are central to understanding the underlying and often conflicting intentions in what would come to be known as Colonial Welfare policy. It is the conflicts that surrounded this policy that would come to inform the debates amongst Caribbean intellectuals and post independence government officials and politicians. Without a glance at oft neglected aspects of the genealogy of policy thought it is hard to fathom the underlying intentions and struggles in contemporary writings about the Caribbean.

The history of Tobago is a fine lens through which to view how attitudes to land use, ownership, economy, society and environment changed between 1763 and the present day. Beyond this it is possible to see the concepts that emerged to embody particular beliefs that attach to conservation and commerce; and explore their changing arrangements with other concepts and the beliefs that those in turn embody. This dynamic grammar can often be obscured by the seemingly pejorative and absolute way in which it can be made to function in certain contexts. In this case grammar refers to the organisation of beliefs. The point being that any system of logic operates through a communicable arrangement of concepts. It is the dynamism revealed by historical studies that shows that even over a relatively short period this is far from a fixed structure without being disorganised or relative.

In the case of contemporary Tobago a specific grammar exists for describing property and landscape. This underpins a language rooted firmly in local historical events as well as global ones. This language, readily used by many Trinbagonians, draws on a wide range of sources to reinforce or reject particular beliefs and concepts. In the case of contemporary

environmentalism and economic activities associated with agriculture or tourism there have emerged several accounts about how and why the landscape of the island should be maintained or transformed and who should be responsible. These draw on the complex origins of how history and society in the post independence Caribbean have come to be commented upon; and what they say about the past and the potential of the future. These visions of a desirable future are rooted in moral logic that is as personal and unique as often as it is global in its connections.

The performance of a moral logic of landscape and development by planners and policymakers, activists and businesses is remaking the appearance of contemporary Tobago and often in ways that are far from being clearly benign. Exploring the origins of key concepts in the study of the Caribbean and in the history of Tobago, from grand ideas of culture to the more humble and specific notion of self reliant peasants, makes many contemporary environmental and social policies more comprehensible. This emphasis on morality and its logical underpinnings and historical origins brings a renewed emphasis to human agency. This is vital in the face of accounts dominated by ether like discourse and its near supernatural emphasis on power that in another context could be construed as god entering surreptitiously by the back door. In the case of Tobago and the wider Caribbean it helps to explore some uncomfortable myths and the mythologies of which they are a part. Nowhere is this more true than amidst the heated debates surrounding Caribbean tourism.

In order to comprehend the contemporary visions that people have of the landscapes of Tobago and the wider Caribbean, and the policies that these visions engender, it is essential to explore the intellectual, economic and political milieu of the past. Through this encounter with the past intentions of others it becomes possible to see how and why the moral logic of the present is performed, and why the concepts and beliefs that underpin it have the significance that they do.

Chapter 1: An Essentially Imaginary Place or Just Not Third World Enough? Attitudes to Caribbean Development in Context at the beginning of the 21st Century

The study of the Caribbean relies upon the interplay of morally laden concepts. At various historical moments particular vices and virtues have been associated with peasants, plantations and slavery, but these are not alone even if they are often salient. The concepts that can be found repeatedly in the policy documents and pronouncements of the present as well as those of the past are all morally laden in this way. Policy debates over land use, economy and environmentalism are therefore moral ones, in essence if not always outward appearance. This thesis traces these debates and the beliefs that have attached to key concepts in the history of Tobago from 1763 to the present. The moral aspect of the terminology of environmental debates in Tobago is not, however, simply generic to the Caribbean. Later chapters will attempt to discern the specific local meanings that have emerged in the discussion of environment in Tobago.

The aim is to reveal a particular moral 'grammar' that is shaped by the manner in which people deploy concepts and argument in environmental policy; a grammar that interferes with (but is not reducible to) the grammar of normal language. The structure of beliefs and the structure of language cannot be used interchangeably – a problem of classic structural anthropology, as the moral dimension is historically contingent²². Making a distinction between language as a method of communicating beliefs rather than as an enforcer of beliefs makes it possible to escape from the trap of reason that lies at the heart of relativist conceptions of power and knowledge. As we shall see, when writers have applied the concept of discourse to the study

²² E.g. Where language becomes the signifier and determinant of vice and virtue rather than the mode of articulation. An example being Levi-Strauss's implication that incest is bad grammar Levi Strauss, C. *Structural Anthropology* Allen Lane London 1967:33ff

of the history of ideas and practises, including development policy, they have often overlooked the significance of the trap²³.

Discursive structures are as illusory a notion as they are beguiling.; their principal problem is that the concept of discourse purports to show the operation and technologies of reason but is dependent on a removal of individual agency. Agency becomes subsumed not to a rejection of reason or a reification of culture but to a more fundamental logical difficulty. This difficulty is the absence of individual intention and its replacement by principles that embody an ethereal and omnipresent concept of general intention²⁴. General intentions enable the placing of ideas and practises within discursive structures where they are then enacted and acquire supernatural agency of their own. In this context the historically contingent moral grammar becomes rather irrelevant and is simply used to denote formal structure whilst meaning is made accessible only through the observation or deconstruction of discourses.

²³ This is a trap based in a particular concept of reason as inherently and inescapably Western that lurks in Derrida's critique of Foucault. It appears to have inspired Foucault's shift from arguing against reason in *Madness and Civilization* to arguing for an analysis of the technologies of power that reason makes possible in later works like *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault's response essentially deals with Derrida's critique of Foucault's reading of Descartes. It marks a fundamental distinction of attitudes to intention on the part of the two writers. Foucault derided Derrida's authorless textual reading in favour of his method of tracing an archaeology of general principles through discourse analysis. Foucault's specific intention to say something about the shaping of society and its injustices led him to critique reason as opposed to Derrida's emphasis on a pure philosophy that saw reason as an inevitable component of abstract thought. It is worth noting that there is some irony in that Derrida's initial critique of Foucault lay in an attempt to determine Descartes intentions in the exclusion of madness from reason. For an overview of the commentary regarding these distinctions of intention see, Boyne, R. *Foucault and Derrida: The Other Side of Reason* London 1990:75

²⁴ For this in action see Foucault's lecture on madness and crime 15/01/1975. Here the argument advanced seeks to show that power is not by its nature repressive in a narrow sense of the word. Instead certain principles for the excise of power are held to emerge at a given time and with particular attendant consequences. There is a historical problem with this argument. The emergence of reason as the determinant of the new punitive economy is located in the late 18th Century and Foucault argues that this is antithetical to past forms of power identified with the ancien regime and with feudal and slave society. The problem is that at the time in question France was probably the largest slave owning society on the planet and Foucault overlooks the tensions that this produced in a manner that suggests he had not read *The Black Jacobins*. There is also a logical problem with Foucault's attempts to illustrate the emergence of a new discourse of normality. Power and the principles underlying the discourses that shape its excise are granted their own agency independent of individuals in order to illustrate a general theme of discursive rupture. The downside is that Foucault's impersonal conception of power and knowledge sounds a lot like a concept of god. For these lectures see, Foucault, M. *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France 1974 – 1975* Verso London 2003 The problem of agency was rather obliquely addressed by Foucault in a 1971 debate with Noam Chomsky in relation to the origins of creativity. Foucault deliberately misinterpreted Chomsky's concern with the daily creativity of all individuals as an attempt to attribute the origins of knowledge to specific individuals which he deemed misleading, see, Chomsky, N. and Foucault, M. *The Chomsky Foucault Debate on Human Nature* The New Press New York 2006:15-21

A study of the grammar of belief differs from an analysis of discourse precisely because it is simultaneously concerned with why and how people think about particular concepts. A discursive analysis privileges the question of how something is thought without considering the why. In practice this makes the question of why something is thought subject to the performance of specific moral intentions. This moral intention is then related in relation to an observation of how something is thought, for example Foucault's critique of the relationship between psychiatry and criminal justice. It is the logic of morality that therefore concerns this study of landscape and policy in Tobago.

The intellectual foundations of Caribbean studies have their roots in various seminal arguments that have impacted upon or originated in broader academic trends. In this chapter, I trace some of these debates in academic works to reveal the emergence of the language used by authors in various disciplines and interdisciplinary fields, their implicit moral meanings, and how these have been shaped within global, Caribbean and Tobagonian debates. The following discussion considers how the concepts of culture, environment and development have been incorporated into particular moral critiques of both Caribbean and global history.

Turning Poverty into Culture, African Survivals, Pluralism and Creolisation

The concept of culture has murky origins, both as a central tenet of anthropology and as a focal point for the debates between left and right in the United States. In the Caribbean the concept of culture has been a key element of academic accounts from a wide variety of perspectives. These include writers such as CLR James who sought to add a cultural dimension to the use of dialectical materialism. This approach was to find favour with a range of subsequent studies seeking to use a culture as a means to inscribe agency into the politics of resistance to colonialism and capitalism. Culture also occupies a central place in the writings of nationalist academics seeking to provide a basis for local forms of modernity and development. This is a project derived from critical engagement with the writings of the Jamaican anthropologist and Manley administration adviser Michael Garfield Smith. Another of the classic examples of the use of culture in the analysis of Caribbean societies lies in the writings of Melville Herskovits. Herskovits and his wife Frances conducted extensive work in the Caribbean as part of their broader research on Africa and the African diaspora. Herskovits was a key figure in American anthropology and the study of Africa with considerable access and influence in the academic establishment. His wide ranging research had a lasting impact on Caribbean studies. To illustrate this it is worth noting that even in the relatively small and understudied island of Tobago Herskovits's methods and ideas were used by local

anthropologist J.D. Elder who had been involved in Herskovits's research in Trinidad. The goal here is to tentatively explore the vices and virtues attributed to the concept of culture in analyses of the Caribbean. The purpose is not to show the failure of culture as a term of description or call for its rejection. Instead the intention is to consider the logical outcome of particular grammatical conventions of usage and the intentions from which they have derived. As a consequence it is hoped that this will give a sense of the moral imperatives that have shaped the study of Caribbean societies and economies.

It is through the works of Melville Herskovits that the historical origins and tensions surrounding the meaning and use of the concept of culture become most apparent. For Herskovits culture was not a heuristic tool but an integral moral good without which neither man nor the idea of man could survive²⁵. An acerbic demolition of Herskovits's fieldwork methods in both West Africa and the Caribbean is easily made²⁶ but what shall be attempted here is an understanding of the rationale for culture that Herskovits advanced. In this it is intended to analyse Herskovits by his own standards, "The logic of this reasoning is impeccable. It is with the premises that we must differ if we would challenge the conclusion"²⁷. To understand the role of Herskovits's work and influence in the Caribbean requires an exploration of why he took culture as the ultimate premise of anthropology.

The debates that shaped American Anthropology and especially studies of Africa and the diaspora between the 1920s and 1960s had their origins in the immediate prelude and aftermath of the American civil war. Throughout this period and beyond American views of Africa were largely polarised between black scholars and lay authors who sought to vindicate Africa and Africans and white researchers who sought to deploy scientific objectivity in the study of race²⁸. The latter attacking the activist bias of the former whilst deploying the language of scientific neutrality in service of their chosen preferences. This division had become entrenched almost a century later when Herskovits, student of Franz Boas, was carving out the field of cultural relativism for his own. The concepts of black and white

²⁵ Herskovits, M. Cultural Diversity and World Peace in *Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism*. Random House London 1972. This chapter first written in 1956 contains Herskovits's somewhat fudged attempts to reconcile cultural relativism to the experience of WWII and of the Cold War, both used as sticks to beat his brand of liberalism with by his right wing critics.

²⁶ Wartena, Dorothea. *Styles of making a living and ecological change on the Fon and Adja plateaux in South Bénin, ca. 1600-1990* Thesis Wageningen University. See especially section 3.3.1 titled "Fon in the role of paid informant: 'Give us money like the Americans did!'"

²⁷ Herskovits, Melville J. Cultural Relativism and Cultural Values written in 1955 in *Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism*. Random House London 1972.

²⁸ Fairhead, James. *Slavery Islam and Civil War in the emergence of 19th Century American Anthropology and African Studies*. Unpublished Manuscript.

academia stemming from Du Bois and Herskovits respectively had managed to enforce a distinction between, “these two traditions [that] represent the black and white versions of African studies and even anthropology”²⁹. Whilst Herskovits took his lead from Boas in rejecting quantitative racial science in favour of ethnography, he would in all his writings retain an emphasis on objectivity which led him to perpetuate the belief that black Americans could not objectively study Africa. Yet Herskovits’s cultural relativism was no less activist in its agenda and by the time of his death in 1963 he had established a descriptive language of humanity that is no less relevant or politically charged today than when it was written.

Herskovits’s emphasis on culture sought not only to describe but to actively shape what it described. He established a grammar not for the vices and virtues of relative cultures but of the United States and its role in the world. Unlike his counterparts in Europe Herskovits never reconciled himself to the idea of being a citizen of an imperial power³⁰. His post war writings are littered with references to Euro American imperialism. Occasional references to Amerindian responses to imperialism are, even in US examples, tellingly styled as contact with European cultures. In Herskovits’s own view that the United States had a, “traditional opposition to colonialism”³¹, Herskovits sought to reinforce the dangers of, “thinking colonially”³², to which he saw cultural relativism as a partial antidote.

Herskovits’s work in the Caribbean and the United States is best known for its emphasis on African survivals. The logic behind this notion and still less its premise of cultural totalitarianism seems to have escaped even well known later scholars. What happened instead was a continuation of the dialogue between black and white systems of anthropology. If Herskovits worked in Haiti then later scholars have sought to show that black anthropologists got there first, “In their search for an ideology that could mobilise resistance, a small group of

²⁹ Amory, Deborah, *African Studies as American Institution* in Gupta, A and Ferguson, J Eds. *Anthropological locations: Boundaries of a field science*. University of California Press Berkeley 1997.

³⁰ He only once styled America as an empire in a 1942 article see, Herskovits, Melville J. On Cultural Values in *Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism*. Random House London 1972:6

³¹ Herskovits, M. Cultural Diversity and World Peace in *Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism*. Random House London 1972:73

³² Herskovits, M. A Cross-Cultural View of Bias and Values in *Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism*. Random House London 1972:105 (1958) Herskovits defined thinking colonially as seeing other peoples as primitive, childlike or savage. In his writing colonialism is therefore a monolithic affront to the necessity of culture and cultural difference. In making this definition Herskovits reinforces and refines an American liberal moral grammar for describing what constitutes imperialism, by definition not American liberals. Certainly this was the view from British Socialists of American policy and both black and white American academia see White, Eireen. What Hope for a Socialist Commonwealth? In Creech Jones, Arthur Ed. *New Fabian Colonial Essays* Hogarth Press London 1959 especially comments on page 267

Haitian intellectuals including Dr Francois Duvalier and Dr Jean Price-Mars began to organise research into Haitian peasant life... So in this independent state, anthropology was thriving before the first Ph.D in the discipline appeared in the U.S.A”³³(Papa Doc perhaps would be glad to be remembered as a pioneering black scholar rather than a brutal ruler who destroyed Haiti’s fragile economy and brutalised its population through his dictatorship). But like Herskovits before him St Clair Drake³⁴ simply failed to see that he was performing the moral logic embedded in the disciplinary grammar that had formed. Far more profitable would be a consideration of why Haiti’s future tyrant so readily embraced the concepts of negritude and peasants and how these found places within the public pronouncements of the regime. In *Life in a Haitian Valley* Herskovits simply ignored the existence of the United States occupation that facilitated his work much as he treated as incidental the Colonial Government of Trinidad and Tobago in his research there or the role of a Dutch official and amateur ethnologist who assisted during his work with the Maroons of Dutch Guiana³⁵. The reason for this is a consequence of both his emphasis on and his reasons for emphasising culture.

The purpose of emphasising African survivals³⁶ was for Herskovits an exercise in showing that all peoples had cultures and that the meeting of cultures resulted in varying degrees of

³³ Drake, St Clair. Further Reflections on Anthropology and the Black Experience in *Transforming Anthropology* Vol. 1 No. 2 1990. It is worth pointing also to St Clair Drake’s deliberate rejection of the US occupation (to which resistance refers) through the appellation, “Independent State”.

³⁴ For a full review of St Clair Drake’s contribution to anthropology and his ambivalence towards the teachings of Boas see Jordan, Glenn. On Being a Committed Intellectual: St Clair Drake and the Politics of Anthropology in *Transforming Anthropology* Vol. 1 No. 2 1990 see page 16 for views on Boas and vindicationism.

³⁵ Herskovits, Melville J. *Life in a Haitian Valley* Alfred A Knopf New York 1937 and Herskovits, Melville J. and Herskovits, Frances S. *Trinidad Village: The First Anthropological Study of a Protestant Negro Culture in the English Speaking Caribbean*. Alfred A Knopf New York 1947. Herskovits’s subtitle was somewhat disingenuous as Martha Beckwith’s *Black Roadways: A Study of Jamaican Folk Life* University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 1929 is the first ethnography of the English speaking Caribbean by a formal anthropologist. Herskovits’s blindness to colonialism in Trinidad is stunning given the level of detail he records about the interaction between government bodies and the public and the central role that he accords Public Works pay day in shaping life in Toco. One of his key ethnographic encounters was sitting in a magistrate’s court where he simply concluded that he was witnessing the confrontation of the African customary culture with the formal colonial culture. Later chapters will deal in more detail with the origins and consequences of Public Works programmes in the Tobago and the wider Caribbean. Herskovits is not the only one to ignore colonial policy in Caribbean ethnography see Yelvington, Kevin A. The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean: Political Discourse and Anthropological Praxis 1920-1940 in Yelvington Ed. *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora* School of American Research Press Santa Fe 2006

³⁶ In the relativist conception of culture espoused by Herskovits it should logically follow that there are not only African but also European survivals. Almost forgotten by serious scholars is the work of Margaret Alice Murray of University College London. Her best known work, *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford 1921) was rapidly dismissed by historians in ways that African survivals never have been, despite the work forming the basis for Wicca and the resurgence of other purportedly pagan beliefs in Europe up to the present day. Both African and European pre Christian survivals in the U.S.A. were used

acculturation. It was therefore possible for Herskovits to argue that black Americans were essentially American in character but that Haitians, Trinidadians and Surinamese Maroons were predominantly African³⁷. Herskovits saw this programme of cultural relativism as integral to combating scientific racism through the means of a science of culture. He rigorously opposed activist or applied anthropology, even going so far as to dissolve a committee he had formed when it tried to organise a conference on racism and black scholars³⁸. This programme of cultural relativism and a tactical stance of objectivity served to insulate Herskovits in his battles with the intellectual right even if it led to his own agency later being attributed to cultural causes³⁹. His biting review of *Relativism and the Study of Man*⁴⁰ attacked a work which postulated many of the views later termed neo conservatism and whose contributors included

as devices in the macabre fiction of the inter war years in America. The writings of Howard Phillips Lovecraft in particular used both ideas within his Cthulhu mythos. This belief in cultural survivals married with his views on racial degeneration allowed Lovecraft to describe the rural and urban poor of America as backward superstitious cannibals in league with extra terrestrial and extra dimensional elder gods. The image of the backwoods cannibal, the zombie or the voodoo cult in American cinema derives largely from Lovecraft and his imitators (Clark Ashton Smith and Robert Bloch amongst others) even if his own works have never been faithfully filmed. A point that is overlooked in assertions about the Caribbean origins of the zombie film most recently reiterated by Mimi Sheller (Sheller 2005). There are actually two distinct genres, 1940s and 1950s horror did use the Caribbean zombie mythology and often purported to be set in the Caribbean or American South. From the 1960s the emphasis on extreme violence and cannibalism drew from Lovecraft's 1921-1922 serial Herbert West: Reanimator, a pastiche of Frankenstein that drew heavily on Lovecraft's disdain for publishers who wanted extreme schlock horror. The story loosely inspired and provided the title for a trilogy of zombie films in the 1980s and early 1990s. Lovecraft was a materialist who rejected the supernatural but used it as a device for furthering his broader and often shifting social views (At various times he advocated both Communism and Nazism even though his wife was Jewish). Had Herskovits subscribed to *Weird Tales* he might have seen how cultural relativism became a key part of American apocalyptic science fiction and horror serving ends very different to the ones he envisioned.

³⁷ Possibly because the former needed to be integrated and the latter were resisting European imperialism, in the Haitian case by continuing to be independent of France rather than contesting the US occupation. For a description of Herskovits's fieldwork and intellectual influences see Yelvington, Kevin A. *The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean: Political Discourse and Anthropological Praxis 1920-1940* in Yelvington Ed. *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora* School of American Research Press Santa Fe 2006

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ See especially Sidney W. Mintz's introduction to a reissue of *Life in a Haitian Valley* where Mintz attacks Herskovits's belief in the assimilation of black Americans on the basis that he was a Jew with, "his own unrecognised desire to assimilate" (2007:viii). Herskovits, Melville J. *Life in a Haitian Valley* Markus Weiner Princeton 2007.

⁴⁰ Herskovits, Melville J. *Symposium on Relativism and the Study of Man – A Review in Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism*. Random House London 1972 the text in question being *Relativism and the Study of Man* Schoek, Helmut and Wiggins Eds. Princeton 1961 To get a good idea of what Herskovits was confronted with by Strauss and other conservatives see Ward, Leo R. The 'Natural Law' Rebound *The Review of Politics* Vol. 21. No. 1 Twentieth Anniversary Issue II Jan 1959 A representative sample of the argument might be, "In contrast to the old line of 'scientific study' and of anthropology itself, it is a good deal to be going, now, so far as to affirm quite obvious ethical universals. As we noted only Herskovits continues to be a holdout, and Bidney has once and for all destroyed the main relativist appeals of Herskovits" (Ward 1959:128). It is fascinating and suggestive that universalists who had previously used science to attack vindicationists in the decades before Boas's work, were attacking relativists themselves for being inappropriately scientific a century later.

Leo Strauss and several theologians. The weakness of the review like much of Herskovits's work lay in its inherent optimism that culture was inevitable and that as a consequence ethnocentrism was also inevitable but not inherently bad or dangerous. What this line of reasoning displayed was that culture was an inescapable absolute. In this formulation it became possible for Herskovits to argue that the vices and virtues that critics of relativism saw in particular cultures were attributable to their own cultural stance. In essence culture became a device for bypassing the raw politics of difference in pursuit of a universal humanism⁴¹. Herskovits's brand of liberalism blinded him to the possibility that all claims to identity are political claims underpinned by human agency, a recognition that the students of Strauss would use to devastating effect against American liberalism and the wider world.

Despite a burgeoning literature on African survivals in the new world a separate paradigm for understanding Caribbean societies developed in tandem with that of Herskovits and it was one born of very different political orientations. The plural society model put forward by M.G. Smith of Jamaica drew its inspiration from the plural society concept advanced by Burmese colonial civil servant J.S. Furnivall⁴². But this inspiration was remarkably shallow. Smith failed to grasp what Furnivall was arguing or acknowledge the origins of Furnivall's intentions for doing so. Smith drew on a wide range of literature from across the social sciences of the 1950s and 1960s that encompassed ideas as various as cultural relativism and deviancy theory⁴³. He saw a society that was Creole in character but in structure was divided between African and European complexes of culture. Europeans were deemed to be axiomatically at the top of the structure he envisaged and therefore, "The basis of the 'white bias' which characterizes West Indian society is cultural rather than racial"⁴⁴. What Smith meant by this becomes blurry at the beginning of the following paragraph, "Miscegenation complicated the picture, producing hybrids, some of whom were free and predominantly European in culture, while others were

⁴¹ As opposed to the Fabian conception of universal humanism that was rooted squarely in liberating the individual from economic and social injustice and all preceding traditions which were seen to be the cause of such injustice. Herskovits's reasoning eschewed anything so ideologically charged.

⁴² Furnivall was a prolific writer and perhaps his most detailed discussion of the theory in question was his seminal contribution to South Asian Studies, *Colonial Policy and Practice*. Cambridge 1948

⁴³ Smith's major problem stemmed from his commitments to pure academic research, his earlier work on colonial development surveys and his later career as a special advisor to his old school friend Michael Manley amidst the increasingly vicious political infighting of post independence Jamaica. Smith never fully reconciled his academic work to his nationalist sympathies in which the romance of the Jamaican landscape played no small part. For a brief account of Smith's life written by a colleague and contemporary see, Hall, Douglas. *A Man Divided: Michael Garfield Smith, Jamaican Poet and Anthropologist 1921-1993* UWIpress Kingston 1997

⁴⁴ Smith, M.G. *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* University of California Press Berkeley 1965:6

slave, acculturated to the Creole 'African' complex"⁴⁵. Smith appears to have seen the transmission of culture as connected to a particular conception of the relationship between race and social behaviours. This relationship is described as a cultural one in order to place the virtue of culture as a universal attribute in distinction to race as an inflexible and pejorative one. Throughout Smith's work a central causal element is missing that underpinned Furnivall's original work. This absence is caused by Smith's following of Herskovits's belief in the universal humanism of culture, because Furnivall's argument hinged specifically on one thing, capitalism.

Smith had described a plural society based around a belief that slavery in the New World and especially the Caribbean was unique. So sure of this fact was he that he manipulated the principles of cultural relativism to put other forms of slavery in a positive light by virtue of their presumably more African sense of social integration⁴⁶. For Smith the plural society was rooted in the innate ethnic chauvinism of what he styled European culture. In order to understand how this differed from the writings of J.S. Furnivall which were its main source requires a brief digression into the colonial policy debates of which Furnivall's work was a part.

Furnivall had joined the Fabian society in 1908 and he maintained a lifelong commitment to Fabianism contributing to the collections of the Fabian Colonial Research Bureau⁴⁷. Furnivall saw plurality as being the direct product of capitalism and specifically the imperialist phase of European capitalism. He was especially concerned about the disruption of land tenure systems by capitalist forms of market economy which in his view turned colonised peoples into units of production within a given territory⁴⁸. In this regard he had similar attitudes to founding Fabian colonial authors like Sydney Haldane Olivier. Just as Smith completely overlooked and confused the intent of Furnivall's Fabianism so have all but one recent account of Furnivall's career made the same error⁴⁹. Furnivall saw the plural society as the consequence of capitalism and imperialism and believed that enlightened administration could create a positive nationalism that would be able to build the social institutions necessary for

⁴⁵ Ibid p6

⁴⁶ Ibid Chapter 6 Slavery and Emancipation in Two Societies.

⁴⁷ For a typical example see Furnivall, J.S. Some Problems of Tropical Economy in Hinden, R. Ed. *Fabian Colonial Essays* Urwin Brothers London 1945

⁴⁸ Furnivall, J.S. Land as a Free Gift of Nature in *The Economic Journal* Volume 19 No. 76 Dec 1909. This contains one of the earliest formulations of Furnivall's ideas.

⁴⁹ The exception also provides a full overview of those who have missed this obvious element in Furnivall's work see Pham, Julie. J.S. Furnivall and Fabianism: Reinterpreting the 'Plural Society' in Burma in *Modern Asian Studies* Volume 39 No. 2 2005

independence. In this he followed almost to the letter Sidney Webb's own vision of society as an organism that socialism would heal in the face of capitalist exploitation⁵⁰.

Smith's model of a Plural Society differed from its primary source material in that Smith attributed the divides in Jamaican society to how authentic cultural forms existed in the context of capitalism. Furnivall's conception of the plural society saw capitalism as directly responsible for the alteration and distortion of cultural forms in a manner that negated their authenticity. Furnivall's advice to colonial policymakers was to foster an inclusive nationalism that sought to negate the impact of capitalism on social organisation. Smith's desire was to recognise the distinctive cultural authenticity of the plural society and use this previously denied authenticity as the basis for a new West Indian nationalism.

Whilst Smith was conducting his pioneering work on land tenure and labour relations in Grenada and Carriacou in the early 1950s another strand of analysis was developing. This was the fieldwork of the West Indian Social Survey that produced two works that remain significant by Edith Clarke, head of the survey and Madeline Kerr, the project's social psychologist⁵¹. Clarke's study of Jamaican family life established the family as a desirable goal of welfare but did so with considerable sophistication⁵². For Clarke the Jamaican family, especially amongst the poor was a totally different concept to that held by the rich and even that described by her informants. She saw instead that the dual language of family roles was indicative of a much more complex grammar of domestic life. For Clarke this system of language and practice was rooted in the economic and sexual practices of slavery and had formed a Creole morality. Clarke was firmly of the view that the welfare state would play a role in supporting families whatever their form rather than attempt to impose coercive reforms provided this did not conflict with child welfare⁵³.

⁵⁰ Ibid 325-326 for a summary of Furnivall's Fabian influences.

⁵¹ The survey ran from 1947-49 Edith Clarke's work as a civil servant predated and continued beyond the project. She was a student of Malinowski at the LSE before the war and originally intended to study in Africa but changed her mind after returning home to Jamaica. Her father and grandfather were both social and political activists in Jamaica and her grandfather, a well known preacher, was acquainted with and publicly praised by Sydney Olivier. The books in question are, Clarke, Edith *My Mother Who Fathered Me* UWIpess Kingston 1999 (first edition 1957) and Kerr, Madeline. *Personality and Conflict in Jamaica* University Press Liverpool 1952

⁵² In fact Edith Clarke was clear that the family was being used as a heuristic device to describe a customary system of social organisation see , Clarke, Edith *My Mother Who Fathered Me* UWIpess Kingston 1999:5

⁵³ Ibid pages 79-80 for an explanation of poor relief and family life.

Madeline Kerr adopted the ideas of both M.G. Smith and Melville Herskovits far more openly if more cautiously than Edith Clarke⁵⁴. Kerr identified a psychological personality for Jamaicans that was rooted in the cultural conflict between black, brown and white, of European elite and African folk, and that was initiated by slavery⁵⁵. Kerr was cautious in her assessments, “I am not telling Jamaicans how to run their own affairs. That would be a gross impertinence. All I am saying is that in the course of a purely scientific investigation certain indications were found that owing to social and psychological frustration people were not developing either as far or as quickly as they might”⁵⁶. Kerr was more sceptical than Clarke. Clarke had enthusiastically accepted what she observed as being foremostly Jamaican culture. Instead Kerr readily acknowledged this but dwelt on the context and consequences of what Clarke so readily embraced as culture⁵⁷. The difference of opinion stemmed from the two author’s subtle differences of intention.

This tension might be easily understood, Clarke was a Jamaican, receptive to nationalism and friendly with the Manley family through her official and unofficial welfare work. For Clarke culture was not a direct challenge to welfare. Kerr on the other hand was an outside academic balancing liberal concern about child welfare with concerns about social welfare. She seems to have been keenly aware that psychology was an effective tool for denying agency and rendering natural the differences generated by political economy⁵⁸. Despite this Kerr appears to have been diplomatically trying to suggest that, however authentic and legitimate some forms of Jamaican culture might have been, they were one of the obstacles to the modernising

⁵⁴ M.G. Smith, then based at the Mona campus of UWI before departing for America, commented on both texts according to the acknowledgements as did Dora Ibberson the Social Welfare Advisor to the Comptroller of Development and Welfare in the West Indies. Ibberson’s work is described in more detail in Chapter 4

⁵⁵ Kerr, Madeline. *Personality and Conflict in Jamaica* University Press Liverpool 1952:x

⁵⁶ Ibid page xi

⁵⁷ For example, “When he [the Jamaican peasant] tries to take over the pseudo European pattern he loses his spontaneity and his personality becomes restricted... the economic situation is not such that he can have the appurtenances of Anglo-American middle class culture... The Jamaican is more fortunate than he realises in this respect” Ibid p195 There is also a suggestion of a representation of thrift and hardship as virtues of Jamaica’s poor that imbues Kerr’s work and tallies with some of the views of public servants in Tobago on Social Welfare projects of the same period (See Chapter 4).

⁵⁸ Certainly these were issues that perturbed the British left between the 1940s and 1950s. Michael Young’s visionary satire of intelligence and personality testing was one notable product of this tension between the elite and managerial strand of Fabianism and more radical Labour party reformers. Young, Michael. *The Rise of the Meritocracy* Thames and Hudson London 1958 A satire less frequently discussed than Orwell’s put perhaps more chillingly prescient as an ostensibly classless, multiparty oligarchy justifies itself with the mantra $IQ + \text{Effort} = \text{Merit}$. I use the word radical with the qualification that Young was a mainstream figure in the Labour Party who wrote the 1945 manifesto. Since the society he envisioned (and the common place use of the word that his satire invented) appears partly to have arrived under the aegis of New Labour I have termed him radical for the sake of convenience.

policies of Colonial Welfare projects and West Indian nationalism. Kerr's cautious approach to the findings of her work in Jamaica should also be seen against a broader backdrop of post war concern amongst British and British based social scientists who felt they were theoretically falling behind their American counterparts in the analysis of social aspects of development policy⁵⁹.

Various forms of subtle and not so subtle nationalism filtered into Colonial Welfare in the Caribbean⁶⁰. The writings of Smith and Clarke would help to render social problems and economic inequality into historically rooted cultural processes. As Smith was to promote a debate around West Indian culture so Clarke is the originator of a West Indian academic politics of gender and domesticity rooted in the legacy of slavery. A new nationalist morality of identity had taken the terminology of British and American scholars and policy makers and

⁵⁹ For an illustrative example of how this concern influenced even a future member of the Manchester School see, Fortes, Meyer. *An Anthropologist's Point of View* in Hinden, R. Ed. *Fabian Colonial Essays* Unwin Brothers London 1945 This article is virtually a facsimile of some of Herskovits's essays of the period, the footnote to Herskovits's work notes peevishly that much of its argument is based on work that, "is all the work of American Anthropologists, incidentally", (Fortes in Hinden Ed. 1945:229). Even more explicit in its rebuke is Simey, T.S. *Welfare and Planning in the West Indies* Clarendon Oxford 1946:238 Recalling the shift in economic thought, (exemplified by Arthur Lewis's shift from a Fabian advocacy of agrarian development in favour of industrial modernisation) it appears much of this belief in American superiority was founded in an admiration for Roosevelt's New Deal. In the Caribbean British officials were especially mindful of the apparent gains of Operation Bootstrap in Puerto Rico. Paradoxically the Americans often had a different view which emphasised the superiority of British methods. This stemmed from the longstanding involvement of researchers in intelligence work in the British Colonies. The difference of intention can sometimes be stark with some of those ethnographers later involved in the foundation of the Central Intelligence Agency plotting to create a secret empire. Meanwhile, many British and British backed researchers were trying to find ways to run one publicly. Fortes himself was one such agent who earned the admiration of American ethnographers turned field agents during the war. See Price, David H. *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War* Duke University Press 2008:245. Not just anthropologists and the social welfare departments were involved in this blend of policy, research and espionage. Members of the TUC also had a hand in providing reports to the Colonial Office in the Caribbean which has seen them less than fondly remembered as spies. This is the line taken in Bolland, Nigel O. *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement* Ian Randle Kingston 2001:489. Spies can have differing intentions as much as anyone else. M.G. Smith's blackly comic account of a bemused British trade unionist working as a Colonial office Labour Adviser in Grenada trying to defuse a volatile labour dispute ends in a dinner party aimed at building amicable relations. The problem was that Eric Gairy and his supporters stood on one side of the room, the planters carrying concealed weapons stood on the other and the Labour Adviser was stuck in the middle, "The Labour Adviser became a social outcast after the incident and was happy to leave in late 1953" Smith, M.G. *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* University of California Press Berkeley 1965:289

⁶⁰ Sidney Mintz seems to have been wholly unaware of the role of social scientists in British colonial policy in the Caribbean. This was particularly apparent when he wrote of, "an almost obsessive interest in social organization" (Mintz 1983:1) amongst British and West Indian writers juxtaposed against U.S. academics who viewed anthropology as the abstract study of the novel and the exotic. See Mintz, Sidney. *Reflections on Caribbean Peasantries* in *New West Indian Guide* Vol. 57 No. 1/2 1983

begun to turn the grammar of poverty into the grammar of culture within a language of regional description.

From the late 1960s onwards the study of slavery, so central to both the moral cosmologies of West Indian nationalism and European post colonial guilt⁶¹, began to change. These changes initially occurred against a regional backdrop of turmoil framed by global economic and political turbulence. From the reinterpretations of slavery there was to be wrought a transformation of the ways that land and people were viewed by Caribbean writers. The key element in this transformation was to be creolisation and its interaction with the dialectics of historical materialism.

⁶¹ Obviously the Caribbean examples discussed in Chapter 1, the works of C.L.R James and Eric Williams. Later examples across a broad spectrum of intention are the works of Walter Rodney, Horace Campbell, Edward Kamau Brathwaite and Elsa Goveia, more recently Hilary Beckles and Colin Palmer amongst many others. For postcolonial guilt an excellent starting point would be anything by Michael Craton although the most glaring examples are to be found in various forms of avowedly postmodernist approach. Craton's dismissal of imperialism largely rests on an ethical belief that things which are old fashioned are inherently wrong. His description of his recruitment and work as an educator in the Bahamas by a representative of the Crown Agents, "the school's headmaster, a white expatriate and old fashioned colonialist" is suggestive (Craton 1997:vii). If this individual is condemned for what he is framed as, by the moral performance of postcolonial guilt, then Craton valorises what he himself does in juxtaposition to what he is. "I did not become involved in politics, I resisted the headmaster's advice to join the right (that is white and expatriate) clubs, and made most of my friends on the other side of the hill, among my black colleagues, the parents of my pupils, and the black Bahamian and Barbadian sportsmen of the cricket league" (Craton 1997:vii-viii). This is from the preface to Craton, Michael. *Empire, Enslavement and Freedom in the Caribbean*, Ian Randle Kingston 1997 Craton's use of various analytical frameworks as a means of performing a specific system of morals has impacted on several key Caribbean debates not least of all that around land tenure, "a nationalistic negritude can as easily lead to a greater affinity to the land and customary ways on the part of the people as a whole, as to the determination simply to exploit the land on behalf of a fortunate black minority. In such healthier atmosphere, the value of African customs, as melded over generations in the crucible of Afro-Bahamian life – the ownership of land in common, its transmission through the kin from generation to generation, and the allocation of its use to families in need – may well continue to prevail over a borrowed and expedient legalism that stems from the European Middle Ages and the subsequent era of bourgeois capitalism" Craton, M White law and Black custom – The evolution of Bahamian land tenures in Besson, J. and Momsen, J. *Land and Development in the Caribbean* Macmillan Caribbean London 1987:108 The article title alone raises serious concerns in that it espouses a racial dialectic between law and custom rather than analysing it. At least Olivier and Macdonald's *White Capital and Coloured Labour* (1906) is a detailed critique of how such a dialectic had been brought about. Other authors beside Craton who make uncritical moral assumptions about the past include Mintz's collaborator Richard Price who dedicated his unexpurgated version of the journal of John Gabriel Stedman to, "Stedman's maroon adversaries who staked their lives on the attainment of freedom, justice and peace. And to their present-day descendants who refuse to forget" frontispiece of Price, R and Price, S. Eds. *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam by John Gabriel Stedman* Johns Hopkins University Press Baltimore 1988 (1790)

Creolisation as a component of academic descriptive language originates with the writings of Kamau Brathwaite⁶². Brathwaite took Smith's plural society, whatever African survivals he could lay hands on from Herskovits, Beckwith and Clarke and threw in a smattering of Fanonesque psychological analysis for good measure⁶³. The end product is a belief in a cultural continuum formed of the Afro-Creole folk and the white-European cultural systems. The relations between which were determined by a combination of what Brathwaite tellingly styles as Euro-Creole, 'Apartheid' and slave resistance as 'black power'. This relationship manifested itself as mimicry, and what Brathwaite terms negativism on the part of those beguiled by

⁶² Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. *The Development of the Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* Ian Randle Kingston 2005. The work was based on a University of Sussex Dphil in History.

⁶³ Brathwaite largely reconstructs what he calls slave culture from later ethnographies rather than primary sources. These he tends to play fast and looses with, for example citing Edward Long's belief that burial traditions owed something to the Scottish Highlands, Brathwaite simply assumes that he was wrong and confidently asserts that it was in fact an African survival. It might have been more productive to consider a) why Long might have said what he did in more detail and b) explained why he was asserting the opposite with sketchy circumstantial evidence. Later he terms Louis Armstrong's 1961 recording of Oh did he ramble, "a brilliant recreation of a Negro funeral" (Brathwaite 2005:218) this recording was actually a cover of an earlier 1939 rendition by Jelly Roll Morton featuring Sidney Bechet on trumpet and Claude Jones on trombone. Jones reads the opening liturgy, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, if the women don't get you the liquor must". What this says about the interplay between jazz and funerary rites, still more the interpretation of the phenomenon, is worthy of a separate discussion. Considering the earlier note about European survivals being a logical and contingent feature of this argument it's worth noting that both Jean Besson for Jamaica and in Tobago JD Elder identified Scottish (Celtic culture for Besson) survivals in the Caribbean. This idea in practice is better understood not as a wholesale importation of some cultural system but as an idealised performance born of personal moral sentiment that normally manifested as an extreme form of programmatic irrationalism. An encounter with a Scottish estate owner in the early 20th Century easily illustrates just how such sentimental idealised concepts of culture are deployed by and performed by individuals irrespective of the physical setting, "The owner was a loyal Scotchman who prided himself on reproducing in the island of his adoption, as nearly as possible the conditions prevailing at home. The floors were heavily carpeted, the glazed windows were closed after dark, and the heavy curtains drawn across them, with consequences to one's personal comfort, which can be more easily imagined than described" (Aspinall 1912:102). The works referred to above in addition to Brathwaite are as follows, Aspinall, Algernon *The British West Indies*, Isaac Pitman and sons London 1912, Besson, Jean. *Martha Brae's Two Histories: European expansion and Caribbean Culture-Building in Jamaica*, University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 2002, Elder, J.D. *Folksongs From Tobago*, Karnak Trinidad 1994. For Brathwaite's use of Fanon's psychological interpretations of colonisation see Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. *The Development of the Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* Ian Randle Kingston 2005 p107 and p309. It is worth drawing attention to the manner in which Fanon's aesthetics and metaphysics of anti-colonial resistance are used to provide a psychological justification for a particular moral scheme. Fanon transforms political and economic logics into a confrontation of mutually flawed psychologically meta personalities. For example in describing the psychological personality of the native that is engendered by colonial rule but will be transformed by the realities of resistance Fanon writes, "In the colonial world, the emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of the skin like an open sore which flinches from the caustic agent; and the psyche shrinks back, obliterates itself and finds outlet in muscular demonstrations which have caused certain very wise men to say the native is a hysterical type. This sensitive emotionalism, watched by invisible keepers who are, however, in unbroken contact with the core of the personality, will find its fulfilment through eroticism in the driving forces behind the dissolution of the crisis". Fanon, F. *The Wretched of The Earth* Penguin London 1967:44

white-European cultural forms. This inconvenient negativism is seen as innately colonial and therefore false and with it the plural society that Smith described⁶⁴.

Responses to creolisation have varied amongst historians. The rigorous assertion of the agency of slaves in postcolonial writings has tended to vigorously embrace Brathwaite's ideas as a continuation of the work of Elsa Goveia⁶⁵. The salience of culture was never questioned nor was the way in which Brathwaite used it as a tool. Instead of considering Brathwaite's underlying logic, later writers simply tried various ways of refining it within the context of a debate characterised by the question of whether or not West Indian societies were the products of Afrogenesis and if so in what proportions. Qualifications of this position tended to come from those who leaned toward dialectical materialism or in one isolated case opposed it⁶⁶. Residing at the core of creolisation theory was a totalising conception of society as a non-

⁶⁴ Most of Brathwaite's argument is confined to the final chapter of the book and the book's first half is little more than a list of constitutional arrangements and laws that sit quite at odds with the second half. It reads like the works of Bryan Edwards and Edward Long simply because it is largely lifted from them but without the revealing subtexts of the original source material. For a defining paradigm creolisation is almost sprung on the reader as an excuse for what precedes rather than a unifying argument throughout the whole work. Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. *The Development of the Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* Ian Randle Kingston 2005

⁶⁵ Elsa Goveia's conceptual tool was slave society see Goveia, E. *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the end of the Eighteenth Century* Yale University press Newhaven and London 1965. For Goveia slave society was the totality of social forms and processes in the New World colonies. For a consideration of her thought and its origins see, Higman, B.W. *The Invention of Slave Society* in Moore, B. Higman, B.W. Campbell, C. and Bryan, P Eds. *Slavery, Freedom and Gender: The Dynamics of Caribbean Society* UWIpress Kingston 2001

⁶⁶ For dialectical materialism and creolisation see Bolland, O. Nigel. *Creolisation and Creole Societies: A Cultural Nationalist View of Caribbean Social History* in Shepherd, V and Richards, G. Eds. *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourses in Caribbean Culture* Ian Randle Kingston 2002. Bolland tries to some extent to reintroduce the concept of individual agency. At the same time though he accepts Creolisation as a theoretical proposition providing that its nationalist connotations are self conscious as he asserts they have become. The legitimacy of this argument rests on a belief that Caribbean peoples are part of a historical struggle for their birthright that requires them to distinguish themselves from expatriates. All Bolland asks is that dialectical materialism be acknowledged as an equally crucial dynamic alongside cultural construction through resistance, the 'can I play to?' rationale of this is an irony apparently lost on its author. The lone dissenting opinion in nearly forty years of scholarship is William Green's *The Creolization of Caribbean History: The Emancipation Era and a Critique of Dialectical Analysis* in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Vol. 14 No. 3 1980. Green identified creolisation with West Indian nationalism and identified dialectical materialism with the manner in which American social anthropologists; specifically Peter J. Wilson hitched dialectics to cultural relativism. Green saw that this served an equally political academic programme alongside nationalism and was heavily critical of Wilson's suggestion that the Caribbean should reject Metropolitan values and modernity on the grounds that it was a vague and uncertain proposition with shallow historical foundations and little appreciation of reality. Green's assertion that historians of the Caribbean before independence had focused on colonial administration rather than social change does not contradict his view that the study of both should be linked, still less the opinion that the former should be rejected. He appears to have underestimated the ways in which cultural relativism and dialectical materialism had become integral to the grammar of Caribbean scholarship through the moral systems that individual writers sought to impose on the past. For his pains his solitary criticism was excluded from the main reader on creolisation

negotiable component of the argument expressed in the literature as, “the society” as opposed to societies or a society. In his discussion of humanitarianism Brathwaite asked, “Would the effect of the Humanitarian Revolution destroy, divide or integrate the society?” That he subsequently berated Jamaica’s ruling elite for failing to create an integrated society rather illustrates his failure to explore exactly why this happened, preferring instead to see this as a function of an inherent inefficiency. Within the language of creolisation society is an eternal entity, a concept that exists independent of the cultures that inhabit it.

Entwined with the programmatic origins and intellectual organisation of creolisation was a specific vision of land and society. This logic derived from the very obvious disparity in West Indian land ownership and the differentiation of land use that characterised it. A peasantry defined as Afro-Creole, in which a folk culture integral to national identity resided, sat in opposition to, but was dialectically linked with, a white and coloured land owning oligarchy in which European values resided. The various ways in which this peasantry formed and operated were the basis from which those sympathetic to theories of creolisation set about extrapolating the ways in which culture, gender and dialectical relations of power; were bound up with understandings of land, nature and property.

Theorists of the Caribbean have gone to a variety of often surreal lengths in pursuit of their respective agendas. Jean Besson arrived at a firm belief in something she called, “a variant of Hawaiianized Eskimo kinship terminology”⁶⁷, in her study of family land. Horace Campbell spun together a compelling conspiracy that involved, bauxite companies, the University of Montreal computer centre, white pseudo rastas and London Transport all acting at the behest of the CIA and the KKK⁶⁸. It’s worth noting that cultural relativism was duly appreciative, Besson won

and his name when mentioned in the introduction appears beside the bracketed “Eurocentric?” (Shepherd and Richards 2002:xiii). Green may have been guilty of a general aversion to theoretical history as much as the advocacy of any particular position. I had exactly the same accusation of eurocentricism levelled at me in a seminar at St Augustine when I presented an early draft of the section of Chapter 3 dealing with health policy and environmental perceptions in Tobago. My alleged crime was to have used colonial documents in order to write about colonial civil and public servants. I do not deny that a reading of any document can simply lead to a restatement of its author’s views but this might in fact be necessary if you actually want to know what those views were.

⁶⁷ Besson, Jean. *Martha Brae’s two histories: European expansion and Caribbean culture-building in Jamaica* Chapel Hill 2002:313

⁶⁸ Campbell, Horace. *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*. Hansib London 2007 Campbell assesses what he deems Rastafarianism’s negative and positive traits (i.e. easily explained as proto communism and not so easily explained as proto communism), “Rastafarians went to Cuba and were critical of the widespread eating of pork in this socialist island. No effort was made to distinguish pig rearing and pork preparation in a socialist society from the pig rearing which uses a large abundance of nitrates and nitrites in the factory farming of the advanced capitalist countries” (Campbell 2007:123) Campbell attempts to denounce bourgeois state sponsored Euro-American CIAist Social Scientists (He

glowing back cover reviews from Sidney Mintz and Kevin Yelvington⁶⁹. Leading from historical accounts of slave resistance Caribbean anthropologists continued to invent and reinvent peasants as part of a program of imagination. That this was self conscious in no way detracts from the view that it was and is wholly irrational in its goals and composition.

The debates that surround family land are a good indication of the ways in which the physical environment came to be used by scholars of the Caribbean. Systems of customary land tenure across the region were rooted in a wide variety of practices and interpersonal relationships that emerged after emancipation. This system of relationships was highly nuanced with often locally specific manifestations such as those described in the Grenadines in the 1950s⁷⁰. Jean Besson and Michaeline Crichlow engaged in a two decade long row over the origins of family land and which of them had first identified it as uniquely Caribbean and Creole rather than a mere African survival. This debate served to cement the view that land tenures in the Caribbean were born out of a dialectical relationship between peasant and plantation. Overlapping this was an interplay between a European derived legal system and a locally derived customary system, “land use is not governed by the values of capitalist monoculture but reflects creole economic and symbolic values”⁷¹.

The idea that the two were part of one in the same system of social organisation does not appear to have occurred to either author. This is illustrated by the fact that Besson’s principle case study village was largely created out of voluntary land redistribution by her own father in the 1940s who it appears held a firm belief in the need for a peasantry⁷². Besson seems to

especially attacked M.G. Smith in these terms) whom he sees as denying the culture of the society by claiming the Rasta as a millenarian cult. The preceding quotation is illustrative of the difficulties he encounters, failing to realise perhaps that a grass roots political movement can be a millenarian cult and that its members might use some of the familiar language of the left where convenient.

⁶⁹ The Yelvington quote refers to, “this politically committed ‘daughter of the soil’ and erudite anthropologist”. Yelvington made an intriguing contribution to the morality of West Indian historiography when he associated Fabianism and Wilson’s concept of Respectability in a critique of Trinidad’s white creole labour leader A.A. Cipriani. Book Review, O Nigel Bolland, *On the March: Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean 1934-39* Ian Randle 1995 in *Labour/Le Travail* No. 40 1997:332-333

⁷⁰ Smith, M.G. *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* Berkeley 1965

⁷¹ Besson, Jean. *Martha Brae’s two histories: European expansion and Caribbean culture-building in Jamaica* Chapel Hill 2002:140

⁷² This connection is glossed over at key points in the text and exploited in others by the medium of identifying her father by his local nickname, Lawyer. An easy illustration can be found on Besson 2002:181 Jean Besson’s statement of positionality is several pages of her own genealogy that indicates a personal obsession with families more than anything else. It is not until midway through the book that she tells the revealing anecdote, “Initially, when I was taken for a tourist, the reaction was suspicious. I therefore explained, by way of an introduction, that my father had been a lawyer-farmer who worked in Falmouth and lived near Martha Brae and Granville. The atmosphere swiftly changed to one of welcome, as the comment, ‘it’s Lawyer’s daughter, Lawyer who cut up the land’ swept through the

have won this debate. So emphatically did Besson make her point that Crichlow ditched dialectical analysis of rural society in the Caribbean entirely, instead favouring a post development styled critique. Crichlow drew on the writings of Arturo Escobar and James Ferguson to argue that rural development policies had failed because of the machinations of the modernist obsessions of nationalists, the neoliberal development discourse and the colonial mind set of civil servants⁷³. This approach rendered more apparent the role and inspiration of various land reform policies in shaping rural identities and production systems. Instead of the plantation as a vice ridden moral object this argument identified the state as the means by which development discourse came to act upon rural populations. What Crichlow retained though was a firm belief that land was the nexus of a confrontation between the state and the folk in both colonial and post colonial contexts.

The decades of theorising about society, land and identity in the Caribbean had created a hegemonic grammar of interpretation. A generation of scholars devised a language of description that was both highly idiosyncratic but also logically programmatic, "family land is not a cultural survival from Africa or Europe, but represents culture-building by Caribbean peasants in response and resistance to the plantation system and other land monopoly such as by mining and tourism. Family land also reflects the positive values of peasantries"⁷⁴. The vices and virtues of the Caribbean peasant had been purposefully reinvented, from the late 19th Century complaints of planters and colonial civil servants, to serve a new logic rooted in discussions of land and development. This system of thought, despite its numerous permutations, was always firmly rooted in a dialectical analysis of labour and capital from slavery and emancipation to the present.

gang" (Besson 2002:182). It is difficult to say what inspired Besson to overlook this detail's significance regarding the origins of peasant landholdings in favour of an obstinate belief in Afro-Creole culture building. It is all the stranger for not necessarily being at odds with the thrust of Besson's argument, it is safe perhaps to presume that Besson simply found the idea of decades of post emancipation resistance through land ownership to be romantically satisfying in some way.

⁷³ The articles and books referred to are, Besson, Jean. Family Land as a Model for Martha Brae's New History, in Charles V.Carnegie Ed. *Afro-Caribbean Villages in Historical Perspective*. Kingston 1987, Crichlow, M. An Alternative Approach to Family Land Tenure in the Anglophone Caribbean: The Case of St. Lucia. *New West Indian Guide* Vol.68 No.1 1994:77-94, Besson, Jean. Consensus in the family land controversy: rejoinder to Michaeline A. Crichlow in *New West Indian Guide* Vol. 69 No. 3/4 1995, Crichlow, M. Reply to Jean Besson in *New West Indian Guide* Vol. 69 No: 3/4, 1995. The book by Michaeline Crichlow is *Negotiating Caribbean Freedom: Peasants and the State in Development* Lexington New York 2005

⁷⁴ Besson, Jean. Consensus in the family land controversy: rejoinder to Michaeline A. Crichlow in *New West Indian Guide* Vol. 69 No. 3/4 1995:300-301

Sidney Mintz has repeatedly suggested that, with the solitary exception of Martha Beckwith, anthropologists before Herskovits had shunned the Caribbean in favour of more dangerous and exotic locales. Believing that all peoples had by definition to have culture and that all cultures had to be recognized as such had initiated a particular chain of events. When Mintz wrote twenty years after Herskovits's death, "The reluctance of North American anthropologists to study Caribbean peasants was compounded by several factors. First of all the Caribbean was simply not considered properly anthropological, for its peoples were merely poor, instead of being primitive"⁷⁵, he might have added that anthropologists and historians had worked hard to reverse the situation⁷⁶. Those whom the Royal Commissioners of the 1890s and 1930s had seen living in poverty had seen their condition transformed into culture. This was not the direct intention of those describing Caribbean societies. However, it was a logical outcome of the various intentions that informed their belief in the virtues of a concept of culture, and the broader grammar through which the significance of culture was communicated. The caution expressed in the writings of Madeleine Kerr amply demonstrates the tensions that arose between the particular place of culture in the grammar of Caribbean description and the intentions that informed development policies.

The Snake in the Garden: Postcolonial Morality and the Critique of Reason in Relation to Nature

If cultural relativism wrought havoc with the theoretical pursuit of Caribbean identities it was as nothing beside what happened to the social sciences and humanities as a whole. The extreme positivist consensus of the post war world was to be totally shattered. The crisis of reason and the crisis of universalism may have been an affront to the right but it was to be a death knell for the left. Being progressive had after all been reliant on a belief in measurable progress. In place of the older rational certainties, and the unease and debate that had accompanied them, would be a wholesale rejection of the foundations of knowledge. New

⁷⁵ Mintz, Sidney. Reflections on Caribbean Peasantries in *New West Indian Guide* Vol. 57 No. 1/2 1983:3

⁷⁶ This is not to say that Mintz did not appreciate the ambiguity of the relationship between whether someone is poor or primitive (Mintz 1986:xxi-xxii). Mintz followed from Herskovits though in assuming that all people are inescapably cultural and culture is a concept that enables people to see one another as all being innately human despite wide variations in belief and behaviour. It is possible to see a tension between this latter view and some of the jarring irony he used to describe in retrospect his experience of Puerto Rican sugar production. Mintz's bemused curiosity in marvelling at the ways that humans have interacted with sucrose sits uneasily with his condemnation of what much of that interaction consisted of. This is the precisely the sort of difficulty that makes cultural relativism so innately problematic. Mintz, Sidney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* Penguin London 1986

systems of thought brought critical scrutiny to bear on the assumptions of universal reason and at the extreme sought to drive the snake from the garden.

Several bodies of thought constitute this emergent moral system and each has a slightly differing language of its own. The first major shock to positivist certainties was the emergence in the late 1960s of dependency theory, followed by neo Marxism and World Systems theory⁷⁷. In a series of classic works differing perspectives asserted that the world was not composed of technocratic certainties, at least not the ones in vogue; instead the world was a system of core and periphery, constituted through the process of imperialism and continued by neo-colonialism. At the same time psychological dualisms between the colonised and the coloniser were put forward so as to reinforce the notion of oppositional cultural forms⁷⁸. Finally language itself became an all encompassing shackle of the mind and the only solution was to entomb as many words as possible within inverted commas to prove how insincerely an author believed what they wrote⁷⁹. As the 1980s dawned on academic thought it found universalism, positivism and reason in retreat. It had become deeply unfashionable to claim to know anything at all and for some it appeared as if the sky was falling in.

Clifford Geertz was sanguine and more than a little triumphal in his veiled defence of relativism, "The objection to anti-relativism is not that it rejects an it's-all-how-you-look-at-it

⁷⁷ Frank, A.G. The Development of Underdevelopment in *Monthly Review* Vol. 18 No. 4 1966, Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Modern World System* Academic press Inc. London 1974, Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Under Developed Africa* Bogle-L'Ouverture London 1972 are all indicative of the trend described if stemming from differing schools of thought.

⁷⁸ Fanon. Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth* Penguin 1967 (original French 1961) is the most notable example but there are imitators. For the Caribbean apart from Fanon the most notable is Wilson, Peter J. *Crab Antics* Waveland Illinois 1973 and in a more literary vein is Glissant, Edouard. *Le Discours Antillais* Seuil Paris 1981. Wilson follows from Fanon in locating the legacies of colonialism in a gendered dichotomy that he terms respect vs. reputation. This model has been stunningly influential in Caribbean studies despite being remarkably easy to logically invert. For this in action see Miller, Daniel. *Modernity an Ethnographic Approach: Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad* Berg London 1994:263 Not to be outdone Miller simply locates his own abstract dualism which he terms transience and transcendence, missing the point as to why Wilson so successfully tapped into the grammar of West Indian scholarship through his use of slavery and colonialism. In consequence Miller's work has not even made the library shelves at UWI St Augustine let alone a reading list.

⁷⁹ Derrida, J. *Of Grammatology* Johns Hopkins Baltimore 1976. Derrida's arguments looked upon language as a prison that could not be directly escaped but could be deconstructed to reveal the components of a relativistic Western Reason. This is most apparent in his deconstruction of Rousseau's opposition of nature and culture. Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Tavistock London 1972. Whilst Foucault refused to be bracketed a postmodernist this largely seems to have stemmed from an aversion to being branded fashionable. Foucault's brand of structuralism (later shifting to the more nebulous notion of Governmentality) and Derrida's deconstruction are explorations of a similar theme from different perspectives with Derrida the more extreme of the two. In a different vein, but no less influential was Said, Edward. *Orientalism – Western conceptions of the Orient* Routledge London 1978

approach to knowledge or a when-in-Rome approach to morality, but that it imagines that they can only be defeated by placing morality beyond culture and knowledge beyond both. This, speaking of things which must needs be so, is no longer possible”⁸⁰. Ernest Gellner, who had something of a grudge against Geertz, had dealt with linguistic forms of philosophy before and had little time for them⁸¹. With a dash of snobbery and more than a little of the truth Gellner dissected Geertz’s position as stemming from a peculiar self absorption in Middle America, “It is of course perfectly in order for Geertz to make it his central task to educate and correct what he sees as the provincialism of his compatriots”⁸². He went on to add that he agreed with Geertz’s definition of relativism but that it was nothing more or less than a logically self contained system that denied the possibility of knowledge without culture. He took serious issue though with the view that it was possible to have morality beyond culture, pointing out that both were components of each other, when he was, “absolutely certain that we do indeed possess knowledge beyond both culture and morality”⁸³. Gellner was careful to note that he rejected relativism not because it was repulsive in a pejorative sense but because it was a logic whose underlying reason removed all possibility of aspiring to knowledge independent of pejorative thought. That it was potentially true made it all the more worrying⁸⁴.

One of the consequences of the debates surrounding relativism was that not just morality but also nature and the physical world could be situated as socially constructed and culturally dependant. Gellner’s decision to situate cultural relativism within the history and performance of American liberal morals is vital for understanding a particular tangent in environmental

⁸⁰ Geertz, Clifford. Anti Anti-Relativism in *American Anthropologist* Vol. 86 No. 2 1984:276

⁸¹ Gellner, E. *Words and Things*, Victor Gollancz London 1959 This was Gellner’s first book and a convincing attack on Wittgenstein’s disciples. Gellner’s attack on postmodernism lacked the impact of his attack on more traditional linguistic philosophy. This was possibly because the argument then was a question of logic and it was Gellner who was the one using the context of beliefs (the social milieu of the University of Oxford) to snipe at his rivals. Postmodernist writings present an extreme form of relativism that permits insinuation but denies the kind of logically determined certainties Gellner advocated. Gellner’s failure to make an explicit distinction between reason and the belief in forms of reason over time (probably derived from his objection to the study of the meaning of words on the grounds that by itself this constituted academic navel gazing) left his argument exposed. This was because it shared some of the same assumptions about what constitutes reason as the Foucauldian critique of reason. Gellner did after all style himself as, “an enlightenment fundamentalist”. Gellner’s dislike of Geertz was in part due to Geertz being a better field anthropologist who had refuted some of Gellner’s work on north African Islamic Saint cults.

⁸² Gellner, E. *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* Routledge London 1992:53

⁸³ Ibid p54

⁸⁴ The response to Gellner from another of the writers he targeted was swift and vicious. Speaking of Gellner’s critique of Postmodernism it was argued that, “Gellner had quite literally fabricated an imaginary adversary”, as if it were possible to fabricate something in a non literal sense Rabinow, Paul. Review of Postmodernism, Reason and Religion in *Man* Vol. 29 No. 4 1994:997

history. In this context the writing of environmental history can be made to situate the agency of virtuously conceived cultural concepts, such as women or indigenous populations, alongside the agency of plants, animals and physical phenomena. When calls for new ethical forms based on a recognition of the agency of nature are made they originate as a permutation of a particular moral grammar⁸⁵.

The writing of environmental history has provided a fertile field for postmodernism to the extent that even those who ostensibly reject it as a system of thought deploy its moral grammar and language in their written performance. Central to this have been two entwined processes, the rejection of anything deemed colonial and a co-comittant reinterpretation of anything deemed to be colonial in character. This follows from Said's deconstructionist derived assertion against the sovereignty of the author, that, "texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe... a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it"⁸⁶. This line of reasoning at face value is a simple denial of individual agency, a purposive rejection of the individual as a cognisant being, instead true power lies within a deified conception of things which order rather than of people who order things for specific reasons. In context it is a moral system that seeks to specifically imbalance established relations of power between colonised and coloniser. This system is moral as opposed to rational because it locates its rationale not in an effort to create a self conscious understanding but in a program to eradicate a preceding understanding of self consciousness. This form of postcolonial morality has perhaps been best stated in another context as 'putting the first last'⁸⁷. For metaphoric purposes the natural world has been a singularly useful device for postmodernist writings as well as those of other perspectives.

Environmental history amongst the postmodernists has developed a whole selection of words that require inverted commas. Alongside the more usual 'western' and 'civilisation' have emerged 'improvement' and 'tropicality'. It is not just that the authors mean something other

⁸⁵ This is not necessarily the grammar of American liberalism. It can be any relativistic conceptual framework into which its believers try to incorporate nature or the environment as a desired virtues. For an example of this relationship between ethics and the agency of nature being enacted in American liberal writing, see, Merchant, C. *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*. Routledge London 2004

⁸⁶ Said, Edward. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* Penguin London 1991:94 (original 1978)

⁸⁷ Chambers, Robert. *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last* ITDG Publishing London 1997 Chambers espouses a very different system of morality to the one described here whose origins are sketched tentatively in Henkel, H and Stirrat, R. Participation as spiritual duty; empowerment as secular subjection in Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. *Participation the New Tyranny* Zed London 2001

than what they write its that their belief in the omnipotence of texts means they do not have to explain what they might actually mean. For David Arnold the western idea of nature has to be truly felt, the doctrines of postmodernity must be works of heartfelt belief, “a number of recent authors have adopted the idea of the ‘picturesque’ as a key to understanding Western representations of India in this period, the term (though certainly frequently used) often had a very trite meaning, suggesting something that was pretty rather than profound, appealing to the eye rather than troubling the soul”⁸⁸. What Arnold sets out to accomplish is a world where, “the possibility (with respect to India) that ‘the tropics’ were invented quite as much as they were encountered”⁸⁹, can exist. Arnold is not arguing that India or the tropical world are incorporeal, rather that people do not encounter them as individuals or interact with them as individuals. In a work that takes, “land, body and state as three fixed points from which to survey the complex and varied terrain of nineteenth and early 20th Century colonialism”⁹⁰, Arnold blurs definitions to advantage. India is at times said to be represented as tropical and at times said to have become tropical as likewise the west is said to be acquisitive and inquisitive⁹¹. If visitors to the Raj had developed a grammar of description from within their own cosmology then Arnold has developed one placing them within his and no more.

The study of South Asian environmental history is prolifically endowed with examples of how the natural world has been incorporated into the grammar of existing moral cosmologies. Subaltern Studies has seamlessly incorporated an environmental component into its broader critique of the colonial and postcolonial state. Here it is a more straightforward case of how academics have aimed to use nature as a metaphor for restoring agency to those deemed without it by extending, “the margins of historical analysis and bring centre stage a ‘cast of non-human’ characters normally ignored, at least until recently, in historical scholarship”⁹². There are other moral currents within this system of thought, “a sense of man as maker and unmaker of nature has only more recently dawned upon us, and with it an awesome sense of

⁸⁸ Arnold, David. *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze: India Landscape and Science 1800-1856* University of Washington Press Washington 2006:24 Arnold is unclear as to whether he means later writers or primary sources are trite. It would appear that he suggests it of the latter directly but of the former by implication.

⁸⁹ Ibid p5

⁹⁰ Ibid p10

⁹¹ Ibid All of these actually happen on page 225

⁹² Arnold, David. And Guha, Ramachandra. Eds. Introduction to *Nature Culture and Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia* Oxford University Press Oxford 1995:3 This is far from the only reference to non human actors and non human agency. This is both a question of how cosmological scale influences morality as well as an illustration of how that morality is performed by academics.

our own capacity for mischief and mayhem”⁹³. This system of morality exists in opposition to, “the gods of Britain’s neo-colonialist scholarship and the manes of Indian bourgeois-nationalist scholarship”⁹⁴. What is illustrated by these quotations is that a system of purposively anti rational logic emerged in the postcolonial world that stemmed not just from a disagreement with an earlier logic of description, but a pejorative moral rejection of reason as a methodology. It was no longer possible to compare the witch doctor and the inquisitor as one traveller in the 18th Century Caribbean had done, without first filtering their beliefs through a moral cosmology that prized a particular conception of culture above all else.⁹⁵

There is another arguably more dominant strain of thought in environmental history that rejects postmodernism’s logic but retains its language. It is from the works of these writers that environmental history originally emerged and by whence the networks of botanists, travellers and doctors came to the attention of postmodernist writers in the first place. This body of works seeks to link knowledge of the physical world with the intellectual lineage of environmental consciousness. Its principle weakness as a body of work is a view sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit that environmental historians are the intellectual successors of those whom they study. That is that they tend to study those individuals and institutions that they deem to possess environmental consciousness and appropriate them for a genealogy which places them, Brahmin like, as its heirs and interlocutors⁹⁶.

The origins of Environmental History are conventionally asserted to lie in the ecological awareness of the 1970s⁹⁷. There are then the big histories of man and nature which split

⁹³ Ibid p3

⁹⁴ Guha, Ranajit Ed. *A subaltern studies reader 1986-1995* South Asia Books Minnesota 1997:xiv

⁹⁵ These incidents form the basis of discussions in chapters 2 and 10 of Lavaysse, Dauxion J. *A Statistical, Commercial and Political Description of Venezuela, Trinidad, Margarita and Tobago* London 1820 Lavaysse basically did what Herskovits would do a century and a quarter later in comparing cultural behaviours as a means of illustrating universal humanity. Lavaysse differs in his belief that universal humanity can be seen separately to culture. His view suggests all human beings are as capable of being charlatans, sadists and thieves regardless of where they come from and are likewise equally capable of generosity, kindness and inventiveness. It’s a point he emphasises vigorously when describing his period as a captive of rebel slaves, contesting the writings of Edward Long, as well as in recounting his brief sojourn with the Black Caribs of St Vincent.

⁹⁶ Grove, R. and Damodaran, V. Imperialism, Intellectual Networks and Environmental Change: Origins and Evolution of Global Environmental History, 1676-2000 in *Economic and Political Weekly* October 14th 2006 is perfect case in point. Reading it would easily leave the reader thinking that only ecologically aware academics and intellectuals had ever advanced a particular understanding of the relationship between man and nature in print.

⁹⁷ Always dubious in my view as most major environmental NGOs in the UK including the largest (BTCV founded in the late 1950s by a retired army officer) predate this by a decade or more. Large scale membership appeared in the 1980s when these NGOs took over the running of welfare schemes as contractors working with the unemployed. This was drummed home in induction seminars during my

between those that focus on the perception of nature and those that focus on the ecological shaping of human history⁹⁸. Following from these are more global explorations of the origins of environmentalism⁹⁹. These routinely criticise both postmodernists for obscurantism and populism as well as other writers for biological determinism and the incipient U.S. nationalism in earlier writings like Crosby or Worster¹⁰⁰. This accusation is somewhat puzzling given the ability of its authors to often deploy concepts like, 'Celtic Environmentalism', or 'European discourses of nature'¹⁰¹ better yet statements like, "Constructions of nature inevitably have a national or racial component"¹⁰². Giving identities to abstract concepts is a sign of a system of morality being preformed through the writing of history, similar to the way Marxists have accorded historical agency and attributes to classes (not to mention an inevitable telos of liberation), but the moral logic of environmental historians is as opaque as its performance is visible.

The problems of telling histories with an environmental slant can be tellingly identified in and of themselves, "A criticism sometimes levelled at environmental history is that its narratives

year as a Volunteer Officer with BTCV but has completely escaped academics. The activist and intellectual bias of academics emphasises a view that the 1970s saw the dawning of environmental consciousness rather than an ideological variant of environmental consciousness. Attending a conference in Cambridge I saw this aptly illustrated when a member of the public asked Bill Adams of the Geography Department what he thought of "ghastly" public participation projects that impinged on UK national parks and woodlands, specifically "Green Gyms". Adams was at a loss to respond and the academic audience reacted to this as an eccentric irrelevance rather than a sign of the relationship between the politics of welfare and the politics of environment in the UK (and a sign of what sort of member of the public attends a Cambridge academic conference).

⁹⁸ For Ecological interpretations of people see Crosby, Alfred W. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1986 and for perceptions of ecology and its affect on people see Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* Farrar Strauss and Gioux Inc. New York 1983.

⁹⁹ Grove, Richard H. *Green Imperialism* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1995 is probably the best known of these efforts.

¹⁰⁰ For an example of both lines of reasoning see Mackenzie, John M. *Empire and Ecological Apocalypse: The Historiography of the Imperial Environment* in Griffiths, T. and Robin, L. *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* Keele 1997 Attacks on one writer by another can be highly revealing. Caroline Ford targets not only the "grandiose" claims of Richard Drayton's *Nature's Government* but also terms it, "lavishly illustrated" see Ford, Caroline. *Nature's Fortunes: New Directions in the Writing of European Environmental History* in *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 79 2007:118 A similar vein Simon Schama and Jared Diamond are both decried for committing the cardinal sin of "populism" by Grove, Richard H. and Damodaran, Vinita in *Imperialism, Intellectual Networks and Environmental Change: Origins and Evolution of Global Environmental History, 1676-2000* *Economic and Political Weekly* October 14th 2006:4352 and Part 2 October 21st 2006:4502

¹⁰¹ An especially extreme example of this would be Grove, Richard H. *Scotland in South Africa: John Croumbie Brown and the Roots of Settler Environmentalism* in Griffiths, T. and Robin, L. *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* Keele 1997

¹⁰² Mackenzie, John M. *Empire and Ecological Apocalypse: The Historiography of the Imperial Environment* in Griffiths, T. and Robin, L. *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* Keele 1997:226

are relentlessly depressing accounts of environmental destruction: just one damn decline after another... I regard the criticism as misplaced. For one thing, military history, which includes ample accounts of carnage and bumbling, is often made interesting and even uplifting"¹⁰³. If this statement illustrates anything it shows that individual historians are always telling personal versions of the past that they feel obliged to portray in a particular manner. Environmental historians have not only done this, but have conveniently organised themselves into schools of thought, drawing distinctions between big history, neo-whiggism, cultural interpretation and apocalyptic narration plus various other oddments¹⁰⁴. Whatever labels are chosen or rejected there is a failure amongst environmental historians to see the politics of environmental history as any more than a trite fusion of the Weberian and the Foucauldian, institutions and the formation of knowledge being many environmental historian's stock in trade¹⁰⁵. The alternative is to retreat into sweeping histories of the physical world's impact on

¹⁰³ McNeill, J.R. Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History in *History and Theory*, Theme Issue Vol. 42 2003. This is not just an observation about the way historians study history. The critique of historical laws put forward by Karl Popper was dedicated, "In memory of the countless men, women and children of all creeds or nations or races who fell victims to the fascist and communist belief in Inexorable Laws of Historical Destiny", Popper's critique of historical materialism made no allowance for its own ideological baggage, as many later critiques of various forms of positivism derived from linguistic perspectives made clear. Popper, Karl. *The Poverty of Historicism* Routledge and Kegan Paul London 1957. This all becomes a lot more confusing when historians and those they write about have substantially different moral reasons for condemning or advocating the same moral concept. In the case of Jamaica one recent work went to great lengths to condemn what it styled and ambiguously defined as 'Victorian Morality'. In local education this concept then stood in opposition to an afro-creole culture of resistance. There is a certain irony to the assertion of these authors that, "For those who preferred to think in stereotypical terms, there was always experiential evidence to support their views", and their belief in Victorian Morality as a concept proves it admirably. This becomes more complex when a reader then encounters a colonial education official in Guyana claiming that schools have a, "general atmosphere of late Victorianism". The two are clearly talking about very different problems of what might or might not be desirable but in the same words. The aforementioned book and accompanying quote is from, Moore, Brian L. and Johnson, Michele A. *Neither Led nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica 1865-1920* UWIpress Kingston 2004:149 and the latter is a quote from Major Bain Gray's *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Education of the Colony* 1925 cited (this time to show progressive sentiments within the context of an inevitable dialectic between labour and capital and expose them as originating with ex military personnel who still villainously used the ranks of the authoritarian command structures they were used to) in Bolland, Nigel, O *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean* Ian Randle Kingston 2001:132

¹⁰⁴ Mackenzie, John M. Empire and Ecological Apocalypse: The Historiography of the Imperial Environment in Griffiths, T. and Robin, L. *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* Keele 1997 or more recently and less explicitly Sivaramakrishnan, K. Science, Environment and Empire History: Comparative Perspectives from Forests in Colonial India in *Environment and History* Vol. 14 No. 1 2008

¹⁰⁵ Sivaramakrishnan, K. Science, Environment and Empire History: Comparative Perspectives from Forests in Colonial India *Environment and History* Vol. 14 No. 1 2008

humanity that are all the more intensely ideological for not stating explicitly what their ideology is¹⁰⁶.

The most troubling aspect of environmental history remains its subtle and inexplicit political stances. The treatment of early 20th Century ecologist Arthur Tansley by historians is compelling in this regard. If Peder Anker's *Imperial Ecology*¹⁰⁷ had set Tansley firmly in the ideological milieu of the early 20th Century then others could not resist removing the subtleties of the argument. Rather than advancing a more nuanced understanding of how those on the British political left viewed nature, employing the long forgotten early 20th Century debates around land nationalisation, race and capitalism, Tansley is simply seen writing, "a book on organized nature conservation that makes an eloquent case for designing 'home regions' for the deracinated citizen of the post-war era"¹⁰⁸. He is just another leftist British nationalist whose personal cosmology is subsequently obliterated by a Judith Butler derived conception of power¹⁰⁹. In driving the snake of reason from the garden certain

¹⁰⁶ This can be manifestly obvious as in works like Jared Diamond's *Collapse* (2004) or far more subtle like the attitudes to state intervention in Richardson, Bonham C. Detrimental Determinists: Applied Environmentalism as Bureaucratic Self-Interest in the Fin-de-Siècle British Caribbean in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 86 No. 2 1996 Curiously Richardson is one of the few to have identified Sydney Haldane Olivier as a leading Fabian and socialist. Rather than seeing this as indicative of the Norman Commission's historical context Richardson simply deems individuals like Olivier and Charles Spencer Salmon (A vocal opponent of James Anthony Froude and Colonial Office mandarin) as exceptional people in a bad system. Richardson has written extensively on the Norman Commission, most recently, The Importance of the 1897 British Royal Commission in Besson, Jean. and Momsen, Janet. Eds. *Caribbean Land and Development Revisited* Palgrave Macmillan London 2007

¹⁰⁷ Anker, Peder. *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire 1895-1945* Harvard University Press Massachusetts 2001 Anker does not make all the ideological connections and underplays them to a certain extent although this appears to stem from the need to focus on the global positioning of Smuts and South Africa rather than a purposeful neglect.

¹⁰⁸ Sivaramakrishnan, K. Science, Environment and Empire History: Comparative Perspectives from Forests in Colonial India *Environment and History* Vol. 14 No. 1 2008:54 What is being referred to is Tansley's contribution to the British national parks debate in Tansley, Arthur. *Our Heritage of Wild Nature: A Plea for Organised Nature Conservation* Cambridge 1945. The ideological justification for Britain's national parks has very different intellectual lineage, rarely explored in global terms, from those elsewhere. Shockingly one recent attempt at an Environmental History of Britain completely ignores Tansley, allotments and land reform campaigns, instead preferring to emulate accounts of South Asia which focus solely on scientists and bureaucracy rather than the rationale of and for scientists and bureaucracy. I must add I do not regard Foucauldian inspired accounts of power as attempts to explore the logic of others but to impose a deified system of logic of their own making. The UK study is, Sheail, John. *An Environmental History of Twentieth Century Britain* Palgrave Macmillan London 2002

¹⁰⁹ Sivaramakrishnan, K. Science, Environment and Empire History: Comparative Perspectives from Forests in Colonial India *Environment and History* Vol. 14 No. 1 2008:58 contains the statement, "following Judith Butler [there] is [a] need to pay heed to temporal sequences in the relation between subjects and power, or what others may call patterns and processes, historical trajectories, cumulative impacts and the creative exercise of limited freedoms to become other than what you were created to be". It is my view that this is precisely what late nineteenth and early 20th Century socialists in the UK set out to achieve (not without some major flaws), but some were fortunate in having a concept of human agency less pessimistic than this.

environmental historians have frequently lost sight of the recognition of individual consciousness it made possible. In so doing they have created an academic politics of the natural world that seems far from self aware, let alone sure of what it is arguing for and less than eager to say why.

Development is the Development of What? Discuss

The study of development in both the Caribbean and the wider world went through a series of major changes in the final third of the 20th Century. Caribbean writers had played a major part in theorising development in the decades before and after WWII. Their popularity outside the region would be an early casualty of changing approaches in development studies. The failure of growth to alleviate poverty in the first UN development decade, the economic crises of the 1970s, the draconian measures of the World Bank and the IMF to ostensibly restore macroeconomic stability in the 1980s, these and the conferences and organisations they gave prominence to would become the focus of study. Whilst fieldwork and micro level case studies remained core aspects of development research they came to engage with larger debates more frequently than their predecessors¹¹⁰. A range of new approaches to development emerged through greater emphasis on relations of power, often couched in the language if not spirit of post modernity. The 1990s was to become the decade of post development thought and a search for focus as well as a pursuit of critique. In contrast the Caribbean was spared much of the debate which accompanied this writing. Caribbean countries certainly did not escape the imposition of structural adjustment packages or the dire consequences. The external scholarly neglect of the region at this time is perhaps best explained by Mintz's oft repeated assertions about why anthropologists had bypassed the Caribbean in earlier decades. With the opening years of the 21st Century a renewed engagement, if not exactly a surge of interest, began to take place. This reengagement and the discussions it produced often inadvertently revealed the moral cosmology of development researchers. More than a decade after the rest of academia had begun to tangle with various new theoretical perspectives the Caribbean was to receive the post modern treatment. The academics of the University of the West Indies seem, in private at least, highly sceptical of this not so new line of analysis for a

¹¹⁰ Amidst considerable optimism and growing hubris researchers in development studies were completely blindsided by the rise of neoliberalism. For an account of this process see, Hariss, John. Great promise, hubris and recovery: A participant's history of development studies in Kothari, Uma Ed. *A Radical History of Development Studies: Individuals, Institutions and Ideologies* Zed Books London 2005

variety of reasons¹¹¹. What follows is both a consideration of development studies and a discussion of how external scholars have come to view the Caribbean as a region.

Amongst the most often cited critiques of development is the work of James Ferguson¹¹². Ferguson's study of development policy in Lesotho pioneered the use of a self consciously Foucauldian approach to what it styled as development discourse. This study came to influence a range of comprehensive and not so comprehensive critiques of development policy, language and thought. Its impact extended beyond anthropology and development studies and influenced the work of historians dissecting the legacy of Joseph Chamberlain's colonial improvement policies¹¹³. The idea of development as a self sustaining bureaucratic system of knowledge and classification, contained and constrained by its own language, the apolitical agent of global power relations, would be styled post-development. At the core of this argument it became, "necessary to demote intentionality"¹¹⁴. In order for discourse to become a valid mode of explaining behaviour by individuals, individuals had to cease to exist. Human inconvenience had to be sacrificed to bureaucratic agency and the machine metaphor truly sought to depoliticise the world it described. The problems of development became

¹¹¹ In a recent conversation I had it was argued to the effect that these authors were often trained at or based at US institutions and had no concept of public obligation. "How do you explain that simply to the public?" was the question asked of one recent work. My reply was to the effect that the idea was that you couldn't. The lack of postmodern impact on the research conducted by Caribbean historians can be seen in the recent edited volume, Cateau, Heather and Pemberton Rita Eds. *Beyond Tradition: Reinterpreting the Caribbean Historical Experience* Ian Randle Kingston 2006. The emphasis in most of this collection is on expanding areas of research neglected by dominant theoretical frameworks rather than substituting new ones, small island identities, sea communications, non plantation economic activities, Botanic Gardens and the finer detail of black consciousness campaigners and their ideologies to name a few topics. The only avowedly post modern piece focuses on Indian indentured labour and draws heavily on the work of David Arnold. A need for writings expressly about Indian bodies having apparently become entwined with the study of writings about Indian bodies. See, Parmasad Kenneth Vidia, *Power and the Body: Medicinal Practices Onboard the 'Coolie' Ship* in Cateau and Pemberton Eds. 2006. Where postmodernism has been an explicit focus it has tended to incorporate many nationalist certainties and descriptive terms within its moral framework, see, De Barros, Juanita. *Order and Place in a Colonial City: Patterns of Struggle and Resistance in Georgetown, British Guiana, 1889-1924* McGill-Queens University Press Montreal and Kingston 2002

¹¹² Ferguson, James. *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis 1994

¹¹³ Most recently, Hodge, Joseph Morgan *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* Ohio University Press Athens 2007

¹¹⁴ Note the ever present need for words to acquire extra syllables, Ferguson does not appear to make the pertinent distinction between the meanings of the words intention and intentionality. Ferguson, James. *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* University of Minnesota Minneapolis 1994:175

problems of disempowerment and the solution became empowerment. In Ferguson's argument there is no ideology, simply something vague referred to as "left populism"¹¹⁵.

Ferguson's approach to development hinges on a particular concept of bureaucracy that fails to ring true when applied to historical case studies of development policy. The paranoia about a stylised concept of government sees not the loose knit and often antagonistic relations between key protagonists but instead a cohesive unit¹¹⁶. What is accomplished is a view in which an obsession with expert knowledge and institutions loses its entire ideological context. The oft cited disaster of the Tanganyikan ground nut scheme can be seen as the beginning of the end for development projects under the aegis of the British Empire. If this project and similar disasters of post war Colonial Development are viewed through a discursive lens it becomes possible to erroneously attribute the end of the British Empire to the role of the Fabian Society¹¹⁷. To arrive at such a conclusion requires a faith in bureaucratic power that exceeds even that of post war Fabians. A concept of bureaucratic power and knowledge is quite capable of masking the personal intentions that inspire bureaucrats and experts¹¹⁸. The popularity of this line of reasoning amongst writers from the United States sometimes appears to combine local political paranoia about institutions, fashionable academic rhetoric and a public expiation of guilt for the American Century¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁵ Ibid p284 and throughout the book's epilogue.

¹¹⁶ For example the treatment of Fabianism as a cohesive discourse in Hodge, Joseph Morgan *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* Ohio University Press Athens 2007:236

¹¹⁷ For this claim see Ibid p19

¹¹⁸ The great post war development drive certainly owed a lot to the influence of Fabian thought on the Attlee government's policies. Yet the Labour Party was full of internal schisms and rifts in regard to Colonial Policy and many other issues over which loomed the impending shadow of the Cold War. Many on the left of the left were deeply worried that technocratic projects were simply the outcome of a policy straight jacket that was being adopted to strengthen the trans Atlantic alliance with the U.S.A. Fabian Colonial Bureau luminaries like Rita Hinden were appalled that some development projects focused on assumptions about soil erosion and prescriptive solutions rather than questions of land ownership and economy that had created particular patterns of settlement and labour migration. Despite these objections the Labour leadership refused to openly support land reform policies in colonies or, over a decade later, in newly independent states. These concerns seem very familiar to the sort of arguments put forward in critical post development accounts yet are easily forgotten if assumptions are made about the history and operation of thought. For the story of how the Labour Party ditched its ideological basis for development intervention in favour of a more general commitment to development aid as a moral good see, Keleman, P. The British Labor [sic] Party and the Economics of Decolonisation: The Debate Over Kenya *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* Vol.8 No.3 2008

¹¹⁹ For example "While there is no denying the significance of Cold War geopolitics and American strategic interests in elevating the idea of development to the status of a hegemonic, global doctrine after 1945, it is important to realize the continuities that exist with these earlier doctrines and debates" (Hodge 2007:20). Or alternatively Ferguson's faintly pompous description of the forlorn anthropologist speaking out after his hypothetical research village is obliterated by the Contras (Ferguson 1994:286).

Theories classed as post development and their authors have never entirely convinced their critics. Not just strident neoliberals, but often kindred thinkers using the same Foucauldian system of language have disagreed with this line of reasoning. This is especially true when carried to extremes. Arturo Escobar's conception of development discourse locates the origins of development in the post-war world of Bretton Woods institutions¹²⁰. For Escobar development discourse continues the more general deified conception of power common to post modernity, "To understand development as a discourse, one must look not at the elements themselves but at the system of relations established among them. It is this system that allows the systematic creation of objects, concepts and strategies; it determines what can be thought and said"¹²¹. This quasi spiritual articulation of development practice and research built on the moral grammar of both earlier post modern writers as well as elements of dependency theory¹²². Other writers in the post development canon likewise altered their presentation whilst retaining various underlying arguments rephrased and reorganised in accordance with the emergent morality¹²³.

Ironically the academics of the United States had had their own very clear debate about what to do to the tropical world after British rule ended. This debate developed in parallel with that in Britain and its colonies, to the consternation of the Colonial Office mandarins and perturbation of local politicians amongst others. For a flavour of this debate in regard to the Caribbean and Latin America see Jones, Lloyd Chester, Norton Henry Kittredge, Moon, Thomas Parker. *American Policies Abroad: The United States and the Caribbean* Chicago 1929. This equalising of a moral responsibility for the carnage unleashed by capitalists, imperialists and global institutions remains a key theme of Ferguson's work. If the epilogue of *The Anti Politics Machine* was vague about the uses of the question "What is to be done?" (Ferguson 1994:279) then it was a view that was later expanded. "If African traditions of moral discourse are capable of posing profoundly moral questions of human agency and causation, as I have suggested, Western traditions may lead us to the equally profound question of historical responsibility... itself also embedded in a local cultural tradition: My God, what have we done?" From Ferguson, James. *Global Shadows: Africa in a Neoliberal World Order*. Duke University Press Durham and London 2006:88. At least the debates of the 18th and 19th Centuries gave the authors of Royal Commissions some clue as to what should be done about what had been done, even if they were to be subjected to considerable contemporary and retrospective criticism (See Bolland, Nigel O. *The Politics of labour in the British Caribbean* Ian Randle 2001:126-128).

¹²⁰ Escobar, Arturo. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World Through Development in Rahnema, M and Bawtree, V. *The Post Development Reader* Zed London 1997:86. This being a chapter from Escobar, A. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* Princeton 1995

¹²¹ Ibid p87

¹²² For a critique of Escobar on precisely these lines see, Lehmann, D. An Opportunity Lost: Escobar's Deconstruction of Development in *Journal of Development Studies* Vol.33 No.4 1997

¹²³ This is obviously true of the eco-feminist turn. Although there have been damning and comprehensive critiques of this and other branches of post development they have often retained the use of broadly Foucauldian language for expressing personal critical sentiment. For an example of this and a thorough review of the critique of ecofeminism see, Leach, M. Earth Mother Myths and Other Ecofeminist Fables: How a Strategic Notion Rose and Fell. *Development and Change* Vol.38 No.1 2007 The same author's critiques of scientific practices of knowledge in relation to environmental change in Guinea draw heavily on decidedly rational approaches, like asking people if there were trees to start with or comparing aerial images with later Landsat images. It is clear from this work that systems of

What has made the language of post modernity an attractive prospect to scholars of development? The answer lies in the way that power is written into theoretical deconstructions of development or any other chosen object. With power free from individual agency authors become free to make power do whatever they want. Rather than arguing if something is desirable or undesirable, or explaining in detail why that should be the case, it is only required that the function of power be described through the performance of morality. This performance of morals requires many syllables, numerous inverted commas and respectful quotations of Foucault, Butler and Bourdieu. It is a performance acutely observable in relation to discussions of participation in development, both as a general concept and as a specific methodology¹²⁴.

Participatory development planning, popularised in the 1980s and 1990s, was a quintessential harbinger of empowerment. To some proponents participation was the dawn of a new development paradigm¹²⁵. At the core of the belief system of participatory advocates was an often confused theory of agency¹²⁶. This relied on both the individual and the institution as actors whose specific role was contingent upon the location of specific behaviours in the observer's moral cosmology. The participatory critique of preceding methods, the mantra of top down, centre out, expert led, is a clear indication of how concepts are organised within this cosmology. The moral grammar of participation is very much akin to what critics have dubbed, "spiritual duty"¹²⁷. The problem with critiques of participation lies in their own ambiguities about agency and a stubborn clinging to an omnipresent if not always omnipotent concept of power.

A discussion of why participation was incorporated into planning policy in Barbados serves to illustrate this clearly. Instead of addressing why informants said particular things in particular

irrational beliefs, albeit wholly logical are something from which scientists and conservationists are not immune. They are wrong because of the flaws in the logic of their argument as much as being derived from an abstract conception of western enlightenment thought. The question of course is how the grammar of specific systems of belief, that constitutes the logic of belief as performed action, developed over time. For the Guinea forest case study see Fairhead, J. and Leach, M. *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest-Savanna Mosaic* Cambridge 1996

¹²⁴ For a recent valedictory account of Foucauldian methods in relation to Development Studies see, Rossi, B. Revisiting Foucauldian Approaches: Power Dynamics in Development Projects *Journal of Development Studies* Vol.40 No.6 2004. This article characterises development discourses as appropriate ways of thinking and speaking about policies and practises. This obviates the possibility that things deemed appropriate are also deemed desirable within a broader moral cosmology.

¹²⁵ Chambers, R. *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last* ITDG Publications London 1997

¹²⁶ Cleaver, Frances. Institutions, Agency and the Limitations of Participatory Approaches to Development in Cooke, B and Kothari, U. *Participation: The New Tyranny?* Zed London 2001

¹²⁷ Henkel, H. and Stirrat, R. Participation as Spiritual Duty; Empowerment as Secular Subjection in Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. *Participation: The New Tyranny?* Zed London 2001

ways at a particular juncture its author draws heavily on Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power. This argument purports to show that what is considered rational is nothing more than a complicit submission to specific symbols of legitimacy, in this case tourism and western democratic norms. In this case study Barbados becomes the recipient of, "western development... United States-style pluralist (liberal) democracy,"¹²⁸ and further incorporation into the consensus of capitalism. What makes this remark odd is that Barbados has the second or third oldest continuous tradition of legislative democracy in the world¹²⁹. If the statement that Barbados has imported a North American democratic model is not true it is still attempting to communicate something. The argument draws on Wittgenstein to show that consensus through agreed language determines the course of policy. In this scenario participatory consultations become criteria for gaining international recognition. Ultimately this recognition by international standards has less symbolic power over local policy language than tourism. Citing an official who argued that tourism should not be questioned as the industry was good for Barbados it is argued that, "It was 'agreed' that tourism should not be questioned, despite the fact that all interest groups should discuss the environmental effects of each others activities"¹³⁰. The views of the official and the debates which preceded them are obliterated in this manner. Instead of a complex dynamic interaction of human agency that generates and performs a language of what is good and bad there instead emerges a world where, "an individual's conscience is shaped by relations of power that were not of his or her own choosing"¹³¹. There is a desire in statements like these to argue that anything deemed bad is the product, not of an erroneous argument, however contextually specific, but of ethereal moral concepts with deity like attributes of agency. The perception of consensus is not rooted in the interaction of people but in the belief in particular regimes of power. The question of what is deemed good or bad lies at the heart of any consideration of what is or is not deemed development yet it can be easily overlooked. The grammar of morals, the relationship between beliefs, derives from a dynamic history of action and the language of describing actions and alternative actions. To understand the exercise of power you cannot merely assert the

¹²⁸ Pugh, Jonathan. A Consideration of some of the Sociological Mechanisms Shaping the Adoption of Participatory Planning in Barbados in Pugh, J. and Potter R. Eds *Participatory Planning in the Caribbean: Lessons from Practice* Ashgate London 2003:121

¹²⁹ Unlike other Caribbean colonies Barbados's colonists never submitted to direct Crown Colony rule. Both before and after emancipation elections occurred on a very limited franchise but then this is true (for different reasons) of the other two contenders, the UK Parliament and the Manx Tynwald.

¹³⁰ Pugh, Jonathan. A Consideration of some of the Sociological Mechanisms Shaping the Adoption of Participatory Planning in Barbados in Pugh, J. and Potter R. Eds *Participatory Planning in the Caribbean: Lessons from Practice* Ashgate London 2003:128

¹³¹ Ibid p133

existence of power and then use that existence to support a particular series of moral judgements.

It is something of a surprise that advocates of post development and post modernity have been slow in making their presence felt in accounts of the Caribbean's history and present state. Given some of the peculiarities of Caribbean history it is difficult to see the vast bureaucracy of the Indian civil service, the continent wide programmes of surveys in India and Africa which have given such weight to arguments about power and knowledge in the context of colonial rule. In the absence of such visible manifestations of ordering anti-politics machines, either heterogeneous or homogenous in character, it appears to have become necessary to invent them.

The means by which the Caribbean has been incorporated into post modern arguments has been not through analyses of bureaucracy but through analyses of consumption. The transatlantic commerce in slaves and cash crops provides the regime through which the history of the Caribbean becomes entwined with that of other locations and their inhabitants. Studying this process of consumption is hardly novel in itself but has provided a metaphor through which discourses surrounding the Caribbean can be identified¹³². The study of consumption becomes not so much an investigative study of history but a moral judgement on historical events, "The overall thrust of my work is to support the claim for reparations,"¹³³ being indicative. According to the leading proponent of this view, Mimi Sheller, the Caribbean becomes a discursive field constructed through the process of narration rather than of any particular agency. The agency of narrators becomes subsumed to the author's judgement about what they have written rather than an analysis of why it was written as it was. Comparatively well known travel writings make up the bulk of Sheller's citations presumably because these are more easily stripped of context¹³⁴. This choice of sources also

¹³² An earlier attempt to describe this integrated history of consumption can be found in Mintz, S. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* Penguin London 1986

¹³³ Sheller, Mimi. *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* Routledge London 2003:4

¹³⁴ This verges on the comical on occasions. For example Sheller introduces the writings of James Pope Hennessy (1916-1974) with the phrase, "When James Pope-Hennessy arrived for the first time in a Caribbean port in the early 1950s", (Sheller 2003:100). Pope Hennessy had actually served as ADC to the Governor of Trinidad in 1938-1939. Hennessy's book (which Sheller cites from) was actually his second about British Colonialism in the West Indies. His first, *West Indian Summer: A Retrospect* (Pope-Hennessy 1943) had been a fictionalised account of his own experiences that weaved together the travel narratives of 10 previous visitors in order to show the differing motives that had inspired what might be dubbed the 'tourist gaze'. The book from which Sheller cites is *The Baths of Absalom: A Footnote to Froude* (Pope-Hennessy 1954). Sheller clearly cannot have read the whole text as it contains repeated references to his colonial service in Trinidad and to the failures of the bureaucracy of which he was a part. Even more comical is Sheller's use of this work to suggest that travel writers failed to see a

assists a logical progression of the argument that consumption of the Caribbean has moved from sugar to resort tourism with little else of interest in between. Abolitionist campaigns are styled as ethical consumption movements suggestive of an affinity with contemporary trade campaigns yet stripped of their distinctive politics and internal debates¹³⁵. Tourism becomes a process of narration which focuses on writers seemingly selected for their bigotry which is ultimately left unexplained. The question of why is subsumed to the author's desire to show, "Western consumption of 'black' and 'brown' bodies"¹³⁶. The question of what Sheller and others seek to achieve by locating the Caribbean in opposition to the western and the white is itself a vexed one that brings the argument full circle to the uses of culture as a concept within systems of belief.

distinction between their idealised imaginary Caribbean and the world of its inhabitants. Pope-Hennessy is certainly not in this category, "Official life, I had found, gives you a frustrated sense of seeing everything through the bars of a cage – the iron gates of St Anne's, flanked by sentry boxes, had come to seem symbolic, as had the polished window-glass of the Government House limousine as this whisked one lightly through the crowded streets and nosed its swift way in and out of the fetid slums. You had the merest passing apprehension, the slightest of slight hints, of what real living in Port of Spain must be. It was like being blind or royal, or both" (Pope-Hennessy 1954:62). As for the tourist's first impressions from the boat Sheller would have done well to read a few pages further to the chapter on Castries, St Lucia, where the author describes the legendary West Indies, the smiling brightly coloured crowds on the dockside, "typical as West Indian people on the label of a rum bottle". Yet Pope-Hennessy quite unlike the tourist in Sheller's imagination precedes this with, "the West Indies can provide a practical lesson in the eternal contrast between appearance and reality. Everything in the West Indies looks much better seen from some way out at sea". As the vessel docks the caricatured, "scene came suddenly to life. Examined in detail it revealed itself composed of a human swarm of prostitutes, beggars, pimps, and scallywag children, with several lunatics and one or two lepers – the whole unutterably mournful paraphernalia of life in a British Caribbean Port" (Pope Hennessy 1954:19-20). Pope-Hennessy, the grandson of the reforming governor, John Pope-Hennessy, whose clash with the plantocracy of Barbados had nearly precipitated a revolution over the confederation question, can be criticised for many things but a belief in an idealised West Indies is not one of them. The whole purpose, if one believes in authorial intention, was to provide a footnote to Froude's critique of British Imperialism in the West Indies and comparison with what he saw as the progress of the French Empire. In so far as this was a picture of neglect, inhumanity and decay, Pope-Hennessy concurred with Froude along with a favourable view of Martinique and Francophone civilisation. In a typically vicious turn of ironic understatement Pope-Hennessy had earlier said of Froude's views of democracy and race, "A lifetime spent in poring over Tudor documents had not helped to make him a liberal" (Pope Hennessy 1943:68). On the subject of nature Pope-Hennessy's prose is filled with images of decay and verdure with one dominant metaphor being a Colonial Development Corporation funded road to nowhere, unfinished in the mountains of Dominica. Despite a promising career as a biographer and a brief stint at *The Spectator* Pope Hennessy lost patience with post war Britain and returned to the family's ancestral home in the Irish Republic and became a citizen, he drank himself into bankruptcy and died after a brawl outside a bar in Kensington whilst in London to research a biography of Noel Coward.

¹³⁵ Ibid p88-95 For an account of what early abolitionists argued about and why see Brown, Christopher Leslie. *Moral Capital: The Foundations of British Abolitionism* University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 2006

¹³⁶ Ibid p156

The image of a constructed Caribbean, an “essentially imaginary space”¹³⁷, is a component in post modernist cosmologies. It is after all logical that a belief in a subjective world should see the world serve only as a stage or text where the subjective is performed. The grammar of nihilistic beliefs and their arrangement in relation to a concept of the Caribbean is therefore informative as to their intention. The other core concepts in this system of belief, race, culture and modernity are organised as part of a system that constitutes their morality. This is acutely visible in discussions of land and nature as concepts. In the case of Montserrat it is argued that, “there has always been a very strong “culture of land” on Montserrat, as well as other Caribbean islands. Land is the navel string connection that people have with their past, with history, and general experience”,¹³⁸ the presence and absence of inverted commas suggests a conflation of the beliefs of those studied, both as beliefs and as reified objects. This process of reification purposively blurs the line between the imagined and actual in furtherance of a moral cosmology which itself dictates what is and is not there, “there is a difference between the Western notion of land in the Caribbean and the West Indian notion of land in the Caribbean”¹³⁹. Cultures and other less specific forms of collective measurement have here become tangible and legitimate categories of analysis, even if the intent differs some what to that in earlier efforts¹⁴⁰.

This distinction between the arrangements of beliefs held by postmodernists and those held by nationalists becomes visible in questions of contact¹⁴¹. A particularly striking example of this morality is the comparison of fieldwork diary entries to the diaries of slave owners and pro slavery commentators of the eighteenth and 19th Century. In making this comparison and revealing the disquieting similarities between accounts the contemporary author sets out to prove themselves more aware than the individual with whom they draw comparison. This display is performed by means of seeking to, “present colonialism and racism in ways that

¹³⁷ Courtman, Sandra. Introduction to Courtman, Sandra. Ed. *Beyond the Blood, the Beach and the Banana: New Perspectives in Caribbean Studies* Ian Randle Kingston 2004:xvi

¹³⁸ Skinner, Jonathan. From the Pre-Colonial to the Virtual: The Scope and Scape of Land, Landuse and Landloss on Montserrat in Besson, J. and Momsen, J. *Caribbean Land and Development Revisited* Palgrave Macmillan London 2007:229

¹³⁹ Ibid p229

¹⁴⁰ It is possible to find nationalists and post modernists in the same readers, united by common beliefs about the tangible wrongness of the Western. What individual writers often seem to intend though can vary. If Skinner cites Jean Besson’s work he does so not in an argument about the desirable creation of culture. Instead it is about a threatened culture, formed by narratives of landlessness over centuries, embodied in the meanings of a constructed landscape. He does not contest the idea of belief but sets up particular oppositions of belief, specifically against, “the colonial machine... with its ever monitoring, scrutinizing, auditing eye” (Skinner in Besson and Momsen Eds. 2007:230).

¹⁴¹ In the case of Jean Besson’s work this manifests as a very visible preference for a particular type of history.

condemn and undermine them both”¹⁴². What is deemed colonialism and racism has already been predetermined and it is the grammatical arrangement of these concepts that inspires the need to condemn them. This stands in marked contrast to a condemnation of the particular systems of belief that logically produce colonialism and racism. These a priori assumptions of what constitutes a legitimate language of description are highly informative, “I listened to local radio, watched local T.V. and travelled around like a tourist. I made some very close friends, and some of my encounters were uncomfortable ones that brought me face to face with the antagonism and injustice left by what white people have done and continue to do in Jamaica”¹⁴³. The categories of tourist and white are clearly indicators of what is undesirable in this particular context. In the case of some recent work in West Indian history this idea of a category of whiteness as a desirable system of organising research is little better than a reverse code noir¹⁴⁴

The need to perform an often vaguely defined sense of moral responsibility is at the core of post modern approaches to the Caribbean. In addressing the theory of creolisation Sheller argues that its use as a broader category of analysis empties it, “of its resonance as a project of subaltern resistance”¹⁴⁵. The point is correct but not in the sense that Sheller means, that creolisation is only a desirable concept in its original context, but that it is a concept designed to do particular things that advance a particular argument. If creolisation is used as a concept outside that context, it is used to mean something other than originally intended whilst potentially retaining some of its earlier associated beliefs¹⁴⁶. The intention in critiquing the appropriation of creolisation is to point to how, “my own work is implicated in the processes of

¹⁴² Petley, Christer. Flying Away and Grounds for Concern: Mobility, Location and Ethical Discomfort in researching Caribbean History from the UK in Courtman, Sandra. Ed. *Beyond the Blood, the Beach and the Banana: New Perspectives in Caribbean Studies* Ian Randle Kingston 2004:15

¹⁴³ Ibid p21 The preceding portion of this paragraph lists a range of people encountered and groups them by occupation save for Rastafarians who are accorded a category all of their own.

¹⁴⁴ To see this in action Lambert, David. *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity during the Age of Abolition* Cambridge 2005 Lambert even goes so far as to create a category of subaltern whiteness into which to group the Redlegs of Barbados. Lambert’s insistence on using whiteness and blackness as categories of analysis tends to preserve rather than scrutinise the use and organisation of these concepts in the Bajan politics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They become independent beliefs rather than beliefs that existed in conjunction with others. It is not that Lambert does not see identities as constructed but that he does not see an essential difficulty stemming from the implications of such a statement. Lambert’s belief in a constructed but analytically valid whiteness is a logical corollary of having a similar conception of blackness. If one is believed desirable then so must be the other.

¹⁴⁵ Sheller, Mimi. *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* Routledge London 2003:203

¹⁴⁶ This is true for example of concepts like ecology the origins and uses of which are described in Anker, Peder. *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire 1895-1945* Harvard 2001

consuming (and being consumed by) the Caribbean”¹⁴⁷. Treating the study of the Caribbean as simply the study of a text that contains independent discourses serves to negate the agency of those individuals being studied through archival and ethnographic lenses. This in turn emphasises the authorial intentions of particular scholars at the expense of their subjects and subverts the initial premise by showing that subjectivity as a phenomenon can be distinct from subjectivity as the basis for belief. In the case of the some recent writings on the Caribbean the emphasis has been on using particular readings of Caribbean history to firmly root the region in a system of beliefs about what should constitute an appropriately third world history and society that an earlier generation of nationalist writers would have balked at¹⁴⁸.

Believing is Seeing

The concept of culture in its historical and contemporary usage in descriptions of the Caribbean and beyond is intimately political. Likewise the study of nature, physical processes and metaphysical considerations of the physical, is a political programme. In the debates surrounding what constitutes development there is a similar concern with the politics both of what is studied and how it is studied. It is the arrangement of all these concepts and a good many more that constitute particular systems of belief. The precise nature of such arrangements, their grammar, can be explored through an analysis of the logic of individual action that proceeds from these arrangements. In this sense what is believed is what is seen, as well as what is seen being believed.

The trouble with how concepts fit into particular systems of belief is not exclusive to the study of the Caribbean. There is though, perhaps a case to be made that the history of the Caribbean region renders such questions about the origins and validity of particular concepts acutely necessary. For example there is little possibility of denying the role of human beings in the wholesale transformation of Caribbean landscapes, physical and metaphysical. The politics of this transformation are instead embedded into questions about land use and society. These

¹⁴⁷ Sheller, Mimi. *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* Routledge London 2003:203

¹⁴⁸ Indeed some accounts of popular participation and development projects in the Caribbean have come to offer veiled criticisms of those who are perceived as having turned away from appropriately traditional forms of community resulting in, “a degradation of local social capital as individuals leisure time has become privatised and places of residence are no longer a focus for community. Individuals turn first to state organisations or their local MP rather than to self help solutions. It is difficult to see how a population that has seen the state bring in economic development and a stable democracy can be weaned of its dependency”, in not so many words, ‘why can’t the natives pull their socks up like real poor people?’. The quotation derives from, Pelling, Mark. *Capacity building for Urban Poverty Reduction: The Pinelands Creative Workshop, Barbados* in Pugh, J. and Potter, R. Eds. *Participatory Planning in the Caribbean: Lessons from Practice* Ashgate London 2003:114-115

debates long precede late 20th and early 21st Century arguments about the construction of nature or the subjectivity of truth. Indeed they are as old as the trans Atlantic economic interactions that begin in 1492¹⁴⁹. These debates have produced a complex language of description both in the academic and broader public realms. It is the complex history of these debates that have produced ways of seeing the Caribbean rather than disembodied discourses.

The concept of culture in the study of the Caribbean as elsewhere has been intimately entwined with questions of authenticity and political legitimacy. Its meaning is dependent on its relation to other concepts in such a way as to make it central to the performance of morality in the study of this particular geographical region and its inhabitants. The civil servants and academics engaged in welfare research in the 1940s and 1950s perhaps make this as clear as more detached scholarly works like those of the Herskovits's. The relation of a particular concept of culture to other concepts like the nature of society and the legacy of slavery was highly specific. Indeed post war development writers saw co-operative behaviour as something innate to authentically primitive societies but as something that would have to be manufactured in the West Indies¹⁵⁰. If capitalism was a threat to these characteristics amongst those deemed economically less developed, then capitalism and slavery negated all possibility of finding them in the Caribbean. This contention would underlie the arguments of politicians, poets, novelists and academics until the present day. It is perhaps no accident that the most strident calls for the rejection of the analytical use of culture by anthropologists have come from a Caribbean specialist¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁹ Even if I have been highly critical of the theoretical organisation of environmental history some environmental historians have been especially quick to see the importance of a global perspective on how beliefs are formed and the uses to which they are put. See especially Grove, R. *Green Imperialism* Cambridge University Press 1995 It is the manner in which beliefs are incorporated from the local to the global that perturbs me.

¹⁵⁰ Waller, E. and Hinden, R. *Co-Operation in the Colonies: A Report from a Special Committee to the Fabian Colonial Bureau*. Allen and Unwin London 1945 Although assertions of this nature can be found dating back to the 1890s in policy documents and even longer in local popular debates about entrepreneurship.

¹⁵¹ The Haitian Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot. *Adieu, Culture: A New Duty Arises* in Fox, R. and King, B. Eds. *Anthropology Beyond Culture* Berg London 2002. Trouillot's argument is that, "culture is allowed to be a shortcut for too many things" (Trouillot in Fox and King Eds. 2002). A critique of this position can be found in Grillo, R. Cultural Essentialism and Cultural Anxiety in *Anthropological Theory* Vol. 3 No. 2 2003. Grillo's stance being that it is essentially neo liberal to argue against culture in favour of the individual even if those who do are not neo liberals. Grillo's concern relates to recent debates around Europe of migrant communities and he illustrates this by citing anxieties around migration in European and particularly Scandinavian contexts. Grillo's call for an investigation of culture as a object rather than use as a concept seems very similar to Trouillot's call to jettison culture altogether in order to study belief systems.

The reason why the study of development as both concept and practice remains so vexed is its central location in the moral cosmology of most individuals. Such a study necessitates some commentary on what is deemed desirable or undesirable change. By implication the study of development is often as much a statement of what the future should be as much as an analysis of the present. In these terms beliefs about what the future should or should not be are about as political as it gets. When reacting to criticism of an ethnographic account of DFID policy in India David Mosse chose to focus on the distinction between office and field, research and writing, the social and the anti social¹⁵². The divide between Mosse and the civil servants who had been both colleagues and informants raised a serious difference of opinion about his descriptions of the project in the past tense. This objection was in part apparently based on the future impact of suggestions about the perceived success or failure of the project. Anyone who underestimates the political character of predicting the future, especially where government policies are concerned, would do well to remember the Emperor Tiberius's penchant for throwing astrologers from cliffs.

The response of Mosse's informants shows that the organisation of beliefs held by a researcher must often differ from those of the individuals being researched. In the case of development research in the Caribbean there is clearly a number of writers who feel obliged to avoid such disagreements with informants or certain types of informant because of the beliefs they do hold¹⁵³. This approach to research is undertaken in pursuit of the often ill defined goals of empowerment and radical democracy¹⁵⁴. The not inconsiderable history of radical politics in the Caribbean becomes, not the precursor to the modernity being described, but the wrong sort of politics. The belief that there are right and wrong politics is like the idea that there can be an anti-politics or depoliticisation. The similarity lies in a disregard for political

¹⁵² Mosse, David. Anti-Social anthropology? Objectivity, objection, and the ethnography of public policy and professional communities in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* Vol. 12 2005

¹⁵³ See Skelton, Tracey. The Importance of Reflexivity in Caribbean Research: Thinking through 'Race', Self and Politics in Courtman, Sandra. Ed. *Beyond the Blood, the Beach and the Banana: New Perspectives in Caribbean Studies* Ian Randle Kingston 2004 This piece argues that research, "done in a sensitive and empowering way can be wonderfully rich and rewarding, for all those involved" (Skelton in Courtman Ed. 2004:30). The piece argues that this is a desirable result that comes about when the right reflexive politics are practised. It follows that Mosse's critique of DFID, and the ensuing legal and professional crisis he describes, stemmed from having the wrong politics which he should have suppressed.

¹⁵⁴ Pugh, Jonathan. Participatory Planning in the Caribbean: An Argument for Radical Democracy in Pugh, J. and Potter, R Eds. *Participatory Planning in the Caribbean* Ashgate London 2003 This is not exclusive to debates around participation in the Caribbean. The desirability of empowerment has been used as a response to critics of participation more generally see, Parfitt, T. The ambiguity of participation: a qualified defence of participatory development in *Third World Quarterly* Vol 25. No. 3 2004

forms deemed undesirable or inconvenient such as when supposedly depoliticising processes produce unintended results¹⁵⁵. Critiques of development that rely on portraying undesirable changes exclusively as repressive discourses obviate the need for a critical exposition of just what makes them so uncomfortable and how things should be.

As a concept morality lacks some of the stature of the concepts already discussed. Yet it is morality that links them altogether through the beliefs of the individual. Morality best describes a logically contingent system of beliefs that are essentially irrational yet held deeply desirable. Speaking with some scepticism about the claims of archaeologists to see the past Edmund Leach argued that, “all languages which convey human information are necessarily structures like verbal languages”¹⁵⁶. Leach styled this as being analogous to grammatical structure but did so in a way that distinguished between the structure of language and the beliefs conveyed by language. This is a sharp division compared to that employed in classical structural anthropology by Levi-Strauss. The problem with this claim is that structure itself is dynamic precisely because of the unpredictable way in which the moral systems of different individuals interact. Even if beliefs exist in a particular arrangement at a given instance any sense of a fixed structure is illusory¹⁵⁷. The danger in looking for structure, like looking for power, is that such concepts are reified and rendered essential. Not only do the meanings of concepts change but such changes impact directly on how a concept is placed within a system of belief. The study of morality seems to have been set aside by late 19th Century anthropologists precisely because it was so obviously unpredictable. John Lubbock found his consideration of the morals and character of savages difficult because of contradictory travellers reports that he freely admitted were matters of subjective opinion. He could only

¹⁵⁵ For a critical examination of such arguments in this vein see, Williams, Glyn. Evaluating participatory development: tyranny, power and (re)politicisation in *Third World Quarterly* Vol 25. No. 3 2004

¹⁵⁶ Leach, Edmund. Concluding Address in Renfrew, C. *The Explanation of Culture Change: Models in Prehistory* Duckworth London 1973 Leach’s general argument as odd man out at this conference was an attack on archaeologists for a) Treating contemporary peoples as viable indicators of past behaviours b) Failing to distinguish between science and the belief in science, particularly in the case of Lewis Binford who equated reason with his own opinions, conflating method and interpretation c) Failing to realise that whilst archaeologists could not do structuralism they would have to abandon functionalism

¹⁵⁷ An advocacy of networks and nodes carries a similar risk. The belief in imperial networks and nodes has two problems, firstly the supposed networks being analysed are nothing more than retrospective heuristic impositions onto the dynamism of lives lived. The second is the aspirational associations of the word network in contemporary language, especially in relation to career advancement and acutely so in the case of web based technologies. For an example of how these difficulties can function in practice see, Lambert, David and Lester, Alan. Geographies of Colonial Philanthropy, *Progress in Human Geography* Vol. 28 No. 3 2004. Such approaches don’t just shoehorn the lives of their historical subjects but also often rely heavily on work that is not properly located and contextualised. For an example of this in relation to the Caribbean and Caribbean post colonial historiography see, Lambert David and Howell, Phillip. John Pope-Hennessy and the Translation of ‘Slavery’ between late 19th Century Barbados and Hong Kong, *History Workshop Journal* Vol. 55 No. 1 2003.

resolve the disquieting possibility that all human beings possessed systems of beliefs by placing those he disagreed with at the bottom of an evolutionary scale of civilisation¹⁵⁸. This is an example of the way that irrational beliefs quite logically solved a particular problem because of a particular arrangement of concepts deemed desirable or undesirable.

The performance of morality is the logical outcome of holding particular beliefs in particular arrangements. Morality may be performed by individuals, beliefs may be held by individuals, but beliefs are formed through the interaction of individuals. People are not constrained by the agency of higher powers of superhuman structure but by other people and the interaction of people whom they may never even meet. It is this process that shapes both the meaning of concepts and their grammatical arrangements. Whether rational or irrational it is the grammar of belief that an individual both sees and derives from seeing.

Background and Methods

A discussion of the historical relationship between landscape, society and policy is ideally an interdisciplinary study. The preceding discussion has sought, with particular reference to the Caribbean, to show some of the origins and pitfalls in theoretical practises that relate to the study of landscape, development and policy. It is important to note that not all the theoretical arguments made above were apparent to me at the time I stepped off the plane into the chaos of queues, shouts and teetering stacks of luggage at Crown Point International Airport, Tobago. The ethnographic tools of semi structured interviews and participant observation and a good deal of archival research were what led me to the preceding analysis.

The research problem itself was a fairly simple statement, ‘what are the origins and history of the apparent disjuncture between knowledge and action in policies relating to environment and development in Tobago?’ The question had its origins in the arguments I had witnessed during a conference held at a resort on the island in 2004 to mark the founding of the island’s capital, Scarborough. Representatives of the major NGO’s, local and international academics, retired politicians, including former President ANR Robinson and a number of the general public were all in attendance. Strangely absent were representatives of the Tobago House of Assembly. At the time I gave this very little thought. I left the island a week later and spent the next eighteen months in UK archives and libraries trying to build up my knowledge of the history of Tobago and the wider region and gain a grasp of key primary sources.

¹⁵⁸ Lubbock, John. *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man* London 1875

This in depth historical research was necessary for several reasons. The Caribbean has not been a fashionable place to write about for some decades. Many smaller islands have only a smattering of historical accounts littered across various archives and many are several decades old. At the time I embarked for fieldwork in Tobago there was no academic history of the island available¹⁵⁹. The last major account of Tobago's history and geography was written in the mid 19th Century by a Chief Justice whose interests lay predominantly with the niceties of colonial jurisprudence¹⁶⁰. Ethnographic writing on Tobago is at a premium with the exception of a handful of doctoral and MA theses¹⁶¹. The locally born anthropologist and one time Herskovits collaborator J.D. Elder made extensive notes and recordings as a private project in the 1940s but these have disappeared since his death in 2003¹⁶². The main repository of local folksongs and cultural memorabilia is closed to the public as a result of its owner's death¹⁶³. Most awkward of all from a historian's perspective is that the Scarborough Library, where the Tobago archives were stored, was demolished following an earthquake in 1998. The archives

¹⁵⁹ There is a three volume work by a local author, partially published posthumously, Archibald, D. *Tobago, Melancholy Isle* West India Trinidad and Tobago 1987 and 2003. The first and third volumes are easily available in bookshops in Tobago and Trinidad but for various reasons the second volume is not in print and I am not aware of the publication details. Despite extensive quotation from primary sources the work lacks a comprehensive bibliography or list of citations. Since my fieldwork three volumes have become available. The first is a posthumously published history by a retired expatriate banker, Phillips, D. *La Magdalena: The Story of Tobago 1498 to 1898* iUniverse Inc Lincoln 2004. This covers much the same ground as Archibald's book. The second is a highly detailed and immaculately researched account of the politics of Tobagonian autonomy in the 20th Century. Luke, L. *Identity and Secession in the Caribbean: Tobago versus Trinidad, 1889-1980* UWI Press Kingston 2007. I am indebted to the author for making available some of the unpublished papers that went into the preparation of the book. The next book is a two volume sociological work by Craig-James, S. *The Changing Society of Tobago 1838-1938: A Fractured Whole* New Beacon London 2008. This is based on a doctoral thesis, extensive private research and consultancy work for the THA policy unit. Some aspects of the policy use of this research are discussed in Chapter Six. There is also the writing of the geographer David L. Niddrie. Niddrie's academic analysis of Tobagonian land use is considered in more depth in Chapter Four. Niddrie's non academic guide to the island is the difficult to find, Niddrie, D.L. *Tobago* Litho Press Cork 1980. Another small book that is of considerable use is Ottley, C.R. *Tobago: The Story of Tobago Robinson Crusoe's Island in the Caribbean* Longman Caribbean 1973.

¹⁶⁰ Woodcock, Henry Iles. *History of Tobago* Smith and Grant Ayr 1867

¹⁶¹ Those which I have been able to read are, Ferrer, Vernon Oliver. *Some socio-economic aspects of peasant farming in Tobago, British West Indies and the possible function of medium term credit in the rehabilitation of low income farming areas in Trinidad and Tobago* Thesis Cornell University 1945. Leinen, Maarit. *Marching to Zion: Creolisation in Spiritual Baptist Rituals and Cosmology*. Thesis University of Helsinki 2002. Levine, Cheryl. *Mediating the Model: Women's Microcredit and Micro Enterprise in Tobago* WI Thesis University of South Florida 2003. Dale, B. *Lives in Between: Encountering Men in a Tobagonian Village* M.A. Dissertation University of Tromsø 2004 Craig, Susan. *The Evolution of Society in Tobago: 1838 to 1900*. Thesis London School of Economics 1995

¹⁶² I would like to thank Dr Rita Pemberton of the Department of History at the St Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies for helping try to locate these.

¹⁶³ This is the George Leacock Snr Heritage Parlour. Due to probate issues the funds from the UNESCO grant for its upkeep were at the time unavailable to Mr Leacock's heirs. I would like to thank George Leacock Jnr for describing the contents of the collections although family and professional matters prevented a private research viewing.

have been in storage ever since and even respected local academics based at the UWI have been unable to get access even to check the condition of these unique records¹⁶⁴. One bright spot was Mrs Patricia Turpin's kind permission to copy certain papers of the late Captain Cyril Turpin and use them for the purposes of research. These documents provided a rare insight into the workings of early 20th Century estate management and the mastery of meticulous horticultural detail that it required.

Regarding Tobago, the collections of The National Archives at Kew in London have large blanks in copies of 19th Century despatches, Assembly and Council meetings which are marked with musty apologetic notes. The 19th Century history of Tobago is very difficult to research in depth as a result. Surviving 20th Century files from the Colonial Office records occasionally allude to no longer extant documents and there are numerous differences and omissions between supposedly duplicate records held by both the TNA and the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago in Port of Spain¹⁶⁵. As a consequence it has required extensive archival detective work to locate many records and accounts on the history of Tobago in order to get a preliminary picture of how the island's economy and society have been described in the past¹⁶⁶.

When I returned to Tobago I thought I had completed much of the archival leg work. All that remained was to interview a reasonable number of public servants, environmentalists and tourism workers and illustrate the unequal relations of power that underpinned development policy. I was confident that this could be accomplished speedily and with little fuss. An initial estimate of six months in Tobago proved overly optimistic and fieldwork ultimately lasted just over ten months. There were no comparisons of past and present in my mind when I staggered, jetlagged, to the customs desk¹⁶⁷. I had however grasped that Tobago's landscape, especially the presence of the Main Ridge Forest Reserve, was a major legacy of the history of

¹⁶⁴ Again I would like to express my thanks to Dr Rita Pemberton for persevering in trying to gain access to these records and for lobbying in the hope of ensuring they are properly conserved for future researchers.

¹⁶⁵ I am grateful to the staff of both institutions for their help. I am especially thankful to Mr Singh at the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago who kept up the flow of heavy bound Council Papers (hereafter CP) volumes as fast as I could read them.

¹⁶⁶ Where difficult to locate sources are cited their location is indicated in the footnotes.

¹⁶⁷ This conversation took a turn for the worse when I tried to explain that I was a research student and would be upgrading my 30 day visitor's stamp to a research visa with the assistance of a contact at UWI. The immigration officer was unconvinced, "Mr Woodcock I need to be certain you are solvent, returnable and desirable", half asleep, I incautiously responded that I was all of those things and if the interest was serious she should tell me when she got off work. Until a local contact could vouch for me I spent the next half hour on a bench in a side area with other undesirable aliens.

environmental thought and policy¹⁶⁸. At the time I was more than happy to accept this and view it alongside classic accounts of sugar, capitalism and slavery. If I missed a key connection that later became vital to my thinking it was simply because I was happy to accept that the endorsement of the former and the condemnation of the latter seemed both to be good. As I subsequently sought ways to understand debates surrounding the morality of various aspects of ownership and property in contemporary Tobago I was to find myself drawn reflexively back to this earlier naïveté.

It took just over a fortnight to arrange an apartment rental and to renew tentative contacts made with local environmental and government organisations many months previously. The state of Tobago's overheated property market made finding accommodation at a reasonable price challenging. It must be borne in mind that this was even more so for local residents and this fed into the antagonisms over land and housing that are discussed in Chapter Five. Because of this I dropped an earlier idea of an explicitly situated ethnography in favour of following stories about policies around the island. At the same time I listened to the currents of gossip in the housing development on the road between Plymouth and Scarborough where my apartment was situated and outside the parlour in the adjacent village. Once key contacts were re-established I became a frequent visitor to the offices of Environment Tobago (ET), a local conservation NGO. These visits were a constant source of information from both the organisation's paid staff and directors, as well as the members of the public who dropped in at regular intervals. ET's resource centre and library were of considerable assistance. Thanks to the enthusiasm and friendship of ET staff it was possible for me to gain a greater awareness of the milieu of people and organisational acronyms that populate the policy landscape in Tobago. I was also able to access several workshops and conferences that dealt with conservation themes. These were excellent opportunities to encounter otherwise busier THA officials, activists and business figures who hadn't the time for sit down interviews. It was thanks to suggestions and introductions by contacts at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad, that I was able to contact several other key officials. Several public servants helped with other suggestions about who to speak to or what documents to search out and where to look for them, not to mention useful personal introductions to other colleagues in Tobago and Trinidad. This said some officials could be downright hostile or suspicious, some opened up and others did not. In my ethnography I've tried to illustrate the rationale and

¹⁶⁸ One of the seminal works of the environmental history contains a lengthy discussion of the scientific concerns that informed the creation of the Forest Reserve, see, Grove, R. *Green Imperialism* Cambridge University Press 1995

broader context behind some of their concerns about foreign researchers. I am grateful to the various departments of the THA and the Central Government in Trinidad for allowing me access to their departmental libraries during my visits to their offices.

During the delay before I secured accommodation I received invaluable help and hospitality from some of those I had met through the conference in 2004. This involved conversations with individuals keen to learn about and protect the history and heritage of Tobago. These amateur historical enthusiasts and their friends went to considerable lengths to make sure I was aware of everyone they believed I should contact during my time in the island. It is my regret that I was not always able to follow up these suggestions, as those I did proved invaluable. During one of these discussions the theme turned to the thinking of the Tobago House of Assembly in regard to historical conservation. I learned that the THA had actually been meant to support the conference I had previously attended. Despite offers of support the THA had withdrawn at the last minute with little public explanation. I was told that behind the scenes this had been due to the misgivings of senior politicians. The central objection was rumoured to have been that it was deemed morally wrong to commemorate the anniversary of colonisation. This revelation sharply alerted me to the drawbacks of uncritically moral readings of Caribbean history and the ways that they could potentially complicate any critical study.

The daily practises of politics and public life in Trinidad and Tobago are both popularly and academically characterised by the expression *bacchanal*¹⁶⁹. This emphasis on personal conduct is not simply a cultural quirk embodied in the costumes and dances of Carnival but an often worrying and stressful aspect of daily life. Environmental groups were at pains to keep themselves publicly separate from politicians even when providing information to those in government or opposition. There was a prevailing concern that the innately perceived good of environmentalism would be sucked into these personal politics of conduct in the way that virtuous concepts like community and society frequently were. Many of the government departments where my public service informants worked were viewed as being politicised. Taking into account rumours of favouritism and vendetta in the civil service of Trinidad and Tobago I have taken the greatest pains to render anonymous those civil and public servants

¹⁶⁹ For a discussion of *Bacchanal* in Trinidad see, Miller, D. *Modernity and Ethnographic Approach: Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad* Berg Oxford 1997:245-253

with whom I spoke¹⁷⁰. This is not a direct study of bacchanal, but the aggressive public performance of virtue and the denunciation of vice amongst others is certainly a lens through which the research problem came to be viewed. What I have tried to do is preserve something of the flavour of the political cut and thrust of Tobago whilst protecting the identities of those who helped me to make sense of the experience.

The question of how development policies in Tobago come about and how they operate is problematic for a discursive account of policy, knowledge and power. Trinidad and Tobago did not escape structural adjustment in the 1980s but the state did not collapse in the face of neoliberal prescriptions either. The country's stake in oil and gas reserves and the blend of populism and nationalism that inspires the politically dominant Peoples National Movement seem to have provided a degree of insulation. The public servants with whom I began to conduct interviews were often optimistic about what could be achieved through government policies in a period of booming revenues. By contrast it was representatives of NGOs and private sector bodies that often felt ignored, and their concerns threatened by government development plans. Environmental activists and business figures were unequivocal in their support and went out of their way to make helpful introductions and provide information they saw as lacking from public debates. This contrast presents something of a contradiction to accounts that see the state in the developing world as having been supplanted by various external organisations¹⁷¹.

There were aspects of THA policy that confused me as much as they outraged environmental campaigners. Rather than view the policies that THA officials endorse as being chaotic, personalised and often fundamentally flawed in a practical sense I used my meetings with informants to try and probe the logic that underpinned these decisions. In writing up I have selected examples from policy debates in Tobago that both engage with wider issues in Caribbean studies, as well as illustrating the social and moral character of these debates.

Over the course of walks in rural Tobago I became concerned that the literature on Caribbean tourism didn't fully explain the state of agricultural policy in the island. Neither was I wholly

¹⁷⁰ The Policy Research and Development Institute (PRDI) of the THA had seen several high level suspensions of staff before I arrived. These individuals were not cleared until after my fieldwork had ended.

¹⁷¹ For the classic account of this see, Ferguson, James. *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis 1994. For a recent exploration of the relationship between NGOs and the state during the collapse of Zimbabwe see, Bornstein, E. *The Spirit of Development: Protestant NGOs, Morality and Economics in Zimbabwe* Routledge New York 2003

satisfied with accounts in supporting policy documents that relied on what became an increasingly familiar set of beliefs about the local history of the peasantry. Tobago's tourist industry is small relative to major regional destinations and cannot realistically be seen as having displaced agriculture in the same way as seems to have occurred in Antigua, Barbados or areas of Jamaica. To explore this further I varied from my original research plan and conducted interviews with several farmers. Some of these individuals I met at government offices where they were often involved in making requests for labour from unemployment programmes, planning permission for access road improvements or equipment supplied from the government tractor pool¹⁷². Others were concerned citizens who attended public meetings on issues they perceived as likely to impact on their livelihoods. These contacts often led to further personal introductions and detailed information on the history and difficulties of the agricultural sector of the island.

What emerged from this experience was the ways in which land use policy was invested with particular moral meanings by everyone I interviewed or spent time with. It was not just the environmentalists who worried about landscape in particular ways but also government employees. There were divided opinions between and within environmental groups, government departments and the private sector. Ethnography is a method grounded in social interaction and its observation. It simply would not have been methodologically legitimate to try and interpret the views of my informants in a way that ignored the complex ways that they exercised their agency. What I needed was a theoretical framework that could consider the issues of the past without erasing those of the present and vice versa.

Morality presents a major challenge to any method of interpretation because the analysis of morality is one of what people, including an author, believe to be right or wrong. In the study of development projects this challenge is keenly felt. There is an ethical tension between a relativistic response to past certainties and a desire to alter present certainties. A discursive analysis cannot approach a resolution of this tension because of its organising logic. In a discussion of the work of Christian NGOs in Zimbabwe Erica Bornstein uses the phrase moral grammar to describe the language through which Christian aid organisations communicate their imperatives for social intervention¹⁷³. I have found myself using the same phrase under

¹⁷² A service so unreliable that one large cocoa farmer, exasperated at official indifference, had entered into an arrangement to make his solitary tractor available to several other farmers in the island.

¹⁷³ The phrase appears three times in the book on pages 119, 125 and 139. In the first and second instances the expression is ambiguous and refers to a collection of concepts associated within a discursive field of participation. The third instance makes it clear that grammar is used as a simile for

different circumstances to try and shape a metaphor that would describe how the logic of development policy in Tobago generates landscape changes and how those changes are contested. The key difference in usage is that Bornstein uses grammar as a simile for language whilst preserving the structural role of language in shaping behaviour. As a result Bornstein contrasts the moral grammar of Christian aid groups to the apolitical neoliberal discourse of secular aid organisations and international bodies such as the United Nations¹⁷⁴. Morality is religious and empowering (if not always for the best) and discourse is secular, impersonal and disempowering. By virtue of this logic Bornstein's conclusion ends up endorsing the very groups she has previously been critical of. The problem is that the argument replicates the very division between a moral spiritual world and a corrupted secular world that it seeks to show as being absent in the politics of welfare and aid in Zimbabwe. The result is a liberal doctrine that perpetuates a division between material and spiritual ethics that is suggestive of the reasoning applied by Cathar heretics¹⁷⁵.

I propose a usage of the phrase moral grammar as an analogy. This analogy was one I arrived at quite independently. None of the individuals I interviewed was an official representative of an avowedly religious body. Despite this I still needed a way of conveying how individuals working for secular government bodies arrive at and convey particular intentions¹⁷⁶. Their

particular structure of language without intention and located within a specific discursive field, "This chapter has investigated a grammar of Christian development that has bolstered neoliberal economic aims", see, Bornstein, E. *The Spirit of Development: Protestant NGOs, Morality and Economics in Zimbabwe* Routledge New York 2003:139

¹⁷⁴ For example the critical description of CARE Zimbabwe's use of neoliberal rhetoric to avoid overtly political entanglement, *ibid* p107-108

¹⁷⁵ To illustrate this point, "Before I began this research, I assumed that missionaries carried with them an essential 'evil' in their attempts to 'do good'. After all, they destroyed cultures and collected souls. In Zimbabwe during the course of my fieldwork, I no longer knew where I stood, morally and politically. I began to respect evangelists and missionaries for their moral conviction, and became wary of [secular] development workers for the very things I used to fear of missionaries: their urge to change people's lives for the better". *Ibid* p169 Cathar heretics believed the material world to be fundamentally evil, the highest level of initiates, the Perfects, gave up food and drink as part of this renunciation. It was partly because of this suicidal logic, and partly because the Cathars decided that a world of material evil had to be created by an evil deity (as opposed to the good deity of pure spiritualism), that the inquisitors sought their extirpation. The Albigensian Crusade, as the ensuing war in Languedoc became known, was deeply entwined with dynastic struggles and Papal claims to temporal authority. It is an instructive example of what happens when conflicting theories of supernatural agency are enacted at the same time. During the course of the crusade the leading Dominican inquisitor, Arnold Amaury, apocryphally gave Christianity one of its most chilling doctrinal pronouncements, "Caedite eos. Novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius" (Kill them all. God will know his own).

¹⁷⁶ Attempts at achieving this by certain philosophers opposed to post structuralism have a key weakness. The concept of 'weak intentionalism' on which they rely is based on individual approaches to contextual meaning that overlook the historical and social context in which utterances are made. This appears to be a consequence of the aversion of analytic thinkers to anything resembling historicism. I am personally unsure as to how such dimensions that are essential to ethnographic research could be

beliefs were still imbued by moral meanings even if the context was secular and within the realm ordained as belonging to bureaucratic power. The agency of my informants was not exercised through a logic that had features of religiosity even if religious beliefs were often incorporated into it. Even in a seemingly secular setting it should not be taken that secular refers to a condition without ethics, sentiment or emotional appeals to a moral logic of action. It is the grammatical organisation and history of this moral logic and the social and historical dynamics of intention that need to be considered. This is the method I needed in order to understand how landscape and policy in contemporary Tobago are shaped, understood and practised by those involved.

incorporated into an abstract discussion of logic with the desired effect. For post analytic considerations of intention see, Bevir, M. *The Logic of the History of Ideas* Cambridge 2002. The difficulties of relating the way ethnography reveals intention in relation to broader contexts is highly problematic. Recent discussions of intention in anthropology have still tended to fall back on structural explanations for intention. This is because of the challenges of scale in relation to policy (both public and private) that exist in ethnographic studies. Structure has uses as a metaphor of social dynamics but not as an actual account of what is happening beyond the periphery of the researcher's observations. For a recent discussion and illustration of the challenges of intention see, Prentice, R. Knowledge, Skill and the Inculcation of the Anthropologist: Reflections on Learning to Sew in the Field *Anthropology of Work Review* Vol.29 No.3 2008

Chapter 2: From Colonisation to Union: A Brief Account of the Moral Economy of Landscape and Ownership in Tobago 1763 – 1900

The first formal colonisation of Tobago by Britain began in 1763. It followed several decades of wrangling and abortive colonisation attempts by various European governments and commercial adventurers. The peace that ended the Seven Years war finally brought Tobago under what at the time appeared to be uncontested British control. A distinctive feature of the programme of colonisation in Tobago, and the other islands ceded at the peace, was that the process was to be formally planned. When the anti abolitionist MP and West Indian landowner William Young rode across Tobago he remarked, “Nature... is nowhere on a more extensive plan than at the Antilles and gives rather the idea of a continent than an island”¹⁷⁷. Whilst Young was partly referring to the geological origins of South America and the islands of Trinidad and Tobago he was also drawing attention to a particular form of a natural plan itself. This natural plan related to the vices and virtues bound up with the key concepts of West Indian Commerce and the relation of those concepts to broader cosmologies of ownership, obligation, responsibility, labour and trade. Over the course of the 18th and 19th Centuries the relationships between these concepts would change in accordance with the beliefs with which they were invested by individuals. During this period in Tobago a series of key events would lead to specific articulations of belief by specific individuals.

¹⁷⁷ Lavaysse, Dauxion J. *A Statistical, Commercial and Political Description of Venezuela, Trinidad, Margarita and Tobago* London 1820:364 Young makes a similar comment in a published extract from his private journals and was possibly fond of making it to learned visitors and acquaintances. William Young was the son of the 1st Baronet Young, a wealthy landowner in the Leewards who had been the commissioner for land sales during the colonisation of the ceded isles. The Young's were English landowners whose family seat of Delaford now resides somewhere beneath the runways of Gatwick Airport. The village of Delaford, associated with Young's Kings Bay Estate in Tobago, still carries the name. Young was a vigorous campaigner for the West India interest in Parliament and an arch opponent of Wilberforce. Young's appointment to serve as governor of Tobago meant that he missed the key vote on abolition of the slave trade. His grave is located in the grounds of the Governor's mansion, now President's House, Tobago and is off limits to the public. Young published several treatises on West Indian History and the state of the plantations, notably, Young, William. *The West India Common-Place Book* London 1807 and Young, William. *An Account of the Black Charaibs in the Island of St Vincent's* London 1795. The published portion of Young's journals can be found in Edwards, Bryan. *The History Civil and Commercial of the British West Indies* Vol III 5th edition London 1819. The relevant chapter is entitled A Tour Through Several Islands of Barbadoes, St Vincent, Antigua, Tobago and Grenada in the years 1791 and 1792.

Planting the Garden: The Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of I?

The plan for the colonisation for Tobago made explicit provision for the location and maintenance of forest reserves for the protection of climate. This was connected to a range of concerns founded in the observations made of the ecological impact of colonisation in other tropical island settings¹⁷⁸. These concerns were undoubtedly connected to developments in scientific thought in the 18th Century. They were also connected to specific debates over the nature of the commercial activities that had come to dominate the nascent Atlantic economy during this period in history. The question over forest conservation in the Caribbean in 1763 needs to be looked at in relation not just to rising environmental concerns, but the relationship between these concerns and particular articulations of humanitarianism and virtuous economic conduct.

At the centre of these concerns and considerations was the principle economic unit of the West Indian economy. This unit was the plantation and its principle crop during the 18th Century was sugar cane produced by enslaved labourers transplanted by force from Africa. For contemporary and later critics the plantation itself became something of a moral object that symbolised all that was immoral and iniquitous in the practises of colonists and the commerce they pursued. Plantations were not absolute bureaucratic institutions. They may well have been organised along particular principles of efficiency and ideas of order. However, these principles of order were pursued and implemented by proprietors and managers whose caprices often produced a violent and brutal regime that sits ill at ease with Foucauldian conceptions of discipline and an impersonal discursive conduct of conduct. The plantations of the 18th Century were agricultural enterprises whose operations are perhaps more perceptively addressed by their contemporary critics than by those who have sought to shoehorn them into particular theories of capital or power.

Abolitionism did not begin with the campaigns of Wilberforce and his well known cohorts. Early advocates of the abolition of slavery and the slave trade were driven by particular critiques of trade and proposed particular alternatives. The tensions that underlie these beliefs bear scrutiny as they are similar to tensions that can be found in the initiatives to control aspects of the environmental degradation produced by sugar production. One of the aspects

¹⁷⁸ For a history of these concerns in relation to both the Caribbean and the wider world see, Grove, R. *Green Imperialism* Cambridge University Press 1995. For a Caribbean overview of ecological change that focuses especially on Barbados, something of a paradigm case for observers of the consequences of deforestation, see, Watts, D. *The West Indies: patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492* Cambridge 1987

of this tension is the overlapping themes advanced by both opponents of slavery and advocates of its perpetuation through amelioration. A key aspect of this was attitudes to landed property and especially the vices and virtues of particular forms of landed property in relation to African produce¹⁷⁹. The American Revolution threw these concerns into stark relief.

The abolitionist James Ramsey was highly condemnatory of the American revolutionaries. To him they and their creed of individual liberties represented the epitome of the greed and self interest that drove plantation agriculture in all the American colonies. He denounced the whole commercial complex as nothing more than, “the Kingdom of I”, individual interest and enrichment placed before divinely ordained relations of societal good. These relations were seen as incorporating coherent and settled communities of smallholders rather than intensive agriculture owned and operated by individuals whose loyalty was primarily to business rather than any other ideals¹⁸⁰. It was this opposition between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of I that informed both defence of plantation agriculture and the proposed alternative in the form of settlement by free black smallholders¹⁸¹.

The pro slavery lobby had initially dismissed early arguments for abolition and the non conformist clergy who advocated them. They did so in no small part because they saw themselves as the standard bearers of enlightened science, commerce and civilisation in the tropics. It came as something of a shock to many to discover this was not how some of their countrymen saw the matter¹⁸². Given the suggestions for creating black British colonies, based

¹⁷⁹ Figures in commerce had become increasingly concerned about the long term prospects for trade with West Africa as a result of the depredations of slave traders and the consequent social, economic and political instability that related to these violent interventions. Some privately hoped that the colonisation of the ceded isles would be based around the settling of free loyalist black smallholders as a model community. These were not isolated incidents, for descriptions of these detailed schemes and their originators see, Leslie, C. *Moral Capital: The Foundations of British Abolitionism* University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 2006:259-330

¹⁸⁰ When William Young 2nd Baronet was appointed Governor of Tobago his brief included monitoring the loyalty of colonists in the aftermath of French occupation for precisely this reason. The British military capitulation in Tobago occurred not because of a decisive military defeat but because planters in the militia lobbied the regular troops and officers in command to cease resistance in order to protect their estates. See, Ottley, C.R. *The Story of Tobago: Robinson Crusoe’s Island in the Caribbean* Longman 1973:47-48

¹⁸¹ Some schemes such as the one alluded to above were often quite eccentric and combined beliefs about race, labour and the perceived just order of society as well as a degree of political expediency. Colonisation attempts based on the settlement of free black loyalists occurred in several places in Canada and West Africa. In Trinidad there remain settlements around the town of Moruga named, 1st 3rd 4th and 5th Companies. 2nd Company of this group of auxiliaries never arrived. One version of the story suggests that they were shipwrecked off the coast of Tobago and settled there instead. See, Ottley, C.R. *The Story of Tobago: Robinson Crusoe’s Island in the Caribbean* Longman Caribbean 1973:78-81

¹⁸² For a study of the effect this had on the identity politics of colonists see, Lambert, D. *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity during the Age of Abolition* Cambridge University Press 2005. Colonists

on a sturdy peasantry better suited to the tropics, the colonisation of the ceded isles was a test of the planter's self image, their ability to act as they saw themselves. This context is vital in understanding why forest reserves were founded in Tobago and St Vincent and why a Botanic Garden in St Vincent was seen as a crucial part of colonisation¹⁸³. This was not a contest

routinely sought ways to protest their authentic Englishness in response to criticisms from abolitionists that branded them as unprincipled savages who had degenerated at the fringes of civilisation. A report into the conditions of slaves submitted to the British Parliament by Tobago's planter legislature was very much in this vein. It sought to show the planters as true Englishmen sharing in the humanitarian concerns of abolitionists. It also condemned reports that Britain had considered giving the island permanently to France during the uneasy peace between the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. As far as the amelioration of slaves was concerned the Tobago legislators concluded that as they were moral people meeting all their lawful obligations it was by definition the immoral character of slaves that caused them to persist in idolatry, drunkenness and worst of all dying on the job. See, *A Copy of the Report of the Committee of both Houses of the Legislature of Tobago, appointed to take into Consideration the Resolution of the House of Commons of the 6th April 1797; and a Series of Suggestions and Queries consequent thereupon, handed to them by his Excellency the Governor, and dated Whitehall, 23d April 1798, relative to the Increase of Negroes, and the Melioration of their State*. HMSO Eighteenth Parliament of Great Britain: third session (20 November 1798 - 12 July 1799)

¹⁸³ Alexander Anderson, the Director of the St Vincent Botanic Garden, was bitterly critical of both the destruction of the island's forests by sugar planters and the extirpation of the Black Caribs who occupied the island. Anderson was strangely silent on the lives of the slaves who assisted his work at the garden. It is possible that he viewed their enslavement as being as much a part of the natural order as the freedom and nobility of the Black Caribs. Anderson's existential crisis over the Carib wars and ecological destruction, referred to by Grove, was about the upset of a natural state rather than any humanitarian concerns per se. Grove, R. *Green Imperialism* Cambridge University Press 1995:306-308. Anderson took William Young on friendly tours of the garden and the two shared a mutual acquaintance in the person of the French trader, spy and adventurer Jean Dauxion Lavaysse. Lavaysse praised Young and his creditor and Tobago neighbour Joseph Robley's ameliorative approaches to slave management and agrarian innovation (Robley was awarded a Gold Medal by the Royal Society) and sharply contrasted it to the behaviours of other colonists. Lavaysse was at pains to stress that slavery was a commercial enterprise and that racial bigotry made for bad management and bad science. Lavaysse contrasted the actions of those he saw as visionary proprietors with the barbarism and ecological destruction wrought by men obsessed with less high minded ideals. In this regard he detailed the extinction of numerous species in Tobago as mangroves and forests were cleared before laying the blame squarely with the national character of Scottish estate managers, known locally as the 36 month Scotch on account of their indenture terms. The contradiction is that the damage he describes occurred during the tenure of the resident proprietors whose virtues he extols, not during the later rise of professional managers in Tobago that he condemns. It would seem that the moral worth of estate management and land use that Lavaysse described was based upon individuals being able to display the desired knowledge of scientific debates. For Anderson's criticisms of planters and the extermination of the Caribs see, Howard, Richard A. & Elizabeth S. Eds. *Alexander Anderson's Geography and History of St Vincent, West Indies* Linnean Society of London 1983. For an analysis of Anderson's attitudes to the Caribs see Grove, R. *Green Imperialism* Cambridge University Press 1995. Lavaysse's extensive work on South America and the Caribbean contains chapter length descriptions of several islands and discussions on racism and race and the society of the Black Caribs of St Vincent, amongst whom he lived for a brief while. Lavaysse, Dauxion J. *A Statistical, Commercial and Political Description of Venezuela, Trinidad, Margarita and Tobago* London 1820. For the venality and brutality of the Carib wars and its intersection with ideals of landscape, stewardship and empire it is best to visit the contemporary sources, Young, William *An Account of the Black Charaibs in the Island of St Vincent* London 1795, an erudite and highly personal call for genocide from one who had previously had high hopes of friendship with the Carib leader Chatoyer. Less nuanced but more detailed on the war itself is the history commissioned over twenty years later to commemorate the accomplishment of the victorious planters and the new landscape they created

between an environmentally aware scientific community seeking to limit the rapacious practises of early capitalists and those seeking to engage in the untrammelled rights to exploit their property as they saw fit. It was an uneasy attempt to make the self image of estate owners correspond with the operations of their business.

Symbols and descriptions of an ordered garden, a contented community and smoothly functioning natural plan dominate William Young's public and private accounts of his estates in Tobago and St Vincent. William Young's journals also contain several references to estate gardens, praising them as signs of improvement and progressive thought, a well kept garden was in Young's mind synonymous with the wise mastery over land and people which characterised the well informed and enlightened planter¹⁸⁴. For Young the garden, the estate house, the slave village and the cane plots were part of a whole. Young even went so far as to argue that planters should inculcate a work ethic by giving cash payments to slaves along with rights to garden plots to produce food¹⁸⁵. At the centre of the whole lay the estate works, in his description of Louis D'Or estate in Tobago these were, "church like"¹⁸⁶. The church of sugar sat at the centre of a particular moral vision of tropical improvement through which Young communicated his personal vision of empire as the Kingdom of I. It was the production of sugar and the virtues of personal proprietorship that remained grammatically central to the organisation of this moral language¹⁸⁷. For other West Indian colonists the performance of these beliefs in whole or in part was of both personal and political importance in proving the vitality of the societies to which they belonged and their fitness to own and administer the human and material property on which it was based¹⁸⁸.

through their commerce, Shephard, Charles. *An Historical Account of the Island of Saint Vincent* London 1831

¹⁸⁴ As an example, "Mr Clarke's house is an excellent building, framed in England, and placed on the very highest mountain in Tobago, with garden and shrubberies, abounding with birds of most splendid plumage... the country of Tobago, that although it is not a twentieth part cultivated, yet it is all, or for the most part improvable" taken from Young, William. *Tour Through the Several Islands of Barbadoes, St Vincent, Antigua and Grenada in the years 1791 and 1792* in Edwards, Bryan. *The History Civil and Commercial of the British West Indies* Volume III London 1819:279

¹⁸⁵ These rights were arbitrary and solely within the gift of the proprietor. Whatever the beliefs that slaves and their descendants came to hold about these plots, the origins of these arrangements lay in the moral performance of proprietorship.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid 276-277 for a description of the layout and appearance of Young's Tobago estate.

¹⁸⁷ It is worth noting that the educated elite of plantation owners, individuals such as Edward Long or Bryan Edwards, had harsh criticism for absentee ownership because of its perceived deleterious effects on management. The personal touch was to be a virtuous component of the ideal proprietor.

¹⁸⁸ The infamous Thomas Thistlewood of Jamaica's diary shows him to have been a keen gardener and botanist as well as having an interest in gathering climate data. Thistlewood was no gentleman by the standards of the 18th Century even without modern assessments of the sadistic and brutal treatment of slaves outlined in his diaries. Thistlewood supplied climate data to the historian and leading Jamaican

In the case of Tobago environmental order and civilization promoted through the alliance of commerce and science was to reshape the island utterly. Even though the forest reserve was maintained large swathes of littoral mangrove were destroyed and numerous species became extinct. It was but a few years after its foundation that the forest reserve was the scene of a merciless battle between rebel slaves and the militia. The social order of the planned garden was as inherently contradictory, transparently false, and unstable as its purported ecological dimensions¹⁸⁹. The forest reserves of Tobago and St Vincent should be seen as a consequence of the planned colonisation and an attendant feature of that catastrophe, in all its human and ecological dimensions, as much as it was a reaction against earlier environmental degradation in the colonies.

man of letters Edward Long. Thistlewood sought to initiate a correspondence with Long but was rebuffed politely. It appears that Thistlewood's goal was to show to himself that he was a fellow intellectual as well as a self made pillar of the community in rural Jamaica. Thistlewood's scientific pursuits follow a similar theme through which self betterment is linked to the pursuit of science. Thistlewood enthusiastically transplanted many plants to his Jamaican physic garden including breadfruit some years before Bligh's voyage. Whatever the situation in Jamaica Breadfruit did not appear in Tobago until after the Bligh voyage and did so via St Vincent at the behest of Joseph Robley. The Bligh voyage was connected to a union of scientific virtues, imperial utility and a desire to show ameliorative concerns regarding slave diets that contrasts sharply with Thistlewood's display of personal worth and status. For the Thistlewood diaries and Thistlewood's attitudes to class, science and scientists see, Burnard, T. *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo Jamaican World* UWIpress Kingston 2004. For a recent reconsideration of the breadfruit saga that omits private ventures like Thistlewood's and treats the whole story as a discursive formation of a commodity in the imagination of globalisation see, DeLoughery, E. Globalizing the Routes of Breadfruit and Other Bounties *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* Vol.8 No.3 2008. This paper accepts Joseph Bank's view (based on speculation) that accounts of breadfruit in Jamaica referred to an erroneously identified but similar plant taken from a French vessel during a battle. Thistlewood's diaries indicate that he explicitly identified the plant he received in January 1786 as being the same as Bligh was later sent to fetch. For an account of Thistlewood's garden and plants and the breadfruit origins controversy see, Hall, D. Planters, Farmers and Gardeners in Eighteenth Century Jamaica in Moore, B. Higman, B. Campbell, C. and Bryan, P. Eds. *Slavery, Freedom and Gender: The dynamics of Caribbean Society* UWIpress Kingston 2003. For an eyewitness account of Robley's plantation at work see, Lavaysse, Dauxion J. *A Statistical, Commercial and Political Description of Venezuela, Trinidad, Margarita and Tobago* London 1820:364

¹⁸⁹ There were slave rebellions in Tobago in, 1770 (called 'Sandy's Revolt', after its leader who escaped to Spanish Trinidad), 1771, 1774, as well as several aborted revolts. Sandy's revolt began at Courland estate and Sandy and a small band of followers fought a guerrilla campaign that lasted nearly a month. The revolts in 1771 and 1774 focused on estates at Parlatuvier and Queen's Bay respectively. The latter was the personal property of the Young family. Sir William Young 1st Bart led the militia in all three instances. During the 1771 revolt bloody close quarters fighting took place around the encampment of the rebels, in the woods on the Main Ridge, not far from the current Gilpen Trace used by ecotourists (the exact site is unknown and there are no signs). It is not known what Sir William Young did to the survivors of this battle but the fate of those he captured in 1774 is suggestive. After another series of skirmishes in the forest reserve Young captured 48 slaves from the Queen's Bay rebellion. The leader was hung alive in chains and seven others had their arms hacked off before being staked out and burnt alive over a slow fire. For a brief but detailed account see, Ottley, C.R. *The Story of Tobago: Robinson Crusoe's Island in the Caribbean* Longman Caribbean 1973:30-37

The 18th Century role of science in planning and policy in the colonies was not the product of an impersonal discourse of improvement which left genocide and ecological carnage in its wake. Of course it may have felt like that to its victims, or at least to those like Alexander Anderson, the curator of the St Vincent Garden, who had their doubts as they watched the islands of the Caribbean remade around them. It was ultimately a consequence of human design and agency. The plan as an organisation of concepts derived from morality was a documentary guide to the performance of the scientific virtues of ownership and commerce in the 18th Century Caribbean. By the end of the 18th Century a new morality of economic organisation, what has been termed a “moral shift to the east”, was underway and scientists engaged in research in the colonies shifted their passions and ambitions accordingly¹⁹⁰. Tobago and the sugar economy of the Caribbean were to become an increasingly neglected periphery in the minds of London policy makers and the technicians of empire until the closing years of the 19th Century.

A Vision of Development and Empire: The Gorrie Rulings and the Post Emancipation Landscape

The 19th Century saw the unravelling of the original plans for colonisation in Tobago. The island’s development as a sugar producer had been driven by boom prices and estates appear never achieved the full output intended by owners¹⁹¹. The lack of suitable flat lands had exacerbated problems with cultivation and the cultivated area of the island as whole began to fall. Illustrations show that hilltops had been cleared and then abandoned except for large open spaces maintained around wind mills¹⁹². Sugar production fell steadily from the end of the 18th Century, crops were affected by severe droughts from 1834-1843 and then the island was shattered by the hurricane of 1847¹⁹³. Emancipation in 1833 and the end of apprenticeship in 1838 also correlate to drops in production during this period¹⁹⁴. In 1845 a system of share cropping known as metayage was introduced from St Lucia and after 1847 this system became increasingly common amongst estate owners and managers as a remedy for shortages of capital. Metayage also kept those freed from slavery bound to estate owners through what was a theoretically mutual, but in effect one sided, system of contractual obligations. Metayage did not noticeably alleviate the problems of planters, accounts of the

¹⁹⁰ Drayton, Richard. *Nature’s Government: Science, Imperial Britain and the ‘Improvement’ of the World*. Yale University Press Newhaven and London 2000:117

¹⁹¹ Archibald, Douglas. *Tobago Melancholy Isle Vol.3 1807-1898*. Westindiana Trinidad 2003:9

¹⁹² Ibid see plate 3 for this image

¹⁹³ Niddrie, David L. *Land Use and Population in Tobago*. World Land Use Survey Monograph 3. 1961:18

¹⁹⁴ Ibid p7

island in this period are littered with descriptions of derelict estates. The musings on the landscape of the garrison commander Henry Capadose are essentially a scenic tour of ruined estates and forts which delights in the overgrown trails of the island¹⁹⁵. Capadose's account is contradicted in part by that of John Davy, Surgeon General of the West Indies, who noted only one wholly abandoned estate in his 1854 memoir. Davy did however note a substantial decline in the area cultivated from 7000 acres to 5462 out of a total estate acreage of 57408¹⁹⁶. He also observed that timber was largely imported from the United States rather than cut locally¹⁹⁷.

By 1884 the practice of metayage was entrenched in Tobago, planters had little capital and labour was scarce. Despite commentators such as Davy bemoaning the post emancipation profligacy of freed slaves on luxury items the true picture of life in Tobago by the closing decades of the 19th Century was far from luxurious. Wage rates were a fraction of what was on offer in neighbouring Trinidad and, despite customary arrangements for the lease of provision grounds to labourers and metayers, a propertied minority maintained a hold over the availability of land and livestock through punitive taxation aimed at smallholders. There had been several disturbances the largest being the 1876 Belamanna riots in Roxborough¹⁹⁸. In the aftermath of events at Roxborough planter politicians quickly dropped their opposition to Colonial Office proposals for regional administrative and constitutional reform¹⁹⁹. After the riots the first meeting of the island's assembly unanimously adopted the proposed transition to Crown Colony rule²⁰⁰. Planters continued to dominate public offices and obstructed the

¹⁹⁵ Capadose was to be the last commander of the Garrison in Tobago as the need for a troop presence declined rapidly with the advent of emancipation and the stability of the European peace. Capadose, Henry. *Sixteen Years in the West Indies*. London 1845:227-249

¹⁹⁶ Davy, John. *The West Indies before and since Emancipation*. London 1854:254-255

¹⁹⁷ Ibid p255

¹⁹⁸ Brereton, Bridget. *Law, Justice and Empire: The Colonial Career of John Gorrie 1829-1892* UWIpress Kingston 1997:260 These riots are also dealt with briefly in Brereton, Bridget. Post Emancipation Protest in the Caribbean: The 'Belamanna Riots' in Tobago 1876 *Caribbean Quarterly* Vol 30. No.3 1984. The disturbance may well have been part of a wider series of events rumours and plots associated with Colonial Office plans to confederate the Windward Islands, disestablish the church and streamline the judiciary. This resulted in widespread violence in Barbados the details and inter island politics of which await a full academic account. A cursory glance at the often garbled despatches from Tobago suggests that there may well have been more to the Belamanna riots than a localised labour dispute combined with the legacies of slavery. The principal written text remains the Colonial Office funded history produced nearly 70 years later, Hamilton, Bruce. *Barbados & The Confederation Question 1871-1885* London 1956

¹⁹⁹ The planter opponents of Crown Colony rule formed themselves into loose groupings called Defence Associations. The best known is the older Barbados Defence Association.

²⁰⁰ See Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Debate of the Tobago Riots 12th May 1876, Debate of the move to Crown Colony rule 26th May 1876 in CO 288/26. The Order in Council confirming the decisions of the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly is dated 27th October 1876 in CO 321/14

work of appointed administrators²⁰¹. In 1884 the principle merchant house that made advances to Tobagonian estates collapsed amidst the financial crisis brought about by the collapse of trade negotiations between Britain and Germany over bounties and tariffs. The swamping of the British market with imported crude sugar was to result in the collapse of sugar production in many islands in the British West Indies and extreme hardship in others. With a worsening financial situation and a volatile and impoverished population, Tobago's planters found themselves unwillingly set on the road to union with Trinidad.

The union of Trinidad and Tobago entered its first phase on January the 1st 1889. The larger island's Government was worried that what was financially expedient to the Government in London would leave them saddled with what was regarded as an uncouth backwater and economic basket case. The Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago, Sir John Gorrie, regarded the event as an opportunity to bring the service of the courts to the impoverished and exploited labourers of the sister island and to correct the abuses that had persisted since emancipation through the agency of a tiny overwhelmingly white oligarchy who had long escaped scrutiny by any but themselves.

The colonial career of John Gorrie had been marked by both a commitment to radical liberalism and a firm belief in the civilising mission of empire founded upon a universal enlightened justice. His appointments in Mauritius and Fiji had been marked with repeated clashes with creole and expatriate landowners and strategic alliances with liberal minded Colonial Office officials²⁰². Gorrie's first foray into Caribbean affairs and colonial justice had occurred prior to these overseas judicial appointments. He had served as a counsel appointed to the 1866 Jamaica Commission to represent the interests of those who had suffered at the hands of government forces in the reprisals which followed the Morant Bay rebellion. It was his role in exposing the atrocities committed under Governor Eyre's declaration of martial law which was to shape Gorrie's later views of empire²⁰³. An editorial in *The Morning Star*, possibly

²⁰¹ R.B. Anderson, the doctor and land owner who later opposed John Gorrie, was at the forefront of this resistance. Anderson viciously pursued Administrators who uncovered his various corrupt practices and stripped him of his title as the colony's medical officer. See successive despatches in CO 320/70 for Anderson's corruption. For the lobbying against Administrator Laborde see Petition Against Laborde dated 30th December 1884 in CO 321/88

²⁰² For a biography of Gorrie and his attempts to reform the administration of justice in British colonies see, Brereton, Bridget. *Law, Justice and Empire: The Colonial Career of John Gorrie 1829-1892* UWI Press Kingston 1997

²⁰³ Gorrie was not alone amongst liberal middle class opinion in being appalled at what happened in Jamaica as Eyre's subsequent trial attests. Sydney Olivier would later write a damning indictment of Governor Eyre during his own period as Governor of Jamaica. For a current account of the rebellion, its

written by Gorrie said of the aftermath of the Jamaica Commission that it was time to end, “this nest of jobbery and incompetence”²⁰⁴. For Gorrie as a member of the British anti slavery movement, imperialism had to have at its heart a recognition of historical obligation stemming from past injustice. Another curious feature of this sense of injustice towards the non white colonial subject was a contempt not just for white elites but for the domestic poor of Britain. Gorrie's unpublished novel, set in Mauritius contains the following description of a British police sergeant who has, “the contempt which the low Briton entertains for the rights of the coloured race, and especially a coloured race which was additionally contemptible by speaking French”²⁰⁵. Gorrie's appointments in Mauritius, Fiji and Trinidad were all marked by an antagonism with insular white elites and a desire to provide open access to the legal system free from corruption.

The two principle sources of litigation which Gorrie addressed in Tobago in 1889 and 1890 were those which related to the grinding of canes grown by metayers and those which related to the tenure of metayers on estate lands. The system of metayage in Tobago hinged on a mixture of written and verbal agreements in which estates leased a given plot of land from an estate and the land reverted to the direct control of the estate after a specific number of crops (usually three ratoons²⁰⁶). Estates were sometimes responsible for the grinding and carting of canes cut by metayers and sometimes free to make their own arrangements. The whole system was open to abuse because of the verbal nature of the specifics in most metayer contracts and the notion that estates had the privilege of granting customary rights rather than holding legal obligations. Metayage was described as a system but was more realistically a common local name for a wide variety of arrangements in land use and commercial practice.

The Chief Justice riled planters by refusing to hear excuses for the failure of estates to collect or grind canes, one complainant referred to it as, “a tornado of law”²⁰⁷. Gorrie firmly believed that metayers enjoyed a legal fixity of tenure rather than a customary right. Gorrie's ruling in the case of *Franks vs. Anderson* in February 1890 was the most controversial at the time and

influences and protagonists and its aftermath see, Heuman, Gad. *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica* University of Tennessee Press Knoxville 1994

²⁰⁴ Brereton, Bridget. *Law, Justice and Empire: The Colonial Career of John Gorrie 1829-1892* UWLpress 1997:65

²⁰⁵ Ibid p102-103

²⁰⁶ A ratoon crop of sugar cane is one grown from the stubble of the previous year's crop. Over time the sucrose content of ratooned cane drops making replanting necessary. The number of ratooning of a cane piece can be an indicator of the solvency of the owner and the availability of labour for replanting. Metayage was designed to limit ratoons and keep sucrose levels high whilst making the share cropper rather than the estate owner liable for the costs of replanting.

²⁰⁷ Ibid p268

the most noted since. Gorrie addressed, rather than the letter of the law, the logic of metayage. He sought to establish a case precedent which would secure the property rights of metayers, "If either the proprietor could cut short the arrangement by a notice to quit or the metayer could get rid of his obligations by a similar notice to the proprietor, the whole value of the system would be destroyed"²⁰⁸. The basis of the defendant's action was in English law and Gorrie believed this definition of property inadequate, "Not being a system known to the law of England we receive no assistance from the law of that country"²⁰⁹. He added later in the judgement, "The land itself has never been a fund of credit to any great extent in these islands. In slavery times it was the number of slaves which gave rise to the credit which the planter enjoyed... In Mauritius where Coolies succeeded the slaves it was the number of Coolies which was the real source of credit of the planter, not the land which, without human hands to work it, was worthless"²¹⁰. The crux of Gorrie's judgement was that property lay not specifically in land but in the context of the system by which land is used and its value derives from that system and not an abstract right of property. The judgement also criticised the Tobago Ordinance of 1888's provisions regarding Metayage for placing obligations on the metayer rather than the planter. For the Chief Justice the role of the system of metayage was one which contributed to the availability of credit and hence kept the economy of Tobago functioning in the face of adverse conditions for its principle crop, "So in Tobago, if there is any soul of goodness in the Metairie system it is because the number of the metayers who have undertaken to grow sugar for themselves and the estates gives a value to the property, and becomes a source of credit by which sufficient means can be raised to tide over the out-of-crop season until the cane has become ripe and can be made into sugar"²¹¹.

The view of property which Gorrie advanced had far reaching consequences in Trinidad and Tobago. Whilst it was ostensibly a redressing of balance between smallholders and estates it also recognised the role of the economy and the broader social structure in generating the value of land. In effect Gorrie recognised that land existed in the contextual rather than the abstract realm and that property was held by both its legal owners and those who contributed to its value. It was a view not dissimilar to that advanced by Haldane Olivier in the first edition of *Fabian Tract 7* the previous year (although Gorrie was by no means in favour of land nationalisation). This ethical basis for empire was an ethical basis for property and it was deeply unsettling for those engaged in extractive capitalism in the West Indies. Gorrie's views

²⁰⁸ *Tobago Metairie Commission*, Appendix IX Records of the Court and Judgements Port of Spain 1891

²⁰⁹ Ibid

²¹⁰ Ibid

²¹¹ Ibid

on the lamentable lack of cultivation in Tobago were another attack on the island's planters and a further suggestion that a customary stewardship should be replaced by definable legal rights with a firm ethical foundation²¹².

The rulings Gorrie made in Tobago in 1889 and 1890 galvanised his opponents in both Trinidad and Tobago. The enthusiasm, of his supporters was represented by hostile officials and planters as indicative of a reversion to barbarism on the part of Tobagonians²¹³. Personal attacks in print, petitions to London about the conduct of justice and ultimately a Commission of Inquiry into the issue of metayage were to dog the last years of Gorrie's life and he died in 1892 in Exeter after returning to England to defend himself against his critics.

The evidence taken by the hostile Metairie Commission suggests that the Chief Justice had provided an opportunity for those outside the landed elite to voice complaint. These sentiments appear to have stretched beyond the rulings in court into a broader sense of what property was and what the rights of the individual were. This recognition is visible in the question of the failure to grind the canes of metayers owing to bad weather. In evidence John Swalls, a metayer, noted during a hostile cross examination:

"Q. Why should the proprietor bear all the loss caused by weather? Why should not the Metayer feel the loss too when the weather makes it impossible to take off the canes?

A. I suppose you mean that while you take care of your business I am bound to wait until you can take my canes: you are your own master. The weather comes down and through your fault my canes are lost. It must be the proprietor at fault and someone must bear the loss."²¹⁴

Whilst the incredulous commissioners mocked the idea that someone should pay for the weather the statement here indicates the view that it is not the weather per se but the organisation of the system of metayage in relation to the weather that is being addressed. Ultimately it is the justice of the human system rather than the seasons which are at fault.

²¹² Brereton, Bridget. *Law, Justice and Empire: The Colonial Career of John Gorrie 1829-1892* UWLpress 1997:269

²¹³ For example see, Hay to Robinson, Administration of Tobago and the Role of the Chief Justice 22nd February 1889 CO 295/321. The Colonial Office requested a gunboat to visit the island. Sydney Haldane Olivier, then a clerk in the West India department, minuted that this was, "a time honoured panacea". Commenting later he noted that the Chief Justice was an admirable man who had forgotten that when dealing with West Indian planters it was important to distinguish between, "what is true and what is acceptable policy". Minutes on the Tobago Disturbances Relating to the Presence of John Gorrie and the Problems of Annexation (Olivier's notes are sometimes signed 'S.O.') 16th-22nd March 1889 CO 295/321

²¹⁴ *Tobago Metairie Commission* Port of Spain 1891:85

In the evidence of a former metayer turned estate owner, Paul Tobago of Prospect Hall Estate, there is further evidence of ways in which the Chief Justice's rulings were used to address older grievances about property, "they reap two crops of provisions out of it. We used to make money out of it, but we can't now. They now say Sir John Gorrie said they must not pay pasturage or ground rent"²¹⁵. This move towards an assertive individualism seems to have stemmed from the pent up grievances which were in the process of boiling over when John Gorrie visited Tobago. This is not to side with the planters who were adamant that Gorrie had disturbed a land of harmony. Instead it is to suggest that Gorrie's presence created an opening for those labourers and metayers who were at the bottom of the hierarchy of Tobago's ailing sugar industry.

What's in a Plan? The 1897 Royal West India Commission and Tobago's Union to Trinidad

The fortunes of sugar did not improve in much of the West Indies and in less than a decade the industry in Tobago was all but moribund. As existing meagre standards of living fell, new industries failed to emerge rapidly and the agents of the colonial state were forced to intervene. Thinking about the Caribbean in the Colonial Office had been influenced by the writings of James Anthony Froude whose highly simplified account of the West Indies had uncritically emphasised the extremes of parochialism and the racial logic of British Imperial supremacy in the region. Froude heartily recommended the continuation of this logic, albeit in a heavily reformed manner²¹⁶. Froude's views had not been universally popular and Charles Spencer Salmon of the Colonial Office had written a line by line demolition of Froude's work recommending a programme of regional political integration²¹⁷. Better known is perhaps J.J. Thomas's *Froudacity* in which its author took issue with the simplistic and contradictory vision of the role of Britain in the West Indies and ridiculed the hypocrisies and inaccuracies of the work²¹⁸. Despite these exchanges of views and regular petitions of grievances from the island's inhabitants themselves the Colonial Office mandarins remained ambivalent over the course of

²¹⁵ Ibid p158

²¹⁶ Froude, James Anthony *The English in the West Indies or The Bow of Ulysses* London 1888. As the allegory of the title suggests Froude saw British Imperial rule in the Caribbean as a disaster that only Britain could remedy because its inhabitants were incapable of doing so. As Thomas sought to point out most of them thought otherwise even if they did not all agree on what was to be done.

²¹⁷ Salmon, CS. *The Caribbean Confederation: A Plan for the Union of the Fifteen British West Indian Colonies* London 1888. Salmon was a keen advocate of free trade and wrote extensively about economic development in the colonies of the Caribbean.

²¹⁸ Thomas, J.J. *Froudacity: West Indian Fables By James Anthony Froude Explained by J.J. Thomas*. Trinidad 1889

action to take. In November 1896 the Colonial Office, with Joseph Chamberlain as Secretary of State, decided on the necessity of a Royal Commission of Inquiry. The growing civil unrest and worsening economic conditions of the region had forced the government's hand. The Commissioners were, Henry Wylie Norman, David Barbour and Edward Grey. The Secretary of the Commission was Sydney Haldane Olivier and its adviser on agricultural and botanic matters was the assistant director of Kew gardens and former agricultural officer of Jamaica, Daniel Morris. In its tour of the West Indies the Commission would sit forty five times and interview hundreds of witnesses²¹⁹. The report it submitted was to have far reaching implications for both the Caribbean and the wider world as a model for development planning and implementation, not least of all in its ambiguities as much as its recommendations.

The West India Royal Commission's report directed its attention to the failure of the sugar industry. It took Tobago as an example of the catastrophe which would befall the region if the industry collapsed without alternatives being supported by the Colonial authorities, "The present condition of such an island as Tobago illustrates the serious character of the economic and administrative problem that must arise in Your Majesty's possessions in the West Indies if there is a collapse of the sugar industry". The report then added a brief description of the conditions that prevailed in consequence at the end of the 19th Century, "The resident population manages to live, but a significant proportion of them is driven permanently or temporarily, to other islands in search of work, and it is impossible to raise more revenue than is barely sufficient to meet the necessary expenditure on the cheapest and simplest form of government. New roads cannot be made, and even those that already exist cannot be kept in proper repair out of revenue"²²⁰. Whilst these statements were more problematic than they appear, especially the state of revenue and expenditure in Tobago, the attitude of the commissioners was one which saw the island as an exemplar of the economic malaise of the British Caribbean.

In devising a solution to the ills of the West Indies the commissioners turned to a system of smallholder agriculture as the best alternative to sugar. The characterisation of the region's inhabitants sought to attribute a balance of qualities rather than the ill disguised abuses of Froude and his readers. The report notes that the "negro is an efficient labourer, especially when he receives good wages", but adds that, "He is fond of display, open-handed, careless as to the future, ordinarily good humoured, but excitable and difficult to manage, especially in

²¹⁹ Richardson, Bonham C. *Economy and Environment in the Caribbean: Barbados and the Windwards in the Late 1800s*. University Press of Florida Tallahassee 1997:29

²²⁰ *Report of the West India Royal Commission HMSO 1897:7-8*

large numbers, when his temper is aroused”²²¹. There is a blending of economic necessities and the necessity of employing archetypes throughout the report. The ambiguities of a compromise draft persist in the descriptions of Indian labourers as well but the report is unanimous in the view that, “The existence of a class of small proprietors is a source of both economic and political strength”²²². The provision for small proprietors is defended with a further statement regarding the region’s planters, “it is the special duty of Your Majesty’s Government to see that the welfare of the general public is not sacrificed to the interests, or supposed interests, of a small but influential minority which has special means of enforcing its wishes and bringing its claims to notice”²²³.

Land reform was not energetically prescribed by the commissioners but it was an integral part of what they recommended. It is also worth pointing out that there is a difference between the redistribution of property and the extension of the ownership of property. The latter policy was advocated by the West India Royal Commission, but the former had more than a few adherents amongst the population, as witnessed by some of the testimony in the Metayer Commission in Tobago. The commissioners were firmly of the view that the ownership of property would go some way to granting a stake in West Indian society to many hitherto excluded. Part III of the report begins with a statement of the ethical basis for intervention. In the first instance, “The black population of these colonies was originally placed in them by force as slaves”. Stemming from this the commissioners were of the view that, “we could not, by the single act of freeing them, divest ourselves of responsibility for their future”. In consequence:

“We cannot abandon them, and if economic conditions become such that private enterprise and the profits of trade and cultivation cease to attract white men to the Colonies, or to keep them there, this may render it more difficult for the British Government to discharge its obligations, but will not in any way diminish the force of them. We have placed the labouring population where it is, and created for it the conditions, moral and material, under which it exists, and we cannot divest ourselves of responsibility for its future”²²⁴.

The placing of the moral before the material is no accident of emphasis in this statement. An ethical basis for colonial policy was certainly a belief of the commission’s secretary and

²²¹ Ibid p17

²²² Ibid p17

²²³ Ibid p18

²²⁴ Ibid p64

underlies its recommendations. The need for government intervention is clear throughout the text of the report as is a certain ambiguity over the role of private property and its origins but in Part III it is totally plain. The reshaping of the British West Indies through a commitment to further smallholder proprietorship was a key recommendation, although how it was to be achieved was often left as discretionary. For example, in Tobago where, “we recommend that the settlement of the population on Crown and other available lands should be persevered with and encouraged”²²⁵, it was left broadly up to the authorities in Trinidad to decide on the course of action without specific recommendations being made. The ambiguities of the document relate to the ambiguities between its author’s varieties of parochialism, as well as their shared concerns about market orientated policies in the colonies. One thing on which the report was adamant upon was the creation of a system of botanic stations and government farms, as well as an institutionalised approach to agricultural training in schools. The independent smallholder may have been a mechanism for divesting government of direct responsibility, but government was to take its role in creating a class of smallholders very seriously indeed. In order to understand the role of professional botanists and agricultural experts in the West Indies over the succeeding decades it is necessary to understand the origins of the institutions which employed them and the pressures which had placed Daniel Morris of Kew Gardens amongst the members of the 1897 Commission.

Since the deepening of the financial crisis in the West Indies in the early 1880s botanists trained at Kew gardens had pursued the goal of improving imperial stewardship through economic botany. This quest for a scientific reorganisation of production in the empire came about as a result of a synthesis between the agendas of the botanists of Kew, and the views of politicians obsessed by the economic and political significance of land²²⁶. In 1882 Daniel Morris, then the Director of Agriculture in Jamaica had reported unfavourably on the state of Jamaica’s forests. He had bemoaned the lack of agricultural extension and the wasteful burning of high value timbers by smallholders in the highlands. His report had found favour with the Director of Kew, Joseph Hooker. Hooker proposed a visit by an expert, E.D.M Hooper, from the Indian forestry service to assess the state of the West Indian islands. This measure

²²⁵ Ibid p41

²²⁶ Drayton, Richard. *Nature’s Government: Science, Imperial Britain and the ‘Improvement’ of the World*. Yale University Press Newhaven and London 2000:256

was far from popular with planters who, as local governments were expected to bear the cost, questioned the need for such an imposition from London²²⁷.

Hooper's report on Tobago was written two years after his visit in 1885. He expressed admiration at the island's forest reserve and emphasised the necessity of its maintenance to protect watersheds, which he saw as particularly important because of peculiarities in the island's geology. He observed that although little had been done with the forest since 1763 and that its area was undiminished. Speaking of the ecological impact of metayage he noted, "The demand for land has been met by the subdivision of estates and the continuation of the system of metairie has kept a portion of the population stationary that would otherwise have wandered to other more distant parts of the island"²²⁸, this forms a peculiar slant on the metayer system whose detractors often attacked the exhaustion of soils which they saw resulting from the cropping system and the lack of tenure. Metayage clearly also filled its intended function of concentrating population. This avoided the creation of interior settlements of the kind which would so often trouble the thoughts of officials in the post emancipation Caribbean.

Hooper recommended the establishment of an enlarged reserve to include all interior lands not under cultivation. Hooper felt that this needed to be done rapidly in case changes in the burden of taxation, designed to assist planters, encouraged a boom in land sales and an, "increase in small holdings and distribution of the labouring class which it is not expedient to foster until the selection is made of the lands the Crown requires for its own purposes"²²⁹. The relationship between conservancy and a covert coercive labour policy is worth noting. The subtleties which Hooper brought to bear on the matter far exceeded the cruder efforts of planters warring with metayers.

Hooper's other suggestion was for an extension of the inter island fire wood trade. Tobago marketed fire wood to Barbados as well as producing charcoal for use in both cooking and water filtration on the island itself²³⁰. Firewood was an interesting recommendation given the special fear in which fire was held by officials in the Caribbean during this period. Morris had

²²⁷ Richardson, Bonham C. *Igniting the Caribbean's Past: Fire in British West Indian History*. University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 2005:79-82

²²⁸ Hooper, E.D.M. *Report on the Forests of Tobago*. Madras 1887:10

²²⁹ Ibid p11

²³⁰ A description of water filters made from charcoal and coral limestone blocks can be found in Hay, L.G. *Handbook of the Colony of Tobago* Port of Spain 1889:59. Many less well off Tobagonians used far cruder devices. I had at least one conversation with a beekeeper who could recall the use of 'black bread' charcoal filters made from burnt loaves.

intervened specifically to propose fire control and Hooper's reports for other islands were also in favour of stringent fire control legislation. The Caribbean was not lacking such laws but the laws were often unenforceable²³¹.

John Hinchley Hart, Superintendent of Trinidad's Botanic Garden was less than impressed by Hooper's remarks on fire wood cultivation. In an article for the Trinidad garden's *Bulletin of Miscellanea*, modelled after the *Kew Bulletin*, Hart suggested the scheme was inadvisable because woodcutters would lack the intelligence to select older trees²³². Of course he felt that larger private proprietors might attempt the experiment. Hart also attacked the vastly increased (6000 acres enlarged to 25000 acres) forest reserve proposed by Hooper on economic grounds although he appears to dodge Hooper's point that an official reserve would result from lands escheated to the Crown and only ultimately become a commercial reserve. Hart was no doubt trying to placate planters perturbed that their uncultivated estates might be added to the reserve area. In 1891 Hart was to write a report on Trinidad's forests in which he specifically blamed fires and deforestation on, "a roving set of semi-civilized African squatters, principally 'Congos' and 'Cangas', who, after reaping one or two crops of rice or corn, abandoned the place"²³³. Fire, insurrection and reversion to African barbarism, were issues that troubled officials. This was especially so as the recession of the late 20th Century and the Caribbean's impoverished and isolated populations, seemed at times to be slipping beyond their control.

In the years immediately before the Royal Commission of 1897 the role of Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office was to be instrumental in pursuing constructive imperialism²³⁴. Chamberlain had instituted the Royal Commission from fear of growing U.S. influence in the Americas and the declining prestige of Britain on account of her ramshackle West Indian possessions. Daniel Morris, who had spent years arguing for the establishment of regional agricultural and forestry services lobbied hard for inclusion on the panel that headed for the West Indies²³⁵. The Imperial Department of Agriculture for the West Indies would fulfil Morris's ambitions, it would set an example for the rest of Britain's territories and it would give Chamberlain his civilized class of smallholders.

²³¹ Richardson, Bonham C. *Igniting the Caribbean's Past: Fire in British West Indian History*. University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 2005

²³² Hart, J.H. Report on the Agri-Horticultural Resources of Tobago. *Trinidad Royal Botanic Gardens Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information* No.12. 1889:20

²³³ Hart, J.H. *Trinidad: Report on Forest Conservation*. London 1891:7

²³⁴ Drayton, Richard. *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain and the 'Improvement' of the World*. Yale University Press Newhaven and London 2000:257

²³⁵ Ibid p257

The Royal Commission wholly endorsed Morris's plans to extend the botanic establishments in the larger islands, "It is evident that to grapple with the present circumstances, there is required for the smaller islands a special public department capable of dealing with all the questions connected with economic plants suitable for growth in tropical countries, and we recommend the establishment of such a department, under which should be placed the various botanic stations already in existence"²³⁶. The report also suggested that general education work hand in hand with botanic establishments. The new bureaucracy was not to be simply a scientific or economic undertaking but a broader idealised project of improvement and standardisation to be undertaken in the British West Indies. From the emphasis on the individual improving planter of the 18th Century had emerged the necessity for a larger system of state sponsored scientific research. This was to be operated in conjunction with the education system to organise and rationalise a class of emergent smallholders. The Kingdom of I had been replaced by the realm of the state if not the Kingdom of God. This proposed system of administration was to be a politically charged realm. Within this realm questions of land use and property ownership were contested. This occurred within broader debates about the nature and organisation of society. These debates would be shaped by the beliefs and actions of individuals within and without government bodies. The concepts of peasants, science, education and improvement were to be central to the efforts of officials seeking to develop the West Indies at the dawn of the 20th Century. These concepts would attract a variety of beliefs and the articulations of their organisation in relation to one another would lie at the heart of policymaking. A commitment to development was to be a common feature of British colonial policy in the wider region and across the territories of the empire. The substance of this commitment would have its origins in the wide ranging ethical concerns of its protagonists.

²³⁶ *Report of the West India Royal Commission* HMSO 1897:18

Chapter 3: The Plan Takes Form: The Aftermath of Union

The immediate aftermath of the West India Royal Commission was to include a renewed emphasis on the role of the professional scientist in imperial rule in the Anglophone Caribbean. The role of Daniel Morris as the head of the newly created Imperial Department of Agriculture for the West Indies was to insure the commission's view of agriculture would be enshrined in the new institution. Not only would the influence of the department's advocates spread across the empire to India and Africa but it would see Morris and his successors coordinating even peripheral activities in the region. The commission's use of Tobago as an exemplar of all that was failing in the British West Indian colonies also serves to explain why the head of this new scientific bureaucracy would pay close attention to the early years of its Botanic Station and Government Farm. In a letter from Thiselton-Dyer of Kew Gardens to Morris on the advent of the latter's retirement in 1911 the progress of the West Indian department was called, "an object lesson for the whole of the civilized world"²³⁷. The peculiar mixture of Chamberlain's improving imperialism and the debates around land nationalization on the left had, through the commission's work, "forged an enduring bureaucratic instrument"²³⁸ whose influence and imitation would play a major role in forming current notions of development.

In Tobago the beliefs that came to attach to particular visions of development were often contingent upon preceding concepts that had been used to describe land use. The logic of improvement was often far from monolithic even if commitment to improvement became a signifier of virtue. The ways in which, landowners, politicians and bureaucrats incorporated improvement into the grammatical expression of belief was bound up with personal moral cosmologies in a variety of ways. In exploring the way that beliefs about the vices and virtues of ownership, health, race, imperial stewardship and nascent Tobagonian nationalism were performed in the context of improvement, it becomes possible to see the varied implications of development as a moral concept.

²³⁷ Thiselton-Dyer to Morris 16th January 1911, C.O 318/325

²³⁸ Drayton, R. *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* Yale University Press Newhaven and London 2000:62

Rebuilding a Productive and Healthy Landscape: 1900-1932

Despite the objections of Tobago's merchants, planters and administrators the Norman Commission had supported the view that full amalgamation with Trinidad would be necessary for an economic recovery in the island. This was implemented in 1899 in place of the looser stewardship that had characterized the preceding decade.

One of the first institutions to benefit from the union was the Botanic Station, founded in 1899 on a small estate adjacent to Scarborough and paid for by the government of Trinidad. This was to be one of ten stations that formed the Imperial Department of Agriculture for the West Indies. Its curator was Henry Millen who had previously worked at the Lagos Botanic Station. Short of labour, Millen used convicts from the island's jail to carry out manual work, an action with faint overtones of the use of slave labour in the St Vincent Garden a century earlier. Improvement retained a connection to the historical evolution of a moral grammar of West Indian labour.

Millen devoted little time to local plants and preferred to try introductions from Trinidad and through his West African contacts including, "a spinach used by the natives and Europeans of that country. It is a species of *Amaranthus* (native name Tete) and has already become quite a weed in the station. Seeds of it were distributed throughout the island and to the Botanical Establishments. It should prove a welcome addition to West Indian Gardens when more fully known"²³⁹. The first step in placing isolated Tobago within a global system of agricultural practice and knowledge was a small one but indicative of the system's operation of transfer and experiment.

Millen worked predominantly on lectures and dispensing pamphlets to the new settlers on crown lands of which 1337 acres were distributed that year. The station staff also commented on the lamentable state of Tobago's infrastructure. Despite the dismissal of the Cacao instructor for unclear reasons Daniel Morris reported favourably on the work of the station and commented that Millen's energetic lectures were generating, "a good deal of interest"²⁴⁰ in the station's work. Tobago's new Botanic station was leading by example in the drive to reform and improve the island's cultivation and the Morris was satisfied that even in such a

²³⁹ Report of the Tobago Botanic Station CP79 1901:3

²⁴⁰ Observations of Daniel Morris to the Colonial Secretary Trinidad, Barbados 14th March 1901 CP79 1901:6

peripheral corner of the empire his new department held the promise of a solution to the malaise in West Indian agriculture.

The Botanic Station was charged with the instruction of smallholders and in particular those settled on Crown Lands in an effort to boost the area under cultivation. Although only one boy availed himself of the opportunity to receive regular instruction at the station he was noted as taking a keen interest and showing a “desire to improve”²⁴¹. People plants, economies and societies could all avail themselves of the improvement on offer in the virtuous imperial garden. Many of the settlers in the years between union and the First World War came from Grenada and St Vincent and preferred to purchase estate land served by roads rather than inaccessible Crown Lands. Speculators hoping to cash in on Tobago’s union with Trinidad were disappointed, with the government in Trinidad sticking to the view that Crown Lands were to be disbursed at equal cost to all. Attempts at naked exploitation through imported Indian indentured labour were dismissed as being detrimental to the broader goal of development. Tobagonian labourers were cheap to employ and needed cash and Tobagonian estates would not conscience a scheme that would add to their tax burden. In this instance it was concluded that potential investors might make their own arrangements but would not receive government support²⁴². This policy commitment was the result of a specific moral logic that illustrates the consequences of a complex of beliefs about the obligations of the public and private sector in the context of imperial stewardship.

The 226 settlers on Crown Lands were reported as often abandoning them due to the depredations of ants and other pests by the garden’s instructor²⁴³. Another reason for failing to cultivate was endemic ill health, in two cases this resulted in repossession, the agricultural instructor noting the need to set an example to increase cultivation²⁴⁴. By this logic failure to cultivate was a failure of personal moral responsibility rather than the result of failures in healthcare.

The early years of the Botanic Station laid an institutional foundation for the science of improvement and the imperatives of development. From small beginnings in penal and more subtle forms of coercion, to plant transfer and educational work, the plan had begun to take shape. With the first institution of development in place the official line moved to establish a

²⁴¹ Tobago Botanic Station Report of 1900-1901 CP92 1901:3

²⁴² Trinidad despatch 153 dated 13th April 1904 CO 295/427

²⁴³ Tobago Botanic Station Report of 1901-1902 CP64 1902:2

²⁴⁴ Tobago Botanic Station Report of 1902-1903 CP46 1903:8

goal for improvement in Tobago; specifically the rehabilitation of the landscape along scientific lines.

In 1909 Governor George R Le Hunte paid a visit to Tobago, albeit fleeting, during the early months of his administration and commented on the state of the island, “The South Western end of the island presents an object lesson in the disastrous effects of the denudation of its hills for timber, no doubt for fuel and to make way for canes in the days of sugar but now continuously burnt for grass for stock, which probably only use the lower slopes while the fire runs unchecked to the summits”²⁴⁵. Despite being vague about the causes of deforestation, a sign that he probably had not travelled into the island’s interior, the description and its tone suggest continuity with the earlier forestry reports of Lodge and Hooper.

The Governor suspected a relationship between deforestation and the frequent washing away of roads and bridges despite also arguing for greatly diminished rainfall which he was certain must be another attendant consequence. “The evil effect is not confined to the District alone, for it may probably have already affected the island as a whole as the result of one portion blindly ignoring a fundamental law of nature”²⁴⁶, he blustered, in what by the end, even he had to apologise to the legislative council for being an overly long speech. The section on Tobago in particular demonstrates a marked moral commitment to responsible environmental management. The Governor’s speech was peppered with allusions to good and evil. Behind this statement lay the complex and bitter politics that had given Tobago an abnormally high level of land ownership amongst the population. In Governor Le Hunte’s argument large estates were portrayed as largely to blame for the Tobago’s economic state and the resulting union with Trinidad. As a consequence of the historical moral failures of estate owners to care for land and people it fell to a reluctant government to find a solution to what reports would call the question of ‘Tobago’s progress’. It was these moral conundrums of progress that the concept of improvement was best suited to address by merit of the virtues with which it was invested.

Agricultural improvement in Tobago had focused initially on finding a crop suited to small holdings on the islands hilly slopes. Cocoa had been chosen with an additional emphasis on livestock rearing, but seasonal burning of the hills in the south west was detrimentally connected with the latter. Ground provisions and vegetables were to be pursued for export to

²⁴⁵ Governors Address to the Legislative council 8th November 1909 CP127 1909:5

²⁴⁶ Governors Address to the Legislative council 8th November 1909 CP127 1909:5

Trinidad²⁴⁷. Between 1912 and 1916 exports of vegetables more than doubled in weight and increased more than five times in value, helped no doubt by wartime conditions²⁴⁸. But just as officials pushed for the export of crops certain unsettling events began to occur in the field of social welfare.

It was more than a decade since the West India Royal Commission had visited Tobago. During that time the island, joined to Trinidad, had seen a flurry of activity in crop experimentation on both private estates and through the agency of the Botanic Station. In 1912 a chain of events would begin that illustrated how the goals of scientific improvement set out in 1897 differed from the new morality of development espoused by Le Hunte in 1909. During the middle months of 1912 people in the inland villages began to fall ill not just a few but in their thousands.

Between June and December of 1912 there were to be 3179 cases of dysentery and 466 deaths in a total population of barely 20000²⁴⁹. The moral, improved and productive society was also stricken with endemic sickness. Accounts of the epidemic and in medical reports more generally, reveal the ways that members of the tiny medical establishment came to use the concept of a peasantry to signify particular systems of belief about the vices and virtues of rural life. When the island was joined to Trinidad the earliest medical report to survive makes the situation brutally clear “The death rate was high: a purely natural consequence of a small hospital (17 Beds) for over 18000 people with the natural result that the beds are mostly occupied by the very worst and most hopeless class of cases”²⁵⁰. In spite of this, cheery accounts of a hard working and god fearing yeomanry had dominated official reports and tourist literature with perhaps the most extreme being the scripture filled tourist brochure of Rev Henry Hammond²⁵¹.

The epidemic bothered the Governor of Trinidad who in turn bothered the Colonial Office, whose clerks forwarded the reports from Tobago to the London and Liverpool Schools of Tropical Medicine. From Liverpool came the opinion that, “the subject of dysentery has been

²⁴⁷ Ground Provisions refers to basic crops grown by smallholders in the Caribbean. The term commonly denotes roots, tubers and vegetables such as, Dasheen, Pumpkin or Sweet Potato. The expression has historically been used interchangeably with that of short crops or catch crops, although this is not always accurate. The time frame indicates the growing cycle. Medium crops might refer to Pigeon Peas and Corn or Pineapple whilst major cash crops like sugar or cocoa are annual long crops.

²⁴⁸ Report of the Tobago Botanic Station CP89 1918:14

²⁴⁹ Trinidad and Tobago Annual Report 1912-1913 page 24

²⁵⁰ Report of the Surgeon General. CP 57 of 1902

²⁵¹ Hammond, Rev Frederick Henry. *A Tour Around Tobago By Land and Sea* Port of Spain 1910

very considerably neglected for a long time”, with the view that an expedition should be mounted for the purposes of research as; “the importance of dysentery throughout the tropics is second only to malaria”²⁵². Dr F.M. Sandwith of the London School had a harsher view of events and of the climatic anxieties which affected health officials in the colonies,

“I notice under paragraph 10 of the Surgeon General’s report that he speaks of ‘climatic and seasonal conditions’ these conditions over which we have little or no control, are probably of much less importance than the water supply over which perfect control can be obtained. I am not conversant with the water supply of Tobago, but it is obvious that a community dependent on shallow wells which are unprotected from faecal contamination is courting dysentery and almost deserves it”²⁵³.

The view that Tobagonians lived in squalor by choice and were in need of correction was to be a belief openly held by officials over the next decade. Through attachment to a concept of the peasantry this belief became entwined with a popular image of the Tobago’s landscape and people. In this manner beliefs about hygiene became grammatically related to the more general beliefs concerning development. What is crucial to note is that this happened in specific ways as people responded to and described the particularities of island life.

It was to be several decades though before Dr Sandwith’s closing comment was acted upon, “Great Britain and many other countries suffered terribly from dysentery until the inhabitants learned that it was economical to spend money upon a pure water supply”. Even in finishing his advice the doctor clearly lays the blame for the ailment with the afflicted. This was a far cry from the Norman Commission’s call for ethically informed action on the basis of a statement of historically constituted responsibility. Scientists and officials had used their personal moral cosmologies as the basis for advising the government on the problems of far flung people and places. The new bureaucracy of the empire made this possible because of the specific moral intentions that had informed its founder’s views of expert knowledge. This made it logically possible to privilege expert opinions that corresponded to beliefs about the perceived vices and virtues of others. Applying a grammatical analogy to systems of belief explains how this enabled the advancement of propositions about what was deemed desirable and undesirable in the broader context of development.

²⁵² R. Ross to the Colonial Office 11th of September 1912 CO 295/479

²⁵³ Dr Sandwith to under Secretary Harcourt 7th October 1912 CO 295/479

Between the 1897 and 1932 the area under cultivation in Tobago quadrupled but the values and quantities of produce shipped fluctuated wildly²⁵⁴. This was partly, as in the case of cocoa, due to global market conditions but also down to distortions of the market created by an emphasis on ground provision exports to Trinidad. This was to prove all the more disastrous during the final years of WWI as the price of imported foods rose sharply. The situation was to be further exacerbated by the tenure of a particularly sanguine administrator in the form of Warden J. Sorzano. In 1918 an agricultural department pamphlet praised Tobago's peasantry for its industry²⁵⁵. But behind the wartime propaganda exhorting imperial loyalty lay a less sanguine picture of food production. Whilst deteriorating transport between Trinidad and Tobago would ultimately expose some of the agricultural progress as a fallacy, the structuring of a concept of the peasantry in the moral cosmology of officials was under way.

The 1912 dysentery outbreak was a disaster for Tobago. Annual mortality in a normal year was around 4-500 deaths in the first two decades of the 20th Century with half being children under 5 years old²⁵⁶. With the dysentery fatalities included the island's tiny population had lost one person in twenty²⁵⁷. But a more mundane matter intruded on the running of the medical establishment in 1913. Britain's Ambassador to Sweden, the high flying Esme Howard wrote to his friend Lionel Earle at HM Ministry of Works in London,

"A friend of mine Mr T.L. Orde who is looking after an estate in Tobago, West Indies, in which I am interested writes to me that he and his brother planters are greatly disturbed at having a coloured man as Government doctor... They do not like – and I think you will agree that this is natural – that a coloured man should look after their womenfolk"²⁵⁸

Howard was probing for a contact in the Colonial Office who would placate the manager of the Louis D'or estate. Howard's mother was descended from Jamaican planters and the connotations of the word brother suggest a flavour of how Howard viewed his associates in Tobago. Only Scarborough's white District Medical Officer submitted an annual report but even this invisibility was just too visible for estate managers like Orde. The trouble was that in Trinidad and Tobago there was an at least official commitment to appointment by seniority

²⁵⁴ Data extrapolated from Council Papers but not complete for all years in series.

²⁵⁵ Freeman, W.G. *Our Local Foods: Their Production and Use*. Port of Spain 1918

²⁵⁶ Annual Reports of the Surgeon General, Trinidad Council Paper series.

²⁵⁷ The point of concern here is that the actual report submitted to the Royal Colleges in London and Liverpool is no longer extant. The death toll figures for the epidemic cited in correspondence are higher than the annual returns of mortality. My assumption, which may be wrong, is that the mortality rate from the epidemic was kept separate from general mortality figures.

²⁵⁸ Howard to Earle 26th June 1913 CO 295/489

and ability (described in that order) and overt discrimination was a direct contradiction of that policy. Given Howard's standing the Colonial Office civil servants scribbled numerous minutes in the file trying to generate a diplomatic response. In commenting on Earle's minute to the department they decided that the word 'prejudice' needed to be amended to 'concerns' but ultimately concluded that, "It is impossible to close the medical service in the W. Indies to black and coloured men and having admitted them we cannot discriminate against them in the matter of (allocating) districts"²⁵⁹. In this instance natural prejudices had to be redefined as legitimate concerns that the Colonial Office was powerless to address in consequence of prior policy commitments. What makes this all the more interesting is that one of the finest snapshots of Tobago in this period comes from the medical reports written by Joseph Lennox Pawan.

Dr Pawan had won the island scholarship in 1907, attended Edinburgh University and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He had returned to Trinidad in 1912 and been Assistant Surgeon at the Port of Spain Hospital. Between 1916 and 1919 he served as DMO for Tobago. Given the above correspondence and his five years in Europe he was unlikely to have viewed Tobago as a favourable posting. This is all the more likely as DMOs relied on private practice for a portion of their income and Tobago had virtually ceased to have a cash economy over a decade earlier.

Pawan's reports are in part a reflection of this disdain but they are also indicative of an attitude amongst officials that viewed Tobago's landscape and people somewhere between a pastoral idyll and a squalid and unproductive whole awaiting the attentions of imperial improvement. In reporting on his first year he wrote,

"The hilly nature of the country, the absence of a proper system of roads, the gross ignorance of the inhabitants in the elementary principles of hygiene coupled with their ingrained belief in witchcraft and necromancy render the work of a sanitary inspector in Tobago, and especially the Northern District, particularly arduous"²⁶⁰.

Pawan's ensuing report is far from the optimism and complacency emerging from other departments at this time. The numerous suggestions for improvement that he includes are indicative of a man both keen to impress and probably keen to be moved elsewhere. He provides a realistic assessment of a community that had been trapped in poverty for decades

²⁵⁹ Enclosed Minute, F.G.A. Butler 8th July 1913 CO 295/489

²⁶⁰ Annual Report of the Surgeon General CP 121 1918

and until the act of union enjoyed only the most inept and parasitic facsimile of government. In 1907, the last time a figure of revenue over expenditure was produced £3920 of tax and licence revenue was matched by a mere £403 in expenditure²⁶¹. After that date only figures for revenue were published.

Sanitation work by the inspector was confined to Scarborough at the time, although Pawan's complaint of "inertia" on the part of the inspector later led to the institution of a system of thrice weekly scavenging and waste collection this was to be some years in the future. In 1917 there was no such system and even in the principle and sole, town of the island the E.G Blanc the town's DMO noted, "There is no provision for this, the prevailing custom being earthen pits or pail and dry earth"²⁶². The water supply was also of "doubtful quality". The sanitary inspector, who is not named didn't even bother to file his annual report as with districts in Trinidad and mandated by law. Medical personnel deemed Tobago and its inhabitants as 'customarily' unhealthy. The lack of a system of sanitation appears to have been viewed by some in government as part of a natural state of affairs, rooted in the vices of the population, rather than the product of decades of neglect and a crumbling infrastructure.

As Pawan's letters and reports to his superiors make clear, he was not of this view. He was however fixated on a particular representation of the Tobagonian 'peasant' that was a mixture of disgust and romantic idyll. "The average Tobagonian labourer male and female is a vegetarian and his fine physique and abundant stamina would gladden the heart of Bernard Shaw. Nitrogenous and protein food, condiments and spices, etc so dear to the palate of the city epicure are unknown to the average natives in the district and to this I attribute the total absence of Brights Disease amongst them"²⁶³. The landscape also played a part in this narrative, "There is an abundant and easily obtainable supply of good fresh water even in the depths of a prolonged drought in the form of numerous beautiful rivulets in the immediate neighbourhood of the various villages"²⁶⁴. The hints of coercion, both desired and frustrated are also present, attempting to tweak this Elysium to a more obedient perfection, "There are still to be found a few surface wells, though happily they are being gradually abandoned. Their total abolition could easily be enforced without any material inconvenience to their owners... ..The rural constables exercise only a limited amount of control over the prevention of the

²⁶¹ Wardens Report, Tobago, CP 149:31 1907

²⁶² Annual Report of the Surgeon General, Plymouth District, Tobago. CP 121 1918

²⁶³ Ibid

²⁶⁴ Ibid

pollution of the streams and rivers. The washing of soiled linen and personal ablution in mid stream still continue to be a universal and favourite practice”²⁶⁵.

The disposal of human excreta was a cause of concern in all of Tobago’s medical districts. The reliance of the population on the hillside streams described above for both water supply and personal ablution played a major part in atrocious mortality and morbidity figures, “In a large number of cases the motions are deposited from the bowels into the midst of the nearest thicket or brushwood, and these, as obtained among the Israelites of old, nature is allowed to dispose of the excreta as best she may – whether it be through the effects of the rays of the sun or through the kindly interposition of the birds of the air or the beasts of the forests”²⁶⁶. Even in graphic descriptions of unsanitary living conditions there maintains a mixture of the pastoral and the corrupted that plays into the emergence of an archetype of rural backwardness. It is in these early 20th Century reports that an aesthetically desirable vision of Tobago’s landscape becomes inseparably enmeshed with descriptions of poverty and government inertia. The level of pollution from household and personal waste also appears to have played a part in dictating settlement patterns, the frequent moving and construction of new houses being a noted occurrence in the island. Such waste when stored rather than dumped was placed in pits built close to the house site and often above it. Tobago’s steep topography should be borne in mind when reading the following description “the excreta of the whole household accumulates for months or maybe even years until overflowing compels the inmates of the house to devote their attention elsewhere”²⁶⁷.

Dr Pawan’s report for the year 1917 also includes a short investigation into one of the island’s mysterious illnesses, Marasmas or Marasma. Careful inquiry enabled the mapping of the disease and revealed its spread from Scarborough to the outlying villages. In this it mirrored the spread of ‘The Trinidad Sickness’. This was the local name for syphilis which was commonly contracted by labourers who migrated to Trinidad. Its prevalence attests to the high level of return migration which is mentioned in several council papers. Pawan developed the view that the Marasmus sickness identified by his local informants was simply congenital syphilis. To the report he added a supporting note from an H.A. Crosby of Mason Hall which, whilst primarily concerned with the neglect of children by mothers and malnutrition stated, “I beg leave to call your attention to this for many years now since I return to my native land I notice that children die within the age of one and five years than aged people and they say it is from

²⁶⁵ Ibid

²⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁷ Ibid

marassama”²⁶⁸. The local identification of disease, especially venereal disease, with Trinidad is difficult to explore through such a limited source but raises the tantalising insight into an early popular stereotype of Trinidadians in Tobago. It also illustrates that it was not merely British colonisers and officials around the empire who used ideas surrounding disease and the body to delineate space but rather it was the economic processes and migration flows unleashed by the economic priorities of empire that caused such distinctions to be made.

The years 1918 and 1919 saw the three DMOs all writing longer than normal reports. The global influenza pandemic, whose spread was facilitated by the upheavals of World War I, required special vigilance in reporting potential cases. This increased vigilance had little impact on the living conditions of the island’s inhabitants. The 1919 report of Dr Pawan notes, “As far as I am able to judge no substantial work was preformed by the Sanitary Inspector during the period under review”²⁶⁹.

The disruption of wartime had necessitated campaigns for self sufficiency in food but it had also necessitated a loss of focus on earlier concerns with government improvement. There was to be a surge of labour unrest in Tobago and throughout the wider region in 1919. In Tobago this centred on the main town of Scarborough²⁷⁰. Early in December the government attempted to stage an Agricultural Show, the consequences of which should have proved an indicator of what would happen just a few days later, “It has been stated that the paucity of the exhibits was the result of a rumour that the Government was having the show to enable them to learn what further taxation might be imposed, as indicated by the show, on the inhabitants of the island”²⁷¹. The sabotage of a public display was one symptom of a growing paranoia about government and the efforts of government staff to regulate behaviours and economic activities in Tobago. This was compounded by an official indifference to low wages, antagonistic labour relations and a populace wracked by avoidable and treatable endemic diseases. To make matters worse the price of imported foods appears to have risen, the surplus generated by increased cultivation in Tobago was being exported to Trinidad and

²⁶⁸ Ibid

²⁶⁹ Report of the Surgeon General. CP 101 of 1919

²⁷⁰ The strikes and disturbances after the war are connected to the circulation of Garveyite and socialist activists. Major riots also occurred during a dock strike in Port of Spain in Trinidad. Even small ports like Scarborough saw the arrival of activists with news of the wider world and of quantities of contraband literature. It has been argued that the Tobago protests were a direct show of sympathy but this should be taken within the context of the potentially very specific grievances of the inhabitants. What these grievances were is not always clear in government documents but some idea can be gleaned from both contextual events and the pronouncements of local politicians who sought to communicate these grievances to colonial officials in later decades.

²⁷¹ Warden’s Reports. CP 115 of 1920

mortality amongst the under fives had doubled. Food exports to Trinidad collapsed but prices remained high in Tobago. Warden Sorzano blamed the fall in exports on a lack of enterprise by the peasantry²⁷².

On the 6th of December 1919 a riot broke out in Scarborough and the authorities quelled the disturbance by opening fire on the crowd, killing one and wounding six²⁷³. Warden Sorzano reported, "As is usually the case in such disturbances most of the leading spirits were persons of no stake in the community, and many of them were known to the police"²⁷⁴. Sorzano was hardly aware of the state of day to day life in the island, certainly the squalor described in reports from the DMOs and the Public Works Division appears to have escaped his notice. When he was summoned to appear before the Legislative Council's Committee on Wages three months later, he stated that he had no idea of the food requirements of labourers, could not state the level of wages with any accuracy and was unaware of whether or not child labour was evident in the island. He believed the population to be, "prosperous and contented" mainly because they appeared to be self sufficient smallholders and that wages were perfectly satisfactory²⁷⁵. A developing myth of the self reliant Tobagonian peasantry appeared to serve as a means by which the district authorities could ignore the area's poverty.

Medical reports for the period offer an alternative insight into the causes of the unrest as well as the alleged shortage of labour available in the island. In the first instance it appears to be no coincidence that the month of December 1919 saw the establishment of a Sanitary Authority, a token gesture and one that had been instituted in districts of Trinidad since 1915²⁷⁶. "Malaria, Syphilis and Yaws constitute the trilogy of disease for Tobago... One may confidently assert without fear of refutation that there is not one single native of working age in the district who has not been incapacitated temporarily and in many cases permanently by the ravages of one of these diseases"²⁷⁷. In assessing the condition of malaria in the island the DMOs were all of the view that under funding and a lack of official will power were to blame for delays in extending the anopheles eradication programme to the island. The DMO for Scarborough exhausted his budget in oiling, draining and otherwise polluting potential breeding grounds in the town. In addition he had to contend with the use of Scarborough

²⁷² Ibid

²⁷³ The dead man's name was Nathaniel Williams. A brief description of these events is presented in the context of the labour movement of Trinidad and Tobago as a whole see, Brereton, B. *A History of Modern Trinidad*. Heinemann London 1981:163

²⁷⁴ Warden's Reports. CP 115 of 1920

²⁷⁵ Wages Committee, Appendix 4. CP 125 of 1920

²⁷⁶ Warden's Reports. CP 115 of 1920

²⁷⁷ Report of the Surgeon General. CP 101 of 1919

beach as the towns dump and the clearing of the mouths of the town's rivers. The runoff of silt from the surrounding hills created burmes across the mouths of the Cook, Darrel spring and Dunoon Rivers and the resulting pools contained most of the waste from houses above the town as well as that which was caught from the beach by the tide. The heightened tensions around town also thwarted Dr Hamel Smith's effort to clamp down on fruit vendors on the market pavements and he turned his attention to requesting that his quarters be moved higher up the hill. He was to be as unsuccessful in this private battle against mosquitoes as he was with managing the town's sanitation. His one success was to plead for a private contractor to handle the disposal of rubbish from Scarborough which was to prove a mild improvement on the measures described above²⁷⁸.

The system of incarceration in the Yaws hospital, located to the west of Scarborough was one to which all the DMOs objected particularly because of the stigma attached to the disease but also because it heightened a mistrust of the authorities. In this regard the government yaws searchers were suspected of colluding with villagers in avoiding coercive treatment²⁷⁹. Antagonisms between the island's inhabitants and government generally were often vented through resistance to sanitary and medical initiatives, "To these important instruments of Public Health the community, long uneducated or sensitive to publicity, evinces a bitter hostility. So much so that the evil of disease in many cases is but half revealed. Despite the cunning of the machinery of Public Health, the achievement of its goal is always difficult and often partial"²⁸⁰. The fight against yaws was seen as instrumental in preserving the large estates in Tobago as well as cutting the medical department's stretched budget, "An energetic and well organised campaign against the disease with alteration and enforcement of the provisions of the Yaws Ordinances would in a few years with the present methods of treatment eradicate the disease from the island and whilst increasing the working days of the labouring classes would considerably reduce the financial burden on the Medical Department"²⁸¹, but it appears that the state of social unrest made an aggressive approach ill advised during the decades before WWII.

Syphilis and other venereal diseases continued to be held up as both indicators of the debased state of morals in the island as well as motives for the expansion and reform of government departments. The role of syphilis in retarding population growth was of special concern.

²⁷⁸ Ibid

²⁷⁹ Report of the Surgeon General. CP 11 of 1921

²⁸⁰ Ibid

²⁸¹ Ibid

Pawan had noted that 75% of the women he treated showed signs of abortion and that in 60% of these instances syphilis was the probable cause²⁸². The island's shortage of labour was deemed attributable to these diseases of morality and informed the eugenic logic that dominated official discussions of Caribbean public morals. "To cure the evil, sociological and educative measures are necessary. For it must be remembered that contrary to experience in other infectious diseases, this group is acquired primarily by an exercise of will or a defect of inhibitory power"²⁸³, wrote Dr Milne a page before requesting a residence more suited to his presumed status than his work. A year later was to mark the first regional conference of Caribbean teachers and the common themes running throughout its workshops were to be morality and the rehabilitation of agriculture as an occupation²⁸⁴. The conference had resolved to replace the notion that school gardens were for agricultural training with the phrase, 'nature study' in order to offset stereotypes²⁸⁵. Furthermore the delegate from British Guiana was of the view that, "the employment of children at work for pay is permissible and, as the world is today, desirable"²⁸⁶ and added a remark as to his pleasure at seeing, "happy gangs of little working folk"²⁸⁷. His presentation was a mix of eugenic musings on how to train the mentally feeble to accept their allotted destiny with disciplined docility especially when bearing in mind that, "the dullard in marrying gives the country generations of undesirables and paupers"²⁸⁸. Reflective of this mood is Milne's closing remark, "We shall have to change our presently rather decorative system of education for another calculated to prepare the youth for his role in life as a useful citizen, yet elastic enough to leave room for further change when the signs of a proximate future are reliably anticipated"²⁸⁹, in this statement Milne draws an analogy between individual physical maturity and regional political maturity. Eradicating syphilis was seen by the medical department as essential both to the forging of a healthy work force but also one which was both moral and intellectually malleable, a population inculcated to restrain itself without the need for official coercion. The disturbances and tensions

²⁸² Report of the Surgeon General, Plymouth District Tobago. CP 101 1919. It is worth noting that Pawan is making use of the clinical usage of the term abortion. This makes it hard to distinguish between pregnancies that were terminated by direct intervention and those that miscarried for other reasons of poor health and accident. For a historical consideration of abortion and medical knowledge with a Caribbean emphasis see, Schiebinger, L. *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*. Harvard University Press Massachusetts 2004

²⁸³ Report of the Surgeon General, Plymouth District Tobago. CP 101 1919

²⁸⁴ Education Conference of The Lesser Antilles. CP 94 of 1922

²⁸⁵ Ibid p32

²⁸⁶ Ibid p12

²⁸⁷ Ibid p14

²⁸⁸ Ibid p11

²⁸⁹ Report of the Surgeon General. CP 11 of 1921

associated with health and other areas of policy in Tobago suggest that this was very much an ideal of policy rather than an actual process.

malaria, syphilis and yaws were the major causes of morbidity and mortality in Tobago. The picture of a community crippled by disease and economic uncertainty that emerges from the sanitation reports is complemented by a view of an often coercive and confrontational government agenda. The programme of agricultural development and landscape rehabilitation that was begun with the union between Trinidad and Tobago necessitated a programme of works that targeted both the physical appearance of the island and the behaviour of its population. In the first two decades of the 20th Century this vision failed to materialise through a combination of under funding, the inertia of officials and public hostility. Nonetheless significant changes took place. Much of Tobago's remaining wetlands were either drained or polluted in the fight against malaria or simply to improve the aesthetics of the island's settlements when officials had to live in close proximity to swampland. Rivers were channelled through concrete culverts; roads were rebuilt and resurfaced (extensive blasting along the south coast to straighten the windward road being one of the more costly schemes) as well as the widening of the now entirely vanished Mt St George to Castara road. This programme of works undoubtedly employed a great many persons, half of the small sample of labourers interviewed by the Wages Committee in 1920 worked on the roads in some capacity in addition to cultivating their own gardens²⁹⁰. Working for the government had better benefits than many of the estates, tools, some work clothes and transport were available free of charge. Despite this the Works Department had repeated difficulties in obtaining labour, especially when the high costs of food imports forced the island's labourers back to their gardens. In 1924 Warden Sorzano blamed this phenomenon on a lack of enterprise and activity amongst the peasantry remaining firmly of the opinion that the cost of food and other imports should be offset by the value of exports rather than an indicator of the precarious existence of most of Tobago's residents²⁹¹. Once more the obstacle to the new Tobago was seen in local idleness rather than in structural aspects of the regional and global economy and became further linked with images of the isolated and unhygienic peasantry deemed to constitute the island's inhabitants. The answer was to be an intensification of the process of sanitation by large scale drainage and the inspection of privies.

²⁹⁰ Wages Committee, Appendix 4. CP 125 of 1920

²⁹¹ Wardens Reports. CP 66 of 1924

It is during this period of sanitising and opening up Tobago that the state appears to have made its entrance as an employer beside the estates, although the Works Department Budget does not account for the numbers of employees or day labourers. Public sector employment became a moral object in critiques of labour productivity in relation to exports. By 1922 warden Sorzano could point to a reduction in peasant production as being evident of especial laziness in light of reduced public works employment²⁹². That the fall in catch crop exports may have been due to the need for subsistence in the absence of cash wages does not seem to have occurred to him anymore than in 1919.

From 1928 onwards further swamp drainage schemes occurred, conducted by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Public Works Division and acting under the coordination of the DMOs. These schemes transformed the appearance of Scarborough, Canaan and Mason Hall to an extent deemed noteworthy by health officials²⁹³. The draining of the Dunoon swamp in Lower Scarborough in particular was deemed a resounding success and in outlying areas the scavenging contractors were encouraged to use gathered waste to fill in various smaller wetlands. More than a mile of streams and gullies were concreted in Canaan as well as in the vicinity of the hospital and fort. The 1932 programme of filling in marshland around Mason Hall culminated in the concreting of the Page Gully, a long time ambition of the Sanitary Authority, which merited a visit from the Chief Sanitary Inspector. In parallel to this engineering of the landscape there was a regular service of public information films on health as the government drew new media into its programme of instruction and improvement²⁹⁴. From 1928 onwards the Warden's Office instituted an island wide health week, commencing with the appearance of the first public latrines and urinals at the Scarborough Customs House. Sanitary reform reshaped the physical landscape of Tobago. In this context the officials who directed these programs also formed and reformed their beliefs about Tobago's supposedly sturdy yeomanry. As the sanitary goal of a healthy and productive people in a healthy productive landscape suggests, agricultural improvement would be the basis for beliefs in development and improvement in Tobago.

Estates and Visions of Empire

The collapse in sugar production in late 19th Century Tobago saw changes in the ownership of landed property. The number of local smallholders and policies aiming to support and improve

²⁹² Warden's Report, Trinidad CP 59 1923

²⁹³ Wardens Reports, CP 82 of 1928

²⁹⁴ Wardens Reports, CP 54 of 1932

them increased. Alongside these changes large estates changed hands as well. Old and new owners sought various ways to perform their personal beliefs about stewardship and commerce in relation to emerging beliefs about the virtues of improvement. Amongst the new proprietors who sought to accomplish this were the members of the Tobago Rubber Syndicate.

The rubber syndicate had its origins in the introduction of the aristocratic Esme Howard to Rowland Biffen through their mutual friend Thisselton-Dyer, the director of Kew Gardens. Howard was the progeny of branches of the influential Long family of Jamaica and the Dukes of Norfolk. Although something of a feckless adventurer the heir of Greystoke, thirty something and unemployed, was a long way away from his fictional counterpart. Biffen, the future head of the agricultural research station at Cambridge, claimed to have devised a machine which made the latex of *Castilloa Elastica* a viable commercial proposition. The two embarked on two trips to Brazil and the West Indies. In Trinidad they worked with Hinchley Hart of the Botanic Station to produce a report that ultimately proved alluring to a number of investors.

Howard and his friend Thorlief Orde embarked for Trinidad in May 1898 armed with money provided by the principle members of the syndicate, Lord Stanmore (previously Governor of Trinidad), Charles Booth and Sir Edward Jenkinson. The latter was the paradoxically, “well known Chief of British Secret Service”²⁹⁵. Orde had been selected for the job of managing the estates purchased for the syndicate on the recommendation of an Oxford acquaintance to the effect that, “He had spent some years in South Africa and was thoroughly accustomed to roughing it and to managing coloured people”²⁹⁶. For Howard the process of purchasing an estate in the West Indies and implementing the economic botany of empire building was to prove more than just a business venture, it was to be a profound and solemn commitment to a personal ethos of imperialism drawing on a range of traditions.

Howard and Orde decided upon Betsy’s Hope, formerly Louis D’or, once part of the imperial vision of improving slave owner William Young. The estate was in a dilapidated condition, “There was the usual wooden house in considerable disrepair on a hill overlooking the usual large sugar works which were falling to pieces, and the river with its valley running into the highest hills of the island”²⁹⁷, whilst Young’s vision of ordered productivity was in ruins less than a century after his death it shared at least one feature with Howard’s, “There was also a

²⁹⁵ Howard, E. *Theatre of Life* Vol I 1935:232

²⁹⁶ Ibid 232

²⁹⁷ Ibid 250

large village on the estate which settled the labour problem for us”²⁹⁸. Howard considered the Castilloa experiment to be an example of the new crops that would replace sugar. He may not have made the explicit linkage between the discredited history of the sugar industry, opposed to free labour and then free trade. Indeed Howard believed in protectionism and a technocratic and elite driven state socialism as the basis of empire²⁹⁹. This latter belief was one based on a fusion of capital and the state. This logic served a personal interest in combining the virtuous conduct of those with wealth and commerce rather than any specific concerns about the welfare of those who would provide the labour. Regarding the Rubber Syndicate Howard wrote, “What could be a more delightful plan for a young man at a loose end than to start a new industry in an impoverished part of the British Empire, while at the same time making a little money for himself and his friends?”³⁰⁰. Howard was certainly convinced of the moral obligation to replace sugar with some more viable crop but in a sense of development as a parochial improving duty on the part of an indistinct imperialist/capitalist figure. Howard gleefully commented on the activity that followed the purchase of Betsy’s Hope, “the flats still untidy with sugar patches, but shortly to be covered with green Castilloa standing in rows like soldiers, and down the great avenue of ever waving coco-nut palms which led out to the green blue sea and the white breakers where the coral reefs were”³⁰¹. Howard’s imperialism like Young’s was to replace the chaotic unproductive with the ordered and productive, to make imperialism as one with nature, as imperialism could only be natural and virtuous to its advocates.

The networks of imperial knowledge had drawn Howard and Biffen together, the morality of improving imperial capitalism had drawn Orde and Howard to purchase Louis D’or³⁰², unfortunately Castilloa rubber, as a plant, was impervious to the whims of imperialists and capitalists. It was simply the wrong variety for producing latex compared to *Hevea Elastica* grown in the East and Far East. The imperialism of late 19th Century thought, like any other notional imperative of development founded on obscure moral compulsions, had no claim on the loyalties of the Castilloa plant. The mistake was not realised until 1907 and the agricultural department got the blame. After this time Louis D’or moved, at considerable expense, to Cocoa production. Howard remained committed to his personal brand of imperialism. He

²⁹⁸ Ibid 251

²⁹⁹ McKercher, B.J.C. *Esme Howard* Cambridge University Press 1989

³⁰⁰ Howard, E. *Theatre of Life Vol. I: Life Seen From the Pit 1863-1905* Hodder and Stoughton London 1935:181

³⁰¹ Ibid 251

³⁰² Howard decided the estate should revert to its original name.

bought out the Rubber Syndicate's Investors, used personal connections to secure a diplomatic posting and persisted in lobbying on behalf of Tobago's planters.

Activity on Tobago's other estates drew on the breadth of imperial experience in the form of tree planting and plant transfer. The denuded hill tops of Tobago were initially held up as examples of the profligate attitude of 19th and 18th Century sugar cultivation toward the environment as a whole. Later the blame was laid on the use of fire by smallholders to create open pasture for the Tobago's growing livestock industry.

Experiments with afforestation were begun on the Kings Bay Estate in 1906. Governor Le Hunte had singled out denuded hill tops as being the greatest threat to the island's future prosperity and called on estates to act. By the early 1920s the Kings Bay scheme had begun to come to fruition and the forestry department took a keen interest. The principle reason for this interest lay in R.C. Marshall, the Conservator of Forests, observation that, "All the land in this district has, however, been alienated so that it is not too easy for the government to take action"³⁰³. Whilst government had pressed for the alienation of land for agriculture and the increased activity of its industrious peasants it had lost direct control over a crucial aspect of the planned landscape. As a consequence of this, government officials who believed in the desirable necessity of improvement saw it as a logical necessity to support private investors who could better perform these desirable functions.

The solution devised by Robert S Reid, the proprietor of Kings Bay combined the government's desired objectives of tree planting and increased cash crop production with the maintenance of the estates. Whilst Kings Bay was nominally a cocoa estate a sizeable area was unsuited to cocoa cultivation. This area was let to contractors on the condition that they plant and maintain timber trees on their rented plots. The total area was 149 acres³⁰⁴ and the predominant species were Cedar and Teak. Cypress and Crapaud were lesser species planted by the estate labourers independent of contract plots. H.W. Moor the acting Conservator of Forests reported on the scheme, "Mr Reid's system of impressing on the contractors the necessity for provision cultivation is a most excellent one from all points of view"³⁰⁵. Moor made numerous recommendations and noted the failure of Cedar on the upper slopes and summits as being due to weather conditions (there had been a Hurricane in 1922). He believed

³⁰³ Report of the Conservator of Forests CP66 1924 p19

³⁰⁴ Robert S Reid to the Conservator of Forests 30/06/23 in C.O. 137/779

³⁰⁵ Report on the inspection of Mr Reid's Cedar Plantation at Kings Bay Tobago on 25th June 1922 in C.O. 137/779

that the economic demands of the plantation should take second place to a more suitable succession of vegetation. His recommendations for the higher ridges in the vicinity of Pigeon Hill were Mango and Poui trees. He recommended that Cassava and Dasheen be the crops promoted amongst contractors and that Pigeon Peas be discouraged³⁰⁶. The goal was to provide suitable shade whilst keeping down grasses and weeds³⁰⁷. Contractors received one penny per healthy cedar plant at the end of each year. Moor was impressed and forwarded his report on the scheme to Kew Gardens. A.W. Hill at Kew forwarded the matter to the Colonial Office and thence to Jamaica where concerns about denuded forest cover and the inability to co-ordinate tree planting were on the agenda. Should a Jamaican Forestry department or even the long shelved West Indies Forestry Department come into existence, the Kings Bay scheme was deemed a model worthy of emulation by the officials at the Colonial Office³⁰⁸.

Reid was unable to implement the recommendations made in Moor's report as falling cocoa prices restricted his ability to hire additional labour. What makes the Kings Bay scheme so intriguing is that it is based around a continuation of metayage, a system deemed wholly undesirable in relation to sugar, but in the case of forestry eminently desirable. Here the logic of imperial priorities can be seen determining the correctness of policy on the simple criteria not of quantitative success, but on the projects coincidence with the priorities of what constituted officials desirable development. Planting Cedar under share cropping arrangements was an innovative idea showing a responsibility towards land and labour on the part of improving capitalists, doing the same with sugar was rapacious and irresponsible. A tantalising aspect of Reid's account is that he explicitly calls his contractors peasants³⁰⁹ and this further confuses the term's use during the period. It is illustrative of the condition whereby Tobago was viewed as possessing an industrious peasantry and therefore all Tobagonians must be peasants when being industrious. Calling contractors peasants, even as they worked for an estate, rather subverts the intended meaning of the word as employed in the West India Royal Commission Report in 1897. Just as Capital and Stewardship formed a dual mandate of empire so they created a dual meaning of peasantry in Tobago. Within barely more than twenty years, the language of development advocated by the Norman Commission for the landless had

³⁰⁶ This was possibly because pigeon peas are better inter-planted with corn. When this is not done the vegetation that grows in amongst the crops is often removed by burning prior to harvesting. This still happens on some plots in Tobago. Such a practice would certainly have sat ill at odds with attempts to create a commercial forestry plantation as a means of rehabilitating a landscape that had been cleared by seasonal firings.

³⁰⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁸ Darnley to Wilson 02/06/25 in C.O. 137/779

³⁰⁹ Reid to the Conservator of Forests 30/06/23 C.O. 137/779

become a part of the language used by estate owners to justify their own economic goals. The transformation of how those of differing intentions used the same concept illustrates the dynamism of morality and the critical importance of individual intention in determining meaning.

Perhaps the most concentrated effort at deploying the science of botany in estate management occurred at Charlotteville in the early 1930s. Here a personal view of environmental management learned through colonial service was to permeate the newly resident proprietor's vision of land, flora, fauna and local residents. This was to be a highly personalised performance of beliefs about what constituted a particular and appropriate brand of stewardship. These beliefs would be enacted in ways that showed how the virtues of conservation and commerce could be organised in relation to concepts of ownership, botanic expertise and personal identity.

Captain Cyril A. Turpin was drawing to the end of his career in the Forestry and Wildlife service of Uganda. His ambition was to draw on the experiences, knowledge and contacts accumulated during his career in returning to manage the family's property in Tobago. Whilst it is clear from Captain Turpin's letters that he appreciated the Estate to have been a family concern since its purchase in the 1860s, he also viewed himself as the best suited member of the family to take control of the property.

The first act of Cyril Turpin's move to Tobago occurred in December 1929 when he completed a plan which assessed the historical, environmental and economic organisation of the estate. The document, prepared in Kampala, is one of blunt honesty, so much so that its second page is printed with the admonition that, "This document is confidential, and its contents are on no account to be disclosed to the public"³¹⁰. The document is disparaging toward previous haphazard cultivation. The estate's primary produce was cocoa with coconuts being grown along the littoral. The first task Cyril Turpin set himself was ensuring properly delineated reserves for these main economic products and that furthermore these reserves should be located with an eye to the location of the watershed above Man O War Bay. This had not previously been the case, "It is acknowledged that in certain localities in the cocoa reserve the cultivation of limes and coconuts was permitted to be undertaken some years ago regardless, or rather in the absence of/any carefully considered planning policy"³¹¹, The problem had lain

³¹⁰ Turpin, Cyril A. *Memorandum on the Administration of Charlotteville Estate, its cultivation etc. Prepared Kampala Uganda, 25th December 1929*. Un-numbered page.

³¹¹ Ibid Section headed COCOA

in an overestimation of the number of trees planted on the estate by contractors and the instructions issued seven years prior to this, under more optimistic economic conditions had been for experimental cultivation. Having dealt with the main economic crops the plan establishes for experimental cultivations to be produced under contract on the adjoining Starwood Estate³¹².

Having devoted merely five and a half pages to the main economic crops (cocoa and some coconuts and timber) and the reorganisation of the estate finances (For which he had made a personal loan independent of his relatives) Cyril Turpin wrote a further twenty five pages outlining a more detailed reorganisation of the Charlotteville area. Firstly he dealt with the estate's game and forest reserve, "The feathered ground game in the area have almost been exterminated by ruthless poaching and, in a lesser degree by hawks in the last ten years"³¹³. Turpin recognised that estate cultivation had transformed the area (he earlier noted the total lack of trees in the Starwood valley) as well as the machinations of hunters and hawks. Whilst the former were to be prosecuted at every opportunity a bounty \$0.25 was to be offered for the eggs and carcasses of the latter. For the estate to take its share of responsibility the plan dictated the need for superior wild fruit varieties. Turpin was confident that Ugandan Flora would meet the challenge and proposed introducing plants which were, "favourites in the African Bird Kingdom and, undoubtedly, will also be appreciated by the game birds in the reserve"³¹⁴. Until his duties in Uganda ended and he was on site personally, Turpin urged the Manager at Charlotteville to accurately record the names, characteristics and progress of the African varieties in a register³¹⁵. Game preservation led to signs and notices around the estate but also covert methods of control.

As part of his attempts to combine aesthetic and ecological concerns Cyril Turpin was keen to preserve sea fowl on the Giles Islands. He was a keen fisherman and viewed any disturbance of the wildlife as liable to have an impact on the ecology and his hobby. In order to make conservation easier he ordered the Manager to make for him, "A list of all persons at Man O War Bay possessing guns [which] might be prepared at leisure from local information gleaned privately and the list forwarded to the Inspector of Police with the object of having gun

³¹² At that time Starwood was the NE portion of Turpin Estate below the summit of Flagstaff Hill. The specific area referred to is roughly 100 acres in the Starwood River valley.

³¹³ Turpin, Cyril A. *Memorandum on the Administration of Charlotteville Estate, its cultivation etc. Prepared Kampala Uganda, 25th December 1929* Page 6

³¹⁴ Ibid

³¹⁵ Ibid

licences in the villages and at Starwood checked by police patrols”³¹⁶. The interaction between private and public systems of surveillance and the approach advocated belie its author’s experience in Ugandan game reserves. The view here was one that placed on property owners an obligation to control and reorder landscapes and saw the agents of the colonial state as adjuncts of that policy. This was one outcome of Cyril Turpin’s personal moral logic of proprietorship. Whilst seeking to coerce his neighbours and tenants Cyril urged his manager to correct the estate’s own practices and ordered an immediate end to the practise of “indiscriminate felling” that had deforested the Game and Timber reserves. Once more African varieties were to be used to supplement the local, this time as part of an experiment devised by the Ugandan Conservator of Forests³¹⁷. Captain Turpin’s beliefs about ownership didn’t just seek to curtail the vices of others. His beliefs led him to make private commitments to land use and did so in ways that upheld the virtues of science and its role in beliefs about an improving empire.

There was a powerful aesthetic element to Cyril Turpin’s plans for Charlotteville estate. His meticulous designations of a series of private contour roads were not simply adjuncts to cultivation or the delineation of the various reserves which composed the Estate. Each contour road, and the principal road on the designated Equatorial Line, was to be lined with carefully selected species of tree from around the world. Meticulously stipulated spaces and arrangements of each variety would serve to give, “Man O’ War Bay the distinction of being acclaimed one of the most beautiful places in the West Indies”³¹⁸. The whole effect was designed to be a series of geometric patterns visible from the bungalow and the sea³¹⁹. This was a very public display of ownership intended to display the virtues of a proprietor committed to particular scientific and aesthetic standards.

The scheme of planting would also extend to the aesthetics of the estate bungalow which would be extensively remodelled in preparation for Cyril’s taking up residence. Ornamental plants would be transported from Uganda to a block of the horticultural reserve visible from the bungalow. This process would be assisted by the Uganda Botanic Officer and equipment from Kew Gardens. The area around the bungalow was to be left bare in order, “To be able to view the varied plant life in all its stages on the flats and slopes and in the valleys from every conceivable aspect is infinitely preferable to staring into the broadside of a Croton at near

³¹⁶ Ibid p7

³¹⁷ Ibid p8

³¹⁸ Ibid p12

³¹⁹ C.V. Turpin to Malins-Smith 24th May 1930

range. Let's have the vast wide spaces environs than a painted isolation cell"³²⁰. An engineer hired by the government in Uganda would advise on how to supply the new house with pipe water³²¹ and the house itself would be remodelled with an extra floor to contain a museum of African trophies and a display of game fish³²². With the landscape and domestic sphere plotted, ordered and measured in accordance with his instructions, Cyril would return to survey the remodelled nature of his dominion. In order to achieve this remodelling several areas of economic plants would be removed but Cyril felt the other proprietors would see sense, "My brother will probably have something ghastly to say about this vandalism! But when he sees the resultant effect on his next visit and the latest panoramic photo enlargement of Man O War Bay (a copy of which will be sent him for Xmas), he will appreciate the fact that such distorted patches and oddments of cultivation are really of little or no economic value in the aggregate turn-over of the Estate, and should not have been there in the first or any instance; that being there is no criterion to remaining there"³²³. What Cyril Turpin's park project illustrates, is that commercial concerns about the running of the estate were only one component of an arrangement of beliefs that constituted a moral impetus to understand and own property in particular ways. This performance of ownership took particular forms because it was related to a cosmology that dictated how land and people should be understood and ordered.

Having decorated not just the estate roads, but also their public counterparts, Turpin turned his attention to boundaries, labour and contractors. He branded Charlotteville village overpopulated and placed a moratorium on sales of land. Any plots sold in adjacent Cambleton had to be accessible by public roads. He concluded, "In matter of fact it would be wiser to have all prospective plots delimited according to a plan prior to consideration being given to local applications for such. The higgledy piggedly system of leasehold tenure any and every where now obtaining is to be deprecated"³²⁴. Cyril Turpin appears to have had no fundamental issue with black landownership; rather he held a view of landscape management that was incompatible with the ad hoc sales of land made in the late 19th Century in Tobago³²⁵. It should be pointed out that this was a vision of ownership through which the scale and symmetry of

³²⁰ Turpin, Cyril A. *Memorandum on the Administration of Charlotteville Estate, its cultivation etc. Prepared Kampala Uganda, 25th December 1929* p14

³²¹ Ibid p18

³²² Ibid p19

³²³ Ibid p15

³²⁴ Ibid p19

³²⁵ It must be stressed that the estate's approach to neighbours and workers was not always likely to have been interpreted in such an abstract manner.

large estates was extolled and prioritised. This was not inspired by an explicit racial sense of entitlement, nor was it driven by greed for what could be produced from land; instead this performance of proprietorship was a logical consequence of a desire to be seen to manage land to produce desirable aesthetic outcomes in accordance with scientific principles. Cyril Turpin's display of sensibility was very much rooted in the ethos informing the bureaucrats and experts who performed the stewardship of the empire.

In drawing up his plans Cyril Turpin selected areas that the estate would have to acquire prior to his return. Minty's piece at Flagstaff Hill summit was an obstacle to extending the cocoa reserve and he held the short sightedness of his ancestors to blame as there was, "No excuse for instituting a foreign government in a Roman Empire"³²⁶. Whatever has subsequently been written about the strong spiritual attachments of Caribbean Family land and its role as resistance to estates and formal legal tenure, in this instance it appears that Cyril's offer of "a liberal cash payment plus a freehold house plot at Cambleton" had the desired effect. What Cyril referred to as Minty's "squabbling heirs" appear to have had no such sentiments when confronted with adequate compensation. Fears over soil erosion led Cyril to pursue Carpenter Moore's plot, Cyril was concerned that in the event of another landslip it might cut off his access to an area of Starwood. This plot was again located on summit ground, this time at Booby Bush. Here Cyril wanted to even the line in the estate boundary and prevent soil erosion and so offered an exchange of an equal sized parcel. He felt that Moore's efforts to produce cocoa were failing and that the plot was unsuitable to cultivation of any kind. He sent the manager an advertisement from the Overseas Daily Mail for a modern carpentry outfit. He felt that this and the offer of exchange would persuade Moore and proposed to pay for the equipment from his own account. Cyril Turpin's machinations regarding smallholders in Charlotteville and its environs present something of a challenge. The legal insecurity of family land in this case made it an easy target for the estate and its claimants seem to have been wholly willing to take up Cyril's not ungenerous offer. In addition the case of Moore's plot illustrates Cyril Turpin's knowledge of environmental management rather than any pathological objection to non white land ownership at the fore. This said, the plans to straighten boundaries, secure lines of communication and improve the perceived disorder of both estate and smallholder exemplify an obsessive and highly informed idea of developing imperial property both in the broadest and most personal senses.

³²⁶ Ibid p20

Labour and contracts were in Cyril's words, "a planter's bêtes noir". Charlotteville, like other Tobago estates and smallholders was badly hit by falling cocoa prices and reduced access to capital. The projects described above were paid for from Cyril's personal salary as an employee of the Forestry and Wildlife section in Uganda in order to avoid putting pressure on the estate's accounts. This was to be an investment for his future, after the Colonial Service, as a resident proprietor.

The labour force of Charlotteville estate, drawn mainly from the village was predominantly female with male labour being drawn to what Cyril called, "a multitude of local interests e.g. fishing, gardening, loitering and so on"³²⁷. Cyril's comments on labour draw attention to both his own views of labour but also some of the underlying local conditions in which they were grounded, "For some abstruse reason – perhaps pique cum malaria and hook worm debility – a field gang takes it into its head to demand more wage"³²⁸. This judgement is located in the local medical conditions already described as much as in 19th Century notions of plenty and idleness. In spite of this recognition its author did not see fit to view his 'empire's' role in bringing these conditions about in a critical light. He did note the impossibility of introducing a co-operative arrangement between labourers and estates, "It [labour] may even threateningly allege that the market price of cocoa being above par its rate of wage should be increased accordingly... Should however, the market price of cocoa drop below par and with it, pro rata, the wage, it is on these occasions that local labour is imbued with the lure of the sea and [can] be supinely indifferent to any recognized cooperative labour obligations"³²⁹. This alternative mode of livelihood, responding to the conditions of the global market, which Cyril viewed with frustration, had a drawback. As a keen sailor and fisherman Cyril Turpin was aware that with careful planting, crop harvest times could be made to coincide with the roughest weather at sea. In so doing he arranged to manipulate his labour force through the mediums of both botany and meteorology. If this failed the estate was authorised to use informally indentured labour from other islands, paid above the local rate and inclusive of passage. This provision bypassed the high costs of transport which had deterred migrants to Tobago since WWI³³⁰. He

³²⁷ Ibid p22

³²⁸ Ibid

³²⁹ Ibid

³³⁰ The mail service had stopped at the outbreak of war and had not been resumed on the grounds that it was not commercially viable.

felt, perhaps optimistically, that this option would be the least likely to cause, “unhappy fantasies”³³¹.

Whilst keen to portray his neighbours and potential labourers as idle (as opposed to cognisant of how to respond to the market) Cyril Turpin also drew on the administrative divide of Tobagonians between the work shy, unwise labourer and the self reliant peasant. In his relations with the contractors who planted the estate’s cocoa, coconut and limes Cyril saw the, “old and best contractors... having evolved a system of peasant proprietorship for themselves on which they are to be congratulated; others, unable to pursue an independent policy, were reduced in extremis, having missed the tide in their affairs”. Although it was nearly four decades since the metayer cases heard by John Gorrie it is apparent from the estate plans that written contracts were only just falling into abeyance. Cyril held the view that long contracts on large acreages had tied down the resources of the estate. He was concerned that this had contributed to the view that there was an inexhaustible supply of available land for cultivation and that contracts had to be renewed automatically. What had made matters even more difficult had been the formal contracts that required litigation in the event of a failure on the part of the contractor to produce this had, “created and atmosphere of mutual antagonism with perhaps an undercurrent of vindictiveness”³³². In this candid and confidential estate document there is an admission of mutual fault. The plan is clear that in the past the estate had not made allowance for “municipal expansion” suggesting that contractors had had to come from villages other than Charlotteville where the boundaries of the estate had restricted the expansion of housing and consequently neglected their plots. Cyril also stipulated that contractors whose crops failed should be given priority for new contracts as an expression of good faith. The key feature of the Charlotteville Estate plan is that it shows recognition of the interdependence of the estate and its neighbours, albeit skewed in favour of the estate. There is no overt evidence of a dialectical opposition between peasant and plantation to be found in this example. Instead of resistance and protest there is a web of legal and perceived

³³¹ Ibid. Curiously enough there is an island wide and, in Charlotteville specific, memory of these events by older residents, with Grenadians and Vincentians being portrayed as hard workers who laboured whilst lazy un-ambitious locals grew subsistence crops and limed. Cyril Turpin appears to have astutely judged the manner in which his policy would become integrated into local beliefs about labour and idleness.

³³² Ibid p29

obligations that derived from the estate owner's advocacy of particular ethical standards of proprietorship³³³.

The operation of the sugar industry and especially the sugar industry in its pre emancipation form has tended to dominate the historiography of Caribbean peoples and landscapes with good reason. Even so discussions of how and why estates operated as they did are rare³³⁴. Discussions of how 20th Century estates in non sugar crops were managed are totally unknown. What has emerged from this overview of Louis D'Or, King's Bay and Charlotteville is how officials and proprietors retained an ideological commitment to the estate as an ideal of progress. These were certainly not the lucrative plantations of the mid 18th Century. All had suffered decades of neglect yet the owners and managers of these estates were men driven by a distinct imperial ideal. In the case of King's Bay this is less apparent. Tree planting, whilst catching the imagination of foresters in Trinidad, was a primarily commercial addition to the estate's activities. With government admonitions on estate owners to repair the eroded hillsides and bare hilltops of Tobago there is some scope for seeing this as response to official suggestions. Robert S Reid made use of the advice and expertise of the officials and institutions in the region and gladly contributed to their attempts to accumulate and disseminate knowledge. It is small stories like his that provided the basis for the new government of nature.

At Louis D'Or and Charlotteville there is a more explicit vision of landscape order and progress. What makes this so startling is that neither Esme Howard nor Cyril Turpin was primarily motivated by money (In Howard's case at least, because his family were stupendously wealthy and he had married into Italian Royalty). Howard had harboured a belief in a progressive,

³³³ This doesn't in anyway make relations between estate owners and their neighbours and workers equitable or automatically legitimate. The social analysis of labour relations on estates run by resident proprietors has often been complicated by a desire to portray the overtly personal relationships as somehow feudal and quasi feudal hangovers from the era of slavery. This is a logical corollary of the need to show estates run by multinational companies and individual expatriate investors as a higher stage of capitalism. The idea that pure capitalism is innately anti social obscures the ways in which capitalism constitutes a socially enacted series of moral expectations and ambitions. What actually changes is not the mode of production but the desires and ambitions that inform the implementation of the method. For M.G Smith's consideration of the labour upheavals in Grenada in the 1950s is an invaluable ethnographic account of the clash of expectations between new owners and the labour force on many estates. Although not Smith's intention the account very clearly shows just how complex the social production of capitalism is, see Chapter 11, Smith, M.G. *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* University of California Press Berkeley 1965

³³⁴ See Higman B.W. *Plantation Jamaica 1750-1850* UWI Press Kingston 2005 for a recent elaboration of just how scarce these accounts are. For a look at the estate and the management of landscape see Grove R.H. *Green Imperialism* Cambridge University Press 1995 and Watts, D *The West Indies* Cambridge University Press 1987

protectionist and improving ethic of empire which he referred to as his 'credo'. It was views of global economy and empire such as Howard's that were best summarised by J.A. Hobson "Just in so far as an imperialist is logical does he become an avowed protectionist"³³⁵. The same global empire that inspired the vision and investment of Esme Howard was what enabled Cyril Turpin to undertake a whole sale reordering of nature within his private imperium. Howard's functional rather than ethical attachment to socialism, blended with a Chamberlain like sense of landed Tory imperial duty, provided the motivation that propelled him from South America to South Africa looking for an opportunity to exercise his personal notion of imperial stewardship. Cyril Turpin was a fanatic who scoured the globe for new plants with the assistance of his unnamed and long suffering orderly. His orderly was dispatched on missions varying from the islands of Lake Victoria to a 250 mile trip by bicycle which narrowly avoided disaster when a bridge collapsed sweeping away his mode of conveyance. Cyril himself travelled personally to the Mountains of the Moon to secure cuttings of *Glyricidia maculata* whom he invited, "to the West Indies to see their brothers and sisters"³³⁶. His networks of contacts stretched from Sweden to the Transvaal and from Ceylon to Hawaii. On hearing of the successful germination of seeds acquired in Uganda Cyril and his orderly danced a hornpipe around their Kampala compound, with good reason after their many botanising adventures. Even more so than Esme Howard at Louis D'Or, Cyril Turpin embodies the politics of environment, economy and control that underwrote the imperial vision of nature. What Cyril Turpin envisioned at Charlotteville was a green panopticon with a place for everything and everything in its place. Not since the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations in 1763 had such an ambitious ordering of nature and society in Tobago been undertaken. It is critical to regard these personal visions of landscape and management of part of a virtuously ordained moral logic that placed emphasis on ideals of ordered progress, informed by science and bureaucracy rather than an impersonal dialectic vision of the 'plantation society'. To perhaps rephrase Hobson, imperialism's attitude to the natural world was logical provided one understands that it was moral and not always rational in its pursuit of property.

An Ocean Apart: Sea Communications, Economy and the Relationship with Trinidad

The interwar period was one of considerable upheaval in the Caribbean. Fluctuating economic conditions for regional produce, official constitutional reforms, growing ideological struggles

³³⁵ Hobson, J.A. *Imperialism: A Study*. Allen and Unwin London 1905 p62

³³⁶ C.V. Turpin to Malins-Smith 24th of May 1930

over possible regional futures and interpretations of the region's past, conflicts between labour and capital and the emergence of Colonial Welfare³³⁷ formed a milieu at once local and global.

In Tobago this period saw not only an emergent vision of a landscape and population, mediated by personal interpretations of a broader imperial account of progress, but also found that same narrative in crisis. This local crisis of progress was most apparent in the events leading to and following the 1929 Sea Communications Committee. The deliberations of the Committee revealed the chaotic nature of the inter-island economy between Trinidad and Tobago and the wider region on the eve of the Great Depression. This was to highlight the disjuncture between official and popular images of Tobago's economic and social identity and their reality. The period should not be seen as solely one in which estate agriculture transformed local flora and fauna through the agency of proprietors' modernizing ideologies. Human agency was also at work in other ways, comprehending the political and economic challenges that spanned the turbulent waters between Trinidad and Tobago. The chore of travelling between the islands had produced considerable ill feeling even before the Act of Union. When he arrived in 1898 Esme Howard had noted a vituperative confrontation between a Tobagonian traveller and a Trinidadian boatman in Port of Spain which started after the Tobagonian, having arrived late, reneged on a promised tip for rowing him to the boat in time which concluded with the words, "Well anyhow de Trinidad niggers is all rascally tief and robber", to which the reply had been, "An' of all de black trash in de worl' de Tobago nigger is de wuss"³³⁸. Navigating the powerful currents in the ocean between the Bocas Del Dragon and the Bulldog Reef was to prove a struggle between cross cutting narratives of identity and progress as much as a test of seamanship against the tides.

The 1920s were a boom period in agricultural production in Tobago. The year 1927 was to prove the most lucrative since emancipation³³⁹ but with the price of cocoa declining sharply

³³⁷ The first Colonial Development Act was passed in 1929 and the very first project was a housing scheme in Antigua. See Harris, R. Making Leeway in the Leewards, 1929-51: The Negotiation of Colonial Development. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Vol. 33 No. 3 2005

³³⁸ Howard, Esme. *Theatre of Life* Vol 1 1935:248. This vituperative exchange is not dissimilar to ones heard in the port terminals in Scarborough and Port of Spain today. One of the most explosive that I witnessed occurred during a police crackdown on illegally customised cars. In Tobago there is very little enforcement of these standards. It is not uncommon to see the vehicles where well off drivers have replaced the interior rear view mirror with a T.V. screen to watch DVDs. An exasperated traffic officer, handing out tickets to vehicles arriving in Port of Spain, received a diatribe similar to the one earlier quoted. His response was an icy stare and the words, "All we have in common with you people is the 'and'. Ya hear?"

³³⁹ Customs and Excise Report. CP 70 of 1931,

thereafter. The number of landowners was to rise from 6466 to 7310 between 1920 and 1929³⁴⁰. The entire increase was concentrated amongst owners of less than ten acres accounting for almost 28% of the population by 1929³⁴¹. Even with this growth in agricultural activity a view of Tobago as being underproductive persisted. When Lieutenant Colonel De Boissiere, head of the Trinidad labour exchange appealed for surplus labourers he immediately turned to Tobago only to be surprised that there was no surplus labour³⁴².

A public waterworks was begun in 1925 but construction was delayed by legal wrangles with adjacent landowners³⁴³. This conflict over the public use of the Hillsborough East River was perhaps a sign that government interventions to distribute resources in accordance with a vision of public progress were less than popular. The island's health authorities were also less than sanguine. Latrines and education programmes on their use had been launched in 1925 which were designed, "to raise the sanitary tone of the district"³⁴⁴, although the results were less than satisfactory. "The gulleys and drains in and around Scarborough continue to be attended with the small means at our disposal" complained Dr Krogh the DMO. The disobedient rivers were to be dealt with however, "so as to minimise the menace of the stagnating that at present occurs in the course of these so called waterways"³⁴⁵.

If proponents of sanitary progress were in conflict with landowners and rivers alike then agricultural problems were also manifest in the island. Despite noting that Tobago's lime crop had rotted for lack of a suitable market and that estates neglected the advice from the department³⁴⁶, the Director of Agriculture was upbeat. Just two years later he entered a report entitled 'Agricultural Progress of Tobago' which crudely compared figures from prior to the union with Trinidad to those then current without adjusting for inflation³⁴⁷. The idea of progress stemming from union between Trinidad and Tobago tended to have a hegemonic effect in that even failures could be seen as successes by virtue of having come under the auspices of union.

³⁴⁰ Figures from Warden's Reports CP115 of 1920 and CP74 of 1929. Reports are at an annual offset due to the tax year e.g. April 1919 to April 1929.

³⁴¹ About double the percentage for any district in Trinidad.

³⁴² CP34 1925 Labour Exchange.

³⁴³ CP74 of 1925 Public Works department and CP101 of 1925 Tobago Waterworks Ordinance.

³⁴⁴ CP64 of 1925 Medical

³⁴⁵ CP61 1927 Medical

³⁴⁶ CP90 of 1927 Department of Agriculture.

³⁴⁷ CP1 of 1929 Agricultural Progress in Tobago

In 1925 the first elections to the Colony's Legislative Council returned James Biggart as representative of Tobago. Before 1925 Tobago had not had any opportunity for local representation after Thorleif Orde had declined an offer to sit in Council as an unofficial in 1920. Tobago's planters had effectively ignored the election, in the words of the Governor's despatch to the Secretary of State they had, "themselves very largely to blame"³⁴⁸, if they were dissatisfied at the prospect of being represented by a black pharmacist from Scarborough. It is worth noting that James Biggart, the newly elected member for Tobago first appears in the written record in 1903 in a petition to the Secretary of State demanding to be allowed to take the pharmacist's examination in Tobago rather than travel to Trinidad³⁴⁹. The furore over the steamer service would reveal not only the short falls of the agricultural economy of Tobago but also the tensions over its perception. The Colonial Office was to find itself caught in the middle between Tobago's well connected landed proprietors and a popular politician with his own notions of development and progress.

Tobago's planters forwarded a memorandum on sea communications in 1927 and sent a small deputation to the Colonial Office. Their petition was primarily focused on the shipping service but made several additional points. There was a direct effort to shift blame for the rubber planting failure from Esme Howard's Kew backed experiments to the Agricultural Department in Trinidad, "Probably a £100 000 was expended in planting the wrong (*Castilloa*) Rubber tree and Planters had to expend large amounts in cutting it out again"³⁵⁰. The memorandum noted that the government decision to create a peasantry through cheap land sales had deprived them of labour, whilst these same now prosperous peasants owed their training and expertise to their former employment on estates. In their view the misguided social concerns of the government were to blame for the obstacles that impeded their ambitions. The actual origins of the policy of smallholder development had been completely subsumed to the cosmology of estate owners, who saw themselves rather than the state as the agents of imperial progress.

In furtherance of this appropriation of the peasantry as agents of their own brand of progress, they blamed the reduction of the steamer service between 1905-1918 for reducing inward migration and cutting trade with the northern islands. Here the idea that Tobago had once exported fruit and vegetables to St Vincent, Grenada and Barbados was deployed. The planters tacitly critiqued Tobagonians by appealing on behalf of the industrious inhabitants of other

³⁴⁸ Despatch 331 Byatt to Amery, 23rd July 1925 CO295/555

³⁴⁹ Luke, Learie B. *Identity and Succession in the Caribbean: Tobago vs Trinidad, 1889-1980* UWIpress Kingston 2007:128

³⁵⁰ Memorandum on Tobago Communications 1927 enclosure in CO295/562/10

islands who were being denied the opportunity to cultivate the interior of Tobago where land was cheap and “of the very best quality”³⁵¹. The planters described an ideal system of sea communications; this unsurprisingly placed Tobago at the hub of a service from Venezuela northwards and which would be connected to a new port at Toco by an extension of the railway from Sangre Grande. As they described this new regional powerhouse, “Given these advantages there can be little doubt that capital and labour will gravitate quickly towards the fertile and beautiful Island of Tobago, and enhance greatly the value of land property there”³⁵². This capitalist aesthetic of development hinged on Tobago rather unrealistically becoming the focus of regional policy. It is revealing that the Colonial Office decided to hold a commission of investigation not as a prelude to action but, “which would bring the whole question into the daylight, and enable it to be thrashed out thoroughly. This would be well worthwhile even if no improvement could be made”³⁵³. It is clear that the official view was that a dose of realism would bring the planters back down to terra firma. Samuel Wilson, Permanent Under Secretary and former governor of Trinidad, added a note that, “I doubt anything that can possibly be afforded will ever satisfy the people of Tobago”³⁵⁴, he also cautioned Darnley to amend a sentence about Trinidad’s responsibility to Tobago, “don’t attach too great weight to the argument that Trinidad will reap considerable advantage from an increase in Tobago’s prosperity”³⁵⁵. Participation and transparency were clearly established tools for controlling disgruntled subjects in the empire whatever their skin colour. Likewise the planters who had objected to being represented by a black businessman in Council had no qualms about appropriating the imagery of a prosperous black peasantry and a happy, fertile and productive landscape to serve the interests of capital. As noted in the discussion of estate management, such views are not a sign of conscious hypocrisy; rather they show a pronounced aesthetic in personal cosmologies of capitalism and imperialism.

Since the 1897 West India Royal Commission the concepts of peasantry, progress and improvement had been appropriated for a variety of official and unofficial ends. Tensions had clearly emerged between what government considered adequate development and what would satisfy other parties. Although called to diffuse these tensions, the Sea Communications Committee hearings would expose the weaknesses and assumptions of many beliefs whilst leading to the emergence of others. During 1929 the Tobago Sea Communications Committee

³⁵¹ Ibid

³⁵² Ibid

³⁵³ Darnley to Wilson 22/10/27 in CO295/562/10

³⁵⁴ Wilson 27/10/27 in CO295/562/10

³⁵⁵ Ibid

held five meetings in Trinidad and one in Tobago. After the meeting in Tobago the committee decided to hear additional evidence on the marketing facilities of the agricultural department. This system of depots had been set up as a wartime measure and had continued to operate thereafter with little official notice.

The hearings in Scarborough had revealed a series of widely held suspicions and complaints about the inter-island steamer service and the shipping and marketing of produce. Almost immediately there were problems, Parkinson the depot manager in Port of Spain revealed that there was considerable, "meddling around going on"³⁵⁶, at the Scarborough depot after he was challenged over purchasing policy and payment delays. Parkinson responded to cross examination from estate owner Kenneth Reid³⁵⁷ that produce arriving from Tobago was unsaleable owing to the shipping conditions and illustrated this with the claim, "I have seen avocado pears so soft that you could put your fingers into them"³⁵⁸. The Harbour Master pointed out that livestock took up all the deck space so fruit had to be placed in the hold. The Warden of Tobago, Henry Meaden was a former manager of the Tobago Government Farm and upbraided Parkinson for spending as little as \$100 a month on peasant produce. Parkinson retorted that he would buy what could be sold and that out of 36 bags of potatoes in a recent shipment only three had been saleable. He conceded in veiled language that incompetence at the Scarborough depot was a part but not the whole problem and discussion turned toward the role of regional trade in provisions for the Port of Spain market.

Speculation in provisions was being driven by truck owners. These entrepreneurs bought from small growers and large proprietors alike before choosing the means of shipment, either via the depot or by sloop. As speculators in both Trinidad and Tobago tried to manipulate the depots and markets it tended to create considerable uncertainty in what would arrive and when³⁵⁹. Parkinson was of the view that there was a shortage of vegetables in Port of Spain and its environs despite daily shipments from Grenada, St Vincent and Barbados. He stated that Tobago could provide more produce to Trinidad but that it would be futile to ship to other islands with better organised production and shipping facilities. He countered Meaden's claim that the Scarborough Depot had previously spent as much as \$1000 a fortnight by pointing out that the round the island service and poor roads meant that many growers did not send

³⁵⁶ Tobago Sea Communications Committee minutes page XV enclosed in CO 295/1567/9 Note: This enclosure differs from the copy of the council paper held separately at the PRO and the copy held at the Trinidad and Tobago national archive. The verbatim minutes appear only to survive in this enclosure.

³⁵⁷ Son of Robert S Reid already mentioned in connection with commercial forestry.

³⁵⁸ Ibid

³⁵⁹ Ibid page XVI

produce to Scarborough themselves. Meaden conceded the point and added that direct shipment, as opposed to via the depot, would be desirable if packing could be preformed to a required standard. The harbour Master added that freight tariffs had been adjusted to encourage this but improvements had yet to materialise.

The Agricultural Director, Mr Freeman described an agricultural show at Roxborough, "I took from a consignment of Tobago potatoes and a consignment of Barbados potatoes and I think also of St Vincent, and showed the people the absolutely different condition in which they arrived", he concluded, "There is a much lower standard of preparation in Tobago. A good deal can be remedied but it is slow work"³⁶⁰. Biggart was incensed by suggestions that Tobago's produce was below par, "It is the first time I have ever heard that produce from Tobago was bad. We have produced good ground provisions from time immemorial"³⁶¹ he interjected in the face of a discussion between Freeman and Meaden about soil characteristics in the Windward Islands. For Biggart even simple observations about marketing and soil were direct attacks on the reputation of Tobago that had to be deflected. For the agricultural officials, eager to defend their competence, the next few minutes were decidedly awkward. It rapidly emerged that whilst Tobago produce received a ¼ Cent preference in purchase, the overall price was often undercut by imports which caused the price available to sellers to fluctuate wildly. Given the fortnightly turnaround in payments from Trinidad to Tobago via the *SS Belize* this meant that market forces left Tobago producers in a state of constant anxiety as to what would be worth what and when. This was compounded by the stockpiling of peas and corn by the Agricultural Department in an ad hoc effort to control seasonal fluctuations in pricing³⁶². Biggart, so far on the sidelines of the discussion, saw an opportunity and attacked, "Peas were bought by you at three cents and sold at eight at the same time, and Mr Meaden will tell you that he has even got ten cents. In 1926 there was a disagreement with the Agricultural Society of Scarborough and the Depot for not keeping their engagements, and you had to come over and settle the matter. You encouraged the people to plant corn and they did, but could not dispose of them, because they found you had bought Venezuelan corn in large quantities, elbowing out our corn which was spoiled in consequence"³⁶³, he may have been less than qualified on the subject of agriculture and at a loss to understand regional trade but he also spotted that the agricultural department was in the same situation. It is crucial also to observe that just as in the earlier discussions of produce and soil there is an act of communal

³⁶⁰ Ibid XVI

³⁶¹ Ibid XVII

³⁶² Ibid XVIII

³⁶³ Ibid XVIII

appropriation as Biggart refers to “our corn”. Biggart was also deliberately misrepresenting the situation. Freeman responded by pointing out that the corn had been black with mould having rotted in its bags. Biggart retorted by conflating accusations, “Then that is a mistake. The Depot had not the money to pay for it. The corn was not bad but it was because your bins were filled with Venezuelan corn”³⁶⁴. The small matter of the spoilt corn was an early manifestation of Tobagonian identity politics.

In Biggart’s presentation inept and inefficient officials from Britain and Trinidad had conspired to undercut Tobago’s struggling smallholders with South American produce. As a result of this conspiracy Tobago’s world class goods were being kept out of the market by poor communications. When Parkinson was asked a few moments earlier by the Chairman, “Why is it that produce from the other islands swamps out Tobago?” he answered, “Because people in Tobago have the idea that they must be paid more for their stuff than anybody else” a few moments later when asked how this could be remedied he stated bluntly, “By growing better stuff and shipping it more carefully”. Biggart had remained silent until he could find some opportunity to pronounce opprobrium of the agricultural department. Officials, struggling with unpredictable economic conditions, saw a peasantry that was resisting improvement in the face of market forces and their own improving efforts. Because their logic of action was imbued with virtuous concepts of development it could not be acknowledged to be vulnerable. Biggart saw efforts to deliberate the performance of the peasantry as an attempt to undermine the image of the virtuous peasant that had become a key concept in the moral performance of what it meant to be authentically Tobagonian. The peasant and his produce lay at the heart of the moral grammar of development that existed in British West Indian policy and co-emergent Tobagonian identity.

The committee’s findings addressed the concerns laid out in the original letter from the island’s planters. The committee felt that agricultural progress was statistically undeniable and that the rise in the production of cash crops tended to counter the claim that agricultural development was being strangled by poor shipping communications. Further to this point the committee observed that the labour shortage was due to the success of agricultural production since Union instead of any decline in population³⁶⁵. Paradoxically the committee then endorsed the view that Tobagonians were naturally disinclined to work on the estates

³⁶⁴ Ibid XVIII

³⁶⁵ Report of the Tobago Sea Communications Committee CP44 1929 P15

and preferred working their own land in spite of poor returns³⁶⁶. In this light the Colony's agricultural policy since Union could be vindicated whilst simultaneously reinforcing both planter accusations of laziness by labourers and the official and popular belief in an industrious peasantry. That the concept of a peasantry was critical to all perspectives of development meant that it had to be retained without discrediting any element of the numerous beliefs from which it was composed. The committee findings were a perfectly logical contradiction provided that the moral beliefs of imperial policy are acknowledged. The disorganised state of affairs created by market forces in conjunction with poor communications meant that Tobagonians although nearer geographically, were relatively minor players in the Windward trade with Trinidad. It was noted by the Agricultural Officer in Tobago, under cross examination by Biggart, that peasants complained bitterly about having to sell in Trinidad³⁶⁷ and several peasant proprietors testified to this effect. The neighbouring island had become shorthand for grievances rooted in a chaotic regional system of food sales. The market as an ideal was restricted by the span of oceans and the organisation of logistics provided by the Colonial Government.

Replacing the Belize with two smaller vessels was the key recommendation and two custom built vessels were delivered in 1931³⁶⁸. The committee firmly took the view that communications for the benefit of capitalists were necessary. It was proposed that such a government funded service would attract investors even though its benefits for trade were negligible. On the other hand peasant proprietors who were shipping by sloop would need to be drawn into using the official service in order to provide, "a very welcome contribution to the revenue earned by the steamer"³⁶⁹. It was clear that investors would not be footing the bill for making Tobago attractive to them. As far as the debacle at the marketing depots was concerned most members of the committee, including Meaden, were in favour of closing the Scarborough depot. Biggart demurred on account of the depot being vital to the very poorest smallholders and believed it should be retained at public expense on their behalf. The committee drafted a compromise position which said of the criticisms made, "An investigation of these strictures is not germane to the enquiry with which the Committee has been

³⁶⁶ Ibid P15

³⁶⁷ Ibid P14

³⁶⁸ The two new vessels were the SS Trinidad and the SS Tobago and they operated between Port of Spain and Scarborough after the abolition of the round the island service. The service alternated between freight and passenger trips. Between 1929 and 1931 the aging SS Belize was often out of service and a private company owning the schooner Grenville Lass tried to cash in on the temporary opportunity. McTair, Constance *The Bocas and the Bulldog: The story of sea communications between Trinidad and Tobago* RPL Ltd. Trinidad 2006:38

³⁶⁹ Ibid P22

charged”³⁷⁰. This masterpiece of obfuscation aside, it was noted that the depot system as much as the steamer service was the cause of many of the tensions surrounding travel and freight between Trinidad and Tobago.

Before the committee had concluded its hearings it became clear that the planters were dissatisfied by the deliberations. Esme Howard, now Ambassador to Washington and dealing with transatlantic naval negotiations, acted as their intermediary. He wrote directly to Leopold Amery through personal rather than official channels, as befitted the correspondence of two old Harrovians. He stated that, “since annexation to Trinidad it [Tobago] had... been treated in a somewhat stepmotherly fashion”³⁷¹, it appears that even in Washington Howard’s personal view of his estates in Tobago led him to imagine a rivalry between Trinidad and Tobago. He also reiterated the popular view that, “the merchant community in Port of Spain wish to keep Tobago bound and tied to Trinidad and are doing all they can to stop Tobago having an outlet independent of Trinidad”³⁷². Amery turned the letter over to the recently returned ex Governor Samuel Wilson. Wilson made several acerbic annotations to the script, he pointed out that the Belize was, “NOT a miserable little steamer”³⁷³, but a vessel of 1300 tons that cost £18000 a year to keep in service, in answer to accusations made about Port of Spain Merchants, “Tobagonians always say this but I don’t think it is the case. They don’t care one way or the other”³⁷⁴, he further added that both he and Sir Horace Byatt, the new Governor, had lobbied for Canadian vessels to call at Tobago and that the idea of a Trinidadian conspiracy to prevent this was lunatic. The geographies of empire played strange tricks on its administrators, the diplomat from Castle Greystoke now in Washington and believing himself a West Indian being a fine example. Howard was not so much engaged by narrow economic motives as by a genuine belief in much of the same mythology of victimhood that had been articulated by Biggart and others in the committee hearings. Tobago was not being improved in line with Howard’s firmly cherished credo and if the empire could not be to blame then Trinidad would suffice. Amery’s reply tried hard to smooth over the incredulity of Samuel

³⁷⁰ Ibid P21

³⁷¹ Howard to Amery July 18th 1928 in the Leopold Amery Papers, Box AMEL 2/1/15

³⁷² Ibid

³⁷³ Ibid

³⁷⁴ Ibid

Wilson's footnotes whilst calmly illustrating just how irrational some of the claims made were³⁷⁵.

The Tobago planters were not dissuaded. In September and October the Colonial Office received two further letters on the subject of the Belize. These letters conveyed a growing sense of distrust of the colonial government that in one instance bordered on the paranoid. This latter communication asserted its moral right with a list of virtuous participants and claimed to be, "a Representative Meeting of the Clergy, Merchants and Planters"³⁷⁶. This letter adopted an aggressive tone that queried the management of the shipping service and the cost of the Belize. The capitalised description of the petitioners belied the truth. Biggart informed the Governor that the meeting was a small and private affair and that he disapproved of the false claims made. The Warden supported Biggart and despite the intervention of Algernon Aspinall³⁷⁷ of the West India Committee the Colonial Office decided that the petitioners were being unreasonable in the extreme³⁷⁸.

Parallel with this Robert S Reid wrote directly to Samuel Wilson on the subject of the Belize's dry docking. He reported that export planting had been reduced in the Charlotteville area and that incomes had declined with a resultant increase in praedial larceny³⁷⁹. Reid noted that complaints about Trinidad taking advantage were on the increase³⁸⁰ in Charlotteville. Reid's letter also reminded Wilson of his last visit to Tobago and thanked him for the water supply improvements and a new bridge, "I said that a bridge had been promised by the PWD for almost 10 years and that the only hope of getting it was that a Government official might get his neck broken crossing it"³⁸¹. Tobago's planters, at least in the isolated north east, viewed government with suspicion and hostility. By government though they meant officials in Trinidad rather than in London, their view was that Tobago was a colony in its own right and that adjustments to regional infrastructure were needed to reflect this. Theirs was an attempt to refashion the means of experiencing geography in order to reflect this status. Communications by sea not only affected the functioning of markets but also reflected the

³⁷⁵ Amery tried to point out that it would actually be financially advantageous to Trinidad's government if the Canadian's could be persuaded to place Tobago on their itinerary. Amery to Howard September 20th 1928 AMEL 2/1/15

³⁷⁶ Tucker to Lord Passfield 7th September 1929 in CO 295/1567/9

³⁷⁷ Aspinall had introduced the earlier deputation at the Colonial Office in 1927 and was the author of several books including *The Pocket guide to the West Indies* which was the Colonial Office's standard reference text for the region.

³⁷⁸ Acting Governor to Lord Passfield 30th October 1929 in CO 295/1567/9

³⁷⁹ Reid to Wilson 29th October 1929 in CO 295/1567/9

³⁸⁰ Ibid

³⁸¹ Ibid

relations of power between the two island's inhabitants even amongst the landed rich. It is not enough to speculate what might have happened to regional trade and Tobagonian market share if the Canadian boats had been rerouted. What should be scrutinised is how what actually happened played into personal perceptions of status in Tobago. Whether it was the overwhelmingly white estate owners, the Scarborough business community or the growing numbers of smallholders, all increasingly came to speak for a specific community against the perceived oppressor across the water. The controversy over shipping and especially the problems with the Belize may have marked the beginning of this geography of power and the accompanying narratives concerning the character and intentions of 'Trinidad' but it was certainly not to be the end of the matter.

Improvement's Ideologies

The first three decades after union saw major changes in Tobago's landscape. There was a rapid rise in the area cultivated and in the number of livestock reared. This agricultural revival was cast by officials as a duty of progress particularly in the early years. In this respect a moral logic of development emerged that mirrored that espoused in the Norman Commission Report. Estates in Tobago, far from collapsing into ruin reinvented themselves with new crops and new technologies and in many cases new owners. The bureaucratic fascination with tree planting and botany was an integral part not of an abstract imperial or western vision of nature but of the individual visions of those who made imperialism possible. It was a transformation of the physical world that was pursued with the full range of resources and personal connections available. The personal visions of Tobago's growing smallholders were likewise focused on a prosperity rooted in land. If the peasantry did not fit the ideal of a sturdy yeomanry that was held by officials then these smallholders would in turn be transformed, even as they themselves turned abandoned sugar estates into cocoa plots.

The image of the self reliant peasant was to become a key tool of representation in descriptions of Tobago. The vices and virtues that officials attributed to peasants were transplanted to Tobago's inhabitants in the language of policy. This conception was to form the heart of a moral grammar of landscape and people that lay at the core of development in the colonial Caribbean. The union with Trinidad exposed the chaotic and unplanned character of the inter island economy of the Lesser Antilles. Arrangements for sea travel and freight were the infrastructure that constructed the regional market and not always in the manner desired by officials. These fluctuating shipping arrangements were to shape identities just as they

transformed human interactions with the marine and terrestrial environment. The perceived iniquities of the market and the allocation and distribution of resources which made it possible were to become as much a part of the moral grammar of landscape as sturdy peasants and improving planters.

Chapter 4: The Building and Rebuilding of Paradise

The early 1930s were to witness the beginning of a new element in development planning in Trinidad and Tobago. It soon became apparent that neither the world economy nor the price of cocoa were about to stage an imminent recovery. Across the British Caribbean colonial governments began to awaken to the prospects of economic planning. This had already begun in the banana and fruit trade after growing concern around United States influence in the regional economy and had been symptomatic of the Anglo American tensions of the 1920s. Systems of producers associations were set up for both international and regional marketing with varying degrees of success³⁸².

As agricultural development struggled against the volatility in the world markets a new industry began to emerge in the Tobago. Tourism had become increasingly important across the region since the mid 19th Century when the British authorities in Nassau had begun turning the Bahamas into a seasonal retreat for American visitors at taxpayer's expense³⁸³. Thanks to growing knowledge about the mosquito the island Caribbean was able to tackle its image as a death trap. In Jamaica in the mid 18th Century the death toll had been so spectacular amongst Europeans that their population effectively died off once every seven years³⁸⁴. Not only had the fin de siècle seen the emergence of purpose built resort hotels but the new found health of the island had seen the formerly malaria ravaged area of the Hellshire Hills renamed Healthshire³⁸⁵. The predictions of District Medical Officers in Tobago at the same time now appeared somewhat apposite. Whilst recent academic accounts have seen tourism as a consumption of places and people the truth is perhaps more complex³⁸⁶. Tourism as a Caribbean industry developed from the relationship between moralities of personal and imperial improvement³⁸⁷. Notions of health and hygiene were as critical for the tourists as for the underpinning of tourism. The Kaiteur falls in British Guiana were first seen by Europeans in

³⁸² For an account of this process in the Windward Banana industry and especially St Vincent see Grossman, Lawrence S. *The Political Ecology of Bananas* University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 1998

³⁸³ Strachan, Gregory Ian. *Paradise and Plantation*. University of Virginia Press Charlottesville 2002 particularly chapter 3

³⁸⁴ Taylor, Frank Fonda. *To Hell with Paradise*. University of Pittsburgh Press 1993:14

³⁸⁵ Ibid p13

³⁸⁶ The most recent articulation of this idea is in Sheller, Mimi. *Consuming the Caribbean*. Routledge London 2003

³⁸⁷ Jamaica's earliest resorts were teetotal Ibid p47 for a photograph

1870. By 1907 guided trips were available by canoe and guidebooks reported associated Amerindian folklore. By the 1930s the Public Works Department operated a nine day itinerary tour and a private operator offered flights by sea plane³⁸⁸. This nascent ecotourism was firmly rooted in the ideology of improvement with the guidebook entry concluding, "To describe adequately the wonders of the hinterland of the 'Magnificent Province' would require many pages. It must therefore suffice to say that it is a country of boundless possibilities which only requires the attention of the capitalist to bring it into the front rank of our possessions overseas"³⁸⁹.

In Trinidad and Tobago oil emerged as a major part of the island's economic future. The unions of the oilfields shook the political and social foundations of the colony with the violent strikes of 1937. This initiated a new era of interest and engagement from a British government whose American allies viewed the West Indies as the unstable slum of the Americas. Full self government and independence followed by 1962. The opportunities of the oilfields, especially after the outbreak of war, were to lead many young Tobagonians to seek work, amongst them A.P.T. James who, turning to a post-war career in politics, was to apply constant pressure to the authorities in Britain and Trinidad to keep Tobago on the agenda. From the disturbances of the 1930s to independence there was an active ferment of ideas across the Caribbean. Tobago was no exception. Amongst Tobago's small cadre of professionals and intellectuals beliefs about Colonial Welfare projects for social improvement came to be held in association with secessionist frustrations. Idealised notions of the village, imaginings of an African heritage that owed more to Melville Herskovits than Marcus Garvey and vigorous public campaigns for morality, hygiene and above all a chimerical new concept, development. These ideas would be the underpinnings of Tobagonian nationalism. The catastrophic impact of Hurricane Flora in 1963 transformed the landscape of Tobago and inspired yet further transformations of economy, society and landscape. This was to be a test of post independence nationalism amidst the intrigue of the Cold War. It would also prove to be the first postcolonial natural disaster which would reflect future trends in the use of humanitarianism as political leverage.

Tobago Land of the Free: Planning for Visitors

In 1932 the Colonial Government in Trinidad decided to pay more attention to the burgeoning tourist trade. Any source of income was seen as desirable if it might offset the growing

³⁸⁸ A recent BBC documentary series merrily claimed the area as a little seen paradise despite this long history of aesthetic exploration.

³⁸⁹ Aspinall, Algernon. *The Pocket guide to the West Indies* 9th Edition Methuen 1939:402

discontent caused by the unemployment and labour unrest caused in part by the depression. The Tourist Inquiry Bureau was formed exclusively from the wives of government officials and members of the establishment.

The Bureau arranged for the first comprehensive survey of visitor interests as well as arranging for the publication of the first tourist maps and the first licensing laws for tour guides³⁹⁰. From the outset tourism was seen as part of broader notions of what formed a correct and desirable vision of empire. The Bureau set out to encourage school children in Canada to write letters asking questions about Trinidad and Tobago as, “young people of today may be regarded as the prospective travellers of tomorrow”³⁹¹. Categories of tourist were established and their presumed activities listed. In their first annual report, the bureau was surprised to find that cruise ship passengers, whom they had suspected would prove the most lucrative visitors, were disappointing for a variety of reasons, “Those who came on these cruises were not much interested in the island itself. The object of their voyage was to have as much ‘fun’ as possible”³⁹². Tourism research also created a minor furore when cruise passengers realised from the Bureau’s literature that the prices charged by shipping firms for onshore tours were in excess of those listed by local firms. In one of the first instances of its kind in the Caribbean the government quickly changed this policy in order to avoid embarrassing the shipping lines.

The tourists in the other categories were either long stay or transit passengers. These were more in keeping with what those volunteering with the bureau deemed desirable arrivals with suitable traits. These traits included a desire to learn more of local history, culture and natural history. The research revealed that the colony’s lack of a zoo³⁹³, public museum and the fact that the botanic gardens put little emphasis on local flora were major disappointments for visitors of an inquisitive nature. Tourists also emphasised a desire for small local guest houses rather than for large hotels, “preferring to live quietly and inexpensively”³⁹⁴. The bureau’s

³⁹⁰ Tourism Inquiry Bureau CP 60 of 1933. The Secretary of the Bureau was Florence Nankivell, wife of the Colonial Secretary and a keen activist amongst local women’s groups. Her husband was Howard Nankivell the Colonial Secretary, he committed suicide after being publicly demoted and disgraced for confronting the Oil companies during the 1937 labour riots. Florence Nankivell gave incendiary evidence to the Moyne Commission about racism and elitism in the local establishment as well as a biting indictment of colonial policy. For a full discussion of these events and the rest of Florence’s fascinating and crusading life (including rescuing Jewish children from inside wartime Germany and Holland) see Samaroo, Brinsley. *Non Traditional Sources for the Trinidad Disturbances of the 1930s* in Brereton, B and Yelvington, K Eds. *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition: Essays on Postemancipation Social and Cultural History* UWIpress Kingston 1999.

³⁹¹ Ibid p5

³⁹² Ibid p5

³⁹³ The Emperor Valley Zoo in Port of Spain was not opened until 1952.

³⁹⁴ Tourist Inquiry Bureau CP 60 of 1933 P6

volunteers approved of this modest, thrifty and culturally interested traveller and noted that to encourage such interests would require government support. From their perspective tourism was more than an economic adjunct but it did have economic goals which were closely linked to imperial ideologies of improvement. They concluded, "There is always a danger that countries which are blessed with beautiful scenery and natural advantages will stay content with these features and make little effort to develop them. A feeling of pride in the beauties and resources of a country is no doubt natural and healthy, but one must remember that other countries possess equivalent features"³⁹⁵. Within six months this small volunteer body had arrived at conclusions which remain stock elements in the study of the region's tourist industry to this day.

The second report of the Bureau added to a rapidly growing awareness of the new industry. The Botanic Gardens were remodelled with signs and trained guides. Coloured maps were issued of first Tobago, then Trinidad³⁹⁶. The challenges of pleasing tourists were sometimes paradoxical, at the urgings of the Bureau there was a clamp down on haggling with taxi drivers over fares as well as on beggars and other hustlers. At the same time they lamented, "With the advance of civilisation 'Local Colour' always a great attraction to tourists is disappearing. Even now there are very few typically local products on sale. Trinidad is deplorably lacking in local arts and crafts"³⁹⁷, the idea of local colour clearly had approved and unapproved forms. The notion of championing the sale of the local to the global and simultaneously bemoaning the spread of progress were to become an established part not just of descriptions of tourism but also of development as an ideal. The Bureau spelt out its goals clearly, "after all there is not only the commercial aspect to the question, for contact with other parts of the world which a tourist trade brings helps to put Trinidad 'on the map' in a variety of ways cultural as well as commercial... We should not allow Trinidad and Tobago to remain mere specks on the map, obscure islands in the West Indies but should aim at making the Colony one of the best known in the British Empire"³⁹⁸. Tourism in Trinidad and Tobago was viewed by these early architects as a key part of the civilizing duty of moral imperial subjects. It was also a method of promoting an aesthetically authentic, morally desirable and commercially viable form of local identity. Travel was not to them exclusively about 'fun' but about personal improvement and the process of acquiring and disseminating a broader knowledge of the imperial world.

³⁹⁵ Ibid p6

³⁹⁶ Tourist Inquiry Bureau CP 89 of 1934. The older black and white map had been of Trinidad only.

³⁹⁷ Ibid p3

³⁹⁸ Ibid p3-4

Tourism was about the dissemination and display of personal virtues as well as the appreciation of the aesthetically sanctioned virtues of others.

The tourist industry in Trinidad and Tobago occupied a vital place in the personal imperial cosmology of the colony's elite. Tourism was far from being solely about imagination and perception. The tourist industry, as the Tourist Inquiry Bureau had noted, was about infrastructure. As with the main industries of agriculture and oil, human agency would inscribe tourism into the very landscape of the island as imagination was translated into action. In 1937 the Public Works Department began a new road scheme. That this coincided with high unemployment, underemployment and unrest is no accident, with government work forming an unofficial welfare state in many parts of the Caribbean³⁹⁹.

The committee that developed the new road scheme decided to undertake a far reaching programme of works which included a massive extension of roadside drainage and kerbing. Outside of urban areas, roads were divided into three categories, oilfield, canefield and tourist roads. Industries old and new were verbally as well as physically imposed onto the landscape. Tourism had captured the attention of planners because, "the Government is considering setting aside of the whole or a part of the revenues from the Oil Royalties, for the purpose of establishing industries to replace the Oil Industry when the oil resources of the colony diminish or become exhausted. The tourist industry would seem an appropriate one for encouragement"⁴⁰⁰. This pre-emptive programme would incorporate both welfare and penal elements to facilitate the aesthetic appreciation of the tropics by motorized tourist excursion. The committee decided that as a long term project, it should have goals which assisted rather than retarded current industry's access to the labour market. "The ideal would be to absorb the unemployed only. It is understood, however, that the labour position may be helped, by the use of road-construction work as both useful training and employment for the population of the Young Offenders Detention Institute"⁴⁰¹. The road policy singled out Tobago's Windward Road for work, "Tobago can, if suitably developed, offer attractions to tourists which are

³⁹⁹ Road schemes were a key method of alleviating economic depression although they were risky given the parlous state of government revenues in many colonies. Sir Henry Blake, Governor of Jamaica seems to have developed this form of interventionist development in the 1890s. Sydney Olivier was the man sent to Jamaica to sort out the resulting fiscal crisis but was a keen advocate of the basic principle of public works as both welfare and future investment. He devoted a number of photographic plates in his history of Jamaica to the subject. See Lee, F. *Fabianism and Colonialism: The Life and Political Thought of Lord Sydney Olivier* Defiant London 1988 and Olivier, Sydney Haldane. *Jamaica: The Blessed Isle* Faber and Faber London 1936.

⁴⁰⁰ Road Development Policy CP88 of 1938 p7

⁴⁰¹ Ibid p8

almost unrivalled in the West Indies. The committee also held a particular view of the aesthetic requirements of the new industry, “the justification for constructing the roads proposed above lies mainly in the exploitation of the tourist traffic, that is to say, in the exploitation of the natural beauty spots of Trinidad and Tobago. The object would be largely nullified by uncontrolled roadside development”⁴⁰². The committee recommended legislation to control roadside land sales.

Tourism was initially a planned industry in which the role of government was to be prominent. Not only did tourism figure in visions of how imperial subjects should experience the empire, but that mobility was to be serviced as part of the practice of improving people and places. This practice of improvement was rooted in the grammar of a particular moral logic that incorporated beliefs about the aesthetics and economics of labour, commerce and mobility.

The 1930s were to see Tobago begin its entry into the tourist market. In Tobago wages had become depressed even as inflation surpassed that in neighbouring Trinidad. Along with economic malaise Tobago possessed the colony’s safest and most accessible beaches as well as the ‘local colour’. This convergence of beliefs about desirable ethics of consumption and development made Tobago the logical focus of tourism policy. Tobago’s first true tourist guide developed this through enmeshing the performance of desirable forms of recreation, the appropriated the histories of individuals who would provide the ‘local colour’ and a specific articulation of a natural and benign imperial project.

The Colonial Office receive troubling news from the West Indies in early 1930, “It seems extraordinary that a transaction such as this, involving as it does the transfer of an entire island to the Colonial Government should not have been reported at the time to the Secretary of State”⁴⁰³. The island of Little Tobago had been the property of William Ingram who had introduced Birds of Paradise (*Paradisea apoda*) in 1909. He had been inspired by the belief that the species was on the verge of extinction in the wild. On his death he willed the island to the Crown on the condition that the birds were maintained and that the island be renamed Ingram Island. The Governor had omitted to tell the Colonial Office.

What makes this vignette intriguing is the way that public and private visions of the natural world coincide. Ingram appears to have taken advantage of the empire, and the system of estates that imperial organisation had made possible in the Caribbean, as a means to enacting

⁴⁰² Ibid p9

⁴⁰³ Minute by J.H. Thompson 17/2/30 in C.O. 295/568/6

a vision of conservation as stewardship. Ingram's willing of the island to government suggests the public and imperial character of this minor project of perfecting and protecting nature. That this was bound up with a process of naming, inscribing the legacy of the act onto the landscape, underlines the point. By contrast the Colonial Office had a different notion of naming and a different idea of how to organise information about even the most obscure parts of the empire. The Governor's omission had led to an inaccuracy in the principle reference text for the region whose author, Sir Algernon Aspinall, had to be immediately contacted⁴⁰⁴. There was also a seeming reluctance by the local authorities to observe the terms of the will⁴⁰⁵. The name of the island was to remain unchanged in order to preserve the accuracy of charts and maps and avoid confusing the Admiralty⁴⁰⁶.

In order to satisfy, Sir Algernon Aspinall, the RSPB, and the Ingram family, the Colonial Government sent an ornithologist to the island in a rowing boat. He was unable to locate the birds. Conservation measures stretched to placing several signs stating the island was the property of the Crown and that trespassers would be prosecuted. As the tourist industry developed government officials became more concerned about the island, charging visitors 2 shillings entry. Weekly maintenance visits provided water for the birds and fruit trees were specially planted, the annual cost being \$243.91⁴⁰⁷. Birds of prey were ruthlessly exterminated, "hawks are shot whenever seen. (Oh! foolish hawk, who, through your bloodthirsty habits, is the only bird not welcome on this beautiful sanctuary!)"⁴⁰⁸. An orderly new landscape kept, "clean and tidy"⁴⁰⁹, was maintained for visitors. Public and private ideas of conservation had combined to create a manufactured paradise. The stewardship of the natural world was undertaken with specific goals in mind and designed to conform to a specific aesthetic, in this instance an Eden without the untidiness of death and with the hawk expelled in place of Eve, Adam or the serpent.

If the acquisition of Little Tobago had proved troublesome it had also provided the opening for the development of natural attractions and the shaping and presentation of a tropical landscape. This landscape was designed with a specific form of appreciation in mind and specific history was told as a key part of that presentation. Peasantries and new crops had

⁴⁰⁴ Algernon Aspinall's *Pocket Guide to the West Indies* 9th edition Methuen London 1927 is the edition referred to.

⁴⁰⁵ Aspinall to Cambell 17/2/30 in C.O. 295/568/6

⁴⁰⁶ Cambell to the Honorary Secretary of the RSPB 14/2/30 in C.O. 295/568/6

⁴⁰⁷ Wardens Report CP 82 of 1938. In perspective with general expenditure this is just under 7% of the total spent on poor relief during the year 1937-38. Visitor's fees for the previous year amounted to \$36.

⁴⁰⁸ Alford, C.E.R. *The Island of Tobago British West Indies* Longman's Dorchester 1953:61

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid

been presented as a moral improvement upon earlier undesirable forms of social and economic organisation and tourism in turn would adopt a morality of desirable progress. This morality was to be presented and preformed through the medium of the guide book.

Tobago had six hotels and guest houses by the end of WWII the majority were purpose built but at least two were former sugar estates. Other estates had also devised ways of gaining revenues from tourism with at least three estates charging for beach access⁴¹⁰. Despite this association between estate agriculture and the tourist industry Tobago's principle guide book sought to promote an aesthetic of landscape that was suitable both to tourists and to the improving character of empire.

To illustrate this, the guide book opens with a song by the author's wife which marketed the charms of Tobago. There is a certain irony to marketing a former slave owning colony, barely a century since abolition under the slogan 'Tobago the Land of the Free'. Whose freedom the lyrics make clear,

There's an island so small called Tobago

A gem of the tropical seas

It's a British West Indian Possession

And there you can do as you please.

Chorus

Tobago, Tobago, Tobago the land of the free

The isle in the west, is the place for a rest

It is also the place for a spree⁴¹¹

Later verses espouse various natural beauties that can be seen, foods to be eaten and of course the history of pirates and the drinking of rum. Imperial possession, tropical beauty and

⁴¹⁰ These were: the Pigeon Point Estate at this time the Tobago Aquatic Club, Golden Grove Estate and Charlotteville Estate. It appears the Arnos Vale Estate Beach Hotel did not engage in this practice but this needs confirming.

⁴¹¹ Tobago the Land of the Free by Kitty Alford in Alford, C.E.R. *The Island of Tobago British West Indies* Longman Dorchester 1952

hedonistic personal freedom are all entwined in this short ditty. Given all the talk of freedom a salient point seems to be missing. This is a theme taken up within the guide through the appropriation of the life story of a former slave. The story of Panchoo Campbell's rescue from Portuguese slavers by the Royal Navy in 1850 forms one of a series of short anecdotes in the guide. Told in inspiring terms the guide excuses Panchoo's liberation to Tobago via St Helena in humanitarian terms. Panchoo's patriotism is drawn on by describing his eagerness to see a visiting British warship. The practice of slavery is associated with a past dominated by the image of the rusting sugar wheel of Speyside estate which Panchoo had outlived and for good measure is associated with the dastardly Portuguese rather than the liberating agency of British Imperial sea power. The improvement of the landscape and the emergence of modernity are united in telling this story, "King Sugar died, but Panchoo lived on. He saw sugar change to rubber and the rubber change to cocoa and coconuts"⁴¹². Freedom and leisure are cast as historical forms of forgetting the rights and wrongs of the past which becomes, "much too long a subject to discuss here"⁴¹³. A new morality for the aesthetic appreciation of tropical islands required a new history. It also required reassuring descriptions of the police force and its armaments as well as the mosquito eradication campaign.

The practises of leisure were to be a performance of ideals underpinned by the broader infrastructure of the Colonial State; itself the sum performance of a shifting and contradictory morality espoused by individual agents. Beliefs in tourism as a desirable basis for commerce were organised in accordance with specific ideals of what was deemed morally appropriate. These beliefs formed part of a broader dynamic relationship between the concepts of labour, capital and identity and the beliefs attached to them. Development planning in 1930s Trinidad and Tobago found a place for tourism and marketable paradises. It must be stressed though that beliefs in the virtuous pursuit of leisure were not the only ideas that informed the rethinking of economy, landscape and society.

Renaissance and Welfare: Development as Whose Ideology?

The strikes and repression of 1937 in Trinidad and across the wider Caribbean led to the Moyne Commission⁴¹⁴. The Moyne Commission promptly surmised that little of real value had

⁴¹² Alford, C.E.R. *The Island of Tobago British West Indies* Longman Dorchester 1952:129

⁴¹³ Ibid p129.

⁴¹⁴ Craig, Susan. *Smiles and Blood*. New Beacon London 1988 gives a detailed account of events in Trinidad in June 1937. The Commission itself tends to be used as a source to study preceding events rather than a subject of study in its own right, but see *Report of the West India Royal Commission* HMSO 1945

emerged from previous Royal Commissions save to restate problems that then went unaddressed. Housing, sanitation, family life, education, employment rights and racial bigotry were all emphasised in the evidence submitted. Tobago was not directly effected by rioting but there was some discontent and protest over wage practises on certain estates⁴¹⁵. Several debating societies and clubs developed in the island during this period with their own internal publications⁴¹⁶. From the 1930s up until independence a complex of beliefs would develop amongst officials and politicians about the characteristics of Tobago's inhabitants.

This complex of beliefs was to incorporate many early ideas about the vices and virtues of peasants and labourers. These concepts would come to be related to specific desirable and undesirable formulations of the history of Tobago. In addition to translating the vices and virtues of the past, this emergent system of belief would espouse the virtues of a desirable future and confront the legacy of past vices. The complex of beliefs that emerged in Tobago during the era of Colonial Welfare was not simply a series of narrative myths. These were grammatically related concepts whose specific arrangement was used to make implicit and explicit statements about what the imperatives of development should be. This folklore was not a hegemonic discourse that imposed morals but it was a complexly structured language of meanings through which individuals articulated or contested the logic of concerns over island life. Fluctuating prices for island produce, wartime exigencies and the post war political climate would be reinterpreted and articulated through these conventions of belief to form a highly particular mythology of policy.

The year 1928 had seen Tobago's agriculturalists afflicted by drought, excessive rainfall and an unusual plague of slugs⁴¹⁷. Planters had either been leaving diseased coconut trees unchecked or burning them with excessive zeal in fires that caused needless damage to their own and neighbouring crops. To cap this litany of typical woes the Director of Agriculture noted, "The school garden work was again very discouraging"⁴¹⁸. On a brighter note the idea of co-operative agricultural societies was once again gathering momentum, first in cocoa fermentaries and then in a more general organisation, The Tobago Producers Association. This idea was to take hold over the next decade as the depression bit, agricultural prices declined and what remained of the island's cash economy disappeared. Co-operation was to become the new virtue of the rural ward. Even if Tobago's agricultural surplus was unsaleable co-

⁴¹⁵ See note 29 in Craig, Susan. *Smiles and Blood*. New Beacon London 1988.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid p12

⁴¹⁷ Report of the Director of Agriculture CP 1 1929

⁴¹⁸ Ibid

operation would give its production a broader purpose⁴¹⁹. Cocoa was the main smallholder cash crop. Tobago's Pembroke Cocoa co-op had been an experimental model which in 1930 was to be rolled out across the colony in response to its success⁴²⁰. This measure was to improve both the quality of cocoa but also the social organisation of production⁴²¹. A new apparatus of government was needed to make the scheme work, "It is recommended that the co-operative officer should foster development towards this ideal"⁴²².

In 1934 the Tobago Producers Association was established with a government loan and was charged with setting up new co-operatives in the island. By 1937 it had begun marketing produce. Although government funded it was run by a small private board of members. This arrangement ran into trouble the following year when it transpired that the association was insolvent, lacked suitable records and that several members of its board were engaged in dubious practises. These included using the individual association member's accounts as a way of collecting debts from other members and a 'long firm' style credit purchase scam with the association being used as a front company. The book keeping according to the colony's Treasurer who investigated, "beggars description", and furthermore, "The manner in which the Cash Books were kept clearly indicate that those connected with the Association have no idea of the purpose of a Cash Book"⁴²³. When the Department of Agriculture, who had overlooked these problems, submitted their own annual report they did so with casual understatement noting the Association's affairs, "to be in a very unsatisfactory condition"⁴²⁴. The Association was kept afloat by Government and its management was turned over to the wealthy Trinidadian businessman George de Nobriga. De Nobriga had extensive business interests and managed both state and private businesses as well as owning several racehorses,

⁴¹⁹ Wardens Report CP 54 of 1932. Even after the issues that emerged in the Sea Communications Inquiry it seems no outlet for cash crops had been secured and nor was this possible until WWII. Despite this large surpluses continued to be produced and then left to rot.

⁴²⁰ Report on How the Government can Assist the Cocoa Industry in View of the Uneconomic Prices Currently Obtaining CP 114 of 1930

⁴²¹ This was thoroughly in keeping with the Fabian development doctrine that was increasingly informing the opinion of Britain's domestic and colonial officials. By the 1950's Tobago's co-operative fermentaries were to be held up as examples of all that could be achieved by co-operation even though they were of dubious economic viability without government support. For example see, Shephard, C.Y. Co-operative Cocoa Fermentaries in Tobago *Journal of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago* Vol. 57 No. 3 1957. The West Indies were "inevitably" agricultural in the eyes of Fabian colonial researchers. Co-operation and co-operative land settlement served the dual advantages of alleviating immediate economic distress and building a new and independent society. Tobago was held up as a prime case of why this was necessary, see, Waller, E. and Hinden, R. *Co-Operation in the Colonies: A Report from a Special Committee to the Fabian Colonial Bureau*. Allen and Unwin London 1945

⁴²² Ibid

⁴²³ Tobago Producers Association Inquiry CP22 1938

⁴²⁴ Agriculture CP 50 of 1938

he epitomises the popular image of a white Trinidadian creole business elite (Being at the forefront of this project probably helped de Nobriga to win election to the legislative council as member for Tobago later in 1938⁴²⁵). Outright closure was averted in favour of temporary liquidation and restructuring because a co-operative marketing system was deemed vital to Tobago's smallholders and estates alike, particularly for the provision of ice. Commitment to co-operation as a desirable aspect of policy simply could not be allowed to fail.

The full publication of the Moyne Commission into the background of the labour disturbances in the West Indies was delayed until 1945 but its urgent recommendations were published in 1940⁴²⁶. The previous Orde report into labour conditions⁴²⁷ had extolled self sufficiency in the West Indian colonies and drawn attention to the unimplemented recommendations of the Norman and Olivier Commissions⁴²⁸. Orde had paid tribute to Tobago's peasantry as part of an ideal for land settlement and as a potential means of reducing Trinidad's reliance on imports. The Moyne Commission's immediate recommendations were far reaching, including centralised health and welfare for the region that acknowledged that the works required could not be paid for from the revenues of the individual colonies, mechanisms for collective bargaining, a move to state rather than denominational education, a more relevant curriculum, prison reform, increased emphasis on probation and rehabilitation, an end to legal discrimination against women, and land settlement. The Moyne Commission was a clear statement of what the responsibilities of the state were and how they should be achieved. In agriculture 'orderly marketing' and the development of mixed farming were advocated to replace the chaos of the past. This last measure, as with all of the above, illustrates the emphasis on a specific morality of improvement. This morality would have to be performed by its intended beneficiaries and would require a change in, "the habits and tastes of the

⁴²⁵ The only other account of this election in Luke (2007), limited franchise aside, fails to give any account for why De Nobriga should have won, with both his predecessors having been from the island itself. His immediate predecessor had been a white cocoa estate owner called Isaac Hope who had owned several properties in Roxborough and a store in Scarborough. Hope had been a keen advocate of unemployment relief through capital expenditure. See Luke, Learie. *Identity and Secession in the Caribbean: Tobago vs. Trinidad 1889 to 1980* UWIpress Kingston 2007:146-157

⁴²⁶ *West India Royal Commission 1938-39 Recommendations* HMSO 1940 and *West India Royal Commission Report* HMSO 1945. The delay in publication was to avoid giving German (and in the early war Russian) intelligence potential propaganda material.

⁴²⁷ *Labour Conditions in the West Indies* HMSO 1939

⁴²⁸ *Report of the West India Royal Commission* HMSO 1897 and *Report of the West Indian Sugar Commission* HMSO 1930

consuming public and in commercial organisation”⁴²⁹. A new rationale for improvement had emerged drawing on the old.

On Tuesday 7th of March 1939 the Port of Spain Gazette, opinion sheet of the conservative Catholic social elite of Trinidad and Tobago, offered a verbatim report of the Moyne Commission hearings that had taken place the previous Saturday. Six members of the commission had arrived in Scarborough on Lord Moyne’s yacht and took evidence from six members of the Chamber of Commerce led by Kenneth Reid the chamber’s president as well as from schoolteacher L.E. Edwards. One of the commissioners toured the island with the ward’s agricultural officer.

The Chamber of Commerce had submitted a memorandum to the Moyne Commission that amounted to a plan for the development of the island. This document had reiterated their long standing fears of neglect from Trinidadian officials and in particular the lack of specific references to Tobago in the then five year plan. This memorandum had many objectives but was driven by an overwhelming concern, “immediate steps should be taken to provide for Tobago children, a general education to fit them primarily for life as agriculturalists which a large majority of them must be and remain”⁴³⁰. The members of the Chamber were worried about the effects of what they termed ‘an English’ as opposed to vocational education. Failing communications, poor housing, poor medical care and malarial swamps all needed to be addressed in their view in order to end this flight from agriculture. They envisaged a scheme that would recreate a contented populace to work in the fields and service the hotels that would spring up in the newly tidied and sanitised landscape, once the necessary public works and transport infrastructure had appeared courtesy of the British Treasury.

The previous year guest house owner C.E.R. Alford had written an article aimed at potential settlers, “Another big point is that the people are peaceful and cheerful. Most of the coloured people have land of their own, however small it may be, which gives them a stake in the island. It is true that this encourages irregularity of labour on the Plantations and gives an excellent excuse for a man to say he wants to go to his garden if he doesn’t feel like working!”⁴³¹ For Alford and other expatriates there was a clear attraction for this pastoral hierarchy. It was based on a moral conception of labour that implied that Tobagonians could not actually be

⁴²⁹ Recommendations of the West India Royal Commission 1938-39 HMSO 1940 p23

⁴³⁰ Memorandum Submitted by the Tobago Chamber of Commerce on Social and Economic Conditions in Tobago .C.O. 950/757

⁴³¹ *The Tobagonian* September 1938 A Settler in Tobago by C.E.R. Alford

considered to be working when doing so on their own account. Later in the same journal it was pointedly noted that many small farmers in Tobago were incapable of self sufficiency through sheer poverty with the roadside often doubling as a pasture for a handful of cattle or goats.

The idealised pastoral view of island life was challenged sharply during the Moyne Commission hearings by Dame Rachel Crowdy, formerly head of the League of Nations Social Section and a stalwart of several British women's organisations, "He [Kenneth Reid] said that the people were looking away from the land and he thought that with increased education it would be worthwhile spending money on them and keeping them happy and the younger generation growing up would be content as the older generation, they wanted a little recreation", Dame Crowdy responded, "I don't think the older generation was content: still that is another consideration"⁴³². What Dame Crowdy wanted to know was how a society of clubs, village councils and public recreation grounds could be created in Tobago and how would potential leaders be found and future activities be maintained. The Moyne Commission was concerned not simply with the perpetuation of the status quo, whose torch bearers were more than perturbed by the unrest of 1937, but with the prospects of self government along improving lines. Kenneth Reid advocated village councils that would create responsible head men who might be assisted by other intelligent persons as emerged. Dame Crowdy drily observed, "They would be very representative, as a result it would have to be done by election by Government?", Reid who had already given an idealised vision of the English parish council and contrasted it to the stylised African derived conception of village head men, suggested some form of appointed tutelage, Dame Crowdy retorted, "Farmer, proprietor, parson and workingman?"⁴³³. What the Moyne Commission drew out in Tobago was that the Chamber of Commerce had an idea of amelioration in mind rather than reform and that this should be Government funded. By contrast some of the Commissioners saw the current system of social organisation as wholly at fault and that far reaching and long term change was desirable. Social improvement was a moral obligation for some on the Commission. It was a universal sense of obligation and one that would translate into an ambitious project of social engineering. This project was to be pursued by thought more than expenditure during and after WWII. Improvement and development would be stressed as being part of a process of psychological transformation that would be taken to heart by local public servants.

⁴³² *The Port of Spain Gazette* Tuesday March 7th 1939 enclosed in C.O. 950/757

⁴³³ Ibid. This exchange is remarkably similar to Edmund Leach's description of the origins of the Indian Caste system and its ironic comparison to the words of the hymn 'All things bright and beautiful' by Crispin Bates. See footnote 18 in Bates, C. Race, caste and tribe in central India: the early origins of Indian anthropometry in P. Robb ed. *The Concept of Race in South Asia* Oxford University Press 1997:213

The newly opened Mason Hall Government School was the first step away from the fractious competition of denominational schooling in Tobago⁴³⁴. The Assistant School Inspector's first report was glowing with the one exception, "There is considerable room for improvement in gardening. It is passing strange that while Tobago is one of the garden wards of the Colony the schools here are very much behind those in the matter of gardening"⁴³⁵. The idea of Tobago as a shorthand for agricultural work is clearly evident in setting the standard of expectation within the moral grammar informed by the Colony's geography. There had been success though in the project of improvement and the new system of state education, "My appeal last year for more emphasis on character building bought us a challenge cup for Civility from a kind but anonymous donor. The competition has done much to improve politeness in and out of school. Unpunctuality continues a cause of much educational waste"⁴³⁶. A belief in civility as a capitalised virtue was integral to the role of education in the ideology that constituted the moral logic of improvement. Land and people were to be sanitised and organised in one effort. Just as public health would be assisted by the rational disposal of waste so did a concept of pollution come to encompass a notion of educational waste, the undesirable disposal of time placed beside the undesirable disposal of faecal matter.

A small magazine entitled *The Tobagonian* began its publication run in 1938 and lasted a decade and a half under the editorship of Toby McIntosh. Amongst its regular contributors would be Carlton Ottley and JD Elder⁴³⁷. They and other contributors were to debate the particulars of a system of belief which synthesised an elaborate nationalism with colonial development policy. In welcoming the arrival of the Moyne Commission, Ottley wrote, "Tobago is now a dependant orphan looking at all times for succour from her foster mother Trinidad... But in an age not long past this little Caribbean gem was an important independent unit of the British Empire"⁴³⁸. The article rapidly makes clear that it is the Royal Commission of 1883 and not the Moyne Commission which is its principle focus. Conjuring up the fall from grace and prosperity to a current dire predicament was to be a recurrent tactic in the articles Ottley and other contributed to the monthly journal.

⁴³⁴ Ibid. The exchange between Dame Rachel Crowdy and Kenneth Reid refers in part to this issue of denominational competition as does the later testimony of L.E. Edwards.

⁴³⁵ Education CP 67 of 1939

⁴³⁶ Ibid

⁴³⁷ Carlton Ottley (1910-1985) was a Scarborough born civil servant who was a leading figure in government community and welfare programmes. He had a special interest in folklore and history. See Brereton, Samaroo and Taitt eds *Dictionary of Caribbean Biography Vol 1 Trinidad and Tobago*. UWI 1998. JD Elder (1914-2003) was an anthropologist born in Charlotteville. He was heavily influenced by the work of Melville Herskovits he published prolifically on local cultural forms and ethnomusicology, notably *African Survivals in Trinidad and Tobago* Karia Press Trinidad 1988

⁴³⁸ *The Tobagonian* January 1939 Tobago and the Royal Commission by C.R. Ottley

The emphasis on contemporary welfare proposals and the key contest over education and achievement were interwoven with an almost biblical narrative of fall and shame. An unsigned editorial speaks of the hope and excitement engendered by the language of development but adjures readers, "However much we dream of a Tobago rising from the ashes of its dead self into something bright and prosperous we must remember that stable prosperity can only be maintained by this island remaining an essentially agricultural unit"⁴³⁹. This new cosmology of the local intelligentsia was to integrate many of the goals of local businesses and estates into its organisation. This integration was to be marked, as indicated in this extract, by a transformative element attached to land and labour on it. This was to be a reformulation of the moral values and necessity of a Tobago peasantry. The editorial is composed of several parables linking the fate of the peasantry to the fate of the landscape and both to a cherished articulation of what is Tobagonian, "If a man requires things he must have at once and hears of fresh openings he is apt to catch the fever and rush off to make his little pile. But then he has to remember that the rush would one day be over and it is to the neglected field he would have to return and the neglected field would be overgrown with weeds and nettles"⁴⁴⁰. The editorial concluded, "It is because we have seen the danger of forsaking our field that we have ventured to pen these lines. We say then 'back to the land!'"

The idea of co-operation and solidarity was integral to this new vision of the future. One writer spoke of agricultural decline in terms of evil days but that this evil would be overcome, "By co-operative methods the challenge is accepted"⁴⁴¹. In one contribution Ottley tells the story of emancipation using a slogan from the welfare programme, "Tobago's masses could achieve no progress in those days. Education was the missing link in the three linked chain of progress in the island which to reiterate is comprised of Agitation, Co-operation and Education"⁴⁴². As Ottley described it there was no true solidarity or social organisation worthy of the name in Tobago and such a structure was essential to the making of a worthy and productive land and people. As wartime moves toward self sufficiency in food gathered pace, this notion of co-operation blossomed. Tobago's juvenile farm club was seized on as an inspiration for Trinidadian education. Land settlements were planned, as was the demand for a loan bank for peasants.

⁴³⁹ *The Tobagonian* March 1939 Editorial

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴⁴¹ *The Tobagonian* October 1938 Tobago then and now by Walter A. Mendes

⁴⁴² *The Tobagonian* March 1939 Agitate, Co-operate Educate by C.R. Ottley

The impact of earlier sanitary measures had also created problems in Tobago. The emphasis on the hygienic production of milk appears to have created the impression that only imported powdered milk was safe. The Chairman of the Peasant Proprietors Association, Mr Hovell, sought to undo this preconception by urging that local sanitary measures must restore public confidence in order to reduce imports⁴⁴³. The following year this body added the word co-operative to its title. An editorial in the *Tobagonian* sang the Association's praises and prophesied that it would undo the days when, "individual peasants have taken their commodities to Port of Spain and returned worse off financially than when they left Tobago"⁴⁴⁴. Once more invoking land, co-operation and progress the Editor cautioned that he had seen, "within the past decade, several Co-operative movements spring up, bloom and fade away through inefficient management, lack of support or some other prejudicial condition". If warnings were heeded however, there was no reason why this, "should not mean a more progressive Tobago; a Tobago with new hopes for a rising generation"⁴⁴⁵. In furtherance with this spirit an expatriate of unknown origin wrote of the need for a credit bank. They offered sympathy to those who left the island to look for jobs on the new US base in Trinidad rather than see their children unclothed. For this writer co-operative credit and solidarity with the peasantry was a patriotic duty. "The Mother Country made a similar blunder before and after the Great War, and is now in a great fix to make good the evil consequences. Shall we wait until starvation stares us in the face to make this fertile ward a more flourishing and dependable farm of the colony?"⁴⁴⁶ Patriotism and an uncertain future conjured up the *Tobagonian* peasantry as a vehicle of hope and self sufficiency. Key to the logic of agricultural co-operation was the need to make a truth of the old statements of Tobago's garden status, used more as an excuse for inaction in the past, now it was time to plant the garden.

Between December 1942 and April 1943 a virulent exchange of letters in *The Tobagonian* between Carlton Ottley and a pseudonymous Jadie occurred⁴⁴⁷. This exchange drew out some of the contradictions in the logic of improvement being advocated in Tobago during the war years. Jadie opened his assault, "What has Tobago done, or the sons of Crusoe's isle achieved? What contribution has Tobago made in the world of Science, Art, Literature, Commerce,

⁴⁴³ *The Tobagonian* February 1940 Peasant Notes

⁴⁴⁴ *The Tobagonian* April 1941 The Editor's Page

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁴⁶ *The Tobagonian* June 1941 Credit Facilities for Peasants by 'Lawrence of Arabia'

⁴⁴⁷ Although there is no way of being certain I suspect Jadie is a pseudonym for JD Elder who often signed more obviously attributable articles, with his initials JD. An article on Charlotteville folk life places the pastoral firmly in the past as a foundation to what he terms, "fruitful signs that there is an awakening" in *The Tobagonian* October 1942 Charlotteville: Social Aspect by JD

Industry?”⁴⁴⁸ Jadie sought to undermine the imaginary past of Ottley’s musings. The article added, “I do not speak of the white or pseudo white men, I speak of the coloured man of Tobago - what has he done?”⁴⁴⁹ The language of race and racism, so conspicuously absent from earlier editions was turned on the notion of an authentic Tobagonian son of the soil. Jadie was adamant that Tobagonians would be, “lost sight of in the pages of West Indian History”⁴⁵⁰, if they did not change their ways. Jadie was blunt; laziness not want was the cause of decline often mentioned in the pages of the Tobagonian. The whole idea of a peasant is brutally attacked as being the root of a psychology of deficient ambition, “And yet it seems the average coloured man of Tobago, hoarding his money and the educational outlook never figured in his scheme of things. His son grew up to be a peasant at that – to inherit his father’s lands and acquire yet more lands which he tilled and died as his father before him – a peasant farmer”⁴⁵¹. Jadie attacks the simple and the pastoral and even sneers at describing this way of life as ‘freedom’. A new geography of identity and achievement is brought in to play as opposed to the narrative of decline and Crusoe mirrored isolation, “be proud that you added your part in the building up of the heritage of West Indian solidarity”⁴⁵². A distinct political project for Tobago was at work here as Jadie predicted, “a new Order in which the legislative, administrative and political aspects of life shall play a great part and in which she shall be enabled to handle her own affairs”⁴⁵³. For the first time a post-war world of Tobagonian separatism emerged that linked concepts of improvement and progress to an imagining of an island political consciousness.

Jadie’s letter drew a wealth of criticism over the following months. The first was pseudonymous and attacked the historical basis of Jadie’s polemic by pointing out that Tobago had experienced the failure of sugar, rubber and cocoa: “the sons of Tobago have had their eggs put in three broken baskets”⁴⁵⁴. Carlton Ottley’s response was livid, he declared, “You are one of those persons who consider an agricultural calling a degradation... I would certainly recommend your detention for the duration as one who hinders the Colony’s war effort towards self sufficiency”⁴⁵⁵. Ottley revealed his own view of agriculture in what was perhaps a slip from his official stance on the wartime unity, “Agriculture is a most noble calling and

⁴⁴⁸ *The Tobagonian* December 1942 Tobago’s Lazy Sons by Jadie

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid

⁴⁵¹ Ibid

⁴⁵² Ibid

⁴⁵³ Ibid

⁴⁵⁴ *The Tobagonian* January 1943 Tobago’s Industrious Sons by H.M.T.

⁴⁵⁵ *The Tobagonian* February 1943 An Open Letter to Jadie by Carlton Ottley

would come into its own were it not for universal exploitation of those who live on the land”⁴⁵⁶. Another critic deployed their own racial theory of Tobagonian history in answer to Jadie’s introduction of the topic, “For many years he [the coloured man] has been neglected by that part of the community whose education and upbringing should be a guide and a helping hand. In those years his only possible means of existing was by the sweat of his brow and the stock that he managed to rear. His thoughts became attuned to the earth, slow, steady and sound”⁴⁵⁷. This theory drew on Tobago’s history of 19th Century Scottish immigrants to brand the Tobagonian, “essentially Scotch”⁴⁵⁸. For this commentator the peasant was to remain, “the steady backbone of the New Order where brains will be needed far more in the field than the political arenas which have nearly bought the world to chaos”⁴⁵⁹. Development and progress are herein called upon consciously as part of a project that imagines it can be apolitical; this ‘New Order’ is a natural one that projects the fusion of man and soil, apparently a nascent anti-politics machine⁴⁶⁰.

What the letters to the Tobagonian amply illustrate is that an anti-politics machine is the outcome of highly specific claims to authoritative authenticity. In this case each correspondent and columnist drew upon a local grammar of beliefs about landscape and morality. The organisation of this grammar was not an innately structured language. Instead it was the subject of a forceful debate that contributed to a fluid cosmology. The parameters of this fluidity were set by the intentions of the individuals debating the specifics of meaning in each contextual instance. How individuals went about doing this was not the rejection of all political activity but instead the political activity of rejecting alternative points of view and waiting for the response. This was done by contesting the vices and virtues of key concepts and relating them to the vices and virtues of others. Jadie rather illustrated this in his response to what he styled the ‘hunnish raillery’ of Ottley’s Open Letter, “It is gratifying to Jadie to remark that his letter... has caused the ‘sons’ of his soil to sit up and do some introspection, to make some self-examinations”⁴⁶¹. Quoting Percy Bysshe Shelley Jadie demanded that Tobagonians, ‘Rise

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid

⁴⁵⁷ *The Tobagonian* March 1943 A Reply to Jadie by ‘Forward to the land’

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid

⁴⁶⁰ This phrase has perhaps been more commonly applied to a conception of contemporary development aid and projects as discourse and is drawn from Ferguson, James. *The Anti-politics machine ‘Development’, Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge 1990

⁴⁶¹ *The Tobagonian* April 1943 Letter in Correspondence from Jadie

like lions from their Slumber' in angry response to those whose sole antidote to historical disabilities and injustices was merely good natured optimism⁴⁶².

There was no uniform ideological programme of development or improvement, rather concepts that formed desirable characteristics of many ideologies. In the case of Tobago the programmes of improvement had drawn on, contributed to and been transformed by the grammar of public morality. In the tiny polity adjoined to Trinidad this performance of morality through language drew on, sometimes simultaneously, ideas of racial pride, West Indian solidarity, inter island rivalry and imperial loyalty. What was certain was that it was for progress and that this was to be achieved by a union of the modern and the traditional. If social welfare was progressive and agriculture was patriotic then it seemed logical to the local agents and agencies of improvement to focus on rural communities and what one had called their 'uplift and pre-eminence'⁴⁶³.

Imagining the Village

Villages had been a key part in imaginings of Caribbean landscape, from orderly depictions of slave huts in paintings commissioned by 18th Century planters, to Baptist free village projects in Jamaica and elsewhere after emancipation. During the period after Tobago was united with Trinidad villages had figured either as persistent sanitary problems, unwilling pools of labour and always simultaneously as repositories of associated peasant virtues and vices. The shifting use and expanding imagination of the concept of the village was to have profound lasting impacts on land use in Tobago and in consequence shaped human experiences and transformations of the physical world.

An early suggestion of how social welfare would interact with Tobago's caricature as garden idyll came during an inquiry into the state of the colony's prisons. "It seems a little churlish to criticise anything that pertains to so beautiful a place as Tobago"⁴⁶⁴, said England and Wales's Chief Commissioner of Prisons, before listing many areas of concern, the shipment of convicts and lunatics to Trinidad in a deck bound iron box, the dual use of the women prisoners exercise yard as a shower area by male warders and the arbitrary judgement of which convicts

⁴⁶² The line is from *The Mask of Anarchy* a poetic comment by Percy Bysshe Shelley on the Peterloo massacre of 1819.

⁴⁶³ *The Tobagonian* January 1943 Tobago's Industrious Sons by H.M.T.

⁴⁶⁴ Prisons Report CP73 1937 Alexander Paterson H.M. Commissioner of Prisons for England and Wales. For an idea of what shipment to Port of Spain in an iron box might have been like refer to the earlier descriptions of the condition of hold stowed fruit on arrival.

were jailed in Scarborough and which shipped to Trinidad. Similar concerns over propriety were bound up with the Social Welfare programme that began to emerge after the Moyne Commission. Given the view of many officials and educated and propertied Tobagonians that rural wards were by definition village communities, albeit in some vaguely traditional and insanitary African fashion, it logically followed that the village would be the target of any programme of moral improvement and society building.

The first public salvo of this campaign appeared in the *Tobagonian* in early 1939, "Village life in Tobago is at a low ebb. It is so low that men and women who know village life in Africa have been surprised"⁴⁶⁵. The Editor went on to note that in the previous fifty or sixty years the civilising influence of Great House life had departed. Whilst a return to this idealised past was not suggested the Editor added, "We cannot view with satisfaction the policy which makes no effort to raise up other influences of a similar nature"⁴⁶⁶. Of course fifty or sixty years previously Tobago's Great Houses had largely been the residences of a bunch of drunks, gun toting neurotics, Obeah practitioners and grave robbers⁴⁶⁷. Village life had never been this way; medical reports after union clearly stated this and Dame Rachel Crowdy had challenged this in her cross examination of Kenneth Reid during the Moyne Commission hearings. What is of note is the extent to which this explanatory historicism had been incorporated into the image of decline that characterised both Colonial Welfare and incipient nationalism. Some advocates of Colonial Welfare presumably found it easier to suggest that discontent was caused by an essentially modern problem. This avoided a wide scale public recognition that life for workers in the Caribbean had been almost as bleak after emancipation as before. The solution mooted in *The Tobagonian* was similar to the Village Council proposals of the Chamber of Commerce Memorandum to the Moyne Commission. "These men [natural leaders] are in the villages today and in a private way they are the accepted leaders and guides... What these leaders lack is Government authority"⁴⁶⁸. This proposed system had a clear goal in extending not simply state power but the ability of the government officials to project the performance of current moral forms, "The application of such a move, besides giving the villagers an increased interest in their homes, would be of great service to the

⁴⁶⁵ *The Tobagonian* February 1939 Our Villages by The Editor.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid

⁴⁶⁷ See Howard, Esme *Theatre of Life Vol. 1* Hodder and Stoughton London 1935:254-258 for these colourful vignettes of 1890s planters and an English settler's suspicious view of a village wake and the accompanying drumming.

⁴⁶⁸ *The Tobagonian* February 1939 Our Villages by The Editor

officials, and to the tourists”⁴⁶⁹. The former would use the system to popularise Health Week and other sanitary measures whilst the latter could procure authoritative information on local life. As a concept the village council combined attempts to project both the official morality of sanitary improvement and facilitated the morally desirable goal of informed travel.

The performance of public morality was not divorced from local living conditions but was a response born of them. The local Red Cross Committee cited the lack of water, the lack of privies and poor disposal of refuse as well as the average wage of \$9 a month when it called for, “Village Upliftment”. In describing voluntary schemes in the island there was a belief that, “Now that Red Cross work is practical politics there are those who look in this direction”⁴⁷⁰. Co-operation, improvement and uplift were the terms coined for this project, villages were named and singled out for their untidiness and poor sanitation, “village reformation should be pleasant and highly instructive”⁴⁷¹. This engagement by the Red Cross was based on explicit recognition of the detrimental impact of past health policy in rural parts of the island. An article that commented on an address to the Tobago division of the Red Cross by Lady Young⁴⁷² reminded readers of outbreaks of typhoid at Bellegarden caused by using wells and rivers for washing and excretion and noted the failure of the constabulary to change behaviours. The article noted the lack of co-operative spirit and community, “A sanitary official often fails to persuade a villager to build a privy in the interests of his own and his neighbour’s health: for there is a traditional hostility between the two,”⁴⁷³ the reason that the Red Cross could succeed in implementing the objectives of government where government had failed was that, “Our Red Cross would not have this hostility to contend with, not being associated with courts and penalties”⁴⁷⁴. Non governmental agencies were perceived as being able to secure governmental goals through a policy of participatory community groups where earlier sanitation had failed. Penal coercion was to be replaced by co-operation, sanitation practised not as a moral indictment of the poor but as a moral obligation of the community as a whole and to which some flavour of wartime patriotism was imbued.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid. The references to health week and informed travel in the next sentence occur later in the article.

⁴⁷⁰ *The Tobagonian* December 1939 Our local Red Cross can uplift village life by George Ridges

⁴⁷¹ Ibid

⁴⁷² Wife of Governor Hubert Young who was to head post war relief efforts in Europe after the Allied victory as first regional head of the UN Relief Agency. He and his wife were active members of the Liberal Party and he stood unsuccessfully for election to Parliament in 1945.

⁴⁷³ *The Tobagonian* February 1940 How the Red Cross can help Tobago by H.B. Meikle

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid

The dispersed population of Tobago increased the difficulties of providing health services around the island with a limited budget⁴⁷⁵. The devolution of implementing improvement from three DMOs and four sanitary inspectors to village level groups therefore had a practical purpose. If this programme placed people under the closer surveillance of government agencies then it placed those agencies and their staff in turn under closer surveillance and made official concerns into village concerns through its own logic of organisation. This said, this was firstly a governmental programme with broader societal objectives, "Tobago may not bulk large in the social welfare programme but its good fortune is to have fewer needs than Trinidad especially on the remedial side", wrote the regional social welfare officer⁴⁷⁶. Tobago's pastoral image in the minds of officials tended to mask problems that were often less apparent than those in Trinidad's urban and industrial areas. Within this reasoning, the family was seen as a characteristic institution almost fused to the local landscape even when incorporating stark contradictions. For example, "[There are] scarcely any children without parents (they are taken by neighbours). The villages have a more settled and homogenous population than those in Trinidad with the family heads as natural leaders"⁴⁷⁷. This idealised vision of an African village family loomed large. On her return to Britain, Ibberson enthusiastically supported remarks at an Oxford University conference, "by an anthropologist with the stimulating thesis that native African education devotes itself mainly to two subjects – sex and manners – generally ignored by the European education"⁴⁷⁸. Civil servants like Ibberson saw themselves as builders of a new co-operative society that would disseminate or discard cultural forms seen respectively as beneficial or opposed to its goals. Even with Tobago's idyllic setting there was still ample scope for, "better child care and nutrition, special amenities in villages and the fostering of co-operative projects and home industries"⁴⁷⁹.

During the Social Welfare Officer's visit to Tobago and prior to the publication of her report *The Tobagonian* was hammering out the distinctiveness of Tobagonian troubles once more as opposed to those of Trinidad, "Social conditions as the officer herself must have discovered are deplorable... The people in the village live in such economic depression and have lived with

⁴⁷⁵ Report of the Committee on Medical and Health policy CP65 of 1944

⁴⁷⁶ Report of the Social Welfare Officer CP33 1945. Miss Dora Ibberson was a well respected civil servant who worked on both domestic and colonial welfare research from the 1930s onwards. Her reports dealt often with the relationship between small communities and the state and how to make such a relationship meaningful to individuals. She is amongst the numerous quiet architects of both the British welfare state and many others.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid

⁴⁷⁸ Dora Ibberson to Oliver Stanley M.C. 17th August 1944 in CO 859/122/6

⁴⁷⁹ Report of the Social Welfare Officer CP33 1945

it for so long that social well being has very little part in their lives"⁴⁸⁰. This was no accident, with a growing tone of regional and historical significance now attached to local improvement programmes. "This state of affairs reaches far back into the history not only of Tobago but in all the West Indian Islands where till today the exploitation of the native people has been the order of the day. No heed whatever has been so far paid to the well-being of those by whose sweat wealth rolls into the coffers of the idle"⁴⁸¹. There is a faint suggestion here that the characterisation by landed and commercial interests of villagers as African natives had by this time become an unexpected part of the self image of some in the island. A historicised conception of ownership could be countered by a historicised critique of ownership. History is seen here not just as a parable about local decline but has become linked into a regional conception of the impact of the world economy. Despite the more strident tone, the emphasis on improvement remained very close to the origins of Colonial Welfare policy in British socialist and radical liberal thought adding, "... social welfare work is but the beginning of the dealing with the many problems which have so far kept the people of these Islands from enjoying the good things that belong to Western civilization"⁴⁸².

Improving the village was a goal born out of the imagining of an idealised past, if the peasantry of the past had been thrifty and disciplined and the present was a period of decline then the fault in part lay with the individual. Improvement was a specific moral logic advocates aimed to redeem their own beliefs by performing a moral cosmology that logically required its adoption by other people. If this seems contradictory to the view that ameliorating poverty had come to replace punishing poverty it is because at a rational level it is. It is the logic of the system of beliefs, the grammar of beliefs about development and the clearly intended meanings it ascribed to people and land, that made such a contradiction a necessary component in the public discussion of social welfare. This was far from a static morality harking back to more conservative appraisals of West Indian societies, "there are so few avenues of spending properly the hours of leisure"⁴⁸³. Social Welfare had a specific purpose just as the leisure of tourists had been posited as having a desirable form with the 'New Order' of 'uplift' aiming to build a more sanitary, equitable and co-operative society.

The liberty of the individual could sometimes pose an obstacle to this in similar ways to that in which individual labour had posed an obstacle to the improving vision of employers. "In the

⁴⁸⁰ *The Tobagonian* February 1944 Social Welfare by The Editor

⁴⁸¹ Ibid

⁴⁸² Ibid

⁴⁸³ *The Tobagonian* March 1945 Social Welfare by The Editor

country districts it is not unusual to see young men and women standing idly at the street corners idly gossiping and in Scarborough one sees groups of adolescents standing about doing nothing where the lights are brightest"⁴⁸⁴. Someone was required to get the 'Bay Boys' off the streets of Scarborough and into morally sound and productive forms of leisure even if there was little immediate prospect of full time annual employment and income for them. The return of Carlton Ottley from his six months training as social welfare officer was heralded as an opportunity to transform these dysfunctional elements of the urban environment. Commenting on this the Editor of the *Tobagonian* noted, "... until we in the West Indies have reached a stage of development where our leisure hours can be spent profitably we cannot be said to have progressed very far"⁴⁸⁵. This programme drew on concept of the village as the principle unit of Tobagonian community and aimed to establish certain areas of greater intelligence, leadership and co-operation with Charlotteville, Mason Hall and Moriah all singled out as progressive areas. Part of the evidence for this was a ten acre settlement in Charlotteville where, "New homes and modern sanitary methods should in the near future add to the attractions"⁴⁸⁶. The location of this project perhaps owed no small part to the agency of the head of the Charlotteville Red Cross Foundation Mrs Ruby Turpin who had been actively organising suitably improving community events for some time⁴⁸⁷.

If improvement was the moral obligation of the day it was an obligation that continued to draw heavily on simultaneously spiritual and secular imaginings of Tobago's agrarian past. If an increasing trend of describing future programmes in these terms had a major advocate then it was J.D. Elder, who was to spend the decades after the war developing his career as an Anthropologist, specialising in ethnomusicology and the mapping of African survivals in the New World. He seems by this time to have reconciled his fascination with the primitive with his desire for the modern by this time writing, "But despite the fact that we have almost lost touch with good Mother Earth amid the bustle and flurry of the modern day, yet there are very few men who do not love to get back for a short time to her"⁴⁸⁸, in this vein Elder extolled the virtues of gardening as a bond between past and present, primitive and modern, "Surrounded by the clamour and clash of a busy world. Everything speaks to him of artificiality. It is here

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid

⁴⁸⁶ *The Tobagonian* November 1945 The Editors Window

⁴⁸⁷ *The Tobagonian* May 1945 Red Cross Activities in Charlotteville. Ruby Turpin was the wife of Cyril Turpin.

⁴⁸⁸ *The Tobagonian* July 1945 On Gardening by J.D. Elder. Elder signs this article under his full name for the first time and adopts a radically different tone to earlier pieces for reasons which can only be speculated at.

that gardening makes its appeal". Elder's emphasis on an ethic of labour and an analogous tale of transformation lurks beneath the sugary prose, "To take an uncultivated plot of land, perhaps over grown with bushes and thorns and weeds and to turn it into a well laid out garden is something that gives us a pleasant feeling of accomplishment"⁴⁸⁹. Tending the garden is characterised as a means of gaining respect, a performance of tidiness, hygiene and thrift before neighbour's approving eyes, a lesson in life that, "good and noble things in life only come from patience and diligent care"⁴⁹⁰.

The Future: The Imagination of a Natural Nation

Carlton Ottley wrote a short story in early 1939 entitled, 'Our President is a Negro', that has a blend of apocalypse and utopia suggestive of HG Wells. In this tale Ottley outlines a chronology and programme for Tobago's progress from dependency to utopia. Told in retrospect by an aged Ottley in 1989 he recounts how the totalitarian states of East and West turned their backs on agriculture and nature in favour of machines, weapons, and genetically engineered "bacterial gas to spread plague and fatal disease among both civilians and combatants"⁴⁹¹, with the colonies existing to produce the sustenance and leisure of this new age. The joyless citizens of the machine world were brought in, "the giant airliners, bringing with them tourists and passengers from the continents of America and Europe all seeking rest from the Frankenstein of their own creation"⁴⁹². In 1972 he sees the armies of fascism, hungry for oil to power their unnatural engines, obliterate Trinidad, "We but heard the roaring of the big guns and the distant drone of huge bombers which had flown from their bases on the previous night"⁴⁹³. The 'radio screens' tell of battles in London and then they fall silent, "Nothing but statics. No news. We were shut out from the outside world as completely as a prisoner in a dungeon"⁴⁹⁴. By 1989 an isolated Tobago remains cut off and unaware as to whether or not the war continues.

Ottley's ideal revolution occurs, even if the President is to be a Negro he is to be President not because of racial pride but because racial hierarchies are products of money relations and of labour. Once isolated by war the new Tobagonians realise that, "We have all the things that we need. After the cessation of communication with the outside world, we here soon realised that

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid

⁴⁹¹ *The Tobagonian* February 1939 Our President is a Negro by Carlton Ottley

⁴⁹² Ibid Ottley seems to have made the common mistake of confusing Frankenstein with the monster.

⁴⁹³ Ibid

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid

money was mere dross in our new community”⁴⁹⁵. With nothing to buy from outside there is no reason to work and without opposition, “five thousand men of Negro descent who, with calm dignity, walked in and set up their leader John Frederick Cambelton Esq as President of Tobago on the 3rd of March 1973”⁴⁹⁶.

The new President quickly solves the post war chaos by decreeing everyone a pastoralist in addition to any other occupation. Districts produce to order, rations are devised in an orderly manner and products are bartered. In order to maintain this new community, “Huge playing fields where young and old engage in trials of skill and games”, are created and there is now, “time for everything”⁴⁹⁷. The new pastoral society ends all sickness, “Our Doctors are long dead. Nature keeps our bodies healthy and strong for now we live with Her all day”. In this utopia it is a capitalised nature, raised as a deity and a communal organisation of land that form the basis for social cohesion and personal bliss. The moral is that, “Tobago is once more on her own and we, her people are not only happy and contented, we are wealthy. We have all that we require”⁴⁹⁸. Ottley concludes his fable with the warning, “perhaps also there will come a time when motor-cars, radios, police and prisons poverty and unhappiness will once more reappear, but until that day, we here enjoy our new found happiness”⁴⁹⁹.

Ottley lays out a radical programme based not solely on land and its ownership but on the experience of land, “This common interest in the soil has banished completely – the anathema of western civilisation – the various strata of society”. What Ottley and other columnists argued for in the 1940s was radically different to the projects of Trinidadian and better known regional writers. Ottley, and one suspects many like him, have been occluded from serious considerations of Caribbean identity simply by virtue of being deemed cogs in a monolithic Colonial State associated with the peculiarities of a perceived English, Victorian or British cultural hegemony to give a few of its appellations. In fact, in Trinidad, social reform amongst radical publications seems to have been interchangeable with racial pride with white creole nationalists like Albert Gomes or Hugh Stollmeyer condemning, “common niggers and coolies”, for not being *avante garde* enough to embrace their ramblings about peasant realities and urban yard life⁵⁰⁰. In Tobago the relative size of the island and the population makes a

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰⁰ *Beacon* November 1933 68 Literary Clubs and Art by Hugh Stollmeyer. Later writers like Neptune (2007) seem happy to embrace Stollmeyer’s ideas about race and his accusations of snobbery toward

nonsense of any effort to separate the society of institutions from society as a whole. What emerges is the dynamic development of a language of landscape and society that is linked to the aspirations of individuals and to the growing permeation (to recall Sidney Webb) of the British state by technocratic socialism in the face of economic and social turmoil. By the end of WWII a distinctive grammar had emerged through which civil and public servants, activists business representatives and politicians communicated their demands, the logic of which in turn drew on the morality embedded in that grammar. A deified nature had crept into the ideological programmes of Tobagonian intellectuals, civil and public servants and activists that was to place an idea of environment, self sufficiency and environmental control at the heart of future wranglings over a Tobagonian identity.

The Future: Separatism and Sentimentalism

The announced elections of 1946 were to be the first in Trinidad and Tobago based on universal suffrage. The Tobagonian made the choice on offer clear, "Tobago's problems are different from any other Colony. We are an island compact in ourselves. In many respects we are an entity"⁵⁰¹. Island and people had by now become an indivisible whole in the minds of the local intellectual milieu. The editorial demanded that policies for development recognise this by bringing about the physical and social transformations so hotly debated in the war years and by addressing the growing potential of tourism that had increasingly come to inspire the columnists of the Tobagonian. "But what tourist would come to a place where there are no roads or roads with corrugated surfaces? A good public road would make a delightful drive for any tourist from any part of the world apart from the fact that the making of such a road would provide work for a very large number of people". The perception of the outside world as enraptured to technology had come to play into the perceptions of local development advocates, with landscape to be transformed in accordance with the imagination of outside expectation as much as any pressing need.

When the election results were received the incumbent candidate, George De Nobriga was heavily defeated by Alphonso Philbert Theophilus James, a local labour contractor who had returned from the Trinidad oilfields where he had worked as a young man making a reputation

the Trinidadian middle class without either considering the potential of inverting the accusation or worrying about a German creole's valorised accounts of racial purity in the 1930s.

⁵⁰¹ *The Tobagonian* May 1945 Editor's Page

as a successful businessman and labour activist⁵⁰². In congratulating James on his victory *The Tobagonian* reminded readers about roads with the admonition that they never appeared to be finished, that cutlassing them was an unceasing task which could easily be rectified by a ten year plan to, “put them in good order once and for all”⁵⁰³. It would appear that the idea of the plan as a panacea to natural disorder had become deeply embedded in Tobago since 1897.

James proved a tireless campaigner for development work in Tobago as well as a keen organiser of fundraising bodies to assist those in need. He also came into increasing conflict with Eric Williams and the Peoples National Movement in Trinidad. Whilst in 1946 this split lay a decade into the future, its origins in widely differing approaches to nationalism, identity and above all separate languages of future development had become apparent. James lost no time in establishing Tobago as what one later writer called his “personal fiefdom”⁵⁰⁴. Although ostensibly a member of Butler’s Trinidad Labour Party in the legislative assembly established by the 1946 constitution, James founded his own Tobago Peasants and Industrial Workers Union and at about the same time also The Tobago Citizens Political and Economic Party. In 1948 James, disillusioned with the progress of the five year plan for the colony and convinced that all that was required to help Tobago was a new plan, drafted his own and took it to London to show the Labour Secretary of State, leading Fabian Colonial Bureau member, Henry Creech-Jones⁵⁰⁵.

The document that accompanied James was entitled ‘Memorandum of Grievances and Complaints of the Inhabitants of Tobago’ and mirrored much of the Chamber of Commerce’s memorandum to the Moyne Commission⁵⁰⁶. James added his own flair to the calls for British

⁵⁰² APT James ‘Governor Fargo’, named after a make of heavy truck on account of his strength (1901-1962) had left his home village of Patience Hill for Trinidad in 1919 amidst the economic and social unrest of that year. Over the next decade some 3000 people left Tobago, mostly for Trinidad. He was a member of the Trinidad Labour Party and became involved with Uriah ‘Buzz’ Butler’s movement in the late 1930s. When he won the 1946 election he also founded with others, amongst them Guyanese born trade unionist Gaskynd Granger, The Tobago Peasants and Industrial Workers Union. Granger’s papers covering a range of events in this period are held at UWI WestIndiana Special Collections. The most substantial biographical treatment of APT James is in Luke, L *Identity and Secession in the Caribbean: Tobago versus Trinidad, 1889-1980* UWIpress Kingston 2007:166-200 as well as an entry in Anthony, M. *Heroes of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* by Ishmael Khan and Sons Trinidad 1986:126 and a similar piece in Ottley, C.R. *The Story of Tobago: Robinson Crusoe’s Island in the Caribbean* Longman Caribbean 1973

⁵⁰³ *The Tobagonian* October 1946 A Move in the Right Direction, The Editor’s Page.

⁵⁰⁴ Brereton, Bridget. *A History of Modern Trinidad 1783-1962* Heinemann London 1981:195

⁵⁰⁵ *Trinidad Guardian* 19th May 1948 Tobago MLC meets Mr Creech Jones.

⁵⁰⁶ The actual typescript text of James’s memorandum was located in storage at the University of Manchester Library during this project. Prior to this only the above newspaper article provided any details of its contents. It is presumed that former University of Manchester Geographer, David L Niddrie acquired a copy whilst on fieldwork in Tobago a decade later.

aid independent of Trinidad contending that, “the Government seems to be convinced that Tobago is a “Cinderella” and any money spent on it is lost money”⁵⁰⁷. James’s main demand was for a massive investment in industrial and agricultural production based on unspecified, “radical land reforms”⁵⁰⁸. James saw Tobago’s landscape as untapped potential fertility and viewed its forests as a sign of neglect and impoverishment. In this he differed sharply from officials who had urged their restoration on steep slopes and seen commercial timber as an ecologically functional and morally desirable alternative to sugar.

The view on offer to the Secretary of State as regards housing and welfare was at stark odds with that offered in Dora Ibberson’s report⁵⁰⁹. “Strangers on their first visit, wonder how it is at all possible for human beings to inhabit such places and continue to exist”⁵¹⁰. James describes few houses being built at all and many never completed with many islanders facing, “frustration and failure”⁵¹¹, in this regard. This was perhaps disingenuous, James was one of a group of politicians who earlier that year had successfully dismantled the welfare programmes recommended by Dora Ibberson’s report. James had joined a coterie of conservative commentators, politicians and civil servants to attack just the sort of intervention he seemed to demand. “Glib talk about social service but in actual experience no social service being done in Tobago... Heard quite a lot about Social Welfare Service Dept. but as far as he could see the vast sums of money which were being spent on that service went towards salaries”⁵¹². Other members were equally blunt and called moral stimulation and planned recreation indulgent luxuries. Chanka Maharaj condemned the programme saying that in his view, “Social Welfare was a fair day’s work”⁵¹³. The Roman Catholic hierarchy in public and President of the Coterie of Social Workers Audrey Jeffers⁵¹⁴ in the finance committee hearings led the attack. The latter

⁵⁰⁷ *Memorandum of the Grievances of and Complaints of the Inhabitants of Tobago*. A.P.T. James May 1948.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid

⁵⁰⁹ Report of the Social Welfare Officer CP33 1945

⁵¹⁰ Ibid

⁵¹¹ Ibid

⁵¹² Comments of APT James in Statement regarding Social Service Estimates Dec 1946- Jan 1947, Social Welfare Committee 11th February 1947 in CO 537/2593

⁵¹³ Ibid Comments of the member for St George

⁵¹⁴ Audrey Jeffers (1898-1968) Often heralded as the pioneer of Trinidad’s social welfare movement she was a deeply conservative member of the upper middle class and voted against the adult franchise as well as the long forgotten episode related here. For her and many other Trinidadian politicians and activists social welfare was equated to faith, self help, soup kitchens and supporting the family. The radical social engineering programme of Ibberson and Burnham seems not to have been caught up with family values per se and involved approaching prostitutes and investigating child trafficking amongst other objectives. This seems to have acknowledged issues that deeply unsettled Catholics and conservatives alike.

made what the Governor deemed a vindictive attack on expatriate workers in welfare⁵¹⁵. The problem as he saw it had been that, with budget cutbacks inevitable, the uncompromising stance of first Dora Ibberson and then her successor Judith Burnham had made welfare everybody's target, "To some civil servants, especially Trinidadian civil servants, Miss Burnham presented herself as an undisguised nuisance, disturbing the serenity of their bureaucratic outlook, expressed in passing papers and bucks from one to the other, one eye cocked on the clock and the other on the monthly paysheet",⁵¹⁶. In short social welfare was, "too efficient for Trinidad"⁵¹⁷, in the eyes of some. Tobagonian nationalist James, whose personal powerbase may have been threatened if he had lost a monopoly on welfare organising in Tobago, united with Trinidadian nationalists, the business community, all religious dominations and even many more radical individuals. For some it was a moral affront, to some an example of British Government interference, liberal indulgence and paradoxically for others it was the Colonial State inconveniently doing something that Colonial States weren't meant to do in the eyes of nationalists. Nearly a decade later the programme would re emerge along new lines, "Social work if it is to develop soundly must arise from felt needs and reflect the religious and cultural values of a people"⁵¹⁸. Ever since the seminal work on regional welfare policy by T.S. Simey there had been a degree of ambivalence between relativism and universalism⁵¹⁹. In an effort to head off one of many sources of division and instability in the Colony, cultural relativism revealed the extent to which it is a reflection born of idealism but implemented in policy as a form of cynical pragmatism.

⁵¹⁵ Shaw to Seel 22nd March 1948 in CO 537/2593

⁵¹⁶ Ibid

⁵¹⁷ Ibid Reported personal remarks to Governor Shaw by Hon Dr Solomon

⁵¹⁸ Report on the Administration of the Social Services in Trinidad 2nd of November 1956 in CO 1031/1286. The report was written by AVS Lochhead of University College Cardiff. Despite his efforts at this new and obsequious approach to local interests and sensibilities Lochhead would also run afoul of nationalist politicians when Eric Williams as First Minister once more dismantled the department and redeployed key staff see undated extract from Chinn to Lochhead in CO 1031/2124

⁵¹⁹ Simey, T.S. *Welfare and Planning in the West Indies* Clarendon Press Oxford 1946. Simey's work draws from the often contradictory ideas of Sydney Olivier and Franz Boas (misspelt Frank in the text) amongst many other scholars and civil servants (especially Frank Stockdale the Comptroller for Welfare and Development in the West Indies). Simey managed to rubbish many of the stereotypes of West Indian society that have so preoccupied post independence scholars, especially ideas of matriarchal society and those surrounding female status as well as still radical critiques of race, labour and regional personality. For Simey cultural relativism was a tool for achieving universal progress. A project of cultural reconstruction based on social engineering and popular participation, with many cautious and insightful qualifications, lies at the heart of the book. He also endorsed the optimistic view that anti colonial resentment was in many ways a sure indicator of successful development but also a sign that more rapid progress would be required. This work remains probably the most genuinely liberal description of the English Speaking Caribbean as well as a radical and still prescient testament to the optimism and tolerance of early mid 20th Century socialist and liberal ideas. Were it still read one suspects Peter J Wilson's idiosyncratic work on respect and reputation would never have achieved such ubiquity.

If James had attacked Welfare reform as excessively expensive then this didn't stop him from making another trip to London and another submission. This second trip to London, less trumpeted by his admirers was to be at public expense. The Colonial Office objected to acting as a, "sort of Cooks agency for Mr James"⁵²⁰, but installed him at the Regent Palace Hotel. It appears James didn't get the ministerial meeting he had hoped for on this visit and met instead with the Permanent Under Secretary. On his return he submitted a more strongly worded memorandum signed by other members of the Tobago Citizens Political and Economic Party.

The year prior to this visit Trinidad and Tobago's new governor, Hubert Rance, submitted his first impressions to the Colonial Office. Rance was entranced by Tobago compared to the political infighting and the growing racial tensions in Trinidad that perturbed the Colonial Office, "I have visited all the British West Indian Islands but Tobago is at least as beautiful as any and is almost unspoilt. The peasantry are happy and I would venture to say are better off man for man than their cousins in Trinidad"⁵²¹. Rance noted that the budget restrictions were all that prevented a quick solution to the island's problems, barring roads. The villages of Bloody Bay, Parlatuvier and L'Anse Formi were of concern to Rance who deemed the jeep track, "the most hazardous journey I have ever undertaken excepting Burma"⁵²². Rance decided that a coast road, as proposed in the current plans, would prove costly to maintain and would be double the estimate provided. Rance's letter bore a wistful tone of imperial decline. As it speculated on the island's beauty he added, "The Governorship of Tobago in elden days could have been a plum but for the yellow fever and malaria"⁵²³. Happy peasants, a simple logistical challenge and the possibility of opening up new and fertile lands seemed all a Colonial Governor could desire compared to the challenges of Trinidad's jockeying politicians. Rance's despatch reveals the elements of private sentimental fantasy, played out against a tropical backdrop that entwined with ideals of improvement and development.

With its elaborately sketched and coloured cover, the memorandum which James and his party sent to London upon his return is a peculiar document. It condenses almost all the myths and stylistic quirks of earlier petitions and totally dispenses with the more considered plan that James had delivered in 1948. No longer satisfied with the image of Tobago's fertile expanses

⁵²⁰ Minute in CO 295/654/11. The objections seem to have been driven in part by UK civil servants who were acutely aware of housing conditions in post war London and regarded housing James and other Trinidad delegates who objected to the new constitution as an unnecessary burden.

⁵²¹ Rance's first despatch 5th July 1950 in CO 295/651/6

⁵²² Ibid

⁵²³ Ibid

left to ruin the new document played fast and loose with figures, suggesting that huge areas had been abandoned as if only a few years before. In truth the area cultivated had risen massively since the union with Trinidad. The memorandum called for, “development along modern lines”⁵²⁴, especially demanding structures and roads that would miraculously turn the island into an economic powerhouse. One of the chief demands was for separate representation in the proposed West Indies Federal Legislature⁵²⁵. To this end the document’s authors were keen to stress Tobago’s exceptional characteristics, comparing its attributes favourably to every other island and noting, “her enviable and unchallenged scenic beauty”⁵²⁶, to the list. Even if they sought to tame the trees and swamps and clear the bush as part of their economic programme the TCPEP were not above using these defects as attributes in competition with other nascent nationalisms. This use of nature by Tobago’s nationalists incorporated revivals of past glory by urging the revival of past crops in the form of sugar and cotton. In this programme peasants and cooperatives loomed large as did the demand for increased concessions for hoteliers and these aspects were approvingly annotated by Colonial Office clerks. If the rehabilitation of land and people had once been predicated on a belief in sugar as an immoral crop its association with past grandeur meant that nationalists saw its return as essential to the rehabilitation of land and people⁵²⁷.

The Best Laid Plans...

In 1956 moves towards British West Indian independence began in earnest alongside moves toward independence in many other parts of the empire. As a prelude to this, the Colonial Economic Research Committee initiated a series of surveys with both practical and political significance for the various negotiations with soon to be independent states. Simultaneously with this move from the Colonial Office local governments began their own development assessments.

⁵²⁴ Memorandum from the Tobago Citizens Political and Economic Party 7th July 1951 in CO 295/654/6

⁵²⁵ This idea was first proposed in an earlier short Resolution passed by the party on 29th October 1950 and enclosed alongside Rance’s sceptical comments in CO 295/654/6

⁵²⁶ Memorandum from the Tobago Citizens Political and Economic Party 7th July 1951 in CO 295/654/6

⁵²⁷ Government accepted some of these points but deemed the reintroduction of sugar as undesirable. Their view was that Tobagonians were peasants and peasants produced food, as mandated by both the written and moral schemes for the colony’s improvement. For comments on the TCPEP’s proposals and the findings of The Tobago Crops Enquiry Committee see Rance’s 5th November 1951 despatch in CO 1031/789

In 1956 many of Trinidad's pre war politicians were swept aside⁵²⁸ by the electoral success of Eric Williams and the Peoples National Movement. Williams, a renowned academic, fierce advocate of nationalism and independence and above all a shrewd pragmatist was the new First Minister of the colony. The victory of the PNM was attributed by British officials as due to the new leader's personality, "but in the main the electorate was attracted to the idea of party politics and many were secretly ashamed of TRINIDAD's political immaturity and reputation for corruption in government"⁵²⁹. The new government faced both the challenges of fulfilling the nationalist promises they had made as well as the commitment to independence as part of a regional federal state. It is in the context of the federal negotiations, especially with the smaller islands, as well as the strident anti colonial rhetoric which led Williams to remark upon, "the many years of neglect and betrayal"⁵³⁰, of Tobago by the British authorities. Williams' emphasis on Tobago was deliberate and he viewed the state of the island as a test of his administration's modernizing zeal.

At the same time the Colonial Office was devising their own scheme in accordance with the recommendations of the Colonial Advisory Committee on Agriculture, Animal Health and Forestry which was compiled from the requests of various cash strapped Governors. A socio-economic study of Tobago was item three on the agenda⁵³¹. The idea of surveying Tobago had begun to take shape in the early fifties ever since Rance had pointed to the need for external aid, a veiled endorsement of the rationale if not the goals of APT James's 1948 plan for the island. . The problem as the Colonial Government saw it was that in the past there had been, "an absence of any co-ordinated plan"⁵³². The project would therefore lay the framework for all future plans. In January 1956 David L Niddrie, a Geography lecturer at the University of Manchester was approached for the task of doing, "the Tobago Trip"⁵³³. Niddrie was enthusiastic despite having heard ominous descriptions of colonial research from the Reader in Colonial Geography at Oxford who had recently had a 'hellish experience' in Northern

⁵²⁸ Uriah 'Buzz' Butler's party was one of the casualties. APT James in Tobago was one of only two candidates returned for the Trinidad Labour Party.

⁵²⁹ Appreciation of the Security Situation in Trinidad and Tobago 1956. I.S. Paton Police Security Officer 12th February 1957 in CO1031/2594. The capitalisation is in the document and the underscored emphasis is a Colonial Office clerk's notation; presumably it was not politic to mention the weak state of Trinidad's civil service and its self serving and highly conservative ruling cliques.

⁵³⁰ Debates of the Legislative Council 7th June 1957. Williams was also concerned that Tobago's moribund economy was generating migration to Trinidad and putting pressure on the job market there. For a full description see Luke, L. Identity and Secession in the Caribbean 2008:222-225

⁵³¹ Circular from the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Alan Tindal Lennox-Boyd 1904-1983) 5th November 1956 in CO 927/387

⁵³² Comments by Victor Bryan, Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Trinidad. Minutes of a meeting regarding the survey of Tobago 27th October 1955 in CO 927/387

⁵³³ Gluckman to Chilvers 18th January 1956 in CO 927/387

Rhodesia⁵³⁴. For the next year the project was tied up in negotiating costs between London, the Research Council and Port of Spain, a contentious point was the Land Rover, “many famous anthropologists in the past have used bicycles and horseback”⁵³⁵. This remark riled the University College of the West Indies who felt that London had, “a lack of awareness of the problems of logistics with which this research Institute has to contend”⁵³⁶, not to mention a supercilious manner in dealing with what they regarded as a serious business and getting the discipline of the researcher wrong.

By the end of October the project had been agreed and Niddrie, after a year of expectant waiting was headed for the field. The Government of Trinidad had given the brief that a series of surveys should compose the project with Niddrie’s focus being land use⁵³⁷. Niddrie would go far beyond this brief in shaping, through a far reaching geography of the island and its history, a new understanding of the local landscape and the role of people within it. Niddrie’s published study contains an extremely confusing introduction to the project that sits at odds with the files in the Colonial Office and the various departmental administration reports. To begin with Niddrie claims that his work was not envisaged until well after the Trinidad based development team assembled by the Williams government visited in March 1957. In his introduction the project is transformed from a Colonial Development scheme into an initiative of the Trinidad Government⁵³⁸.

Niddrie began as he meant to go on, with a manipulative citation from the 1891 Metairie Commission Report emblazoned and unexplained inside the cover, “No, but Nature is too good, there’s no poor people here, no one need work... where is there such a place, such a

⁵³⁴ Niddrie to Gluckman 12th January 1956 in CO 927/387

⁵³⁵ Carmichael to Huggins 11th of July 1956 in CO 927/387

⁵³⁶ Huggins to Carmichael 8th October 1956 in CO 927/387

⁵³⁷ Niddrie was charged with a survey of land use and livelihoods, the agricultural department at the University College of the West Indies formerly the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture would conduct a soil survey. Brigadier Hotine the Director of Colonial Surveys would act as ground control for an aerial survey and design a topographical map of the island. This last item caused a major headache as it required renegotiating the contract with a private firm who were working in British Guiana and the Treasury objected; in the Brigadier’s view because it meant work and taking a firm line with the contractor. He felt that the job could be done without an increase in costs and even waived his own department’s fee to keep the Whitehall mandarins happy. See Minutes of a meeting regarding the survey of Tobago 27th October 1955 in CO 927/387

⁵³⁸ Niddrie, David L. *Land Use and Population in Tobago* Geographical Publications London 1961. Niddrie may have been disingenuous with good reason, he was later employed by Eric Williams in the aftermath of Hurricane Flora and may well have been eyeing the possibilities of this appointment by the time he published his findings. My gratitude to Professor Bridget Brereton for furnishing this detail which seemed so inconsequential prior to cross checking the project documents at the PRO and only recently reading Niddrie’s later work.

blessed land where the man who don't want to work need not work to live"⁵³⁹. This citation is drawn from the evidence of Joseph Tobin, metayer, one of the few metayers to support the estate owners against John Gorrie. To understand what Niddrie meant by quoting this it becomes necessary to read the whole statement:

"No but Nature is too good, there's no poor people here, no one need work. I am a Tobagonian and I say it. We are too lazy. All we think of is to jump on a horse and ride about and play buccra – we think we white people; we don't know we nigger. We don't want to work. I am a black man myself as you see and I say it. We want to qualify with everyone and to say you're a gentleman. Every man is a gentleman. There is no poor people in Tobago. I am speaking about what I see – there is no poor man in Tobago because if you beg them to come work you cannot get any man to come and do a day's work?

[A voice: Not a Soul!]

No you must beg them to come and work – you cannot send them to come work for you; you must beg them. I heard them talking that they can't get work to do; where is there such a place, such a blessed land where the man who don't want to work need not work to live"⁵⁴⁰

Niddrie's ensuing study, strangely adopted by Eric Williams, is nothing less than a selective exercise in white supremacy supported by rudimentary maps, pejorative statements and extracts from the soil science survey⁵⁴¹. The soil conservation agenda that Niddrie was schooled in is synthesised with the moral self image of estate capitalists and their language of describing land and labour in a vitriolic attack on the Tobagonian peasantry. At the very least Niddrie serves as yet one more example that science is a methodology that can be used to suit any political programme under the right circumstances.

Flagrant distortion and misrepresentation aside Niddrie supported much of what had previously been written or said about agricultural production in Tobago. What is significant is

⁵³⁹ Ibid

⁵⁴⁰ Evidence of Joseph Tobin, Tobago Metairie Commission 1891:154 -155. This polemic lasted for several more minutes as the gratified pro planter commission allowed the witness to speak in contrast to those who had tried to claim that metayage was a system of tyranny and impoverishment of the planter's making. The copy of the report that I was lent by a UWI lecturer is annotated at this point with the words, "Talking like a Planter". Niddrie's later qualified support for South African Apartheid showed a similar tendency to manipulate information on the assumption of an inevitable, apolitical and natural racial harmony under all circumstances. Presumably this is excepting the unruly subversive activities of communists and tribal savages who disturb the natural order like the needless herds of Bantu cattle he disliked so much. For these views see, Niddrie, David L. *South Africa: Nation or Nations?* Van Nostrand New York 1968

⁵⁴¹ One can only presume that for once the eminent historian and new First Minister did not check the footnotes and primary sources with his usual zeal.

the purpose to which this information is put. Relying on an examination of Brigadier Hotine's aerial photographs and using the voices of metayers from the 1891 report and local estate owners as his principle informants Niddrie proceeds to create a new image of the Tobago peasant. This is one of a lazy⁵⁴², land hungry, "inveterate herder of animals"⁵⁴³ prone to seasonal firings of grassland and guilty of shifting cultivation. Niddrie remarked, "Locally the peasant is heard to say that his land is 'losing she fat' or that it is 'dead'. This concept carries with it the implication that he is therefore entitled to further supplies of new 'fat' land; such an assumption lies at the root of most of Tobago's problems"⁵⁴⁴. Niddrie on the one hand makes this allegation of land misuse but on the other complains that land has been deserted and left to return to bush or the local term of *lastro* by migrants bound for Trinidad. It is a contradiction that had characterised early 20th Century accounts of land use and the island's appearance.⁵⁴⁵ Niddrie didn't mince words in his view of peasant behaviour towards land, "with few exceptions most of these lands are agricultural slums on which all the crimes against good husbandry are committed, or which have been neglected and unused to such a degree that they are rapidly merging into forest cover"⁵⁴⁶. The view that informed Niddrie's writings was based largely on an unswerving admiration for the South African Soil Conservation Act (1946). Niddrie deplored the idea of breaking up estates and in consequence was vigorously opposed to the idea of self sufficiency that had for so long informed official doctrine in the British West Indies. This didn't make him opposed to land reform though, he advocated displacing at least half the population of the Courland valley as a conservation measure. His conclusion was that any "cry of 'land for the people'... must surely be resisted at all costs"⁵⁴⁷. Niddrie's conservation recommendations were based upon a grammar of belief that stressed the relational virtues of ownership and race.

⁵⁴² Niddrie blamed a lack of ambition and a liking for easy money for the failures of cultivation.

⁵⁴³ Niddrie, David L. *Land Use and Population in Tobago* Geographical Publications London 1961:37. Niddrie

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid p15

⁵⁴⁵ See previous chapter for an account. It is also worth noting that Niddrie was aware of the work of MG Smith on Carriacou regarding customary tenure systems but that he simply disregarded the function of such systems when making recommendations merely noting the irrational desire of adult males to have a 'place to retire'(Niddrie 1961:39). Indeed Niddrie believed the main reason for people living at a distance from their land holdings was in order to stay close to the nearest rum shop. (Niddrie 1961:53). This view again sits uneasily with his characterisation of a peasantry on marginal lands and his true aim is best expressed by his suggestion that Government immediately acquire smallholdings by compulsory purchase. His rather unreasonable suggestion was that the whole island should be allowed to revert to secondary forest for some 20 years before starting again on scientific lines. He drew his inspiration for this from an 1878 measure used by the island's planters to control labour (Niddrie 1961:39).

⁵⁴⁶ Niddrie, David L. *Land Use and Population In Tobago* Geographical Publications London 1961:52

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid p55

Niddrie was an unfortunate candidate for the Tobago programme. He bought to bear some of the most intense bigotry mustered to characterise Tobago's landscape since the Metayer Commission whose findings he so readily abused and stripped of context. His admiration for South African approaches didn't stop at soil conservation and would manifest itself in later works. Niddrie later concluded that Apartheid was merely, "outwardly repugnant", and that the homelands policy would solve ecological and social difficulties, "problems of race friction and overurbanization, so vexatious still in many parts of the world, are here being handled in a totally new way, and with some degree of masterliness and success"⁵⁴⁸. His ardent programme of modernisation may have resonated with the goals of the Williams Government but it was inspired from very different beliefs. *Land Use and Population in Tobago* was a study that simply saw Tobago's inhabitants as an inconvenience to proper scientific approaches to soil management and their presence as the sole cause of soil erosion. In taking this stance it struck away the ideological basis that had informed earlier attempts at land reform in the Caribbean and sided blatantly with vested and wealthy interests whom Niddrie championed as vigorously as the island's metayers had been by John Gorrie. His physical description of the island was riddled with contradictions which each bought his argument closer to fruition. Niddrie, a savage anti communist and critic of socialism in later works would have done well to consider the suggestion of earlier experts on Colonial policy, "only the stubbornly old fashioned would react to such a situation by planning coercive measures"⁵⁴⁹.

Parallel to Niddrie's work in Tobago was the preparation of the Frampton Report at the behest of the newly elected Government. This was the report of a planning team headed by A. deK Frampton who was agricultural advisor to the Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies. The report established an account of the island's history that differed from past attempts, notably it placed a part of the blame for the island's economic decline on, "a lack of enterprise"⁵⁵⁰, by the island's planters in contradistinction to Niddrie's conclusions. This document seems in part tailored to suit Williams' political sensibilities as much as Niddrie had

⁵⁴⁸ Niddrie, David L. *South Africa: Nation or Nations?* Van Nostrand New York 1968:167. For Niddrie Apartheid was a difficult policy decision which provided the only means of tackling the ANC's purported agenda of tribal barbarism and Chinese backed communism. Naturally these two forces would create the fragmentation of ownership that was so abhorrent to his prescriptive and highly coercive approach to conservation. Niddrie was also to write a further book on his earlier project entitled simply; *Tobago* Litho Press Cork 1980. Niddrie moved to the University of Florida which now, without a hint of irony, offers a David L. Niddrie Memorial Scholarship to, "The author of the best proposal in any discipline by a UF graduate student intending to conduct field research in Africa".

⁵⁴⁹ Simey, T.S. *Welfare and Planning in the West Indies*. Clarendon Press Oxford 1946:235 This quote derives from a critique of the concept of a civilizing mission.

⁵⁵⁰ *Development Plan for Tobago: Report of the team which visited Tobago in March/April 1957*, Development and Welfare in the West Indies Bulletin No.34 Bridgetown 1957:19

prepared his report to meet his own. The planning team set out to reconcile the idea of a labour shortage with the departure of large numbers of migrants for Trinidad in search of work. They explained this as, “a dissatisfaction with the whole fabric and pattern of life in Tobago”⁵⁵¹. Bringing the island’s appearance into play the report noted, “the less favourable impressions generally are confirmed and the more favourable appear open to doubt, except for the beauty of the island, which cannot be questioned”⁵⁵². Tobago’s romantic appeal, partly coloured by the historical advice of both Carlton Ottley and Trinidad’s Gertrude Carmichael, was not lost on the development team. Their analysis of tourism was that it should be kept at a very low density and away from agricultural lands. Preserving the views so eulogised in the early pages of the report was a priority. “The type of overseas visitor”⁵⁵³ by whom the hotel business is sustained at present may be discouraged from coming to Tobago... particularly if the island becomes ‘spoilt’ by an excessive development of urban facilities and entertainments”⁵⁵⁴. When it came to infrastructural improvements the development team wrote with shades of Governor Rance six years before. “It might be argued that the development of the tourist trade will call for the construction of roads of a higher standard but we feel that the type of visitor who is attracted to the island at present is unlikely to be deterred by a utility rather than a luxury type road; in fact, to many the former might offer an attraction”⁵⁵⁵. Aesthetic sensibilities played their part in determining the course of the plan in other ways with the scenic drives from Alford’s guide book forming the basis of the team’s itinerary⁵⁵⁶.

Frampton and his team managed, in the acknowledged absence of much published information, to readily support Williams’ plans for Tobago as a show piece of what Trinidad could achieve. Noting the standard of living the team felt that what they called a sociological survey was wholly unnecessary as it was deemed axiomatic that living standards would have to rise. They also quickly arrived at the view that Tobago was underproductive and readily

⁵⁵¹ Ibid p22

⁵⁵² Ibid p28

⁵⁵³ 1950s Tobago was the scene of Princess Margaret’s honeymoon and the bar at the Blue Haven hotel saw scenes of debauchery with various Hollywood stars, notably Robert Mitchum. Daniel Archer the hotel’s former boatman who picked up visitors arriving in Bon Accord Lagoon by seaplane told me several tales of Mitchum’s hell raising over lunch at a local history conference in November 2004 at the Rovanel’s Resort. Of particular concern to the environmental historian was Mitchum’s role as an agent of reef destruction when he tried to prove his manhood by seizing hold of and breaking off fire coral at Buccoo Reef. Archer had to slip him his own personal and highly potent homemade rum as a pain killer in order to stop the agonised, disorientated and flailing star from falling overboard. Mitchum apparently, “became calm like a baby”, on the journey back to shore.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid p37

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid p135-136

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid p171 for a list of acknowledgements and sources used by the development team.

adopted the belief that Tobago had declined since union as a statement of fact, “the general opinion of ‘old timers’ is that agricultural production has declined since the turn of the century”⁵⁵⁷. Like Niddrie the team attacked customary land tenure and intensive cultivation and soil erosion although they deemed Tobago’s newly acquired status as a net importer of food as quite undesirable. What is striking is that all that they describe as problems are the outcomes of conscious policies adopted in the supposed decades of decline. The massive increase in the area under cultivation between 1900 and 1956 or the rising levels of land ownership in this period suggest that any system of customary tenure was less than fifty years old. If Niddrie’s close use of planters as informants had one major positive side effect it revealed that this system of customary tenure was bound up with an unwillingness of planters to pay taxes on land or rents or make contributions to the newly introduced PAYE tax. Instead informal casual and verbally agreed rentals and leases skewed the figures for rentals and ownership of land⁵⁵⁸. This system of rentals by both estates and other private individuals and the uncertain tenure it created, had been noted by agricultural officers as the real cause of low levels of long term investment by agriculturalists. The system was deemed particularly prevalent in Les Coteaux and Castara according to evidence submitted to Frampton’s team⁵⁵⁹. Heavy rainstorms and landslides in 1949 and again in the early fifties had impacted upon local perceptions of soil erosion⁵⁶⁰. As the demands of the plan had changed so had the perception of the problems it sought to solve.

The business of planning development was no disarticulated process but the distinct product of distinct personal beliefs. With less than a decade until independence, from Britain if not from Trinidad, the landscape of Tobago was set to be transformed first by the hot winds of

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid p31

⁵⁵⁸ Niddrie, David L. *Land Use and Population in Tobago* Geographical Publications Ltd. London 1961:40. Niddrie also notes that advertisements were regularly posted after deaths searching for the whereabouts of co-heirs by those wishing to sell and needing the consent of relatives. This has implications for many assertions about the sacrosanct character of family land. Niddrie describes encountering a degree of suspicion when showing informants aerial photographs and asking which areas they owned or leased.

⁵⁵⁹ Frampton, A. deK. *Development Plan for Tobago: Report of the team which visited Tobago in March/April 1957*, Development and Welfare in the West Indies Bulletin No. 34 Bridgetown 1957:95-96

⁵⁶⁰ These events may well have swayed local opinion about soil erosion and were certainly posited as indicative of decline. APT James further cemented his reputation by raising funds to dispense to the worst affected and organise village welfare events. The District Administration Reports 1949 (Port of Spain Government Printing Office 1950) has a clear description of this storm and congratulates James’ for his efforts. These reports cease to be included in Council Papers after the war and were not apparently kept by the Colonial Office with other administrative reports. These were viewed at the London School of Economics Library.

nationalist rhetoric blowing through the region and then by the hurricane force winds of a storm called Flora.

The Coming of a Storm

When Eric Williams commented on the Frampton report in 1957 he proclaimed, "Tobago is a test case, if Trinidad cannot deal with Tobago, if Trinidad cannot develop Tobago, then Trinidad's claim to be the principle partner in the Federation, Trinidad's claim to accept the responsibility of the smaller islands falls to the ground"⁵⁶¹. It was not to be a successful test case and nor were the dreams of Federal leadership to prove well founded. Williams spent the rest of the 1950s locked in both the struggles of Federation and the struggle with the United States over the US base at Chaguaramas. Walter Orebaugh and Philip Habib, the senior American diplomats in Port of Spain vigorously but ineptly sought to destabilise Williams's government. The British colonial attaché in Washington was forced to intervene and noted of Orebaugh, "What he lacks is any idea of how to employ diplomacy, tact and patience in a situation where those are the only qualities which are even likely to get him anywhere"⁵⁶². Orebaugh was quietly recalled under British pressure but Williams still faced difficulties.

By the end of 1959 Tobago's economy was in a dire state and its agricultural production was firmly in decline abetted by a drought. Insecurity of tenure and a lack of credit along with cheap imports and transport difficulties were at the forefront of explanations much as they had been for more than half a century. Despite soil conservation programmes, subsidies, food garden leases and land settlements food production dropped as did the area under cultivation by about 37%⁵⁶³. To make matters worse the road development programme paying cash wages provided a preferable alternative and the last straw was the, "Walt Disney Filming Unit, which proved to be more lucrative to them [land settlement tenants and smallholders], resulting for the most part in allotments being in a backward or abandoned condition"⁵⁶⁴. With Britain preparing to leave Trinidad and Tobago, by extension pulling the financial support for

⁵⁶¹ Debates of the Legislative Council 7th June 1957 Trinidad and Tobago (Hansard)

⁵⁶² Douglas Williams to J.E. Marnham August 6th 1958 CO1031/2028 for a full transcript of this masterpiece of diplomatic dry wit and a detailed commentary see, Palmer, Colin A. *Eric Williams and the Making of the Modern Caribbean*. University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 2006:115-116. Ironically Habib who was equally incompetent in the handling of the Chaguaramas dispute came to be regarded as one of America's greatest 20th Century diplomats. He and Williams would cross swords again over America's regional policy in the 1970s.

⁵⁶³ Agriculture in Tobago, Supplement to the Administration Report for the Department of Agriculture 1959. This document appears only in the copy viewed at the London School of Economics and not in the copy at the PRO

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid. The Walt Disney crew was filming Swiss Family Robinson.

the Colonial Development Programme⁵⁶⁵, the final reports have a feel of going through the motions. Perhaps the single most important event was the introduction of the Foreign and Aliens Landholding Ordinance (1960) which placed severe restrictions on foreign ownership. Niddrie viewed the sole purpose of the measure as, “a move to prevent wealthy Americans from purchasing Shangri-las”⁵⁶⁶. He seems to have failed to appreciate the antipathy which the author of Capitalism and Slavery held for large foreign owned agricultural estates. This antipathy would prove significant two years later.

The last hopes for a West Indies Federation collapsed when, in January 1962, Trinidad and Tobago withdrew from the rump Federation that had existed since Jamaica’s departure the previous year⁵⁶⁷. A quieter demise occurred in Tobago where APT James died just a few short months after losing his Tobago seat to the PNM, whose campaign as elsewhere in Trinidad and Tobago had been boosted by a ‘crash programme’ of works funded under the development plan in the weeks before the vote.

Later that year Williams took a drastic step in rejecting, ‘The Golden Handshake’ offered by Britain for Trinidad’s independence in August of that year. Two months earlier Williams had outlined his alternative demands which contained a demand that Britain meet the cost of the unimplemented plan to rebuild Tobago’s capital Scarborough⁵⁶⁸. The urban landscape of Tobago was about to become a pawn in Williams’ wider demands for Britain to meet what he saw as a moral obligation to fund his post independence plans to the ultimate tune of about 1/5th of total cost of £50m. By contrast Harold Macmillan’s government had in mind a figure of about £2m and no additional loans. This dispute would run until December 1963 when the British essentially settled matters on their own terms but there would be ramifications for

⁵⁶⁵ Colin Palmer’s contention that 98 ½ % (Palmer 2006:141) of this funding had come from the Colony’s own resources is drawn from Williams’ own estimate and doesn’t account for the multiplicity of ways that the UK Government subsidised the programme for example bearing over half the cost of the survey of Tobago including Niddrie’s salary and expenses. The truth as to who paid for what in the 1956 five year plan lies somewhere between the two sets of figures. The main bone of contention being what actually constituted a British or Trinidadian asset e.g. grants issued to and through the St Augustine Campus of the University College West Indies. Williams wanted to support his next five year programme from overseas loans rather than domestic revenues and the resulting diplomatic fracas can be seen as an attempt to tap up Britain for the money. Also key to the dispute were Trinidad and Tobago’s debts to Britain as a result of the collapse of the West Indies Federation.

⁵⁶⁶ Niddrie, David L. *Land Use and Population in Tobago* Geographical Publications London 1961:30

⁵⁶⁷ Palmer, Colin A. *Eric Williams and the Making of the Modern Caribbean*. Chapel Hill 2006:40-75 for a full description of the Federation negotiations. For a contemporary account with different motives see Lowenthal, David. Levels of West Indian Government in *Social and Economic Studies* Vol.11 No.4 1962

⁵⁶⁸ Eric Williams, Equipment for Independence June 18th 1962 in DO 200/85 The unimplemented plan was a component of the Frampton report. The blue prints and designs are in copies of the administration reports held at the London School of Economic and do not appear in the copies held by the TNA at Kew or the National Archives in Port of Spain.

Tobago's planters along the way, as well as Williams and the British diplomats involved coming to regard each other as caricatures of demagogues and oppressors respectively.

In September 1963 Williams launched a vitriolic attack on, "someone in Tobago", whom he termed a South African. He claimed the individual to have been promulgating the doctrines of Apartheid and to have in his possession a 150 signature petition demanding the individual's deportation⁵⁶⁹. Norman Costar the British High Commissioner, whose contempt for Williams combined thinly veiled racial invective and post imperial bitterness in equal measure, was cautious about this development in the Prime Minister's regular attacks on foreigners meddling in Trinidad's affairs⁵⁷⁰. The previous December Costar had been scathing about the state of the Development Programme and especially the works in Tobago. His report offered a clear assessment of the new country's economy teetering on the brink as public expenditure blossomed and a credit boom driven by hire purchase firms had taken advantage of a distorted wage market created by oil revenues and driven up consumer demand. In Costar's view the development plan had soaked up unskilled labour and driven up inflation whilst contributing very little. "Millions are spent on a splendid new road to open up a beach whilst over-crowded hospitals and slums fester"⁵⁷¹. The plan had failed in its main goal of creating long term employment in any sector of the economy and oil revenues had reacted negatively on manufacturing and agriculture⁵⁷².

Costar was under no illusions about Williams' motivations in Tobago and saw them in mercenary terms as aimed at preventing Tobago from joining the by then defunct Federation or seceding⁵⁷³. The report was brusque about the plan's impact: "in the process of so-called development, Tobago's Civil Service establishment rose from 360 to 442, hundreds of workers were employed on road making, at higher wages than agricultural estates were able or willing to pay, and the island's agricultural production (its major asset) declined at a more rapid pace than before"⁵⁷⁴. Costar saw the economic situation not solely as a case of bad management but in terms of a broader blend of Malthusian and racial logic, "At the core of both social and economic troubles is the rapid, uninhibited growth of population... for reasons of religious

⁵⁶⁹ Report of Williams' speech at Woodford Square, Port of Spain 24th September 1963 in DO 200/104

⁵⁷⁰ Despatch from High Commissioner to the Commonwealth Relations Office 25th September 1963 in DO 200/104

⁵⁷¹ The Prospects for Trinidad and Tobago 21st November 1962 in DO 200/78

⁵⁷² Costar was witnessing first hand what would later be colloquially known as Dutch disease.

⁵⁷³ Costar certainly did not consider Eric Williams' strong sense of historical moral responsibility or appreciate the extent to which Williams' cast himself as the sole figure capable of righting the wrongs of colonial neglect.

⁵⁷⁴ The Prospects for Trinidad and Tobago 21st November 1962 in DO 200/78

belief or racial practice, there is unlikely to be any control on its continued growth”⁵⁷⁵. As guardian of nationalism and national morals Eric Williams was condemning the profligacy of the population’s spending as nothing less than base mimicry, preaching self help whilst shopping for foreign loans to keep the development project running⁵⁷⁶. Just as Williams channelled his own vision of the nation through the emergent moral grammar of postcolonial development so did Costar who drew on more traditional symbols of West Indian economic malaise, “The Trinidadian now sees himself as entitled to a North American standard of living though making no effort (because of the serious unemployment and his inborn – or perhaps his slave ancestor-cultivated – indolence) to achieve comparable productivity in his daily work”⁵⁷⁷. Those who sought to describe or transform newly independent Trinidad and Tobago showed the underlying grammar of their communication. The moral etymology of the words through which they communicated relates the respectively intended moralities of improvement. This moral constitution of development and all its implicit and explicit assertions of status and ownership was being performed behind the curtains and upon the stage of the new state.

At 11:16 on the 1st October 1963 the teletype machines at the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Admiralty chattered into urgent life⁵⁷⁸. Hurricane Flora had passed north of Trinidad and struck Tobago on the 30th of September. All contact had been lost. Eric Williams as Prime Minister and Minister for Tobago Affairs took personal charge of the relief effort. The British warship H.M.S. Tartar was diverted by SNOWI (Senior Naval Officer West Indies) to assist. The handling of the first major natural disaster in an independent state with which there was an ongoing diplomatic dispute was to be a sign of the transformed relationship between Britain and the tropical world. The first task in hand was for Commander Hutchings of H.M.S. Tartar to diplomatically handle, “exasperatingly slow interviews with local officials”, a matter in which observers deemed him, “the essence of tact”⁵⁷⁹.

Shortly after the arrival of H.M.S. Tartar the public relations exercise began. Firstly the High Commission had to work out which members of the Royal family had to offer sympathy

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid

⁵⁷⁶ Dr Williams Calls On Trinidadians to Stop Wasting Money: Casino, Over my Dead Body. *Evening News* Wednesday 5th December 1962 enclosed in DO 200/78

⁵⁷⁷ The Prospects for Trinidad and Tobago 21st November 1962 in DO 200/78

⁵⁷⁸ Flora was a truly devastating experience for the whole region and generated significant official correspondence and media attention.

⁵⁷⁹ Report on relief work in Tobago carried out by H.M.S. Tartar by T.P. Tenten 2nd Secretary British High Commission 7th October 1963 in DO 200/106

alongside the Queen⁵⁸⁰. Secondly the status of the negotiations with Trinidad over development funding had to be taken account of: “the work that has been done in Tobago is most important and useful in this connection”⁵⁸¹. In the delicate position of providing aid which had to be both unconnected and useful to the negotiations officials had a serious challenge. Noting that technically Britain had no obligation to independent colonies but that at the same time this, “will not make much appeal to Dr Williams”, civil servants and diplomats decided that the opportunity to help Tobago, the object of Williams’ own private goals for development was too good to pass up⁵⁸².

The damage in Tobago was extensive with 24 persons killed and at least 2500 buildings destroyed outright, “as regards buildings, the difficulties are increased rather than lessened by the worthlessness of much that has been damaged or destroyed”⁵⁸³. Meeting Williams at his HQ at the Blue Haven Hotel, the Acting High Commissioner, Stanley Fingland noted, “Dr Williams has obviously decided that it is not socially or politically acceptable to nail them back as they were before”⁵⁸⁴. Fingland was laconic about the devastation’s impact on the island’s inhabitants explaining to London that: “The poorer half of the population led easy-going if hardly full lives”⁵⁸⁵. Fingland’s true concern lay with another constituency.

Agriculture as an industry, already struggling, had been obliterated on both garden plots and large estates. Mindful that this devastation and the planned development expenditure militated against agricultural revival, the island’s estate owners confided in Fingland their fear that Williams would use the situation to conduct wholesale land reform⁵⁸⁶. There was certainly no prospect of the Government coming to the aid of the estates. Would the Government, “allow Tobago to return to its somnolence and decline”⁵⁸⁷, and how would Williams interpret the opportunity that had been presented? Fingland noted:

“Economically, possibly the quickest way to shelve, if not solve, the problem of Tobago, would be to allow the plantations to try to reassert themselves; but politically such a solution is unacceptable to the

⁵⁸⁰ Davidson to Sykes 9th October 1963 in DO 200/106

⁵⁸¹ Walsh Atkins to Footman 9th October 1963 in DO 200/106

⁵⁸² Ibid. More explicitly and within the same docket the negotiations with Trinidad and the impact of Hurricane Flora are dealt with in Luke to Sykes 7th October 1963 in DO 200/106

⁵⁸³ Fingland to Sandys 29th October 1963 in DO 200/106

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid

present Government. Socially, also, it would be simple to allow the Tobagonian to revert quietly to his idle and shiftless existence”⁵⁸⁸

For Fingland Tobago was symptomatic of the inevitable decline of British influence and the privileges of what Sydney Olivier had termed ‘white capital and coloured labour’ nearly sixty years before. The islanders were the barely human bi-product of this upturning of the social order. Tobago was though, above all else, a problem that now thankfully belonged to somebody else. A Williams preoccupied with rebuilding a whole island, with what British diplomats often styled his, “total single mindedness”, would lose interest in part at least, with his battles with Britain over debts and money.

Williams addressed the public not just as the head of the relief effort but as a historian putting history’s lessons into practice. The hurricane of 1847 loomed large in his calls for redevelopment. He saw 1847 as an opportunity that had been lost through the economic dogma of minority interests, a dogma which the PNM would progressively reject, “Are we therefore to go back to coconuts after September 30, 1963, as they went back to cane after October 11, 1847? Or are we to attempt a greater measure of diversification and seek a better pattern of land use?”⁵⁸⁹ Williams took the opportunity to assure listeners that he would not neglect the acquisition of land for, “small farmers and for community centres and for recreation grounds” as planters had neglected their emancipated former slaves in 1847⁵⁹⁰. Williams signalled a desire to acquire estates for public use and made pointed comments as to the need for a development plan for Scarborough⁵⁹¹. He was in luck as many companies and individuals privately informed the British High Commission that agricultural activity in Tobago was no longer viable. The island’s coconut crop had been seriously affected by Red Ring disease and acutely so in the years before the hurricane. The emergency anti fire precautions for hurricane debris had meant that the standard solution of burning infected trees was ruled out for the foreseeable future. The Government had also rather liberally interpreted the meaning of emergency work and employed a great many additional workers including the small numbers previously working for estates. The only crop deemed viable was bananas and the island lacked the necessary shipping facilities. Land redistribution was deemed disastrous

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid

⁵⁸⁹ Fourth Report by the Prime Minister on Situation in Tobago – 20th October 1963. Transcript of a Radio Broadcast in DO 200/106

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid

⁵⁹¹ Ibid. These remarks were highlighted in the text and are discussed at more length by Fingland in his later despatch, Fingland to Sandys 29th October 1963 in DO 200/106

for reasons similar to Niddrie's estimate⁵⁹², but acceptable if the government paid market prices. One estate owner expressed their scepticism by complaining about previous land acquisitions for public projects, "two weeks after acquiring the land the Government had sent in bulldozers for a new school, destroying the cocoa crop in the process, since then no further progress has been made with the school!"⁵⁹³ This was a line of argument that drew implicitly on older racially defined performances of proprietorship. This was veiled in a contrast between the wise stewardship of the estates with the incompetence of the newly independent government. The officials at the British High Commission offered sympathetic platitudes to the estate owners. Even as Williams sought ways of rebuilding Tobago others were washing their hands of the matter.

Storms and Empires: The Aftermath

The last thirty two years of British rule and the first year of independence had seen an interconnected transformation of the landscape, society and economy in Tobago. The description of the island had been a medium through which ideological struggles had been conducted. Through this language new and old industries pressed their claims to legitimacy and sought to establish their roles within a broader ethos of improvement, trying to grammatically arrange the virtues of their objectives so as to be synonymous with the virtues of the moment. This period saw the moral performance of a range of economic and social goals influenced by and in turn influencing the language through which they were projected.

What the preceding chapter has shown is that moralities were not uniform in character or origin but were the conscious creations of individuals that drew both consciously and unconsciously on a dynamic language of development. Civil servants were not the automatons of a vast and Foucauldian, state but people who were a part of the world they sought to describe and transform. Likewise politicians, businessmen and private citizens all complicate attempts at comfortable characterisations of group interests as each learned and performed a personal logic of action and preference. Integral to understanding this process is that morality rather than knowledge is subjective but particular. That which is deemed desirable is at heart

⁵⁹² Comments by Vestey Bros General Manager E.L. Walker are revealing in this regard, "without the income from estates they could not survive. The Tobagonian was in any case essentially an idler, and to break up the estates to give land to peasants would only result in serious deterioration of the land and production. Experience of co-operatives in Trinidad and Tobago had not been encouraging". Booth to Sykes and Aylward 28th October 1963 in DO 200/105

⁵⁹³ Note on the investments of Forres Park Ltd (Vestey Bros Ltd) Booth to Sykes and Aylward 28th October 1963 in DO 200/105

irrational and subjective but the actions that it inspires form a logical progression from that irrational first premise and the particularities of this premise are knowable. It is also worth emphasising that such individual moralities are forms of performance, social acts by individuals, the ideology of what is right and what is wrong is something which exists to be expounded, displayed and implemented. All of those who described environmental changes and social practises in the period in question sought broadly to bring prosperity to Tobago. In each instance though it is possible to see that ideas of what type of society could bring such prosperity and how prosperity might be defined varied considerably. If the construction of a grammar of development in Tobago and the West Indies communicated many different moral logics certain meanings at least had become hegemonic. The Williams Government's plan for reconstruction in Tobago was a statement of intent for a postcolonial morality that differed markedly from preceding programmes. It still retained and expanded the language and grammar of those programmes even as it sought to shift emphasis on key concepts such as the purpose, performance and relationship between public and private property⁵⁹⁴. It is toward the legacy and performance of postcolonial morals and their visibilities in modern Tobago that the argument now turns.

⁵⁹⁴ The planning team that Williams sent to Tobago emphasised 'Better Villages' and 'improved Youth' in ways that supported both nationalist goals and for the former, reinforced older ideas about rural areas being both degenerate and symbolic to local identities. See Chapter 14, *Report of the Tobago Planning Team*, Port of Spain 1963. Sometimes referred to as the Crooks Report after its chairman.

Chapter 5: Divining Visions of Paradise

In the closing decade of the 20th Century and the opening years of the 21st Tobago experienced a considerable increase in tourist arrivals. The number of visitors was modest by regional standards but the landscape was transformed, especially in the south west. Guest houses, villas, large hotels, bars and restaurants appeared along the roadsides in an unplanned and brightly painted sprawl. Following on the heels of the turmoil that had engulfed Trinidad and Tobago at the end of the 1970s oil boom, much of this seemed a welcome blessing. Despite this, concerns began to grow over the absence of co-ordination to much of the development taking place in the island. The presence of foreign investors became politically problematic and environmental groups emerged to challenge expansion of the airport and the building of large hotels amongst a range of other concerns. The same time plans were published that talked of a new future based on natural gas extraction and IT. Against this backdrop a new commitment to development plans began to take form. The intentions that inspired these plans reveals a great deal about the broader debates taking place in Tobago and the wider Caribbean about tourism, land use and the merits of foreign investment. Within these intentions are embedded a range of beliefs about the past, present and future of Tobago. The logic of the beliefs held by those involved in making and contesting official policy provides a lens onto a range of ongoing debates in the study of the contemporary Caribbean. To explore these debates in Tobago requires an exposition of the meaning of some of the concepts that are incorporated into the language of policy and the logic of belief that the arrangement of these concepts constitutes.

A Revolution, a Coup and Two Oil Booms Later... Political and Economic Résumé: 1963-1998

The aftermath of Hurricane Flora saw a collapse in the agricultural sector that had long dominated the economy of Tobago. Despite increases in tourism, it was state investment funded by central government oil revenues that characterised subsequent economic plans. The revised second five year plan drew on the recommendations of the Tobago Planning Team

appointed by the Williams government but allocated only a fraction of the funds needed to fully implement the rebuilding programme⁵⁹⁵.

From the late 1960s the Government of Trinidad and Tobago acquired several estates in the island. The use to which this land was then put was largely minimal. Even the farm school constructed on Kendal Estate never became fully operational as the residential college that was intended. Agricultural production was kept artificially high by subsidies in the late sixties but by the early 1980s had collapsed⁵⁹⁶. Given the preceding relationship between the central government and Tobago's politicians and businesses it was hardly surprising that antagonism over the allocation of resources persisted. This was further exacerbated by a widespread belief in Tobago that Government statements about post Flora reconstruction and expenditure were a less than clear and honest picture of events⁵⁹⁷.

The haphazard nature of government policy after Hurricane Flora not only saw a sizeable area of the island purchased by the state but also managed to incur the hostility of a broad range of political figures first outside and then within the ruling PNM. The first calls for outright secession appeared in the late 1960s with slogans along the lines of, "it is time for geography and politics to go hand in hand"⁵⁹⁸. Several letters to newspapers in Trinidad, the latter implacably hostile to the various secessionist groups, complained that Trinidad had received development. The desirability of development as a concept and the way in which it was defined were bound by historically rooted grammatical practices in the language of policy that had emerged in regard to Tobago. In this case the complaint focused on the absence of

⁵⁹⁵ Ragoonath, Bishnu. *Development in Tobago: Twentieth Century Challenges* UWI Press St Augustine 1997:38. Ragoonath calculated actual expenditure to be \$TT7.4m in 1964 as opposed to the \$TT14m suggested by the planning team. The overall figure of expenditure made in the period covered by the revised plan was \$TT23m which included the already allocated budget in the original draft plan and was significantly lower than the proposed (but unbudgeted) suggested expenditure in the revised draft. Basically between 1963 until the early eighties Tobago received the same 5-6% of total national capital outlay that had been typical prior to independence despite the fact that most standing structures and infrastructure had been literally demolished in 1963.

⁵⁹⁶ Government assistance after Hurricane Flora was targeted at small farmers and involved clearing hurricane damaged lands. By the time of the 1982 Agricultural Census both the number of farmers and the number of acres cultivated was remarkably lower than 1964. E.g. 7546 acres of cocoa lands were cleared after Flora but there were 2432 acres left in 1982. Plantains and Bananas fell from 3469 acres to 692 acres and catch crops fell from 20 000 acres to 2471 acres. These figures are far higher than pre independence peaks and should be treated with caution. At the very least they are the result of the post Flora subsidy programmes that ended with the oil boom. They may also reflect a tendency to record the area of land assigned to a specific crop rather than the area actually being planted. Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 1982 *Agricultural Census* Central Statistical Office Port of Spain 1984

⁵⁹⁷ Luke, Learie B. *Identity and Secession in the Caribbean: Tobago vs. Trinidad 1889-1980* UWI Press 2007:236

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid p239 the quotation is from a speech by a then prominent Tobago lawyer, J. Bayliss Frederick who also launched a blistering attack on foreigners, Trinidadian businessmen especially.

factories in Tobago. One letter stated that, "Tobago continues to be hoodwinked with talk of unspoilt charm"⁵⁹⁹. There is a considerable resemblance between these various public pronouncements and the earlier beliefs espoused by APT James in the years after the war. The proponents of the politics of land and identity that had emerged in the early half of the century had redirected their vitriol from the colonial state to the postcolonial state. Anything viewed as tainted by Trinidadian influence was both coveted and reviled. It was to be a heady blend of contradictory views about natural resources, desirable economic activities and symbols of autonomy and identity that informed the move to self government in the 1970s.

The 1970s were a decade marked by political turbulence in the Caribbean. In Trinidad and Tobago Black Power demonstrations in 1970 reached their zenith amidst a wave of strikes and an army mutiny⁶⁰⁰. The Government of Eric Williams clung on to power with support from the United States and the United Kingdom. Williams's Minister of Finance ANR Robinson, the lawyer and founding member of the PNM who had defeated A.P.T. James for the Tobago seat in 1963 resigned in the middle of the crisis. Robinson became the leading light of a new opposition party based in Tobago, the Democratic Action Congress and adopted a rhetoric increasingly hostile to the central government. This centred on demands for protection of Tobago's marine environment from pollution generated by the oil and gas industry, the development of a distinct economy based on tourism and the resolution of disputed land titles⁶⁰¹. Despite a government commission into the island's constitutional arrangements in 1973, little action was taken to head off the moves for autonomy in Tobago⁶⁰². In 1976 the DAC won the two Tobago seats in the national Parliament and an embittered Williams responded by disbanding the Ministry of Tobago Affairs that he had founded prior to independence⁶⁰³. At the close of parliament in 1976 a motion was proposed by the two Tobago

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid 241

⁶⁰⁰ Tobago was not immune to marches and protests and Black Power slogans were easily incorporated into the language of Tobagonian separatism and nationalism. This was acutely so on the issue of land ownership with about 60% being in the hands of large estates many of which were owned by the island's miniscule white minority. With three estates acquired by government in the late sixties and eleven more by the early eighties government had become the largest individual landowner and was to continue to acquire land whenever possible. After 1980 this activity became the preserve of the THA rather than central government. By 1998 the THA owned 12 whole estates totalling some 4,138.9 hectares but would subsequently acquire more, most recently acquiring Bond author Ian Fleming's old Hurricane Season retreat, Goat Island from a local businessman. For a brief discussion of the relationship between Black Power and separatism in Tobago see, Premdas, Ralph R. *Secession and Self Determination in the Caribbean: Nevis and Tobago* UWI Press St Augustine 1998:108-110

⁶⁰¹ Ibid p245

⁶⁰² Ibid p242

⁶⁰³ Williams made increasingly irate public comments about Tobagonian nationalists and Tobago in general which were reciprocated. In addition to the machinations in favour of autonomy in Trinidad and Tobago a small group of expatriates living in the UK petitioned the Queen for a review of the union from

members for establishing an autonomous self government for the island. Throughout the next three years Robinson sparred with Williams in parliament whilst other opposition leaders took full advantage of any discomfort to the PNM offered by Robinson's jibes and disclosures⁶⁰⁴. Robinson's manoeuvring in parliament garnered the support needed to put through the Tobago House of Assembly Act 1980 after three years of wrangling and filibustering⁶⁰⁵.

The new Tobago House of Assembly embarked on a decade length development plan focused on the island's infrastructure. The timing of the plan was far from fortuitous whatever its merits as a document. The global oil price rises of the 1970s had, via government spending aimed at heading off the criticisms of 1970, led to a considerable rise in living standards. When the price of oil began to fall the economy of the country went into meltdown⁶⁰⁶. The public works schemes, such as the Development and Environment Works Division (DEWD), that had been icons to many of the oil boom excess, ground to a halt⁶⁰⁷. By 1989 there was deep seated poverty in much of Trinidad and a newly autonomous Tobago had gained remarkably little from the boom in general. The National Alliance for Reconstruction, a party born out of an uneasy coalition of ex PNM members, small parties, the Indian associated UNC and the Tobago

the late 60s to mid 70s. This drew a bemused but thorough response from FCO clerks struggling to unearth the necessary files. It appears that this very small group were adamant that the state of emergency declared during the 1970 revolution was solely directed at stifling Tobago's appeal for self government and they demanded "protection against assault and detention" (Philip to Milne 20th October 1971 in FCO 63/862). The dismantling of the Ministry of Tobago Affairs was symptomatic of the way in which the civil service of Trinidad and Tobago became (and has since remained) increasingly overtly politicised during this period.

⁶⁰⁴ For example Robinson disclosed that a broken bridge that Williams had used as evidence of colonial neglect in Tobago was still broken twenty years after a speech in 1956 denouncing the treatment of Tobagonians. Luke, Learie B. *Identity and Secession in the Caribbean: Tobago vs. Trinidad 1889-1980* UWlpress 2007:262

⁶⁰⁵ The verbatim text of the relevant debates is to be found both in Trinidad and Tobago's Hansard as well as Davidson, J.G. *Tobago vs. the PNM* Beacon Publishing Trinidad 1979.

⁶⁰⁶ GNP per capita effectively halved between 1982 and 1987 from US\$7560 to US\$3480. For a collection of sources on the impact of the oil price collapse See Ryan, Selwyn. *The Muslimeen Grab for Power* Imprint Caribbean Ltd Trinidad 1991. For an ethnographic interpretation situated in the oil boom's aftermath see, Miller, D *Modernity: An Ethnographic Approach Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad* Berg Oxford 1994. Miller's observation of a divide between the opinions of rich and poor informants about the benefits of the oil boom viewed in retrospect was not evident by the time of my own fieldwork in Tobago. Miller documented a rhetoric devoted to a 'loss of authenticity' associated with high levels of consumption and a neglect of traditional values which he identified as being a predominantly middle class perspective. My own experience was that almost all of my informants in Tobago, bar those directly involved in managing various welfare programmes, held this view of the period in question even if they were too young to actually remember it in detail or at all. What Miller had identified as, "a tropical storm, which, with hindsight, passed over the country leaving an astonishing amount of detritus in its wake" (Miller 1994:204) is now widely regarded as having been a national curse and is frequently cited as the source of almost any contemporary problem.

⁶⁰⁷ DEWD Development and Environment Works Division. A rotating employment scheme instituted in 1971 and known as "ten day" in Tobago after the length of each on and off cycle. This became the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP).

based DAC, came to power in 1986. The new party was led by ANR Robinson whose government soon found its hands tied by agreements with the IMF and the World Bank. Unable to actually implement any ameliorative policies and forced to implement draconian cuts in public services, the Robinson government focused on its other key electoral pledge of rooting out corruption from the PNM years⁶⁰⁸. Against this backdrop of economic malaise and political vendetta widespread public protests began to gather pace. A planned referendum on the government's dealings with the IMF and the World Bank was organized by the Joint Trade Union Movement and the Summit of Peoples Organisation⁶⁰⁹. On the day scheduled for the referendum, July 27th 1990, Imam Yassin Abu Bakr and his followers stormed the country's Parliament and government media stations, taking the Prime Minister and many MPs and journalists hostage and leading to a bloody standoff with the army for the next six days whilst looters ransacked the capital⁶¹⁰. Whatever Bakr's motives, which were largely related to an increasingly tense dispute with the Port of Spain Corporation over land rights, the fallout from the coup attempt effectively removed the NAR's slender chance of winning the following year's scheduled election.

With Robinson gone and the DAC/NAR little more than a rump occupying the two Tobago seats in the national Parliament, development projects in Tobago slid from the national

⁶⁰⁸ This had the opposite effect to that intended and looked to many as victimisation of the PNM whilst the government dodged its own obligations. The decision to build a statue in honour of anti corruption whistleblower Gene Miles also drew considerable scorn during a period of recession. Miles had blown the whistle on the 'gas station racket', where key PNM figures took bribes in return for licences for gas station franchises. The result of this practice was that in Trinidad petrol stations are located in clusters rather than spread out at intervals. Miles was alleged to have been hounded into penury and an early death by vengeful PNM ministers. The official line was that she was an embittered and jealous woman who had been jilted by her lover and superior and chosen to disclose his dealings. Even if true this would be irrelevant. The fact that the PNM at the time and pro PNM writers nearly twenty years later thought otherwise is an indicator of how the complex of beliefs about morality in public life are performed in relation to gender in Trinidad and Tobago. Selwyn Ryan (an academic closely supportive of the PNM) astutely chooses to cite the accusations without comment one way or the other, the quotation seeming to stand for the author's opinion. See, Ryan, Selwyn. *The Muslimeen Grab for Power* Imprint Caribbean Ltd Trinidad 1991:26-27

⁶⁰⁹ SOPO and JTUM contained many of the same members and also attracted support from a range of religious and community groups

⁶¹⁰ 28 people were killed and many more injured. In order to intimidate the hostage takers as advised by US Special Forces, the army fired missile launchers at the Red House and at what was then the only T.V. Station in the country. The tactic was successful but the Red House remains partially enveloped in scaffolding 18 years later. Curiously the second volume of Miller's ethnography of Trinidad, which occurred before and after the coup and offers a discussion of the oil boom, makes no mention of the coup itself. Certainly Bakr's demands to create an Islamic state as an antidote to the consumerism engendered by the boom were of quite a different order to the middle class media commentary tackled by Miller's first volume. The coup and the subsequent looting which receives a brief mention in Miller's work is a notable absence adding to the impression that modernity is somehow an apolitical condition. Miller, Daniel. *Capitalism: An Ethnographic Approach* Berg Oxford 1997

agenda until nearly the end of the decade. It was not until the reform of the THA Act in 1996 that development planning in Tobago came back onto the political agenda.

Slavery and the Undesirable Past

The memory of slavery, or more precisely beliefs about the past and especially slavery, are key features in development plans for Tobago. These plans were drawn up in the late 1990s and a new plan was published in 2005 after a second planning exercise that followed a change from DAC to PNM control of the Tobago House of Assembly. These documents are in many ways an analysis of the past aimed at divining a desirable future. For this reason they are logically products of wider moral beliefs about the past as much as they are targeted at specific ends.

It is not an original point to suggest that development plans prepared by civil and public servants and consultants alike are driven by aspiration to particular aesthetic forms⁶¹¹. But these are not simply aesthetics of symbolic modernity. They instead contain valuable insights into what is desirable about particular aspects of past and present and what will be deemed desirable in the future. Debates about the character, purpose, operation, abolition and legacy of slavery in the Caribbean have dominated the writing of the region's history with good reason. But these accounts have always necessitated the performance of certain moral schemes. The association of key concepts in development plans for Tobago, agriculture, tourism, estates or labour productivity, are indicative of a broader moral conception of development. A conception held by individuals favouring or opposing the contents of the documents in question. In examining the regular references to slavery at key points in development plans it becomes possible to see not a general aesthetic of modernity but a specific belief system about what should constitute modernity. This is not a sedimented memory of events but the result of dynamic debates in the past being reformulated to support statements about the present and predictions for the future⁶¹².

The first major planning exercise in Tobago after Hurricane Flora occurred in the late 1990s following the revision of the THA Act in 1996. In order to gather the data for the plan, long aggregated to national figures and sketchy at best, the THA established a Policy Research and Development Institute (PRDI). The plans prepared were mostly published by 1998 along with

⁶¹¹ Stirrat, R.L. Cultures of Consultancy in *Critique of Anthropology* Vol. 20 No. 1 2000

⁶¹² For an example of how memories of the slave trade impacted on belief systems in West Africa see, Shaw, Rosalind. *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* University of Chicago Press Chicago 2002. Although I would dispute the contention that the past shapes the present so much as currently held beliefs about the past (Shaw 2002:268).

their supporting documents and focused mainly on generating a competitive edge through local comparative advantage. The goal was to move the long stagnated economy from dependence on central government transfers. In retrospect much of the content of these documents reads like an unbudgeted list of aspirations rather than a step by step plan based on concrete projects. Yet it is these aspirations which are most telling for they contain the intentions that derived from a particular understanding of the history of Tobago. Such intentions are clearly visible in the text, "The social and economic problems that have characterised Tobago since the period of slavery must now be removed once and for all. The state of total dependence on Trinidad must be replaced by a self reliant integration into the national fabric"⁶¹³. Slavery and the central government in Trinidad are, if not actually equated, arranged in such a way as to be suggestive⁶¹⁴. The belief in this historical progression, from one form of failed and unjust domination to another, lies at the heart of the economic policies articulated in the plan itself.

It is in the historical supporting document of the plan in particular that this particular vision of the future arises. Here the period of plantation slavery is portrayed as predestined to collapse under its own innate contradictions⁶¹⁵. This in turn gives rise to the virtuous Tobagonian peasant, a self sufficient innovator, the descendant of slaves who captured the internal provision market and stole a march on the slothful planters. After emancipation it is the peasantry which is described as the backbone of the island's economy promoting a more intrinsically local form of entrepreneurship. Metayage becomes the innovative repository of socially responsible capitalism that "drew upon African traditions"⁶¹⁶. A clear contrast is offered between, "the ex-slaves [who] creatively drew on their cultural and community resources to obtain labour, accumulate savings and acquire credit" and, "the planters who could not control the production process. Poor husbandry, low technological capacity and low prices led to low levels of surplus creation on the planter's account"⁶¹⁷. The past becomes a moral contest. By the 20th Century the foolish planters had picked the wrong kind of rubber whilst the innovative peasants had created in, "Tobago the most advanced co-operative organizations in the BWI. It is clear that the small size of the peasant's enterprises drove them

⁶¹³ PRDI *Report No.2 Tobago Development Plan: Medium-Term Policy Framework of Tobago 1998-2000* PRDI 1998:45

⁶¹⁴ This is commonly described by local politicians as being, "a master servant relationship".

⁶¹⁵ Craig-James, Susan. *The Social and Economic History of Tobago (1838-1990): Persistent Poverty in the Absence of Adequate Development Strategy. Supporting document 1. Tobago Strategic Plan Report No. 3* PRDI 1999. This work is based on a longer thesis, subsequently expanded and published in two volumes

⁶¹⁶ Ibid p5

⁶¹⁷ Ibid p5

to co-operate for labour, credit, processing and marketing⁶¹⁸. The background to these events and the machinations of the agricultural department to create co-operation are omitted. The mythology of the Tobago peasant, much changed in intention from the reports of Lennox Pawan, was alive and well, though embodying new beliefs⁶¹⁹. The report concludes by stating that the hard working peasantry had established a culture of innovation which paradoxically made it difficult to accept the need to work in the new service economy of tourism⁶²⁰. The peasantry had become as unviable as the plantations. Government, for which can be read the THA, was logically the only viable sector of the economy because it is not described as being tainted with any historical baggage of failure. The reasoning being that only the THA could draft an island wide plan capable of protecting the virtues of the past whilst resisting the vices of the present⁶²¹. Development had become established as a specific moral duty aimed at undoing a range of past iniquities yet framed in favour of a particular logic of action⁶²².

The formulation of development policy in Tobago in terms of a moral interpretation of the past is not a new phenomenon. It mirrors in many ways the references to slavery and emancipation in the 1897 West India Commission report and the broader thrust of development planning after the 1940 Colonial Welfare Act⁶²³. This is not a case of an organically transmitted historical memory in action. The mimicry of a colonial culture, a ubiquitous critique of Caribbean governments after Naipaul's acerbic satire, or the colonised mind of Fanon's psychological approach falls short of an explanation beyond the superficial. The intention of the first set of comprehensive development plans for Tobago differed markedly from earlier plans. The public servants and consultants involved in preparing the documents were not simply ciphers for

⁶¹⁸ Ibid p9

⁶¹⁹ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the Reports of District Medical Officer Lennox Pawan.

⁶²⁰ Ibid p13

⁶²¹ This argument was further supported by the disastrous experience of structural adjustment during the 1980s and early 1990s in Trinidad and Tobago as well as the wider regional and global settings, a point made explicit in the main plan. PRDI, *Report No. 4 Tobago Development Plan: The Integrated Plan for the Development of the People of Tobago in the 21st Century*. PRDI 1998:147-148

⁶²² As the title of the document in the above note suggests development was something to be done to people with (ideally) their participation. In many ways this programme revisited the methods and ideas of the post-war Colonial Welfare planners regarding upliftment, a word frequently used by politicians and other public figures in Tobago.

⁶²³ This was far from a West Indian phenomenon and cross cut with a wide range of intellectual concerns about international and colonial issues. From complaints about the lack of public awareness of colonial affairs to specific criticisms of colonial and dominion governments it is clear that articulations of a specific moral logic of action were being made. In addition to discussions in Chapters 4 and 5 statistical evidence about just which sections of the public were interested in such issues as well as discussions of key individuals (Especially South African exiles working with the left in Britain such as Rita Hinden head of the Fabian Colonial Research Bureau) can be found in Lee, J.M. *Colonial Development and Good Government: A Study of the Ideas Expressed by the British Official Classes in planning Decolonization 1939-1964* Clarendon Press Oxford 1967.

some hidden language of Caribbean development that was a legacy of slavery and colonisation⁶²⁴. In incorporating such subjects into the text of plans they were instead making statements about contemporary policy preferences that have far reaching ramifications for land use and society. New beliefs about old moral concepts have come to mark subtle alterations to the grammar of policy that passes judgement on the past in order to predict the future and explain the present. Policy documents are therefore not solely artefacts of aesthetic form and modern or western discourses. Instead these documents are displays of particular sensibilities about aesthetic form that draw in novel ways on long genealogies of ideas and debate.

The Undesirable Future

The two mainstays of Tobago's economy aside from government expenditure are tourism and agriculture. Both industries occupy an ambivalent place in both written plans and the thinking of their authors. Both industries have also raised the ire of national politicians at various times in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. Eric Williams' remarks, "I will not be Prime Minister of a nation of waiters and bellhops" and "throw away your cutlass and your hoe the future of the nation is in your school bags", have passed into the folklore of grievance amongst many in the private sector with various renditions of these being repeated in interviews by informants as explanations for government action and inaction. Yet the story is far more complex than this or the more globally orientated literature on the shortcomings of ecotourism suggests.

The role of beliefs about desirable and undesirable forms of economic and social activity has played a major part in shaping tourism policy in Tobago. Many of the issues raised in the Dominican journalist Polly Pattullo's frequently cited guide to the Caribbean tourist industry are certainly present but with often unexpected consequences⁶²⁵. For planners and other public servants in Tobago it is their often seemingly contradictory beliefs about tourism that shed the most light on the dynamic relations between the industry and the government.

⁶²⁴ Critics of regional governments after independence have often drawn on concepts of mimicry and mental colonisation. In Trinidad this line of reasoning was actively pursued by the New World group and its later political offshoot the Tapia House Movement. Accusations in this vein are a frequent subject of radio phone in programmes and letters to newspapers bemoaning the state of national decline.

⁶²⁵ Pattullo, Polly. *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean* 2nd Edition Latin America Bureau London 2005 Pattullo's work uses many of the iconic images of the Caribbean tourist industry often accepted as objects rather than subjects of study. Most notable are the images of black West Indians waiting on white visitors that begin most chapters and the book's overwhelming focus on the resentment of tourism by locals that falls back on easy assumptions about the economic and social continuities in the region.

Beginning with a change of government in 2002 the PRDI initiated a new development planning exercise in association with central government. This was part of a broader central government driven initiative called Vision 2020 which would lead Trinidad and Tobago to developed country status by that year⁶²⁶. In 2005 this exercise led to the publication of a large and glossy document that, during interviews, public servants would frequently rummage for in desks or bemoan not having seen. The document was capable of evoking strong responses from those charged with its implementation or who had been involved in drawing it up.

The new plan places a contradictory emphasis on the role of the private sector in Tobago. In some sections, “there is a need to diversify away from this dependency and to develop a strong private business sector, with a sound local representation”⁶²⁷ whilst elsewhere in relation to tourism, “there is a need for substantial investment by the THA, in what is essentially private property, a feature which may raise eyebrows immediately”⁶²⁸. This contradiction arises from beliefs about what the industry has to offer. It is in effect an object embodied with vices and virtues dependant on its relation to other objects rather than a field to be subjected to enquiry. When questions of government expenditure are raised the emphasis is on central government expenditure and acutely the relationship between Tobago and Trinidad that that expenditure perpetuates in the eyes of local planners. This question of interisland relations was viewed as key by the majority of government employees I interviewed; a tourism official, bluntly told me that I would be, “required to get a correct impression”, then proceeded to deliberately remark, “Tobago’s population depends on

⁶²⁶ Vision 2020 has been vigorously derided by many commentators from within and without the main political parties not least because of its emphasis on massive government expenditure on mega projects fuelled by oil income. The resulting rise in inflation has been a serious cause of concern to many of these domestic commentators who fear a 1980s style bust if the price of oil drops, others are concerned at the massive environmental impact of these developments especially Aluminium smelters, business parks on artificial islands in the Gulf of Paria and the destruction of old buildings in Port of Spain (this latter is also a major issue in Tobago). One cynical guest house manager in Port of Spain remarked to me that a local company had begun T.V. advertisements for brand 2020 house paints and that painting yourself out of poverty was as realistic as the government’s strategy. In light of some of Miller’s remarks about the presentation of domestic space in Trinidad this doesn’t seem too far fetched as a conclusion. See Miller, Daniel. *Modernity and Ethnographic Approach: Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad* Berg Oxford 1994 Especially Chapter 5

⁶²⁷ PRDI *A Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago 2006-2010* PRDI 2005:128. The last part of this statement is a thinly veiled reference to the expatriate element of the business community which includes the head of the chamber of commerce (who does hold local citizenship). More explicitly one informant muttered something about, “that damn English guy” Interview with Public Servant 05/12/06

⁶²⁸ PRDI *A Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago 2006-2010* PRDI 2005:99 This refers to the view that Tobago’s tourism industry should be divided between a south western mass tourism product and a north eastern luxury ecotourism product. The private sector in the view of planners is incapable or unwilling to make a distinction between these two zones and act in accordance with the policy.

tourism... the country as a whole depends on oil, but Tobago is moving from dependence on what Trinidad gives to independence through tourism revenue”⁶²⁹. A correct impression not only meant a positive view of the THA, but an acknowledgement of the relationship between the concepts of tourism, development and Trinidad within the current grammar of planning. To underline the point, it was also remarked that the national tourism master plan was not available in Tobago at least in the offices of the Tourism Division⁶³⁰. The none too subtle implicit suggestion was that central government tourism planners had scant regard for their Tobagonian counterparts, even though Tobago and not Trinidad is the major tourist destination.

Tourism may offer an economic solution to the THA’s dependence on the national budget but planners remain sceptical about the private sector’s ability to create the type of industry they actually want to see. It is a scepticism that is applied selectively and expediently depending on the relative merits or drawbacks deemed to be associated with the concept of the tourist industry at a given juncture. An illustration of this was provided by an official discussing the internal area plans drawn up for the island. The main planning document had called for three such plans⁶³¹ of which one had been completed⁶³². This document, drawn up by an external consultancy firm, placed considerable emphasis on a concept of ecotourism with which other sectors of the economy of north east Tobago would be integrated. Conversations with village council members and tourism workers in this area of Tobago had left me with a decidedly different impression to that in the document and I questioned whether or not it had been a whirlwind exercise. The public servant to whom I was speaking disagreed. The planning process had done all that was required and more in his view, but it was the underlying premise that was flawed, “What bothered me is that north east Tobago is rural, 26-27% poverty⁶³³, 50-60% of people are engaged in consumptive jobs, logging, fishing, hunting, aggregates. Hardly

⁶²⁹ Interview Public Servant 02/10/06

⁶³⁰ This document is of debatable value with a new strategy held up in parliament for nearly a decade. For a brief account of the document’s origins see, Fairhead, James and Leach, Melissa. *Science, Society and Power: Environmental Knowledge and Policy in West Africa and the Caribbean* Cambridge university Press Cambridge 2003:126

⁶³¹ South West Tobago, Middle Tobago, North East Tobago.

⁶³² The *North East Management Plan* prepared by Kairi Consultants, a Trinidad based consultancy firm and Environment and Development Group UK, a firm composed of current and former Oxford University staff.

⁶³³ This figure is contentious to some. The national poverty line figures show 24.0% with 16.3% for Tobago. The national average is 21% of the population below the poverty line. PRDI decided to repeat the analysis factoring for increased food costs in Tobago. This led to a 5% increase on the national cost of living and an adjustment of non food components to a higher rate as well. The result is that PRDI have a preferred figure of 26.2% poverty in Tobago. PRDI *A Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago 2006-2010* PRDI 2005:66

any tourism jobs. It's simple that tourism is big business, but that it's capital intensive not labour. It is a rural area. You show me where in the hell that plan says rural development eh?"⁶³⁴ To promote the north east portion of the island as a differential tourist product from the south west is a key part of the overall branding strategy but as this individual commented, it does not bare much resemblance to the actual challenges facing the area in question. The planning document serves a purpose within a wider strategy but doesn't necessarily have any direct geographical relevance.

By contrast an earlier plan for the south west of the island focused on establishing a formal carrying capacity limit that would form the basis for regulating the sprawling ribbons of hotels, guest houses and bars that fan out from Crown Point, along the coasts and the main roads. This plan was at the draft stage when a consortium put forward plans to build a Hilton hotel on an estate in the south west. The participatory meetings that formed part of the planning process for the carrying capacity study had seen decreased attendance. Rather than persevere it became desirable to pursue the Hilton proposals, "but to build the Hilton meant ditching the plan because it would have breached the limits in the plan you see?"⁶³⁵ The commitment to tourism by policymakers is not always as blatant as this example. Nor is this a simple case of the power of the tourist industry⁶³⁶. Indeed the strategic use of tourism in planning and policy can mask numerous ideas about the industry and the role of government.

One of the clues as to why a plan based on ecotourism might have been adopted for an area where tourism is a minority employer lies in what is being excluded by such a scheme. The agricultural industry in Tobago evokes its own mythology that different individuals approach with different emphases. This was clearly underlined to me by the scepticism of public servants about the potential of the agricultural industry. This often led them to a grudging endorsement of policies based on tourism. To illustrate this belief system about beliefs, "You will hear this ole talk that Tobago used to be the breadbasket of Trinidad, that is in the past. Our farmers

⁶³⁴ Interview Public Servant 3/10/06

⁶³⁵ Ibid. There are a considerable number of different stories as to how this decision came about which range from the scurrilously plausible to the outlandish.

⁶³⁶ Indeed Hilton has subsequently sold its 30% stake over high maintenance costs leaving Vanguard Hotels Ltd as the sole shareholder. By 2008 the THA had made a major grant to VHL to renovate the hotel and rechristened it The Tobago Plantations. The hotel foyer contained two smiling sculptures of locals in 18th Century dress by an expatriate artist. These were represented in cartoon form on the hotel's information boards and even on toilet doors. These cartoon images bore more than a passing resemblance to marmalade jar golliwogs. It is not difficult to see how some commentators have come to view tourism as a cipher for slavery. One major issue facing the Hilton hotel had been the use of substandard and ill chosen materials, given its coastal setting, which had produced the high costs for maintenance. In late 2008 the hotel closed for refurbishment with the loss of more than 215 jobs in south west Tobago.

have to move with the times, they have to embrace science in order to move because Tobago is still manual, the land is too hilly. It is just a romantic fantasy by people who heard stories from their fathers about how many moons ago agriculture used to be the mainstay of Tobago⁶³⁷. This statement, delivered with an ironic emphasis on dialect, is suggesting the old fashioned character of agriculture, unsuitable for a modern Tobago. Yet it is a belief about belief, a complex weaving of myth upon myth. A run through the agricultural reports from the late 19th Century up until Hurricane Flora reveals that the commercial performance of the agricultural sector in Tobago has always been volatile, and often been unproductive or unprofitable or both with the converse of profitable productivity rarely being true.

Statements about the past, found in planning documents and political pronouncements to the effect that there was once a golden age are simply untrue in a literal sense. The above comments suggest that beliefs about these myths and the moral vision they project are both equally compelling and equally dubious. In essence planners who disbelieve these stories do so in specific ways that contain their own beliefs about the utility of the past rather than any knowledge of what that past was like. This is a bit like the quandary of an atheist who has to choose how not to believe in something they do not believe to be real. It is not a relativistic point that both beliefs have a notional equal value. Instead it is an observation that in choosing not to believe something that is untrue we may do so for reasons other than its untruth.

Agriculture in Tobago (and in Trinidad to a certain extent as well) is seen as the hallmark of an undesirable past in opposition to a desirable future. A point underlined by the far from unique decision of the Public Servant with whom I was speaking to illustrate the point to me by describing census details on the educational attainment levels of those employed in agriculture. This relates to a mismatch of expectations as to what knowledge of agricultural work and environmental management is for⁶³⁸. Early trainees from the Kendal farm school, opened in the 1970s, seemed focused primarily on attaining government jobs and the school effectively collapsed as a residential farming college⁶³⁹. A 2002 action plan on agriculture has not been seen by agricultural officers⁶⁴⁰ and the question of policy is largely verbal in the view of frontline staff⁶⁴¹. This question of verbal policy on agriculture in a sense underlines the way

⁶³⁷ Interview Public Servant 5/12/06

⁶³⁸ I suspected that certain branches of the THA served as useful stepping stones in the education of some staff and that turnover rates were high. I was told in no uncertain terms that even if figures were kept they would not be publicly available.

⁶³⁹ Interview Agricultural Officer 5/2/07

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid more than one individual present at this interview.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid

that intersecting beliefs drive development policy. During my fieldwork the issue of food security had arisen in response to rising food price inflation and this timely concern became the verbal goal of the agricultural department⁶⁴² but practical action had not emerged. As one Agricultural Officer put it, “I imagine if you checked budget allocations you could chart the decline of farming as a priority but I cannot single out a particular instance for you”⁶⁴³. The sense is that agriculture has been purposively run down as a government priority. Yet if tourism raises questions about the desirability of the private sector⁶⁴⁴ and agriculture questions the underlying assumptions of a desirable vision of the future, what is the overall driver of the most recent Tobago development plan? Agriculture may have been replaced by tourism and the rural by the eco as the tagline on reports, but how are these more than discursive tactics, a balancing act by politically vulnerable public servants trying to meet ambiguous demands from elected officials and politicians struggling to run a fragile economy and get re-elected?

The Desirable Future: Gas or Hot Air?

The vision of Tobago’s future according to the current administration is loudly trumpeted in the fourth chapter of the development plan. Oil and gas are the focus of this chapter and these words are potently entwined with many publicly held views about the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago and with the notion of a genuine independence. At the time of my fieldwork, PetroCanada was conducting surveys in Block 22 off Tobago’s north east coast and there were hopes of a major exploitable find. The economy of the country as a whole was booming due largely to increasing petroleum and gas revenues and the resultant government expenditure on major infrastructure projects and flagship social programmes. Public consultations on both the gas exploration and on a proposed reform of the national constitution were often a scene for politicians and activists to quote lengthily from 19th Century legislation about the boundaries of Tobago’s perceived territorial waters. The development plan had been published a year at this time, with a PNM administration in both the THA and the central government, there was improved co-operation between these bodies

⁶⁴² At that time inflation in Trinidad and Tobago had climbed to double digits, it dipped briefly toward the end of my fieldwork but remained volatile. The principal driving factor appears to be the government’s capital works project using oil and gas revenues which has sent prices across the economy soaring and contributed to a labour shortage.

⁶⁴³ Interview Agricultural Officer 5/2/07

⁶⁴⁴ Negative impacts of tourism will be discussed later in the chapter as these relate to broader questions concerning property rights and land use.

over previous years⁶⁴⁵. Indeed the Tobago plan contained several statements, especially in chapter four, that used phrases such as, “there is some willingness on the part of the present administration of the THA for the relationship [with central government] to evolve to a structure more compatible with fiscal federalism”⁶⁴⁶. Whilst promoting the potential desirability of a shift in policy, this document also drew attention to the countercyclical performance of Tobago’s tourist industry in the 1980s recession. Tourism was desirable in so far as it could be portrayed as giving policy makers an advantage over Trinidad. Yet in conversations, documents, interviews and hearsay tourism appeared to be viewed by many as a fundamentally inferior option. There was of course one major sticking point to this move towards a gas driven future for Tobago’s economy and a surge in infrastructure improvement, there is absolutely no legislative framework for the THA to attain any direct financing from oil and gas rents⁶⁴⁷.

Without a legal framework that guaranteed gas revenues to the THA, the administration had begun the construction of a flagship project in south west Tobago, the Cove Eco Industrial Estate. At the time of my fieldwork the only certain structure for the new estate was a gas receiving station and turbine hall to replace the earthquake vulnerable power supply from the TTEC plant in Trinidad. This project’s conception and public description are a prime example of how the moral logic of policy is implemented in practice. Initially this project was part of a plan to export gas from Trinidad, via a now energy self sufficient Tobago, to the wider region. In practice it became an opportunity for officials to trumpet the virtues of the THA, industrial growth and modern technology, all the time implicitly condemning the vices of tourism, agriculture and dependency on Trinidad. The signage for the estate was constructed shortly after the land was cleared and this sign was seemingly placed to obscure that of a small hotel located on the same trace⁶⁴⁸. The public and private statements about Cove Estate differ markedly from the cautious tone of the plan which advised against heavy industrial

⁶⁴⁵ There was also allegedly a degree of political victimisation of public servants perceived as close to the previous administration in Tobago with several suspensions in the PRDI after the change of party in power. One UWI academic noted that this favouritism had effectively decapitated the local public service. Perhaps this was an exasperated overstatement but several of my informants refused to meet me in their offices and were emphatic that their anonymity was crucial even when making the most moderate observations.

⁶⁴⁶ PRDI A *Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago 2006-2010* PRDI 2005:88

⁶⁴⁷ The plan does note this is the case but then proceeds to concoct an elaborate series of speculative statements about possible future tax arrangements as an alternative to the current Petroleum Taxes Act.

⁶⁴⁸ A trace is a colloquial expression for a secondary road, byway or track it is also a common appellation for street names e.g. Orange Hill Trace. It should be noted that certain types of trace, such as publicly maintained agricultural access roads, have a defined legal status.

development in favour of an IT driven approach based on cheap electricity and power exports to adjacent islands. This approach was explained to me by a senior public servant who was condemning the agricultural sector, “You see the modern world is flat, I can see right across it with the computer on my desk”⁶⁴⁹. Information technology had become something of a talking point as a desirable focus for the future and had become for local policymakers an indicator of the truly progressive.

The desirable nature of an eco brand conjoined with a desirable future beyond tourism that was, “light manufacturing, knowledge based, high energy and eco friendly... thereby shifting the almost total dependence on tourism”⁶⁵⁰. The Assembly’s Chief Secretary added: “Cove must be seen as a symbol of Tobago’s advent into the mainstream of industrial development”⁶⁵¹. These remarks suggest an ambiguity about the function of Cove in the future of the island and what the plans later call, “a high sense of self actualisation among Tobagonians in the special place that is Tobago”⁶⁵². No matter that some planners in interviews and in documents had described a delicate balancing act between different components of a desirable modernity, the private views of politicians, and many members of the public had very different expectations. In closed meetings between environmental activists, business representatives and the THA, the Chief Secretary was considerably more forthright about what he thought. One activist described one of these tirades as follows, “I’ll tell you that he told a lot of people, especially the realtors, that he doesn’t give a damn what they think. He says he doesn’t want Tobago to be thought of as being tourism but as energy. When he gets his oil and gas he will build what he wants and where he wants and if Manning [the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago] doesn’t give it to him he’ll declare independence. Then the law will be what he says it is because he’ll be able to pay everyone in the ruling party to stay in line”⁶⁵³. This statement contains some clues as to where other beliefs about the moral desirability of certain futures intersect with those about oil and gas. Specifically the beliefs that have arisen about land ownership and the role of government in the island’s economy.

The public consultations on both the PetroCanada programme of exploration and constitutional reform were enlightening as to the nature and origins of debates about the

⁶⁴⁹ Interview 5/12/06

⁶⁵⁰ Finance and Enterprise Development Secretary, Anslem London quoted at the sod turning ceremony for Cove Estate *Tobago News* Friday, 16/02/07

⁶⁵¹ Dr Orville London quoted in *Tobago News* Friday, February 16th 2007

⁶⁵² PRDI A *Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago 2006-2010* PRDI 2005:97

⁶⁵³ Interview Environmental Activist 12/05/07

future of Tobago and its relationship to the past in the minds of many individuals. At one of the constitutional gatherings a student activist from Trinidad, who was concerned about the then mooted role of an executive President, was effusive in praising the high turn out to such gatherings in Tobago. The same intensity of debate was noticeable at the PetroCanada consultations.

The consultations held by PetroCanada were a requirement of the Environmental Impact Assessment process. The company's local representative was genuinely concerned to make sure that everyone who was interested could attend. In the months before the meeting he had driven around every community in the island liaising with different groups and individuals, especially in the fishing community. The latter had serious misgivings about the loss of income caused by both the disruption during the survey process and the potential artificial reef effect of the exploration rig when it arrived. This was not made easier by an erroneous radio comment by a local politician that the chase boat used in the survey was an armed vessel to warn off fishers. By the time the meeting was held this story had become common gossip. The problem facing PetroCanada staff on the presentation panel was that they had very little freedom to answer the vast majority of questions⁶⁵⁴. These questions were almost all directed at the political and economic decisions that underlay the arrangements between the company and the national government. The flailing and school Ma'am like press officer spent much of the time repeating the mantra, "we are not involved in the politics of your country" which seemed to exasperate her colleagues as much as the crowd, with several public servants gathering outside the building to swap youthful reminiscences of the black power movement. Helpful hecklers contributed shouts of, "Tief, Hitler and Mussolini!" and "The slick stuff is ole talk, dem divide and dem rule!" In short the audience was all too aware of the expectations being placed on the potential of gas revenues by the government and keen to learn what actually underlay the public pronouncements of policymakers. In a technical sense this was indeed beyond the remit of an EIA consultation, although questions about local contracts to be awarded by PetroCanda were addressed in one to one conversations with local businessmen after the derailed power point presentation was over. In a sense all of this activity was a public relations exercise, like PetroCanada's local representative's search for local projects worthy of funding. This is not to dismiss the consultation out of hand as being merely PR but rather to acknowledge that public relations in a climate where corporate social responsibility is desirable

⁶⁵⁴ This meeting took place on 5/12/06 at the Infrastructure Division HQ at Shaw Park Estate Tobago. A second meeting was held in the north eastern town of Roxborough shortly afterwards which I was unable to attend due to transport problems.

can serve eminently utilitarian ends without being insincere⁶⁵⁵. This was underlined for me a couple of months later during a chance conversation at an internet cafe with a senior PetroCanada official whom I had met previously. Following meetings with the THA he was increasingly concerned that they were, “putting their eggs in one basket... curbing unrealistic expectations is our major issue”⁶⁵⁶. The optimism amongst politicians and planners about the benefits of a gas driven economy was so out of kilter with what was possible that even the employees of the multinational involved in exploration seemed perturbed. He even went so far as to point out that even if there was a find it would be 2012 at the earliest before commercial extraction could begin and that having a plan that ended in 2010 and talked of a gas driven future was downright surreal.

The pursuit of a future based on natural gas export and a downstream IT industry utilising cheap power became the focus of THA planners and local politicians. It should be readily apparent that the economic viability of such a programme was certainly not amongst the deciding factors. What emerges is a complex language of policy that could easily be masked by a dismissal as just another example of development speak and development discourse. Yet the grammatical structure of the arguments deployed to justify the policy offers a telling insight into the intentions behind what is being said, a point hopefully underlined by the repetition of the indiscreet remarks of local political figures. This is a system of beliefs rooted firmly in

⁶⁵⁵ For an account of capitalism as a utilitarian moral system enacted through corporate social responsibility monitoring measures see, Blowfield, Michael E. and Dolan, Catherine S. Stewards of Virtue? The Ethical Dilemma of CSR in African Agriculture in *Development and Change* Vol.39 No.1 2007. The principle contention of this piece is that the limitations of CSR are the limitations of an emphasis on rationalism. This in turn is argued as being the cause of the failure to analyse the actual morality being promoted through CSR auditing systems. I would argue that it is not rationalism (as a cipher for a post modernist defined ‘Western Reason’) that is the problem but a particular logic believed to be rational by its practitioners and in this instance its critics. In the case of this consultation in Tobago the company was under no illusions as to the potential drawbacks of the approach or the utilitarian nature of its actions which indeed exceeded the minimum prescribed by local law. What this instance shows clearly is that even in a world of neoliberal morals it is individuals in the governments of even small countries that hold considerable power over corporations under certain circumstances. The difficulties of PetroCanada’s press officer in answering questions related in no small part to confidentiality clauses in the contract insisted upon by the national government of Trinidad and Tobago. A more nuanced consideration of the disjunctures between agents engaged in ethical trade might reflect on the relationship between PetroCanada’s local liaison officer, eagerly looking for ways to channel help to his local community through relationships formed with a multinational oil company, in turn eager to be seen doing the right thing but within the context of a much larger business plan. For a consideration of how such disjunctures between individuals and organisations and organisations involved in ethical commerce works see, Luetchford, Peter. *Brokering Fair Trade: Relations between Coffee Cooperatives and Alternative Trade Organizations – A view from Costa Rica* in Lewis, D and Mosse, D Eds. *Development Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Agencies* Kumarian Press Illinois 2006.

⁶⁵⁶ Interview 06/02/07

visions both of the past as well as the future. Indeed the past itself was routinely cited by public servants as a major obstacle.

The infrastructure division of the THA has been a major beneficiary of the funding increases made possible by rising oil and gas prices and increased government revenues. One senior officer in the division, generously speaking with me in bursts between a steady stream of visiting members of the public and subordinates (probably the busiest government office I visited on the island) explained the problems of negotiating this system of beliefs into action. He noted there was a distinction between the long term vision aspired to by the previous and current administrations and what resources actually allowed in practice. He pointed out that all the major works underway in the island at that time including the road from Mason Hall to Les Coteaux and the slope stabilisation programme for the windward road, were made possible by increased government revenues and expenditures. It was in his view never a question of capability but of money and staff, the latter difficulty being overcome with the addition of technical staff from the UN volunteer programme. In many ways his view mirrored those who saw broader potential for oil and gas, “there is nothing we cannot achieve at the present. There are challenges, but with access to the technology that exists we can overcome them... when you spend a million dollars in Trinidad it can be a long time before you see anything happen. Here in Tobago you spend a million dollars and you can see a project taking place within a week”. He was particularly keen to mention the move toward developing a GIS system for the island and stressed, “As soon as we get our politics sorted out you’ll see plenty of development come fast enough”⁶⁵⁷. To this individual and others there were no fundamental economic or social obstacles beyond the bickering of politicians⁶⁵⁸. This sat rather uneasily with the statement that it had been the ideas of politicians all along to pursue the programmes deemed necessary and that it had simply been money that had been the main obstacle.

The need to oil the plan and write gas into the text of policy without any guarantees seems to have been an extension of a logic of desirable progress. The public works projects that guaranteed the paved roads and IT systems that would make government and by extension

⁶⁵⁷ Interview 21/11/06

⁶⁵⁸ Indeed there were many employed by the THA who openly identified themselves as technocrats or the more euphemistic assertion that they ‘believed in institutions’. As another informant in the Tourism Division put it, “The politicians need to see the need for a policy that we need to stick with no matter which party is in power” (Interview 02/10/06). The policy itself and the logic that informed it were never actually deemed to be wrong. Society as a non negotiable object rather than a subject for discussion was at the heart of much public comment in Tobago. In this way the political character of policies and what achievements are sought through implementing them is largely obscured.

the population at large, into a regional beacon of development success were most readily funded by energy exports. Yet nominally Tobago makes no exports and so any energy driven future becomes desirable as a further impetus to separate the island's economy from that of its larger neighbour⁶⁵⁹. Further more such an economy holds out the possibility of turning away from the perceived failures of past economic activities and their reliance on inward investment and the oft derided unskilled labourers. The latter being held up as being the embodiment of what can only be seen as the wrong social values and aspirations whose long term future is to be mortgaged to a speculative vision of the future for their own eventual benefit and, in the long used parlance of civil and public servants and politicians pursuing development, their eventual upliftment.

Intention and Tradition: Branding Development

One of the most noticeable and easily critiqued aspects of global tourism is its emphasis on branding destinations as products. Critiques of tourism have frequently seized upon advertising campaigns and slogans as embodying discourses that, when deconstructed, reveal the persistence of unequal power relations between the first and third worlds⁶⁶⁰. This leads to an easy observation about the nature of becoming a destination that, "all too often the local communities visited by tourists are viewed precisely as that [destinations] – places, to be collected, as if the people who live there are either irrelevant or at best incidental to the place"⁶⁶¹. In the Caribbean, academic memories of slavery have seen the tourist industry branded as a new slavery, a renewed cycle of external exploitation, locking the countries of the region into a dependent relationship resented at every turn. So often has this been repeated by politicians and journalists throughout the industry's history, this mantra has become a truism to many commentators. This has happened despite seemingly every industry spokesperson having learnt the counter mantra of, "service not servitude"⁶⁶². The existence of a tangible and undeniable folk memory of slavery in opposition to both commercial and

⁶⁵⁹ Trinidad and Tobago is a unitary state and any goods or services produced in Tobago are counted towards national economic calculations. This practice masks the costs of communication as well as physically moving people and materials between the two islands. One of the key aspects of PRDI's founding remit was to gather reliable figures on the economy of Tobago as distinct from the economy of Trinidad. The question of course is what might be intended by such a distinction.

⁶⁶⁰ For a discussion in this vein see Mowforth, Martin and Munt Ian. *Tourism and Sustainability: Development and the New Tourism in the Third World 2nd* Ed. Routledge London 2006

⁶⁶¹ Ibid p211 This quotation introduces a discussion of authenticity, impact and the clumsy academic neologism zooification. These questions will be considered in tighter focus in Chapter 6.

⁶⁶² The regularity with which this phrase is used even by ex employees of the industry in government, private sector or NGO work was surprisingly well rehearsed. Indeed one official in the Tourism Division actually ticked off his fingers as he noted, "with international tourism there is also the issue of servitude, dispossession, plantations, the like". Interview 20/08/06

government tourism brands has become a key concept in many studies of the Caribbean⁶⁶³. In amidst this rush to denounce tourism as a specific form of undesirable activity the actual nature of branding and its place in policy rarely gets mentioned. This is not to deny that questions of ownership, identity and working practices are entwined, but rather to add that they are totally entwined beliefs in turn entwined with many others each with its own complex story.

Branding exercises and their slogans are actually a lot more than marketing hyperbole. They can and do reveal specific intentions in policy that in the case of Tobago are not wholly compatible with the industry they seem ostensibly to serve. They also reveal people as very active agents both in design and interpretation⁶⁶⁴. Yet it is how brands are entwined within the broader beliefs surrounding environment, economy and society in development policy in Tobago that makes them fascinating. The slogan of 'Clean, Green, Safe and Serene' beams out from every document and sign in Tobago that can feasibly be made to accommodate it and a few that possibly cannot. Is this slogan a signifier that the THA plans to make the island's tourist industry sustainable and environmentally sound? If so, is this in the same way that the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations sought to do for slave grown cotton and sugar, by laying down the boundaries of the Main Ridge Forest Reserve that dominates the landscape of Tobago?

On my first visit to the PRDI I tried to obtain a copy of the current development plan only to be told that a torn and stained copy of the glossy volume was the only one in the office at the time and that it was going nowhere. Part way through the conversation the public servant with whom I was speaking jabbed at the cover and said, "You see a document like this, Clean Green Safe Serene the Capital of Paradise? What message is that sending to foreign buyers? It looks like a real estate advertisement"⁶⁶⁵. Certainly this statement was in keeping with the academic critique with which I had been primed by over a year of preliminary readings. It was to be

⁶⁶³ Recently see especially, Pattullo, Polly. *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean 2nd* Ed. Latin American Bureau London 2005, Sheller, Mimi. *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* Routledge London 2003. Largely because of V.S. Naipaul's use of the phrase the 'New Slavery' in *The Middle Passage* (London 1962) and his towering presence in studies of Caribbean writings, this perspective has been particularly attractive to scholars of literature. A noteworthy example of this polemical approach to the industry's impact and intentions (Naipaul's thinly veiled disdain for anything as common as merely going on holiday rarely being noted) can be found in Strachan, Ian Gregory. *Paradise and Plantation: Tourism and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean* University of Virginia Press Charlottesville and London 2002

⁶⁶⁴ For a nuanced study of marketing and publicity Trinidad's domestic industrial economy see Miller, Daniel *Capitalism an Ethnographic Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad* Approach Berg 1997

⁶⁶⁵ Interview 3/10/06

several months before I finally obtained a copy of the document to scrutinise. Yet when I did sit down to read the document I noticed that chapter 2 of volume 2 entitled 'Branding Tobago – Clean, Green, Safe and Serene' was not what I had expected after that initial encounter. Indeed after listening to more government employees its contents came as no surprise⁶⁶⁶. There was not a single direct reference to the tourist industry in the five pages of text. Three challenges are presented that outline the basis for seeking a branded image for Tobago. The first refers to a, "negative self image among some Tobagonians" engendered by the perceived developmental superiority of Trinidad. Then there is the view that, "The image of a Tobago that is forever dependent on the Treasury in Port of Spain" is hardwired into the national policy agenda and that Tobago is not viewed as a potential net contributor to the national economy. The closing challenge notes that the previous conditions act to make, "any such possibility consciousness of a dynamic Tobago economy", unlikely and makes central government hostile to the big push style investments in infrastructure and capacity building outlined in earlier chapters. The preceding statement does not have the ring of a tourist brochure even if the slogan to which it relates appears on the brochures⁶⁶⁷. The process of branding in Tobago, despite a qualifying claim that the process should be above partisan politics, is an innately political one and bears the distinctive hallmarks of a specific set of intentions and interpretations as to what the concept of development means for many in the island. This equates with the constant stance of informants who championed road paving even on unsuitable and underutilised stretches. It also called to mind a frequent occurrence waiting by the road for a route taxi into Scarborough when, after a third or fourth full vehicle had sailed past I muttered that it was quicker to walk the forty minutes into town and heard a school girl mutter, "I ent walkin, that for poor people"⁶⁶⁸. When pressed about why a particular event had or had not happened, some public servants would respond with comment along the lines of, "Our development is slow slow, but maybe one day we will get there. It is what we call the Third World you know that? A developing country beg my pardon"⁶⁶⁹. From the perspective of the THA, branding was less about marketing and more about a psychological

⁶⁶⁶ By this time I had also become acquainted with the scepticism of local environmentalists who interpreted the slogan as little better than greenwash and rank hypocrisy.

⁶⁶⁷ PRDI *A Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago 2006-2010* PRDI 2005:114. It should be noted that the minutes of the workshops held by the consultants who designed the slogan show the consultants to have been keen advocates of ecotourism. This vigour appears to have been consigned to the appendix rather than the text itself.

⁶⁶⁸ The first time I came across this phenomenon was on a drive into town with PetroCanda's liaison officer. He was reminiscing about walking to school along the beach before the esplanade in Scarborough was built and when I asked about the odd looks I got walking I was told that "nobody walks, even the short way to the village school". Late in fieldwork I was told by a neighbour that I'd been dubbed Mr Walk for my peculiar behaviour.

⁶⁶⁹ Interview 2/10/06

achievement of development. From projects to plans it became apparent that there was not a mindless policy discourse but that the brand was one more expression of what was deemed desirable progress and the tourist industry was conspicuously absent.

An analysis of Tobago's branding exercise from the perspective of long running critiques of tourism branding is more than a little problematic. Clean, Green, Safe and Serene: The Capital of Paradise has all the hallmarks that leave it open to this brochure analysis approach. Most crucially of all it contains the magical moniker of paradise that is so rich and tempting in its potential discursive associations⁶⁷⁰. It is just a short step from here to the well established grammatical convention in Caribbean studies of making moral assertions about economic activities through the metaphors of plantations. Something that achieved some degree of global attention when deployed in broader development studies by the New World Group in the 1960s⁶⁷¹. Yet the branding exercise actually appeared to have very little at all to do with the tourist industry whose representatives frequently bemoaned a lack of government intervention on their behalf⁶⁷². Indeed many of those I interviewed in the public service were highly sceptical about the potential of many tourist enterprises and the ethos under which they were run. Tourism was championed by officials and politicians only in so far as it could be used as a symbol of national distinction from Trinidad. Others simply saw it as immaterial to their work or believed that the rural economy of the island needed a far more balanced approach than guest houses arts and crafts and tour guiding⁶⁷³.

As a result of a history oil driven central government expenditures Tobago certainly has not come to depend on tourism in the way other countries in the region like Antigua Barbuda and Barbados do. The case of whether national branding equates to a form of tourism advertising is none the less intriguing if not universally applicable. Making the assumption that the slogan adopted is directly and predominantly associated with tourism is the result of a particular logic of analysis. By pursuing one line of moral intent, exposing the iniquities of service sector employment in the Caribbean, it becomes possible that another is being obscured. The challenges identified in the branding exercise alone speak of intentions very different to what a simple focus on the slogan alone might reveal. In the case of Tobago these reveal long running themes in local politics both public and institutional. The politics of planning in Tobago

⁶⁷⁰ A notable usage of this metaphor lies in the title of Taylor, Frank Fonda. *To Hell With Paradise: A History of the Jamaican Tourist Industry*. University of Pittsburgh Press Pittsburgh and London 1993

⁶⁷¹ See Ibid for a chapter entitled 'Ratooning the Plantation' in which the concepts surrounding tourism and sugar cultivation are so suggestively combined.

⁶⁷² Interview with Hotelier 25/04/07

⁶⁷³ Essentially the formula proposed by consultants in the North East Management plan

and the need to make it more than a simply technocratic exercise have been concerns since the aftermath of Hurricane Flora if not before. The failure of that plan raised many questions about assumptions that had underpinned pre independence policy decisions. From then onwards plans have noted that the image of the future projected by policymakers must to some extent match the aspirations of those who are the subject of the plan⁶⁷⁴. Whether this makes the policy any more feasible to implement is a moot point, it has become the reasoning that has been adopted by public servants within the THA and is loudly advocated by local politicians. The grammatical arrangement of beliefs in the Tobago branding exercise therefore reveals the intentions of planners and politicians as well as what they believe to be public aspirations. The branding exercise is an attempt to capture the essence of a desirable future and not in any way evidence of a discursive effort to serve the interests of a vocal sector of the economy. Brand Tobago may well be a wasteful exercise in hyperbole but the nature of that exercise can only be discerned by examining the traditions of belief that inform it rather than believing in traditional methods of interpretation.

The question that remains when thumbing through the pages of the development plan and scanning through interview notes and observations is the conundrum of what paradise is actually being proposed? Tobago's development plan is founded on beliefs in a series of mythological objects. Foremost is the relative economic power of neighbouring Trinidad and the view that this has contributed to dependency and self denigration in the smaller sister isle. The solution is simply put across that it is necessary to acquire this power and harness it in more responsible ways. The measure of this is just how green it can be.

Local government environmentalism is not drawn from a global pool of ecological sentimentality but rather a desire to do something externally and internally perceptible as a general good. Also present is a sense of national decline especially in relation to crime. This takes the form of an all prevailing sense of rampant criminality, from which Tobago at least stands some hope of isolating itself, provided it adheres to other aspects of a moral future. To accomplish this goal the plan speaks of a quasi religious sense of transformation: "the psychological shift that can motivate the population to embark on the transformative role that is required of it"⁶⁷⁵. As usual it appears to be the behaviour of the young and the poor that is most in need of correction in order to make utopia a reality. Development may be a spiritual duty but it is a very particular sense of duty.

⁶⁷⁴ A point forcefully made regarding the failure of agricultural rehabilitation in Nunes, F.E. A Ministry and its Community: Tobago – A Case Study in Participation *Social and Economic Affairs* Vol.23 No.2 1974

⁶⁷⁵ PRDI A *Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago 2006-2010* PRDI 2005:117

Even if a sense of spiritual obligation is avowedly secular it still constitutes a logic than can readily be made to abrogate the necessity of any fundamental material change. A secular spiritualism can also be a logic that demands specific material changes in order to facilitate the psychological transformations that it demands of its subjects. Herein lies the conception of government as an emancipator of sorts, an antidote to private sector failures and rampant misdeeds, a custodian of land and people alike. In policy documents from Tobago there is a sincere conviction that the island's other inhabitants believe the same to be true and that the plan is an aspirational document for the public as a whole⁶⁷⁶. It is in this sense that brand Tobago should be regarded. It is the actual practice of such an aspirational moral logic that will produce the intended concept of paradise. The particular morality that informs policy in Tobago, when believed and implemented can and has produced outcomes that have had far reaching implications for people and the landscape in which they live, not all of them intentional.

Living CEPEP: The Moral Constitution of Welfare and Environment

Landscape management in Tobago and in Trinidad has some unusual features when looked at alongside many studies of environment and development. This is most apparent in the role of welfare provision. Before and after independence most Anglophone Caribbean countries have had some form of welfare provision. Since independence Trinidad and Tobago has had several different types of project under a bewildering number of acronyms most commonly remembered as the DEWD programme and the crash works aimed at relieving unemployment during the last oil boom. This programme has been replaced by the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) and the later Community Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) initiated in 2001. Both programmes get only cursory mentions in the development plan itself most likely because they have proved somewhat impolitic for government to associate with too closely.

Nationally both of these programmes have been considerably maligned by national media and opposition politicians. The main cause of this has been the alleged blatant connections

⁶⁷⁶ This is perhaps one crucial difference from pre independence plans which were far less ambiguous about the motives for a need to transform public morals than those drafted in the second half of the 20th Century. This ambiguity is not because the former were colonial in a moral sense that they were inherently and morally wrong but in the sense that colonial planners simply felt themselves to be under a different set of obligations (even when goals were apparently similar) that were far more globally orientated, especially in the post war period. The moral logics of empire in this sense differed significantly from the moral logics of independent states in the Caribbean (or as in Tobago where many believed that true independence had been deferred).

between the projects and organised crime, especially in the East West corridor of Trinidad and Port of Spain, as well as allegations of overt political favouritism in awarding places on the programmes. The cause of this connection largely stems from the programme being administered by a government agency awarding contracts to businesses, who in turn provide the services and administer project funds⁶⁷⁷. The competition for these contracts is frequently alleged to be a cause of many gang related shootings involving project workers and contractors alike. Government's concern to be seen as committed to private sector involvement in services appears to many to have created a situation where those in poverty frequently shoot each other for meagre benefits payments whilst others take the profits.

In Tobago this has not been the case. Although both programmes are controlled by the central government they are administered in Tobago by the THA with varying degrees of control in relation to Port of Spain. The THA has allowed the administration to remain in house in both cases. Both programmes are noticeable features of life throughout the island, URP workers are employed in the maintenance of secondary roads, drains and also some public construction work. CEPEP workers maintain roadside verges and small parks. The overwhelming majority of recipients are resident in the north east of the island. The projects are routinely criticised by media commentators, private sector bodies and opposition politicians for wasting public money, contributing to an island wide labour shortage and damaging ecologically fragile areas of the island in various ways.

Despite these criticisms the directors and staff of these government projects are broadly optimistic about their role. The principal goal of URP is vocational training, with a higher weekly allowance being allotted to those who undertake a structured training programme rather than the normal fortnightly cycles of work⁶⁷⁸. CEPEP staff seemed to deploy its environmental label as a badge signifying a wider national role than employment training and take its beautification remit very much to heart despite widespread public cynicism⁶⁷⁹. These

⁶⁷⁷ With URP this is the Ministry of Local Government and with CEPEP it was at the time of fieldwork the Sewage and Solid Waste Management Company (SWMCOL). In 2008 CEPEP was transferred to a dedicated government owned company.

⁶⁷⁸ The training component of URP is heavily orientated towards construction work and focuses on concrete working skills, welding and also furniture making and carpentry. Construction work is a major part of the island's economy either in direct government projects, for contractors employed on these projects or in the construction and maintenance of hotels, villas and private residences. The latter, once often communally constructed in return for intricate village level exchanges of goods, services and obligations, are now predominantly paid and normally commercial jobs.

⁶⁷⁹ The Vision Statement of CEPEP Tobago (provided on a small specially prepared fact sheet for a local NGO considering collaboration with CEPEP) reads, "To create a country unified in its goals. To protect the environment through mobilizing community efforts, to build National awareness and pride in how

two programmes have slightly different methods of administration which impact on their operation. URP is attached to the Infrastructure Division of the THA in a slightly ad hoc way, with ring fenced funds being provided by central government in the island's budget allocation. THA officials do have an option to increase funding for the programme if needed and fund additional expenses like unforeseen equipment purchases but this convoluted process involving the contingency fund is rarely (if ever) used. This arrangement is rumoured to have created a degree of resentment between central government and the THA who feel they do not own the programme⁶⁸⁰. CEPEP by contrast has no such difficulties, although a national programme, it has been placed under the executive remit of the THA Division of Health and Social Services. From their impact on people and environment to their place in gossip and comment, both programmes are revealing in regard to how and why the landscape of Tobago is being directly and indirectly transformed through the enactment of policy.

At the heart of the criticisms levelled at welfare programmes in Trinidad and Tobago are many persistent beliefs about the subjects of race, class, labour and public morals. These beliefs also reveal a great deal about ideas relating to environmental stewardship and the control and use of property. It is a system of belief that I encountered from village gossips to major business figures, journalists, activists and government officials. Early in my fieldwork I was driving with a local amateur historian who bemoaned the state of people's mindset in Tobago muttering of CEPEP, "patronage was more important with them [the THA] than helping people to do well for themselves"⁶⁸¹. At the beginning of the following month the former Chief Secretary of the THA was on the national morning news bemoaning the CEPEP programme and suggested that CEPEP was a PNM tool that encouraged, "a state of reversion to laziness"⁶⁸². This similarity

we treat and use our natural resources; to ensure future generations and also enjoy a healthy and beautiful Trinidad and Tobago". With its capitalised Nation this is rather different in intention to the snappy unofficial motto and alternative reading of the organisations acronym adopted by the URP Director "Useful, Relevant and Productive". By providing an alternative reading of the programme's initials this motto attempts to confront some of the accusations levelled at welfare programmes (Interview 17/11/06).

⁶⁸⁰ There was also deemed to be a, "conflict of a personal nature" between the then minister of local government (himself from Tobago) and certain assembly figures. This was considered to be the major reason for a lack of THA initiatives in developing the URP programme in the island and knowledge of this dispute, although seemingly an ill kept secret, was deemed highly sensitive and potentially career threatening by informants.

⁶⁸¹ More a series of casual chats and introductions arranged by a key informant than an actual interview as such 17/08/06

⁶⁸² This broadcast on CCN6 (not the Tobago Channel 5 news) was an interview between Hochoy Charles and former Tobago East MP turned T.V. talk show host, Morgan Job. Job certainly prompted Charles somewhat as part of his tendency to push a personal politics of what might be generously called an extreme conservatism. UWI academic and PNM friendly political commentator Selwyn Ryan more bluntly referred to Job as a, "social Darwinist par excellence and the darling of the establishment". Ryan,

between current critiques of welfare and past critiques of African reversion so commonplace in pre independence reports was hammered home to me a few weeks later. Outside a village parlour I encountered a small business owner, originally from Trinidad and a proudly self defined East Indian⁶⁸³ whom I had spoken with a few times. He drew my attention to the group of CEPEP workers and proceeded, somewhat the worse for rum, to attempt to enlist my help in reintroducing slavery to Tobago to inculcate a more vigorous work ethic. I tried to deflect this as tactfully as possible, resulting in a state of mutual exasperation, “Won’t you just look at dem lazy nigger women sitting by the road drunk?”, he yelled, “but you’re standing in the road drunk”, I replied as genially as the situation allowed, “But at least I’m standing, that’s what I’m talking about”⁶⁸⁴ he slurred and reeled away leaving myself and a number of onlookers more puzzled than anything else.

Aggressive early morning drunks don’t make the best informants but this exchange opened my eyes to the way that ideas about labour are shaped not so much by a literal historical legacy but in beliefs about what such a legacy might signify. Similarly I recall a white Trinidadian informant bemoaning the racism of her fellow countrymen before noting that, “Africans have a really different attitude to work than us”. I frequently noted black Tobagonian

Selwyn. *The Muslimeen Grab for Power: Race Religion and Revolution in Trinidad and Tobago* Imprint Caribbean Ltd Trinidad 1991:202. Job certainly projects this image in his relentless assault on what he perceives as the influences of Marxism and Africanism amongst a UWI educated intelligentsia. Job’s rants against a perception of perceived wisdom drew the attention of the anthropologist Daniel Miller through one of Job’s passionate defences of the slave trade. Miller, carefully distancing himself from Job’s actual remarks, suggests they indicate that “within Trinidad the discussion of economics is established within the parameters of capitalism understood as successfully applied market theory”. I would dispute this for the simple reason that it overlooks the logic of Job’s actual argument in order to impute the significance Miller seems intent on seeing. Job’s intention as in many other works and public statements (including an obsequious performance at UWI alongside the equally opinionated Vidia Naipaul, the latter’s brief homecoming to Trinidad coinciding with my fieldwork) is to contest the moral basis of economic policy. Arguing that the poor have only themselves to blame, should refrain from breeding and be glad their ancestors were enslaved, has very little to do with economic theory except in so far that economic theory is an articulation of how a society should function. The morality that Job seeks to project is one deeply entangled in the history of how regional economic activities have been interpreted. The framing of Job’s language is reflective of the grammatical conventions of how that history is morally interpreted by academics describing the concepts of labour, property and capitalism, at least in so far as it inverts the intent of those conventions. Miller’s conclusion to this section of his own work rather underlines the way that discussions of economics are firstly and fore mostly about the public performance of morality in relation to grammatical conventions of interpretation, “The situation [capitalism in Trinidad] is only relatively benign: relative to the harshness and cruelty that preceded it as the norm of commerce, and I fear relative to what pure capitalism may yet engender in Trinidad”. See Miller, Daniel. *Capitalism: An Ethnographic Approach Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad* Berg Oxford 1997:325-329. The collected thoughts of Morgan Job can be found in a volume entitled, *Think Again: Essays on Race and Political Economy* Alkebu Industries Co. Ltd. Trinidad 1991 2nd Ed. 2004

⁶⁸³ East Indian is the term historically used to describe indentured labourers from the subcontinent and their descendants. It is deemed both archaic and unpalatable in educated circles in Trinidad and Tobago but remains in widespread common usage (as in this instance of self identification).

⁶⁸⁴ The notes of what was said in this incident are dated 19/10/06

businesspeople blaming the laziness of local young men on workfare schemes, “oil money”, and a disregard for the past. Often these explanations concluded with a frustrated remark that a revolution like 1970 or 1990 was the answer.

The dedicated Tobago news channel’s breakfast show saw the articulation of often recurring conspiracy theories. One presenter claimed that the UNC had signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child some years previously as part of a wider international plot. This plot was concocted by white rich countries and local Indians as part of a plan to remove the cane from schools and deprive young African men of a form of physical motivation needed, “on account o’ we slave past”. This was certainly not a view shared by many journalists and I recall a conversation with one about this broadcast a few days later. He was highly critical of this tendency to eschew the facts found amongst some journalists. Yet the alternative argument that he put forward carried many similar hallmarks. In his view Tobagonians were afflicted with a lack of creativity caused by a combination of past production for export encouraged before independence and the country’s insignificance in the global labour market ever since. Curiously he gave examples of poverty in Central America claiming that Tobagonians had their creativity stifled by government. He remarked that the sense of achievement given by the removal of the state safety net and the need to pursue personal enterprise would make Tobago, “like Guatemala [where] the people are happy jolly and smiling”⁶⁸⁵. As an enthusiastic supporter of the local carnival and musical arts he saw this need to focus on creativity as paramount. Government plans also espouse a similar rhetoric that creative zeal is a magical ingredient that has been stifled by the history of the Caribbean⁶⁸⁶. Indeed the argument in Tobago is often rarely one about laziness per say, as my informant had it, the creative exploitation of loopholes in works programmes was a sign of the latent intelligence of poor people. Yet all this assumes that the removal of the welfare programmes would somehow catalyse a break with a presumed history of under achievement and dependency. Key phrases in the language of national ambition to be sure, but often at odds with the economic reality of the present as well as the past⁶⁸⁷.

⁶⁸⁵ Interview 11/04/07

⁶⁸⁶ A sentiment famously espoused by V.S. Naipaul in *The Mimic Men* amongst other works.

⁶⁸⁷ In the 1970s the Williams government had implemented DEWD and various crash projects to assuage concerns that the poorest in the country were being left behind by existing policies. Faced with the popular support of the Black Power demonstrators the government took expedient action. The programmes were similar to those used in Tobago after Hurricane Flora when the formal private sector effectively ceased to exist.

A mythology of poverty had come into being in Tobago through the pursuit of several desirable futures and the rejection of various undesirable pasts. All of the racially charged descriptions of labour questions and economic activities that populate sections of my fieldwork notes have common themes. Each individual is often explaining something highly personal about what they value and why they think it is the most desirable way forwards for the island where they live. If you believe in the undesirable colonial past, remain proud of the achievements of independence, the celebration of locally authentic festivals, community and music (and are a university educated self made man with a successful business), then there is a strong chance you'll argue the point similarly to the journalist described above. On the other hand a crack addict, hustling tourists in the south west for a few pieces of poorly carved coconut husk (worked with a prominently displayed Stanley knife), living a life of petty crime against a backdrop of low level violence and daily verbal and physical abuse it's easy to remark, "we movin two ways and I gettin' left one side and dem de udder"⁶⁸⁸. There is not a great deal of difference between the journalist's impression of happy, motivated Guatemalans selling oranges from a bag to passers by and the pieces of carved coconut husk. It's a question of what being enterprising actually gets you and for many in Tobago the answer is not a great deal.

It is the belief in particular moralities seen to constitute genuine development that drives the policies of public and private sector bodies and unites their mutual critique. Public cultural events frequently involve speeches that draw together contradictory exhortations to self reliance and mutual interdependence as part of the spectacle. Such events seem designed to give the impression that creativity is a desirable good, inseparable from a legitimate definition of community. In this context beliefs about creativity are a final bastion for a desirable concept of community that is all too frequently refuted by daily experience⁶⁸⁹.

⁶⁸⁸ Interview 20/08/06

⁶⁸⁹ In the case of the journalist already described he frequently exhorted the importance of traditional institutions for co-operation. The late J.D. Elder who had institutionalised this conception of community and island culture through the Tobago Heritage festival wrote many times of these West Indian cultural forms, their African roots and their Tobagonian uniqueness. In an extreme form of cultural relativism Elder decided to allot each village on the island a specific culture which he claimed to have discovered through forty years of ethnography. In practice this led to some villages preparing dances for the festival whilst others like Moriah were deemed especially proficient at raucous wedding celebrations or Obeah practice (spooky stories for the festival) in the case of Les Coteaux. Elder is often praised by those who remember him for his insistence on cultural authenticity. He even went so far as to regularly admonish and berate Spiritual Baptists and Orisha practioners for not using proper Yoruba drumming patterns and failing to pronounce African words correctly (Laitinen 2002:71). There are pitfalls to a literal belief in culture, one of my informants had imported a sound system from the U.S.A. and told me that it was a local tradition to rely on others to oversee each stage of transshipment between islands. His sound

The programme directors of CEPEP and URP and their staff were under few illusions about the operation of their projects. When I drew attention to low rates of productivity by programme workers that were the source of so much negative publicity, both men said that the programme's critics should think about what would happen if they didn't exist. Despite this neither scheme is immune from the need to perform public morals. Those at the URP programme referred to a distinction between the unemployed and the unemployable. The former they believed could be helped through the project's training schemes. The latter were divided between young men with criminal records and young women with large families⁶⁹⁰. In the case of CEPEP the focus was even more heavily on women⁶⁹¹. Both schemes tailored the way they operated to suit the circumstances of project recipients. This was predominantly directed towards women and was largely unofficial. This was also reflected in many of the criticisms about the project's impact on the local labour market. As the figures show they account for a small percentage of the working population and are predominantly focused in the north east of the island away from the main employment centres of the south west⁶⁹². In making various adjustments to project hours there is an explicit recognition that the programmes often operate in a way that supplements the livelihoods of those on very low incomes⁶⁹³. Both projects often had requests from local businesses for workers that often assumed that much larger numbers were on the programmes than was the case. In reference to these requests a CEPEP official remarked, "there is a misconception that we actually have workers... they think there is a pool of available labour that simply doesn't exist"⁶⁹⁴. Yet this approach often created distortions, for example, women being directed away from what was deemed excessive manual labour in agriculture. Even as welfare programmes are critiqued by public moralising about laziness and labour they also promote other forms of public morality⁶⁹⁵.

system had not made it onto the Tobago ferry and his trusted contact remained incommunicado in Port of Spain. In his view a sign of declining morals and eroding traditions which only affirmed his belief to stand by them in the future.

⁶⁹⁰ The total number of recipients for URP is 1300 persons of whom 500 are on the women's programme

⁶⁹¹ CEPEP has 536 recipients in Tobago of whom 441 are women. As with URP the figures are not routinely published but the rosters are easily obtained and can be checked by comparing the figures for each district team with those on actual work sites.

⁶⁹² CEPEP total figures encompass other projects not exclusively connected to CEPEP. For example The Training Programme in organic Herb and Spice farming in Charlotteville involves 23 CEPEP workers.

⁶⁹³ When interpreted another way this equates to the frequent complaints that people on URP and especially CEPEP are often working from 7am to 10am

⁶⁹⁴ Interview 16/04/07

⁶⁹⁵ It should be noted that one project referred to involved potential workers clearing land on a cocoa plot which was in the words of one project worker, "almost like a cliff" like much of Tobago's cocoa districts in the north east. The argument about not using predominantly female CEPEP workers on this

As is suggested by the vision statements of the respective schemes, they promote specific forms of moral desirability, a vision of community co-operation and labour for welfare are certainly paramount. They also promote a particular vision of the landscape as a whole as is explicit in the name and remit of CEPEP. At the beginning of my fieldwork, when I was in the process of moving from guest house to apartment, I spent an evening at the home of an informant who had offered to help me move my bags in his brother's car. His wife asked where I was moving to and I told her. With a sharp intake of breath she remarked that the land around there was overgrown and you could see nothing but bush. Her husband interjected, "that's how they like things". I didn't give the remark another thought until some months later in the dry season when I was trying to make sense out of the annual epidemic of wild fires in the island.

I was at the offices of Environment Tobago the main environmental NGO when a director, dropping by the office, began to complain that CEPEP workers had burned a key strip of littoral woodland that shielded a turtle nesting beach from the lights of a nearby road. CEPEP workers were adamant that it was not them although the Wildlife Division and ET thought otherwise (with the head of the former making exasperated comments to the local media). I asked a CEPEP official a few weeks later about the incident and he denied it flatly mentioning that on that day several government agencies had been working in the Courland Bay area as well as private landscaping contractors not to mention that CEPEP never burnt anything especially in dry season without a permit. Then he added, "But what I will say is that that whole area was a haven for bandits. The communities we are working with to empower and improve are at risk as well as the tourists who are getting robbed out there. By clearing out all the bamboo and the bush we have created transparency so that when you can see the community the community can see you and we get none of that type of thing"⁶⁹⁶. It occurred to me as well that many informants, including those employed in the supposedly eco-friendly Tourism Division, had referred to anywhere outside the vicinity of Scarborough and the sprawl around Store Bay and the airport as 'the bush' as if it were another planet rather than a short walk away⁶⁹⁷. CEPEP's activities may not have tallied with some people's interpretations of what constituted Clean, Green, Safe and Serene but that slogan was precisely the thinking that

small farm took into account the fact that there was no appropriate PPE available and that recipients have only their own clothes.

⁶⁹⁶ Interview 16/04/07

⁶⁹⁷ I asked one Tourism Division employee about land use and planning in the south west and the lack of development controls and he responded that much of it was derelict bush, "like the wasteland around by the Hilton" (Interview 20/08/06) I got a similar response when I asked a press officer if they knew the best way to contact the Forestry and Wildlife Divisions.

informed the actions of the programme. Landscaping road verges may lead the business community in particular and the public at large to mutter that CEPEP pay old women to paint rocks and sleep by the roadside, but it is an integral part of the idea of environment held by certain officials. This idea of environment conveniently dovetails with concerns about community cohesion and the need for welfare to be conditional upon labour. In this instance environmental enhancement was not aimed at addressing ecological concerns but addressing a particular conception of environmental concerns associated with particular beliefs about how criminals behave⁶⁹⁸.

The involvement of CEPEP in schemes to landscape the Cove Eco Industrial Estate site also speaks volumes about the role of workfare programmes in helping to shape the morally desirable landscape envisioned in policy documents. The question of how this interacts with beliefs about the past and how they should or should not inform the actions of the present is starkly illustrated by the SuSu lands scheme. Begun under the previous administration, the project was designed to increase local landownership through co-operative purchase. The project was hailed by at least one distinguished Caribbean anthropologist as an overdue triumph for indigenous invention and creativity⁶⁹⁹. The project failed for a variety of reasons, not least the failure of prospective members to make payments. It was taken back into public

⁶⁹⁸ This sense that walking into the bush was a sign of immoral tendencies or a place where such people are encountered was widespread. Attacks on tourists at beauty spots frequently drew parlour comments about what do people, especially women expect in such surroundings? One informant gestured to a group of scantily clad local teenagers cutting through the piece of woodland at Courland that CEPEP burnt and muttered, "See dem girls? They ought to be careful going off like that. It isn't safe or right". I had a neighbour who was deeply intrigued by my habit of traipsing down agricultural traces and chatting to aging part time farmers and the odd hunter. She remained firmly convinced that I would be murdered if I carried on that way. My partner had to contend with frequent invitations into the bush on the grounds that tourists are that kind of girl. On one occasion she was protected by the lady who ran the village general store who pointed out to the ardent young man, "She my neighbour and a customer not a damn tourist so leave her alone". The implication of these remarks seemed to be that tourists remained fair game. Crime against tourists in Tobago overwhelmingly occurs in rented accommodation such as villas or on popular beaches (something borne out by an increasingly strongly worded FCO travel advisory). Those attacked in isolated areas have often either had their routines observed (some assailants watch from roadside cover for the tell tale R plates on rental vehicles) or have made indiscrete comments about their plans to people they do not know.

⁶⁹⁹ "Finally, an eighth direction for research is the institution of susu land currently being created in Trinidad and Tobago. With this new mode of indigenous development, in the society where Herskovits and Herskovits (1947) first identified the Caribbean ROSCA, we come full circle to the theoretical debate about African cultural retentions and Caribbean cultural creativity. Susu land is being created nearly five hundred years after African slaves were first brought to the Caribbean region. This suggests the active use of African symbols to create Caribbean institutions, rather than passive cultural survivals; the symbol of Yoruba esusu may have been so used to create Caribbean ROSCAs". Besson, Jean. Women's use of ROSCAs in the Caribbean: Reassessing the literature from Ardener, Shirley. & Burman, Sandra. Eds. *Money Go Rounds: The Importance of Rotating Savings & Credit Associations for Women* Berg Oxford 1995:281

ownership as state lands and is now a CEPEP community park. The project had in different ways and guises served the needs to perform a specific historically rooted morality of development. When a CEPEP official remarked, “the more projects we do the more people will see what CEPEP has done for the community. Then they will be living CEPEP all around them”, he was making a serious point. Even if this comment would probably elicit groans of exasperation from the critics of the programme it reveals, along with the SuSu example, that conscious policy decisions, inspired by sincere beliefs, inform the invention of culture and community⁷⁰⁰. The case in point reveals how ideas about ideal landscapes in Tobago are informed by beliefs about desirable definitions of behavioural norms, community and worthwhile labour.

The Village of Germans: Land, Land Use and Identity

The issue of foreign land ownership has been circulating in Tobago since at least the 1950s when David L. Niddrie noted the formal and informal efforts of the warden’s office to reform land tenures and control tourism developments⁷⁰¹. The large land acquisitions made by central government and later the THA have partly reflected similar attitudes to securing property as a means of controlling desirable economic developments and favouring preferred forms of labour. In Tobago foreign land transactions began to emerge after the Central Government, trying to secure foreign investment under the terms of a structural adjustment package, repealed the Foreign and Aliens Land Holding Act in 1990 and replaced it with the foreign

⁷⁰⁰ This relates to the way government requires welfare to be perceived by the public. Both the CEPEP and URP programmes are reckoned to turn a profit through the sale of services to other arms of government and community groups. Despite the desire of officials in both programmes to publicise that in Tobago at least they have the potential to fund themselves, the reception from politicians has been lukewarm. This is partly to avoid accusations of unfair competition but also, I suspect, because of a view that unemployment training and relief are essentially altruistic and welfare should not be seen as a viable business. After all it wouldn’t be welfare if it could be made to pay. This view stands in contrast to an expatriate business figure who remarked that CEPEP and URP were part of a government desire to see young men as workshy criminals, “some of my best workers are bla... I mean Afro-Caribbean men. They want to work themselves out of poverty but they just don’t know how and it’s through (His NGO) that we are trying to achieve this through providing people with the skills they need to get on” he protested, before adding, “I grew up in [ex British colony] and that’s just how these societies are especially a little place like this where everybody wants to be Prime Minister or whatever the whole time. I think you just need to look at the public sector here where they are employing close to half the workforce to do nothing in particular and it just isn’t sustainable. I mean we’re being told that there is unemployment but then we can’t get labour. It’s the government that’s driving the problem and they need to see that, because the oil and gas is going to run out in twenty years and there will be no economy to go to if we don’t diversify [into tourism]”. Everyone sees welfare as perpetuating or promoting some aspect of wider beliefs about labour and identity. In the case of this remark sustainability is used as a measure of the desirability of a particular future as much as a statement about the viability of that future.

⁷⁰¹ See Chapter 4

Investment Act⁷⁰². In the years since the legislative change there has been a growing unease surrounding the impact of the act on land ownership and attitudes to land. Accusations of malpractice by attorneys, buyers, sellers and realtors have been rife with many perceiving a rise in speculative investment to have contributed to sharply rising land prices in Tobago. The previous THA administration even went so far as to launch a crackdown on foreign nationals who had violated immigration requirements. The main targets of this were German residents, the appellation 'German' being used interchangeably with that of foreigner in Tobago, as Germans made up a noticeable proportion of the foreign land transactions in the early to mid 1990s. Graffiti denouncing foreign sales of land and the presence of foreigners in general was a visible characteristic of Tobago's capital Scarborough and in several villages on the island.

Throughout the period of my fieldwork, the single most burning political issue in Tobago, one which cut across and drew upon all others, was the question of foreign land ownership. The Tobago Chamber of Commerce, the THA administration, the national government, opposition parties and private citizens all threw about statistics and accusations. Many of my informants, as well as local newspaper correspondents, were concerned about the hostile atmosphere these exchanges were beginning to generate. Aggressive nationalism and xenophobia are far from the common traits often associated with West Indian life by ethnographers. Instead the tendency is to see cultural heterogeneity and openness as the distinctive features of a region perceived to lie at the heart of modernity⁷⁰³. Yet it is precisely this language that is all too

⁷⁰² The new act allowed non nationals to purchase up to 5 acres for commercial development and up to 1 acre for residential use.

⁷⁰³ A recent study of Revival in Jamaica makes an explicit assertion of this position that draws on the work of Sidney Mintz, Peter J Wilson and Jean Besson, Wardle, Huon. A Groundwork for West Indian Cultural Openness in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* Vol. 13 No. 3 2007. This paper makes an attempt to show West Indian cultural openness as a spiritual system of belief rather than the product of what it denotes a loaded historical trajectory. The problem lies in its assertions about the absence of sectarianism and moral absolutes. Drawing on census statistics in Kingstown it claims the number of those espousing no religion is not an assertion of growing atheism and is a reflection of the fluid and personal nature of religious faith. I recall a story from a lime in Port of Spain where my partner, on a girl's night out leaving me to write up a week of interviews in Tobago was outed as an atheist by a friend. "I've always thought of you as a kind and spiritual person how can you be an atheist?" said one fellow limer, another asked straight facedly, "Were you not loved as a child?" before drawing on her experience living in northern England and adding, "a lot of them are like that over there". Belief in god or the assertion of the spiritual self is the pejorative moral absolute in my experience of Trinidad and Tobago. A similar observation on Tobago, "Tobagonians are a religious people. I have never met an atheist in Tobago – even those whose lifestyles are a far cry from Christian norms and who never go to church still may be staunch believers in God" (Leitinen 2002:11) was made in another graduate thesis (Leitinen 2002). This discussion of Spiritual Baptism by a researcher turned enthusiastic convert provides an insider perspective of spiritual baptism that seeks hard to balance historical claims about this system of beliefs with an enthusiastic support for its authenticity and indigenoussness. It contains fascinating information on the largely undocumented suppression of Spiritual Baptism by the authorities in Tobago in the early 20th Century. Used interchangeably the terms indigenous and authentic show their author's

evident in many criticisms of tourism including those of an academic intent. The historical dimension of the land debate is also peculiarly skewed. There is often a rush to describe customary land tenure systems as having their origins in slavery and emancipation and as a reaction to white, European and western ideas of property⁷⁰⁴. The fact that the origins of such systems of tenure may well lay in the management strategies of West Indian estate owners often goes unexamined. Equally occluded is the various land settlement programmes initiated or suggested by business leaders, social commentators and government in the years after emancipation⁷⁰⁵. Deeply held beliefs about life in Tobago and their intimate connection to

reliance on a particular dynamic form of syncretism that seeks to balance cultural relativism with historical awareness whilst retaining the underlying principle in a manner similar to Besson's studies of Jamaica. See Leitinen, Maarit. *Marching to Zion: Creolisation in Spiritual Baptist Rituals and Cosmology*. Thesis University of Helsinki 2002. Attending different churches for the purpose of seducing a married man was quite acceptable (provided he doesn't tell his wife who then makes him tell the entire congregation and that the individual in question feels they have exhibited appropriate public and private levels of spiritual turmoil and angst) provided you go about it with a sincere spiritual commitment. This might signify a cultural openness of the sort argued for by Wardle but it certainly is not without limits. Indeed given that the logic of the argument is predicated on the assertion of Euro-American cultural norms to which it is deemed alien it seems all the more shaky. Even if the specific requirements of the morality to be performed differ it is still a bounded moral system of belief about desirable conduct. The desire to paint the Caribbean as a culturally heterogeneous melting pot, whether inspired by the politics of history or the exigencies of intellectual theorising is more suggestive of a Herskovits like belief in culture as object, rather than a subject, instead of some hidden force directing Caribbean processes of self definition.

⁷⁰⁴ See Chapter 5

⁷⁰⁵ There are examples of this in the history of Tobago and some recent scholarship has begun to explore these schemes. In Tobago in the 1870s the white planter Groome Napier pursued just such a scheme and gained considerable public support and many subscriptions. The Colonial Office deemed it desirable but unfeasible given the parlous state of the island's tax revenues and officials were unsurprised when the whole scheme collapsed impoverishing all concerned. Napier by all accounts then went slightly mad and began to dress in the uniform of an unspecified European kingdom and demanded that others address him as "His Highness the Prince of Mantua Montserrat and Emperor of Tobago". He wrote under this name to the CO demanding the abolition of land tax but bemused clerks minuted in the margins of his letters that since his decline in health and the end of production on his overgrown estate his taxes had been paid by a Mrs McKenzie an "elderly coloured lady of good character", who had been a friend of the family before its misfortunes. See despatch dated 17th May 1880 in CO 321/40. The McKenzie family were the well off descendants of John Robley the nephew of the award winning agriculturalist and former governor mentioned in chapter 2. Eliza Mckenzie had been John Robley's slave mistress and had resided with him at Golden Grove estate. The three surviving children of this relationship received £5000 each on his death as well as a legal recognition of paternity. For an account of the Robley family and their relations see, Smith, S.D. *Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles 1648-1834* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 2006:342-344. Another Tobago born land reformer was Samuel Carter who later wrote for the Trinidad Chronicle and ultimately purchased the San Fernando Gazette. Along with an active Masonic internationalist, Joseph Lewis he used the press to pursue the goal of self betterment for black men through land ownership and agricultural labour. An account of these and other leading 19th Century black business figures in Trinidad and Tobago can be found in, Toussaint, Michael. George Numa Desources, The Numancians and the Attempt to form a Colony in Eastern Venezuela circa 1850-54 and Ellis, Melisse. *E-Consciousness: Economic Black Consciousness in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Trinidad and Tobago* both in Cateau, Heather and Pemberton, Rita Eds. *Beyond Tradition: Reinterpreting the Caribbean Historical Experience*. Ian Randle Kingston 2006

government policy and its public and private presentation were frequently revealed whenever the land issue came up in conversation. It was an issue where questions of labour and land use also frequently found a place. The PNM administration and its predecessor have both represented foreign land ownership as unfair competition driven by inequalities in the global economy. More recently certain opponents, especially the Tobago born former diplomat, ambassador, and architect of 1980s public service reforms, Reginald Dumas, have argued that the THA has stifled the creativity of Tobagonians and opened the way for their exploitation by more skilled foreigners and Trinidadians⁷⁰⁶.

Family land has been one of the vexed questions of Caribbean ethnography since its first detailed descriptions in the mid fifties⁷⁰⁷. Interviews with informants in Tobago frequently revealed many of the same ambiguities as to what precisely constitutes family land as opposed to land merely bought by an ancestor. Sometimes this is clear cut and agreed upon, especially when a will dictates that a plot will be transmitted intact to a given group of descendants and held as such in perpetuity but on other occasions it is far less obvious⁷⁰⁸. Litigation is widespread and often spills over into violent confrontations and sabotage⁷⁰⁹. This latter point

⁷⁰⁶ Reginald Dumas is a popular and well received public speaker capable of spinning the most impressive linguistic knots to wrong foot his opponents. One would expect nothing less given a diplomatic pedigree that includes service as Trinidad and Tobago's Ambassador to the United States amongst other high profile postings. At the constitutional consultation in the island he demolished the draft document in minute detail and with lengthy digressions into local history, to rapturous applause. He is perceived as one of a generation of high achieving Tobagonians who emerged in the years immediately before and after independence. The failure of young Tobagonians to emulate this example is frequently cited as evidence of a decline in the virtues of the population. Dumas's contributions to the debate over foreign land take a similar stance by noting, "the increasingly less important role that Tobagonians are playing in their own society. Others from Trinidad and further afield, are, for good or ill, taking advantage of that inattention and that descent... How is the decline to be arrested and the culture transformed back to what previous generations took for granted – hard work, education, proper values etc?" THA Budgets of 2006 and 2007 *Saturday Express* 19th August 2006

⁷⁰⁷ Smith, M.G. *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* University of California Press 1965 and Clarke, Edith. *My Mother Who Fathered Me* Allen and Unwin London 1957. Clarke's earlier description of family land in Jamaica draws clear attention to many contradictions in attitudes to land as well as the role of family land in women's livelihoods. Smith has a larger theoretical point to make about the transmission of land from formal to customary tenure in Carriacou following government land grants earlier in the 20th Century. Smith was generally more enamoured of family land seeing it as fundamentally rooted to the social context which was by default associated with the type of cultural forms disparaged by colonial officialdom but not necessarily opposed to post colonial development policies. Clarke by contrast was concerned with the ambiguities and pitfalls of land tenure as part of a wider social survey aimed at establishing the goals for future development initiatives.

⁷⁰⁸ This does not always lead to fragmentations of plots as some critics have had it but often to complex webs of claims by many individuals to what have always been very small plots of land. Detailed examples of how this can operate in practice can be found in Jean Besson's study of Jamaican land tenure in, *Martha Brae's Two Histories European Expansion and Caribbean Culture-Building in Jamaica* Chapel Hill University of North Carolina Press 2002

⁷⁰⁹ One of the neighbours to the plot where my land lady had built a small block of apartments and bungalows was involved in just such an elaborate dispute. His brother had purchased land which he

is often glossed over by family land's ardent supporters who tend to stress the vitality and resilience of West Indian Kinship⁷¹⁰.

Family land exists in part because of the vagaries of the legal system and the costs of conveyancing fees and stamp duty⁷¹¹. Since the passage of the THA act many laws relating to land use and infrastructure are the THA's responsibility⁷¹². Nominally the new national GIS system will replace older records of land ownership and use but this is basically a digitised version of older hand kept records that are riddled with inaccuracies which in some cases date back decades⁷¹³. Officials in Town and Country planning blame the status of land tenure on out

claimed was the family's land anyway and had been taken from them by a Trinidadian with the aid of corrupt THA officials. He immediately restored the land to the family by telling his unemployed brother he could build a house on the plot and so stay in Tobago and take care of their mother and live respectably. Having taken these steps to make the land visibly family property again he stopped making payments and reverted to claiming it was his all along or alternately writing from Trinidad and claiming the payments had gone astray or been unfairly refused. As a consequence the house on the plot was demolished three times over the course of my fieldwork, following court orders granted to the aggrieved legal owner. Each time it was quickly rebuilt by the brother who resided on the plot, albeit in different shapes depending on what had survived each demolition.

⁷¹⁰ Jean Besson puts this a little too conveniently under the bracket of Wilson's 'crab antics' letting slide uncommented the remarks of an informant in Jamaica, "A man cut out his belly and it was over some land business"(Besson 2002:304). Such violence is rare if not unheard of in Tobago but simmering feuds are not so hard to come by.

⁷¹¹ Attempts to bypass this often appear to implicate certain attorneys in Tobago. Notes prepared by the Chamber of Commerce in relation to the announcement of the THA that they planned to licence land sales specifically state that this is the cause of many local to local transactions not being properly registered with the Ministry of Finance.

⁷¹² The classification of roads would be a good example. All roads in Tobago, including the Claude Noel Highway between Bon Accord and the Eastern outskirts of Scarborough remain agricultural roads (exempting access traces) in law (This dates back to the 1930s classification of road uses see Chapter 4). In theory there should be a 7.5 metre setback without obstructions. I was enquiring about the classification of an agricultural road that on older plans was a public road but since bridges were destroyed during Hurricane Flora no longer led anywhere. My enquiry concerned whether the status of the road had been updated as a locally owned guest house had turned the setback into a private car parking area at a point where it ceased to be passable to non 4x4 vehicles. This meant visitors had to accept the owner's services as a guide or turn round and park about a quarter of a mile further back where the road widened. A Town and Country planner explained that the Tobago office had only incomplete maps that were either private gifts or cast offs from the central office in Port of Spain. Her distinction of what type of road it was proved more intuitive than legal, "I mean when you say agricultural road did it look like an agricultural kind of place?" Interview Public Servant 18/05/07

⁷¹³ Specifically I got hold of a copy of a map in Port of Spain which showed an elderly informant's farm to still be the property of his late father. He was adamant that he had paid his taxes and owned a small produce company. His problem was that the land had partly been leased in perpetuity from the original owner (a reward to a valued employee, after the sale of the estate the family also got some of the estate stock at knock down prices) before independence. This arrangement had only partial legal status as Niddrie suggested was commonplace in the mid 20th Century. In the late 1960s the Estate was sold to the government and they tried to reclaim the leased land from my informant's father in court without success. If it is indeed the case that the old records have simply been fed into the computer software then they might simply become true by virtue of being modern and sophisticated, restarting this and other land disputes from the past all over again. It was a point underlined to me at the Lands and Surveys Division HQ in Port of Spain when I was shown maps being used for the new digital system

of date colonial laws rather than local cultural innovations⁷¹⁴. The system of Common Law land rights was believed to be up for reform if not outright repeal in T&T at the time of my fieldwork. This was generated by a range of public pronouncements from THA and central government officials that had created a palpable confusion relating to land policy especially in Tobago. In the event of such a move away from Common Law principles the THA would be responsible for generating a statutory code and there was growing concern amongst some public servants and real estate businesses that the THA have failed to implement the laws needed to keep the formal market in land functioning⁷¹⁵. Customary tenure may become as much a response to the failures of the formal economy and its regulators as much as its intrusion. Beyond these legalistic concerns there are other reasons for the persistence of family land.

Specific treatments of land in Tobago often reflect a wider view of proprietary rights as involving specific forms of propriety rather than the more mechanistic slant often given by a detailed mapping of kinship. In its most obvious form this came as the standard historically orientated description of family land, "My father always used to say that the Queen of England sent a commissioner and did a survey of Tobago and that they recommended that the people own the land and work it because the queen had said that people have to own the land in order to own the country"⁷¹⁶. The part time farmer and works employee I was speaking to was making a clear assertion of the historical obligations that family land carries with it. Despite this similarity to other accounts of family land it should be clear that this differs from the slavery grounded accounts presented in Besson's Martha Brae study⁷¹⁷. This story, with its references to Queen Victoria and land reform, seems to carry combined references to both John Gorrie's tenure as Chief Justice in the late 1880s and the later recommendations of the

sprawled across a desk. Glued to a card back was the fragmented survey sheet of Tobago's Main Ridge Reserve dating from 1907.

⁷¹⁴ Interview 11/05/07 The sobriquet colonial was here very much used as a contrast to the new and modern government which, given, technology and time, would correct the situation. It should not be read as an actual reflection of the role of written law in shaping or not shaping land tenure.

⁷¹⁵ Interview with Realtor 10/05/07 It is worth noting that this was simply a belief about the future direction of CARICOM integration and is not a clear cut policy commitment likely to implemented in the imminent future. Business figures at the time of my fieldwork were deeply uneasy about government attitudes to private land tenure and even seemingly innocuous pronouncements from officials were carefully scrutinised for import.

⁷¹⁶ Interview 09/10/06

⁷¹⁷ Here claims were rooted in the foundation of the Jamaican free villages in Trelawney Parish founded by the Baptist missionary William Knibb and informants often backed up their stories with original deeds.

West India Royal Commission⁷¹⁸. My informant went on to depict a biblical temptation of himself by a hypothetical German and his refusal to sell, “But that land is my family’s, I can take out a loan against, I can grow food on it... All over Tobago there are people who have sold to foreigners for the easy money but haven’t got what they hoped for with it. You’ll see some of them in the bars by the road feeling sorry for themselves”⁷¹⁹. The perception of the foreign national as a tempter offering bountiful wealth has worked its way convincingly into personal stories of family land. Sometimes the foreigner is politely refused and sometimes grievously tricked⁷²⁰. Always the principles of family, ancestry and property are upheld and always there are examples of other individuals who have fallen into temptation and lost their values and livelihoods.

Family land is not simply a system of symbolically transferring physical property. It is a publicly visible way of owning property. In terms of broader land ownership in Tobago there is a range of publicly visible ways of performing such ownership in appropriate ways. The most visible is the detailed signs on driveways and verges warning of private property. In addition to the warning the full text of the relevant passage of the relevant Act of Parliament replete with Hansard references may well be displayed. My Trinidadian informants frequently commented

⁷¹⁸ Gorrie became something of a folk hero in Tobago and his name remained a popular choice for children well into the 20th Century. The metayage disputes left a mark in popular folk song as well:

Sar John Gorrie

Never make a bit of fun;

He knock de fine

Like de eight o’clock gun

See Craig, Susan. *The Evolution of Society in Tobago: 1838 to 1900*. Thesis London School of Economics 1995:311

⁷¹⁹ Interview 09/10/06 Its worth pointing out that this individual’s brother owned one such bar and the family were comparatively well off compared to many of the bar’s customers regardless of how much land they might potentially have access rights to.

⁷²⁰ Much land in Tobago, family land or otherwise has not had proper ownership transferred for many years sometimes decades even on parcels distributed by government in the late 1960s. When foreign nationals first began to make land purchases in the 1990s they failed to realise that the back taxes had to be paid and that a new purchaser might well acquire spectacular debts if they did not get proof of payment (technically a legal requirement) or the sale was simply refused with the seller disappearing until the irate buyer had left the country minus their money. This naivety is popularly associated with German nationals who had similarly fallen victim to Hochoy Charles’ deportation plans by failing to realise that to be resident without a visa or citizenship was to be an illegal immigrant. One white Trinidadian businesswoman remarked that this was what came from believing that you can do what you want because you were in the Third World, “it was ridiculous because Germany is one of the hardest places to settle as a resident in Europe. Its that damn xenophobia thing”, she added illustrating that T&T was far from exceptional with regard to either law or prejudices and I thought, amply illustrating the dangers of actually believing in the authenticity of paradise.

that those who purchased land in Tobago were liable to become Tobagonian in character where they, “just start saying that it my land and I can do what I want with it”⁷²¹.

The question of how to present land prior to a sale is a more specific example of the propriety of property in Tobago. Shortly before a piece of land is sold, it is cleared, normally by fire, regardless of seasonal legal restrictions. This is described as tidying the land or making it clean. I first noticed this in detail when trying to resolve a quite unrelated question, the difference between a snake and a serpent. I had a hunch, totally unjustified that there was some dual spiritual meaning to this distinction, in fact a serpent is simply a large snake⁷²². Whilst discussing this with a pair of men clearing an area of land for an older female relative who was planning to sell I was told that burning out serpents and worms would guarantee the land would attract a buyer willing to offer a better price⁷²³. As dry season progressed and public officials and environmentalists bemoaned the spread of bush fires, I increasingly noted that these often correlated to land which was for sale. In other cases the land was owned (sometimes family land) but not cultivated or lived on, but even then required burning in order to avoid complaints from neighbours. At least one house in a nearby village narrowly escaped incineration when the wind shifted direction during the burning of verge side scrub between

⁷²¹ Neither ideas of race or class seemed to influence these reported transformations which was in part why it was remarked upon.

⁷²² This gets confusing as a juvenile Boa Constrictor (Macajuel in T&T and sometimes ‘Brown Anaconda’) may be classed as a snake or a serpent and I once recall this nicety causing an argument amongst a group of young men from a government project who had been clearing a verge. The suspected serpent had been filmed on a mobile telephone but others claimed it to be no more than a snake. A passing Rastafarian who I was told had experience of handling snakes was consulted and proclaimed the creature a serpent. It was not however deemed a ‘mighty serpent’, that honour would go to a beast wider than “d’white boy waist”, I was informed, no mean feat given my roti consumption at the time. This story connects also to my efforts to determine the origins of a rumour that Germans hungry for land had released venomous snakes in Tobago (Tobago has no venomous snakes; scorpions, foot long centipedes, that locals and expats alike often confuse with harmless giant millipedes and various mildly poisonous spiders are enough to be going on with) to drive people off their land and lower the price. Much of the gossip relating to this led me to believe that this story actually began within the expatriate community where other nationalities mutter along the lines of, “they’ve not done right by local people. The way they’ve got land, you hear stories, marrying local women when they had a wife in Germany. Shit like that. They really haven’t put a lot into the economy and just traded on the way the island looks” (Interview 26/09/06). This rather neatly illustrates the way that geographies of birth are no immunity against moral assumptions of conduct. This style of description has many parallels with descriptions of sexual norms in the era before the arrival of U.S. troops in Trinidad, not because it is directly related but because there are as likely to be beliefs about how to behave and do business in someone else’s country as in a colony. Each is a setting framed by a series of concepts embodying and inspiring beliefs about desirable actions.

⁷²³ Late in my fieldwork an elderly farmer also assured me that this would enhance the quality of the produce grown on the land by making it cleaner.

the building and the road⁷²⁴. Some farmers in the surrounding area used controlled burns in strips bordering their land in order to avoid complaints about untidiness or to get round shortages of labour.

The impact of fires on the landscape of Tobago in dry season is hard to describe (2006-2007 was a very dry year). It is yet one more way in which the association of propriety and proprietary obligations interact to shape the landscape of Tobago. What drives this interaction is the performance of public morals about the desirability of ownership and domestic (in the broadest sense) cleanliness⁷²⁵. Family land has a similar place in Tobagonian life and is likewise routinely proclaimed a desirable system of tenure. It is less an organised system and more a generally acknowledged sign of virtuous conduct. Respect for family land suggests a respect for broader ideas of what it is to be Tobagonian and to embody the perceived virtues of the Tobagonian peasant past. This is a potent and often coercive mythology, like many of the spiritual aspects of public morality in Tobago. Outside a supermarket one evening one of my informants, an eager amateur historian introduced me to a friend of his in the fire service who was also an amateur architectural historian. They began bemoaning the behaviour of a group of boys who were gathered round a brightly painted car replete with deafeningly impressive stereo system broadcasting to the street. This soon progressed to a discussion of the depredations of foreign land buyers. They recounted the story of how a local historian and one time sociological consultant to THA had mapped the story of every family's land. When she was teaching at UWI she discovered one of her students' family had put up for sale a parcel of land. Reacting angrily she was rumoured to have lectured the student on the history and significance of the parcel of land and of family land in general. The For Sale signs came down. This anecdote hopefully reinforces the perspective of family land as a particular concept within a moral grammar of daily life in Tobago, like various spiritual activities, expectations of hygiene

⁷²⁴ In land disputes burning is sometimes a chosen method of removing a house deemed to have, "dirty up my land" as one man (who decided against this course) put it. One graduate thesis I encountered contained an anecdote in which a feud between neighbours progressed from stray cows being let loose on the land in question, escalated to the poisoning of the family dog and culminated in a deliberate arson attack disguised as a bush fire. It virtually mirrors several stories I encountered during fieldwork. Levine, Cheryl. *Mediating the Model: Women's Microcredit and Micro Enterprise in Tobago WI* Thesis University of South Florida 2003:286

⁷²⁵ If there were some informants who linked the necessity of land ownership to inherited stories dating from the 1890s it seems plausible to suggest a connection between these actions toward bush and swamp as in some way connected to the activities of the sanitary department between 1900 and the outbreak of WWII. It must be added that this is entirely my own speculation.

or politeness⁷²⁶. These concepts all embody specific beliefs about how one should be seen to behave. This performance of desirable moral absolutes certainly does not exist in a historical vacuum, as in the story about Queen Victoria there is always a frame of reference. What should be taken into account is the dynamism of such morals, not just the frame of reference on which they draw but the frame of inference from which individuals deduce their intent. In Tobago family land and land ownership more generally are probably more important now than at any time in the 20th Century. This is a morality driven by policy and formal political intent rather than innate characteristics⁷²⁷.

Government land settlement schemes in Trinidad and Tobago have gone through various attempts at regularising land tenure. These attempts have partly been a result of localised real politick and partly a response to fashions in international debates about the benefits of regularised tenure in poverty reduction⁷²⁸. In Tobago the debates surrounding foreign land purchases have been similarly effected. By mid 2006 opposition figures in Tobago were putting pressure on the government to invoke a clause in the Foreign Investment Act (1990) that required non nationals to obtain a license to purchase land⁷²⁹. Land prices in Tobago had been rising driven in part by expectations of good returns from foreign sales⁷³⁰. The Chamber of

⁷²⁶ On a more frivolous note Tobagonian takeaways have a special place for BBQ chicken eaten with fingers from a tray. Being able to eat BBQ chicken in public in a decorous manner that doesn't draw tutting about your table manners can be a challenge.

⁷²⁷ For example earlier ethnographies suggest that much of the discontent over the original repeal of the Foreign and Aliens Land Holding Act was directed at the lack of government consultation. Given the spectacular unpopularity of the Robinson government during structural adjustment it seems reasonable to assume that foreign nationals themselves have only more recently become the target of discontent with the uneven distribution of the current boom in T&T. See Levine, Cheryl. *Mediating the Model: Women's Microcredit and Micro Enterprise in Tobago WI* Thesis University of South Florida 2003

⁷²⁸ For an example of this and a history of the land tenure policies and legislation (including the Trinidad SuSu lands scheme) see Home, Robert and Lim, Hilary *Demystifying the Mystery of capital: Land tenure and Poverty in Africa and the Caribbean* Glasshouse Press London 2004 This DFID backed research blithely absorbs the desirability of symbolic attachments to land and in effect supports an abdication of government control in favour of pro poor initiatives that imply a resignation to the status quo. The problems of regularising squatting and developments in unsafe locations are largely overlooked. This has given rise to a belief amongst some that in Trinidad squatters and farmers deliberately locate to flood and landslip prone areas in the expectation of compensation following the inevitable disasters that accompany the annual wet season.

⁷²⁹ Several newspaper comment pieces and articles highlighted this subject notably, Restrict Foreigners from Owning Tobago Land *Sunday Guardian* August 27 2006 an open letter signed by George Bobb, Roy Chadband, Reginald Dumas, Trevor Isaac, Andre Phillips and Margaret Godson-Phillips

⁷³⁰ One employee of an environmental NGO had to relocate shortly after moving to Tobago from Trinidad as her landlord wanted to attract tourist buyers for his apartments. Some months later they met in town and he casually explained that he was letting to locals again as the presumed foreign buyers had never materialised. The mythology of the avaricious foreign land grabber has certainly helped to drive up prices more than any discernable demand. According to its former owners the plot where my landlady had built apartments had lain vacant for around 18 months whilst she gauged the truth of

Commerce was in uproar over the matter, disputing the vast acreages often attributed to foreign purchases, protesting the benefits of globalisation and economic openness. In response foreigners were blamed for a housing shortage, failure to pay taxes and driving up crime by having the temerity to present themselves as victims to an influx of Trinidadian criminals and dispossessed locals. To support their case figures in the Chamber of Commerce obtained and analysed the government land sales figures and made their findings public as the government added to the uncertainty by agreeing to activate the aforementioned licensing clause⁷³¹.

Contrary to claims from the THA and other public figures, the Chamber claimed only 5 purchases made between 1990 and 2005 appeared speculative, amounting to less than 1% of the total of 479 transactions that involved foreign nationals or those married to foreign nationals. The figures being cited by the THA were deemed to be based on the haphazard way that records relating to land transactions had been kept, many had been double counted, areas had been recorded as a numeric value but the unit of measurement had often been assumed⁷³². Despite these revelations the members of the THA remained unimpressed⁷³³. At a subsequent meeting with the realtors the Chief Secretary was alleged to have remarked that he, “didn’t give a shit about whites, foreigners and Trinidadians, I know what I know and I have

rumours about foreign tourist rentals and sales, deciding instead that domestic tenants on 6-12 month contracts were a more viable option.

⁷³¹ The Chamber of Commerce statement was published under the slightly misleading headline Put a tag on licence for land... Mandate for Foreign Buyers *Tobago News* Friday October 20th 2006

⁷³² Interview Realtor 10/05/07 When double checked figures were in a combination of acres, hectares, square feet, square metres and even chains. The Central Government and THA grasp of how to present figures can produce some bizarre results in other areas, figures for criminal offences committed by non nationals give Norwich (as distinct from England, placed between Trinidad and Venezuela) a separate category between Guyana and Jamaica! PRDI *A Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago 2006-2010* PRDI 2005:74

⁷³³ This disapproval of land transfers to non Tobagonians did not always impact on the family business dealings of members of the assembly and senior officials. One of my neighbours, a return migrant from Trinidad who had been in the UK for 30 years working as a nurse was looking for land to build apartments on. She’d already secured a house plot but wanted an investment to give her daughter who had been uprooted from London and was not wholly impressed by her new surroundings (an older daughter had already moved to T&T). The theory was that she’d settle in once she became a businesswoman rather than moping about highly unsuitable men in the UK of whom her mother would wax lyrical (occasional family rows between mother and daughter shortly after the latter’s arrival were audible enough to become the stuff of local gossip). Her efforts to secure land led her to a local part time farmer who lived in Scarborough but commuted to his share of a family plot adjacent to our apartments (the apartments were built on land that his relatives had all agreed to sell their shares in, he retained about 500sq feet for plantains and bananas). As soon as the question of land deals came up he produced the business card of an assembly woman for whom he did landscape work (he was not clear on the details of this arrangement) telling her to be discrete and call the mobile number on the back rather than the official line printed on the front. There was a rumour that some roads near this land had been resurfaced to enhance its value.

to give my people what they want”⁷³⁴. Clearly the difference of opinion was not one inspired by the facts of the matter but by particular intentions underlying land use policy.

The land use debate had even found its way into the text of the development plan in the form of an upgraded Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT)⁷³⁵. The goal of this project was to create, “a vehicle through which the THA can be a developer and an intermediary in the retention of the land-mass of Tobago, mainly in the ownership of the people of Tobago”⁷³⁶. Meanwhile the Chamber’s representatives were heading for Port of Spain for a clarification of just how the proposed licensing clause would operate in an effort to end the confusion⁷³⁷.

One local business figure put the complaints in a particularly forthright manner, “What you have to understand is that this is an essentially socialist society and one of the issues driving land inflation, don’t quote me on figures, is government expenditure on land. They’ve bought a whole lot of estates in recent years but don’t seem to be doing anything with them”⁷³⁸. This question of legitimate uses for land gets to the heart of the debate. There are several competing reasons for this mismatch of opinions. Some planning staff accepted the 2% foreign ownership figure for private lands in Tobago but added that the whole island was a coastal zone, “2% sounds like nothing but two thirds of Tobago is unusable, the Main Ridge is a 4000 hectare protected area, around it is almost as much forest, secondary growth that is vital for watersheds, landslip prevention. Then there are the remaining wetlands, flood zones, eroded slopes. With all this suddenly 2% can be a lot and the land prices from speculation put homes out of most peoples reach so they build illegally”⁷³⁹.

The label of ‘Green’ had developed a special significance for opponents of foreign land ownership. It was not simply a case of regulating the activities of capitalists though. There was more to this point of view amongst planners, “Foreign land ownership is to me as a Tobagonian a question of we people’s patrimony. If this issue is not addressed people in

⁷³⁴ Interview Realtor 10/05/07

⁷³⁵ PRDI *A Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Tobago 2006-2010* PRDI 2005:122

⁷³⁶ Ibid

⁷³⁷ At the time my fieldwork drew to a close there had not been a definitive clarification of how the licensing scheme would work and so non nationals could not make any purchases of land in Tobago. Scanning the Trinidadian press from afar this still appears to be the case. During an interview with an official at the Attorney General’s office in Port of Spain priorities were made clear to me, when I asked about current land law in Tobago, “They are the laws of Trinidad *and* Tobago” (Interview Civil Servant 14/05/07). National law is available from the website of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. There appears to be some reluctance to publicise any distinction in law between the two islands that might result from decisions by the THA or the Central Government.

⁷³⁸ Interview Expatriate Businessman 25/04/07

⁷³⁹ Interview Public Servant 02/10/06

Tobago are going to wake up one day and find out they no longer own Tobago. How would you feel if British people no longer owned Britain because it was all owned by some foreigners with a lot of money? The hotels sector have their own view on this but they are just an interest group with their own agenda”⁷⁴⁰. At this point I raised the question of Trinidadian ownership being the real issue, “Absolutely, it is something we must address because Trinidad is a wealthier place... As a Tobagonian Trinidadians are foreigners and also represent a threat to the people of Tobago”⁷⁴¹. In these exchanges and others it became clear that the question of land ownership was not solely about foreign ownership. It was part of a more fundamental complex of beliefs about being Tobagonian, the role of the THA in securing that identity and a particular brand of government environmentalism that saw state land acquisition and development as the epitome of benign management.

The tensions arising from land ownership and use in Tobago are not unique. What is unique is the opportunity presented by the web of intentions that interact to give policy and broader discussions their grammatical form. Even accounts which note the rise of xenophobia caused

⁷⁴⁰ I interjected that Britain was owned by rich foreigners, especially Germans, one of whom had a crown, but didn’t get a laugh. Stereotypes of Germans can materialise in almost comic form in academic research and official documents. A paper based on PRDI supported research argued, “In order to understand the motivations precipitating the meeting of cultures, one has to understand the German proclivity toward domestic and international travel, the desire to acquire real estate and the lust for leisure. The German tradition has been associated with a culture that is steeped in formality, regulation, precision and punctuality leaving very little room for errors of judgement. Being one of the principal industrialized societies, the German passion for capital accumulation is common knowledge in intellectual circles”. Constant talk of, “the German quest for real estate and the acquisition of land” dominates this paper. Its worth noting that only 91 land purchases by Germans were made between 1990 and 2005 by Germans or T&T nationals married to Germans about 18.9% of total sales to non nationals. The paper argued that the offspring of mixed marriages could generate a “German subculture” that would stimulate the local work ethic and IT industry in particular. See St. Bernard, Godfrey, *Demographics and Emergent Diasporic Influences in Caribbean Island Get-Aways: The Case of Western European Transients and Tobagonians*. Paper prepared for the International Conference on the Caribbean Diaspora South Bank University, UK 2001. Within their own data PRDI drew on Smith’s Plural Society thesis to illustrate the presumed cultural homogeneity of Tobago compared to neighbouring Trinidad. A poll that appeared in the local press received apparent official endorsement, despite being massively flawed not least by a sample of only 100 persons, the poll respondents overwhelmingly stated they opposed the presence of Indians even more than foreigners. Following statements about the licensing scheme I was able to get a copy of minutes taken at a meeting with the THA by a member of the Chamber of Commerce who noted a significant disapproval with the poll, jotting the line from the National Anthem ‘every creed and race has an equal place’, at the base of the page. Interestingly another objection was that none of those polled could be identified as land owners, demanding they should have comprised 50% of the sample. Clearly some business figures felt that having an opinion should be restricted by a property qualification.

⁷⁴¹ Interview Public Servant 05/12/06 Later in this meeting I was told that all British people could enter the UK housing market. I protested this point vigorously and was told that it was a simple thing to get a mortgage; my suggestion that paying it back might not be so simple was dismissed. It would be intriguing to repeat this conversation with the benefits of current hindsight. My informant was adamant that it was easy to get a house in Britain as a friend who had emigrated had been able to buy a house in Milton Keynes.

by changes in land ownership tend to underplay them as they are torn between the competing moral certainties of scholarship concerning the region's history⁷⁴². Throughout my time in Tobago it was possible to discern the wide ranging impact that the public debate around land ownership was having. It was not just graffiti, comments in the street and seemingly random accusations. An early interview with an environmental activist led to my being advised that unsolicited casual conversation about foreign land ownership carried a high probability of a hostile and potentially violent response⁷⁴³. A Guyanese born labourer who rented the apartment next door to me was frequently abused in Scarborough with threats of violence, spitting and verbal abuse. The problems declined after he found work cutting hair rather than on a building site but were still a regular feature of his working day, "People everyday cussin at me at work, on the street. I don't like to get me vexed see, cos them Tobago people small minded like I sayin. Some people say it and I hear dem [behind my back] but some bold, say it right up to me 'there a Guyanese man suckin up we job' and it small people not like de ones you be speakin to but lower scale"⁷⁴⁴. I always found it peculiar that expatriates in the business community would laud Tobago as being a paradise of racial integration and cultural harmony praising the expanded membership of the Chamber of Commerce since the election of an expatriate head, "I don't think there is any of the racism you get in the UK in T&T, that's why I like it here, because its so multiracial" yet in the same breath remarking at the hostile attitudes of PRDI officials towards white, Indian and Chinese members. To them it seemed a government conspiracy that would wilt away if the market were allowed free rein.

Almost every interview I had with a government official and at every office I visited I was quizzed about my commitment to dissemination. Always the story was that foreigners had been before and used departmental time and resources for profit and whenever I followed up suggestions as to who would know the details of these events I met with blank incomprehension. Consultants employed by various bodies have come in for severe criticism in

⁷⁴² An excellent example of this would be the reappraisal of Smith's work on family land in Carriacou. Here the resentment of foreign buyers is gently described as a, "misconception given the small number of individuals not born on the island who own second homes and the even smaller number who own businesses. Nevertheless, there is a real fear among many that resources are shifting to white foreign control. The idea of keeping family land undivided and in local hands is important to some people who express anxiety regarding a loss of control over their heritage" (Mills in Besson & Momsen Eds. 2007:239). This chapter and others in the same volume make repeated references to heritage and personhood as though they were tangible objects with legitimacy beyond question See, Mills Beth. "Leave to Come Back": The Importance of Family Land in a Transnational Caribbean Community in Besson, Jean & Momsen, Janet. Eds. *Caribbean Land and Development Revisited* Palgrave London 2007

⁷⁴³ Interview ET Director 29/08/06

⁷⁴⁴ Interview 27/08/06 Interviews with 'big' men and women suggest my informant and his friends might have been misplaced in their confidence about what better educated Tobagonians thought, even if they put the matter more discretely.

Tobago and seem to be the target of many of these stories, some more justified than others. The head of the PRDI was of the view that this was misplaced because consultants only did what they were paid for and that they had to be managed tightly especially foreign nationals with an academic background and a tendency to incoherent waffle, “Often a consultant will come to you with this ‘there is no data’ story, I never buy this. This is what people are hired for, it is their job. No I don’t stand for that one minute. It is bullshit talk”. Yet even if the quality of work is up to standard in the eyes of the contracting agency the experience of staff can be different let alone that of the public⁷⁴⁵. Frontline staff who were under the impression that data theft by foreigners was common had often simply been left out of the loop, asked to take a visiting official from a private firm or bodies like the EU or USAID, they did so without knowing quite what the point was or what happened next. The occasional use of tour guides in this capacity, especially in relation to the Main Ridge reserve simply added to this public perception of foreigners.

Perhaps a measure of how widespread the mythology of foreign land ownership has become is a story I heard whilst liming with a neighbour and some of her friends over from Trinidad. One young lady remarked, “In Mt Irvine they got a whole village of Germans and them buying up the island from under the poor Tobago people”. Despite wondering where such a settlement might be, often speculating if it might be reminiscent of the jungle scenes in the *Boys from Brazil*, I never found it. The question of land ownership and the concepts of race, heritage and economy that inspire it can only be understood as a system of belief underpinned by specific intentions. In this sense the Chamber of Commerce could never have won its argument with the THA and the media on the basis of figures alone. Widespread ideas about what it is to be a

⁷⁴⁵ In one government body in Tobago I encountered a Canadian consultant who demanded that the air conditioning be kept on at maximum all day and into the evening. Staff who wore coats were reprimanded for being unprofessional. During a Christmas break in the UK I took orders for black cardigans and jumpers that would be deemed more suitable for the office. In another case a public servant remarked of this marked hostility to one group of consultants involved in surveying north east Tobago, “The issues with outsiders is perhaps a cultural thing, not a race issue, but there is body language... In one of the meetings the top consultant guy sat with his back to the dark skinned guys, the local staff and when he speaks he is speaking to the light skinned colleagues who were with him”, he banged his arm beside mine on the table in frustration and pointed, “See that cultural difference, what message does that body language send?”. Whilst I was in Tobago the Japanese government body JAICA were asked to leave in March 2007 after funding a project with a fishing community for which they had neglected to obtain planning permission. The official explanation was unauthorised interference with state property. The reality was that JAICA’s project interfered with pre national election expenditure by the PNM dominated THA who immediately announced their own plans to improve local fishing facilities. Despite these examples overseas development bodies are comparatively rare in T&T and UN organisations are based in Port of Spain in Trinidad. During a lunchtime game of pool with a group of Nigerian sailors one remarked of T&T that the absence of white aid staff in offices was clear evidence that the country was more corrupt than Nigeria.

Tobagonian have been entrenched through the enacting of various measures from the Heritage Festival to the current furore over land licenses. In order to comprehend this discussion it is necessary to see land ownership in Tobago as a subject to be studied rather than an object defined by relational moral conditions. In summary the debate is not one of who is to blame or who is telling the objective truth but over what their intentions are and the publicly legitimate ways in which they are frequently performed.

Contradictions and Aspirations

The process of development planning in Tobago and perhaps elsewhere remains one defined by aspiration as much as objectives. In this sense the question of how the past is morally read and how such morals are then performed is crucial to understanding many wider conflicts. The decision to back oil and especially gas as economic drivers in an island that formally derives no income from them is a case in point. The views of government officials about tourism, agriculture and broader statements about labour and welfare serve to emphasise that policy is the enactment of innately political goals. Such goals are no less innately political than the embedding of historical judgements into the text of development plans. Such an action is no less political than the academic analyses from which they were drawn.

When exploring the politics of policy in Tobago it became impossible for me to avoid the view that I was looking, not at competing discourses that controlled people but at statements made by active individual agents. Trying to understand how wider concerns form the backdrop to contests over the physical transformation of the Tobagonian landscape required an alternative comprehension to the one widely available in the literature. It became a matter of learning by observation the grammar that gave particular meanings to statements made with particular intentions.

It is this question of intention that underlines schemes aimed at achieving desirable environmental ends. Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) may have inspired frequent treatments but the underlying inspirations of such schemes are rarely explored in depth. What a consideration of a scheme like CEPEP raises is the connection between such projects and a range of ideas about labour, welfare and desirable futures. It is by looking at underlying moral systems and their organisation that it becomes possible to ask why communities become custodians and hunters game wardens. In the case of CEPEP in Tobago a state entity provides welfare explicitly on the condition of labour, yet such honesty about intentions is not as obvious in the schemes of governments, NGOs and supranational

organisations elsewhere in the world. These essentially promote a system of welfare conditional on an ideal of environmental stewardship and appropriate labour yet get called pretty much anything other than workfare programmes. My suspicion is because the former is deemed fit for traditional communities and the latter is for the more conventional undeserving and unemployable poor⁷⁴⁶.

Land ownership, tenure systems and questions of xenophobia in Tobago illustrate how the formation of landscapes can often draw together disparate themes beyond the plainly physical. The debates around these concepts link back to questions of intention in the interpretation of Caribbean history and the public performance of such analyses of the past. At the same time the ways in which family land and private land holdings more generally are presented in Tobago underlines that the study of such subjects is very much the study of the present. It is the physical and social presentation of land that is laid open to scrutiny by the public performance of morals. Only through understanding this does it become possible to see just why the debate around foreign land ownership gathered momentum in the way that it did in Tobago. This leads neatly back to the observation that the present is the performance of judgements about the desirability and undesirability of both past and future. Development plans do well to begin with vision statements as they are processes of divination underlined by moral intent as much as they are guarantors of any substantive change.

⁷⁴⁶ For a recent review of literature on African conservation programmes where such questions are totally avoided see, Nelson, F & Agarwal, A. Patronage or Participation? Community Based Natural Resource Management in Sub-Saharan Africa in *Development and Change* Vol.39 No.4 2008

Chapter 6: Melting Into Air: The Moral Performance of Environment and Economy

In Tobago the environmental movement encompasses a range of individuals who often hold overlapping membership with other interest groups. Such connections are all the more apparent in an island barely 114 miles square with a current population of around 60 000 and where the political process is often personal and immediate. In consequence there is no bubble that can be delimited as being the realm of the environment but a web of beliefs about how the landscape of the island should look and why it should be so. These individual webs of belief about conservation and other environmentally themed concepts are arranged through their relations with beliefs about other key concepts. The beliefs of environmentalists in Tobago have arisen in conjunction with the beliefs that underpin the activities of contemporary hunters, agriculturalists, farmers and hoteliers and tour guides. Ever present in the language of local environmental groups are references to ecotourism and environmental valuation which in turn interact with questions of heritage, desirable forms of land use and economy and property. These issues have dogged Tobago and the wider Caribbean throughout modern local and regional history⁷⁴⁷. Exploring the intentions and priorities of Tobago's environmental activists helps to shed light on the concerns of those they see as frustrating their objectives. What follows is an attempt to relate the language and practises of environmental concern in relation to wider issues surrounding the way that economy and landscape are described in contemporary Tobago.

Strivers for Sustainability: The Environmental Organisations of Tobago

Concerns over the state of Tobago's landscape, flora and fauna have been part of the local policy process since colonisation in 1763. From the moment Tobago and Trinidad were somewhat unwillingly conjoined, against the background of Joseph Chamberlain's tenure at the colonial office, there have been various public and private initiatives designed to promote environmental management and the moral and social improvement of the population. It was not until the mid 1990s, partly inspired by the Rio Earth Summit, and partly by effects of

⁷⁴⁷ As noted in Chapter 2 and Chapter 1, for various motives much of the existing literature uses the adjective modern to signify the entire post Columbian history of the Caribbean.

increasing economic activity in Tobago, that formal environmental groups formed on the island.

The origins of the first environmental organisation, Environment Tobago (ET), lie in the founding in 1993 of a branch of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists Club⁷⁴⁸. Environment Tobago was formed two years later. It had become apparent that a separate campaign group was needed to raise a broad range of environmental issues. After some discussion regarding the new group's name⁷⁴⁹ it was incorporated in 1999 as a not for profit company. The group initially secured a grant from the Rockefeller foundation in 1996 to conduct community water testing, the second phase of which was funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in association with the Council of the Presidents of Environment (COPE)⁷⁵⁰. Subsequent individual projects have been funded with small grants from various companies and foreign governmental bodies plus membership dues, several small and one large personal donation⁷⁵¹. At the time of my visit to Tobago ET was in the process of repeating part of the water quality project because a household survey had been botched in the absence of a reliable map and GPS equipment⁷⁵². In addition to this ET had a rolling education programme of school visits and summer eco-camps run by a paid educational officer⁷⁵³ and was moving towards a partnership with the THA to create community nature reserves beginning with one of the few remaining areas of mangrove swamp in the south west at Kilgwyn. ET was handicapped in part by the unexpected interruption of a fresh Rockefeller grant that had been held up by over zealous Homeland Security officers in the U.S.A.

In addition to ET there are two other major environmental groups in Tobago, Save Our Sea Turtles Tobago (SOS Tobago) and the Buccoo Reef Trust. The former organisation had been formed from younger ET volunteers who had decided to create a dedicated group to raise awareness of the island's turtle population and breeding sites and to participate in beach

⁷⁴⁸ The Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists club was founded in 1891 by the grandfather of the Tobago branch's founder, the respected Trinidadian naturalist and one time collaborator of David Attenborough, David Rooks.

⁷⁴⁹ Changed and formally re-launched in 1996

⁷⁵⁰ COPE is a national NGO and CBO umbrella group that has dealt with environmental issues since its foundation in 1989

⁷⁵¹ This donation was anonymous but was traced to the CEO of the Time Warner group who owned a holiday home on the island.

⁷⁵² This was subsequently completed by ET's newly recruited and enthusiastic Office Manager. The survey provided a map of waste water treatment systems in Charlotteville as well as the results of a questionnaire on public knowledge of waste water treatment. See, Singh, H and Sookneran-Maharaj, R. *Charlotteville Household Survey Report: Tobago Wastewater Disposal System Improvement Program Pilot Project: Charlotteville, Tobago, Collette River* Environment Tobago July 25th 2007

⁷⁵³ At that time the only salaried staff member

patrols during breeding season. The Buccoo Reef Trust has proved an altogether more controversial body, founded by a local politician and businessman who had originally served on the ET board of Directors, prior to an acrimonious split⁷⁵⁴. The Buccoo Reef Trust makes quite a contrast to ET. With its high tech diving equipment, cameras and a film editing suite, foreign and Trinidadian staff, plentiful funding and contacts with international volunteer groups. One of the Trust's directors defined the Trust as, "a science based organisation to furnish empirical data on Tobago's reefs"⁷⁵⁵. The Trust focuses primarily on the numerous marine conservation issues that impact on the island's reefs and in particular that at Buccoo and the adjacent Bon Accord Lagoon. It is also involved in promoting watershed management.

The Trust has been the subject of considerable criticism partly because of its original funding sources. The trust was originally funded by Angostura Holdings Ltd. Part of one of the major Trinidad based regional conglomerates, Angostura, a company in turn controlled by a major real estate developer with Tobago interests, Colonial Life Investment Company (CLICO)⁷⁵⁶. When I first encountered the Trust, during a preliminary field visit in 2004, a presentation by members to a local history and heritage conference descended into outspoken allegations and accusations. Since then the Buccoo Reef trust has diversified its funding to a certain extent and pursued a series of projects, working with a business backed tourism NGO to install Reef buoys for yachts, a study of sea moss farming potential and a major Reef mapping exercise backed by Coral Quay International. Accusations that the organisation is a corporate fig leaf persist in

⁷⁵⁴ It must be stressed that this was not his view of the matter. It was felt by some on the ET board that he had left because of personal disagreements and used his connections to set up a new group that incorporated many ideas discussed privately in ET board meetings. These included a long standing campaign to establish a marine research and education centre at Buccoo. The THA decided to incorporate this proposal into their plans for a campus of the recently founded University of Trinidad and Tobago in the island. This had the effect of stripping the trust of a major policy goal and producing a degree of schadenfreude amongst some long term ET activists.

⁷⁵⁵ Interview Director Buccoo Reef Trust 20/11/06

⁷⁵⁶ Backed by CLICO, Angostura is currently planning to develop a massive 700 room resort in South West Tobago on the Buccoo and portions of the Golden Grove Estate. CLICO's investment banking arm's exposure to the US sub prime real estate bubble led, in February 2009, to its emergency bailout by the government of Trinidad and Tobago. The Golden Grove development's status is consequently uncertain. CLICO's sponsorship of tourism events in Tobago, such as the Plymouth jazz festival, has been withdrawn and the cancellation of these events is expected to lead to a decline in room bookings and consequent lay offs in the hotels sector. There is similar uncertainty over the Buccoo Reef Trust's funding. The Golden Grove development's EIA was submitted in 2004 and has proved highly controversial in Tobago. Suggestions that developers will be able to build a series of ponds to compensate for Mangrove loss have been met with scepticism by local campaigners not to mention local resentment at what is widely perceived as a land grab (272ha) by a major Trinidadian firm. EPAS Consultants Limited *Estates of Golden Grove and Buccoo Development Project: Non Technical Summary of Environmental Impact Statement* November 2004

Buccoo Village and beyond, despite the Trust's assertions to the contrary⁷⁵⁷. Unlike Environment Tobago the Buccoo Reef Trust has no local volunteer base and might be viewed as being an academic tourism entrepreneur as much as an NGO⁷⁵⁸. The Buccoo Reef Trust also appears to have been damaged in the eyes of the public, other NGOs and the THA through its association with a project led by researchers from The University of East Anglia in the late 1990s. This project raised the ire of THA planners for what they deemed a spectacular ignorance of local history, livelihoods and resource conflicts⁷⁵⁹. This was especially so given the amount of time that stakeholder groups spent being told about the importance of traditional knowledge and perspectives⁷⁶⁰. Several environmentalists and officials felt that some of the

⁷⁵⁷ A rather cagey denial and cross examination to try and discover who in Buccoo, ET or the THA was behind these accusations suggested to me that the Buccoo Reef Trust's issues clearly aren't just a matter of gossip. One ET director reported a phone conversation with one of their counterparts at the Trust, "They call me up the other day and say 'we hear you don't trust us' they say we've been spreading rumours about us yeah? Well its true a couple of our Board don't trust them because they have their administrative costs met by CLICO (Caribbean Life Investment Corporation, the body that owns Angostura) where as we have to go gettin a grant for every little thing we do. Buccoo Reef has always been complaining how they don't fit wid the community and I say of course not, you're a bunch o' bloody white guys what ya expectin". Interview ET Director 13/09/06

⁷⁵⁸ For a discussion of Academic Tourism see, Mowforth, Martin and Munt Ian. *Tourism and Sustainability: Development and the New Tourism in the Third World* 2nd Ed. Routledge London 2006:205-207

⁷⁵⁹ Major concerns included the researchers assumptions that Reef Boat operators were representative of the community, an exercise in which bemused fishermen were confronted with the Latin names of fish, a failure to tell participants that there was actually no official guarantee that anything would result from the project other than the warm feeling of involvement, a failure to include representatives from major hotels and businesses as stakeholders as they were deemed to be outside the traditional community despite being to blame for a proportion of the sewage discharge into Bon Accord Lagoon, the euphemistic use of the phrase resource conflict to describe relations in the area after a fisherman had been shot dead by a guard at Pigeon Point Resort for trying to gain access to the (public) beach, openly discussing salary arrangements in earshot of THA employees on a fraction of the amount and assumptions about the ease with which local residents can move from fishing to tourism. This last point especially annoyed one planner I interviewed who felt that any idea of environmental valuation must be aware of the legislative and policy framework regarding training and employment. To him it seemed that, "the stakeholder guys" just assumed anyone traditional and poor could just wake up change careers and be grateful. One environmentalist remarked, "Dat bloody ridiculous lot, dem knew nuttin". Quite. A more discrete and detailed account of this project and its difficulties can be found in Mukhida, Farah. *Opportunities and Constraints of Co-Management: Case Studies of the Buccoo Reef Marine Park and the Speyside Reefs Marine Park, Tobago*. FES Outstanding Graduate Paper Series Vol. 8 No. 2 2003

⁷⁶⁰ This research found its way into a peculiar text on coastal zone management. Filled to bursting with flow diagrams and guidelines for discerning stakeholder priorities the text is interspersed with solipsistic comments on the subjectivity of nature for traditional communities. In a bizarre twist the neo pagan and druidic objections to Seahenge being excavated by archaeologists for preservation are contrasted to the resource conflicts amongst Buccoo's Reef tour operators, presumably also traditional, indigenous and coastally situated. See, Brown, Katrina. Tomkins, Emma L. Adger, W Neil. *Making Waves: Integrating Coastal Conservation and Development*. Earthscan London 2002

suspicion of foreign researchers and consultants stemmed from this experience and its fallout⁷⁶¹.

While the Buccoo Reef Trust and SOS concentrated on coastal flora and fauna ET focused on terrestrial issues. Environment Tobago has had regular successes as an advocacy body, intervening after construction was begun on a hotel at Kings Bay that lacked planning permission and getting a moratorium on sand mining from beaches⁷⁶², not to mention campaigning against the dumping of medical waste at the Studley Park landfill⁷⁶³. Founder members admit a certain tempering of enthusiasm after their early “rabid environmentalism”, jumping in front of bulldozers during the airport expansion. Since this period in the mid 1990s, Trinidad and Tobago has begun to update its environmental management legislation⁷⁶⁴. Against this backdrop of broader acceptance, ET has been steadily able to win regular face to face meetings with local politicians including otherwise closed events⁷⁶⁵. Despite this there is still a suspicion about THA official’s attitudes toward Environment Tobago. The hospital waste case led to THA officials claiming that the materials shown to news crews had been planted by

⁷⁶¹ ET’s education officer, with whom I was discussing the difficulties this presented remarked that school children doing environmental surveys for homework even encountered suspicion. There was a broad feeling in Buccoo and surrounding villages that participation in anything should in future be contingent on some discernable benefit. I tried to secure a comment from the three lead members of the research team regarding some of these questions. I received a copy of a British Academy funding proposal from one seeking to illustrate the proposed outputs of a further project on climate change impacts and the resilience of ecotourism. There was no response from two others.

⁷⁶² This activity remains an issue as does aggregates extraction from rivers. There is some level of official collusion in these activities with DNRE vehicles and plant being used in one instance at the Goldsborough River. Environment Tobago raised the matter in early April 2007 after being notified by local members. The permanent secretary of the DNRE claimed a pump had been fitted for the irrigation of state lands.

⁷⁶³ A success trumpeted by a collection of newspaper cuttings on an office notice board and indicated by a large letter sign stating that, “Advocacy Works!”

⁷⁶⁴ For an account of the new legislation and Environmental Management Authority in Trinidad and Tobago see, Fairhead, J and Leach, M. Science, *Society and Power: Environmental Knowledge and Policy in West Africa and the Caribbean* Cambridge 2003:135-136. The role of the EMA is often contested in the media of Trinidad and Tobago as well as questioned by activists. Setting the public record straight in an interview with a national paper the CEO of the Authority stressed, “the emphasis on management and not an environmental protection agency”. To Manage Not Protect *Business Guardian* Thursday 14/09/06 It is worth pointing out that the creation of the EMA was a conditionality of continued World Bank engagement with Trinidad and Tobago. In the opinion of some activists this explains why the EMA is not to be viewed as a serious regulatory body.

⁷⁶⁵ These included discussions held regarding the delayed south west Tobago sewage treatment plant. The faecal coliform bacteria levels revealed by water testing in the late 1990s are considered too sensitive to publicly acknowledge by a THA eager not to destroy tourism overnight. All the environmental groups have been pressing for some years for a sewage treatment facility but at the time of my research only a tender document had been prepared. In the Division for Natural Resources and the Environment (DNRE) library I encountered a confidential 1991 World Health Organisation (WHO) memorandum that warned of a possible cholera outbreak in the island’s south west if a sewage system capable of handling local and visitor waste was not introduced

ET after ET's President declined to participate in a publicity damage control exercise. Similarly the involvement of environmental groups in the consultation process for the construction of the L'Anse Formi to Charlotteville link road didn't prevent the contractor ignoring an EU funded EIA and causing major mudslides and subsidence⁷⁶⁶. Official mistrust has apparently been exacerbated by the role of expatriate tourism businesses in ET and the fact that the current President was an outspoken estate owner. There was plenty of co-operation between frontline staff and those working with environmental NGOs and between the NGOs themselves in spite of several notable personality clashes between directors. The official mistrust remained evident as ET's education officer recounted in a story concerning a children's play area a short walk from the ET office. A local business had used the area for discarding scrap metal and the play area had fallen into disrepair, unused save for a couple of tethered goats. A suggestion was made that the site be repaired and that all ET would initially need was permission from the relevant THA division. The reception was enthusiastic but no project was ever given permission and reminders were met with curt dismissals. This careful delineation of official authority was not unique to the experience of ET or the Buccoo Reef trust and many private individuals reported experiencing a similar Jekyll and Hyde attitude from THA officials⁷⁶⁷.

Although priding itself on public engagement ET has a number of members who are not actively involved in projects and many have allowed membership to lapse. The board of directors is also not immune, with only a small cadre making regular appearances for monthly board meetings as well as maintaining close contact with the office⁷⁶⁸. The board and many active sympathisers contain a marked preponderance of business figures and professionals but the opinions of these individuals are perhaps less homogenous than this would seem to

⁷⁶⁶ THA officials did eventually agree to be shown a video of the resulting damage to both the hillside bordering the forest reserve and the offshore reefs along the north coast. This road was never designed to be paved for reasons of geological instability and cost that were outlined in 1950s plans. The project did bring a short term boost to employment in isolated north coast villages but its long term utility remains highly questionable. Some staff from the Forestry Division were convinced that in addition to coastal impacts there had been a major impact on several terrestrial species as well as the slope drainage. Their problem was that they lacked the resources and the pre existing base line data to prove the point to senior managers and politicians not to mention the road contractor and the Infrastructure and Public Works Department.

⁷⁶⁷ Sometimes referred to amongst activists as 'THA mode'. Many visitors from Trinidad were at pains to style this peculiar switch from cheerful openness to frosty hostility in both personal and business relations as something peculiarly Tobagonian.

⁷⁶⁸ ET has a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and 11 other directors. Problems surrounding attendance at meetings are nothing new and the key role of a small number of active members can clearly be seen in the accounts of students who have done work placements with the organisation and deposited them in the ET library see, Peerbooms, Lenny. *Placement Report* Netherlands Institute of Tourism and Transport Studies 2000

suggest. One director was frequently named by informants around the island as a leading environmentalist. I was introduced to him initially by those who were keen that I see an authentically Tobagonian environmental campaigner. He made clear his spiritual attachment to nature as a religious responsibility toward God's creation and contributed poems and prayers to the organisation's newsletters and meetings⁷⁶⁹. When interviewing activists about the origins of their involvement with the organisation, similar personalised accounts of obligation emerged. Frequently these would be combined with accounts of personal property and stewardship. One active director who was already involved with the local committee of the Red Cross and worked as an IT trainer highlighted his experience running a small garden growing vegetables and flowers. He'd worked in an earlier local group that had collapsed. He placed the blame on a lack of governmental engagement with nature, "they just interested in paying people to pick up litter, not to educate them not to drop it. We spend so much time on one and not the other, you have to help people to better the world that we and our children live in. I got fed up with people in power who talk about stopping the wrong doing and who then are the ones responsible for it". In his opinion environmentalism was a logical extension of a, "life of service"⁷⁷⁰. Unlike those who ran larger businesses he saw it as the responsibility of government to fund NGOs like ET that were doing morally ordained work but that this was denied because ET repeatedly exposed the wrong doing and bacchanal of government.

This commentary highlights a stance on government labour projects that was often contradicted by other members of ET. One director routinely condemned lengthy road construction work and the environmental consequences of sloppy execution as being a part of, "their political culture" a reference in part to the supposedly African characteristics of the poor and the means by which these are exploited by government. Those involved in tourism as well as ET often drew similar conclusions about the origins of poor environmental stewardship. With one land owner and hotelier there was a constant balancing act between positions of public service, personal self reliance, parochial stewardship and occasional descents into an

⁷⁶⁹ This question of stewardship was for this individual one of saying, "In Tobago our whole history is global but with sustainability we have to ask how much is too much?" The limits of growth and the boundaries of moral society were seen as inseparable. This individual worked alongside the THA and the experience often made him half jokingly suggest that Tobago needed a Green Party. This was a marked contrast to other members who believed that becoming embroiled in the political process would distract from the goals of conservation and sustainability upon which ET prides itself. Constant accusations of, "playin politics" have served to convince those campaigning for what they believe to be morally desirable that the democratic process is somehow irrevocably tainted.

⁷⁷⁰ Interview ET director 24/04/07

invective, “I swear you’d have to go back to Africa to understand how these people think”, a view that mirrored late 19th Century reports on bush fires in neighbouring Trinidad⁷⁷¹.

The debates around the direction the organisation’s policies and advocacy campaigns should take tend, at least in public form, not to reflect these tensions. Articles and press statements use neutral language culled from international and regional policy documents and the internet to provide a global perspective on conservation⁷⁷². This is not so much a case of classic West Indian mimicry as an active attempt to internationalise an issue in a manner that serves a dual purpose. Such articles and statements build an image of a united global struggle to save the environment but also serve to keep conservation separate from more contentious local political questions. Yet such political questions frequently underlined debate behind the scenes. These sometimes filter over into press articles as admonitions that link environmental degradation to a perceived rise in immorality or supposed aspects of the national character⁷⁷³. It must be stressed that this is often the result of specific intentions on the part of authors writing under the ET banner in the local press. There is a genuine belief that the local political process is failing to meet their desired goals and as such a genuine desire to find another road to success⁷⁷⁴. At no time did I get the sense that ET was the passive relay node of global scientific and environmental discourses despite the international sources of much of the argument and data in ET’s publicity. Indeed ET’s staff tended to treat national and regional workshops for NGOs and key stakeholders as something of a chore, especially when it necessitated a ferry journey to Trinidad. The view was that such events were necessary for making funding contacts to secure their local objectives and that fashionable jargon and power

⁷⁷¹ I had several spirited and lengthy discussions about this topic with the individual in question. When actually shown the function of these earlier documents and the problems they had raised for conservation practices they began to change tack to condemning the ecological legacy of the plantocracy.

⁷⁷² Articles like Lalsingh, Gian. Vanishing Species *Tobago News* 20/04/07 and Singh, Hema Forests and Climate *Tobago News* 9/03/07. These articles draw on established popular media such as Al Gore’s ‘Inconvenient Truth’ documentary to provide facts figures and justifications for conservation policies. Articles in ETs newsletter raise similar global concerns with one edition containing an article on biodiversity which talked at length about the decline of the UK house sparrow, *Environment Tobago Newsletter* February 2000

⁷⁷³ One article following a litter picking exercise bemoaned the inability of Trinbagonians to complete a day’s work at the beach without drinking. The writer was a UWI researcher who had just returned from fieldwork in St Kitts and sought to contrast the sincere ecological principles of that island’s inhabitants with the frivolous fete minded activities of her homeland. Sewlal, Jo-Anne Nina. Activities in the Caribbean *Tobago News* 23/02/07

⁷⁷⁴ This conceptual approach to education is very similar to the one found in planning documents which speaks of altering mindsets and sensitising cultures for transformative ends.

point presentations would simply need to be endured⁷⁷⁵. A similar muted reception to international development jargon could be heard amongst guest house owners committed to ET. Some questioned the conservation commitments of fellow members of the Chamber of Commerce to genuine conservation. Concepts such as responsible tourism and sustainable tourism, derived from academic commentary and enthusiastically promoted by many hoteliers, are viewed with some suspicion as being distinct from what they saw as the authentic sustainability advocated by ET. In this case ET members tended to hold similar views to some of the more sceptical public servants about the potential of the tourist industry⁷⁷⁶.

⁷⁷⁵ One member of ET staff had worked in the UK in the hotels sector before leaving similar work in Tobago to pursue a passion for sea turtle protection. The preparation for such workshops, stuffing Tee Shirts and publicity materials into the back of the car, prompted him to cheerily make frequent use of a favoured colloquial expression acquired in the UK, "It's a bunch of bollocks", before adding that with luck some good would come from it on the funding front.

⁷⁷⁶ There were of course marked differences from the disdain for foreign investors found in some government bodies. ET members espoused a clear commitment to eco-tourism (regardless of the land ownership issue which was once more "this fella London playin politics") but certainly did not see a tourist industry of the size advocated by some in the business sector as being sustainable. ET's blog carried some vociferous criticisms of Cove Industrial Estate that explicitly support tourism, "The tourism sector's needs are benign but inattention to it can decide the future of the Tobago 'scenery' just as much as if an adverse natural event were to impact on our shores Sustainable tourism should remain the primary thrust of this island, in that it carries almost ten thousand persons on the path of their daily bread. It must be noted to the island administrators have already coerced retirees, youth and others, even 'foreigners' to invest in the Tobago tourism plant... ..It is unconscionable to create an 'orphan' sector and dabble in an expensive and unsustainable area for which we have no natural asset base" (Commerce and Unsustainable Development 17/10/08). The blog started after I left Tobago but other posts similarly support the observation that ET seeks to advocate an approach to environmentalism that regards the normal democratic process as a failure. In terms of development blog posts, like newspaper articles, push for a return to a harmonious and utopian agrarian past and a small and simple tourism sector, "this sounds familiar to anyone over twenty years of age" (Environment Is the Holy Grail 07/10/08). The posts readily adopted ideas about environmental degradation and the industrial developments they oppose being about the transfer of goods and services from rich countries to poor countries. Global processes here trump local ones as determinants of development and what is advocated becomes inevitable and natural and what is opposed is portrayed as ignorant human meddling, "Commerce is unforgiving, in that it follows an inexorable path. In the same way that the food chain defines the scenery (as such) of any landscape, so to will commerce define the Tobago we will see in the future, regardless of any group who may think differently" (Commerce and Unsustainable Development 17/10/08) The relationship between tourism as an antidote to environmental degradation and as a source of livelihoods was ambiguous in ET's public messages. If anything there was a feeling that there were for example too many tour guides and that sight had been lost of conservation goals in the pursuit of livelihoods objectives as well as pressure from airlines and cruise firms. This contrasted with an element in the hotels sector that saw the best justification for tourism as its employment and foreign exchange earning potential. This was especially so when dealing with a government less than enamoured with the industry and its historical and contemporary connotations of foreign control. Tensions can be seen in the research commissioned by groups associated with this perspective. One study pressed for an increased capacity of A1 (high end) rooms in a resort setting combined with a clear regulatory regime for smaller businesses seen to have expanded in an unplanned manner. It was an approach that favoured the all inclusive resort model provided that such resorts maintained suitable ties to local businesses. Such ties are therefore desirably responsible but do not necessarily imply a significantly wider distribution of economic benefits still less an adherence to conservation (for example

In many ways Environment Tobago is a microcosm of public debates in Trinidad and Tobago. The office frequently draws visits from concerned citizens, keen activists, business figures and occasionally visiting researchers and journalists. The phone rings regularly with governmental and non governmental bodies often seeking information about pollution and habitat data. The Environment Tobago library acts as a clearing station for a broad range of documents on everything from land law and Environmental Impact Assessment copies to education packs and BBC nature videos and DVDs. Underlying this activity is conversation that draws together local conservation questions with various national political issues and paradoxically a desire to keep these as publicly distinct as possible. Amid the cheery if often somewhat hectic daily atmosphere there is a clearly discernable sense of mission and obligation. Conservation is a moral obligation whether the emphasis is on the practises of hotels, the disposal of domestic waste water, government projects gone awry or the commitment to protecting local flora and fauna. Conservation is also a moral judgement about others that determines the authenticity and sincerity of their actions and inactions. With this sense of obligation, and the obligation it places upon other individuals, comes a spectrum of entangled belief and experience. In the case of Tobago property and the public performance of ownership have become integral aspects of debates about the past present and future. This has occurred to the point where no discussion of conservation can occur without some throwaway comment linking more anodyne global commentary to the immediate politics of life in the island or the wider Caribbean. The emphasis must therefore shift to the nexus of belief and practice that has so massively transformed not just the economic and social lives of Tobagonians but also the landscape they live in and the existence of the flora and fauna with which they share it.

Forever Blowing Bubbles: The Ethics and Practicalities of Ecotourism

Tourism and more specifically ecotourism have marked an intriguing point of convergence for debates regarding the moral character and inspiration of development projects. Even if the branding exercise for Tobago seemed to be targeted at a broader sense of nascent national prestige its slogan certainly found acceptance amongst businesses and NGOs with an eye to

there were only two members of the Green Globe scheme certified in Tobago, both owned by ET members, of which neither were major resorts). The report referred to is Abdool, Afzal and Carey, Benjamin. *Making All Inclusives More Inclusive: A Research Project on the Economic Impact of the All Inclusive Hotel Sector in Tobago for The Travel Foundation*. Hibiscus Consulting and Dunira Strategy 2004 The Environment Tobago blog (accessed 01/11/08) was originally available at <http://blog.environmenttobago.net/> but is no longer active.

promoting a particular view of the island⁷⁷⁷. Broader accounts of ecotourism from around the Caribbean and the wider world have frequently been sceptical of such endeavours. Journalists have questioned the distribution of benefits and supposed distinctiveness of ecotourism as opposed to other kinds of product⁷⁷⁸. Academics have traditionally focused on issues of authenticity raised by travel and consumption sometimes with scepticism about the motives of visitors and sometimes with reference to a broader socio-cultural bubble enclosing the particular acts of consumption involved⁷⁷⁹. Connected to these concerns have been others that link ideas of space, nature and discovery so frequently bound up with perceptions of international travel and theories of modernity⁷⁸⁰. Responses to these often critical accounts of travel and its context have tried to add a degree of depth by exploring the way the tourist industry impacts on the lives of those who work within it⁷⁸¹. Tourism and niche tourist products have become a proving ground for a whole range of moralistic accounts of behaviour by visitors and locals, governmental and non governmental agencies and above all, competing attitudes to theories of modernity and the desirable future.

⁷⁷⁷ This view is well underlined by a public diatribe by the Chief Secretary of the THA that, "I am suggesting that we in Tobago do in fact take this paradise for granted. It is not surprising that a lot of times we appreciate Tobago when we are showing it off to visitors rather than when we are enjoying it ourselves". A description of the island as a, "priceless piece of real estate and therefore it places a tremendous responsibility on us to manage it, to preserve it, to enhance it" should be seen as somewhat double edged in light of the foreign land debate. It is certainly a valuation of nature as resource but it is one underpinned by a differing intent from that espoused by ecotourism advocates. This speech reported in, London: Tobagonians only love Tobago when showing it off. *Tobago News* 02/03/07

⁷⁷⁸ The oft cited classic being Pattullo, Polly. *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean* 2nd Ed. Latin American Bureau London 2005

⁷⁷⁹ Tourist spotting as some have dubbed it has been outlined as a project of future research in tourism studies by anthropologists. This approach seeks to explore the motives of consumption, especially in regard to niche tourist products like ecotourism and to contrast the claims of advocates with the experiences, motives and behaviour of visitors. For this outline agenda see, Stronza, Amanda. Anthropology of Tourism: Forging New Ground for Ecotourism and Other Alternatives in *Annual Review of Anthropology* No.30 261-283 2001. The tourist bubble and its applicability to supposedly new trends in travel has its origins in Marx's notion of commodity fetishism. Its expansion to ecotourism can be found in Carrier, James G. & Macleod, Donald V.L. Bursting the Bubble: The Socio-Cultural Context of Ecotourism in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* Vol.11 No.2 2005. For concerns over the role of authenticity in tourist consumption see, West, Paige & Carrier, James G. Ecotourism and Authenticity: Getting Away from It All? In *Current Anthropology* Vol.45 No.4 2004

⁷⁸⁰ For example, Redclift, Michael. A Convulsed and Magic Country: Tourism and resource Histories in the Mexican Caribbean in *Environment and History* Vol.11 No.1 2005. These concerns are central also to the trajectory of analysis found in Mowforth, Martin & Munt, Ian *Tourism and Sustainability: Development and New Tourism in the Third World* 2nd Ed. Routledge London 2003. In the case of Tobago the obvious distinction from neighbouring Trinidad has added an extra element to older dependency theory critiques of tourism that conjoins easily with concerns about space and identity. See, Weaver, D.B. Peripheries of the Periphery: Tourism in Tobago and Barbuda in *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol.25 No.2 1998

⁷⁸¹ For this seemingly valedictory version of tourism, presented as verbatim life history transcripts with little commentary, see, Gmelch, George. *Behind the Smile: The Working Lives of Caribbean Tourism* Indiana University Press Bloomington and Indianapolis 2003

Getting tourists and other visitors to make strikingly crass and ill informed pronouncements about their surroundings is like shooting fish in a barrel. Despite this it is something which researchers rarely seem to have tired of even when presenting such statements within the life histories of those involved⁷⁸². There is something of an element of professional elitism to this practice. After all, this mainly serves to underline that most visitors, whatever their purpose of travel, rarely read as much in advance as the average researcher embarking on fieldwork⁷⁸³. Accounts of these statements do offer an excellent opportunity to explore ecotourism and tourism more generally as moral concepts and the relation which these concepts exist in vis-à-vis others⁷⁸⁴.

My first encounter of this kind was with a pair of film students from a UK university who were in Tobago to make a documentary about ecotourism with the co-operation of the THA⁷⁸⁵. I met them at the ET office where they were interviewing the organisation's President about ecotourism on the island. Their interview questions dealt with defining and achieving sustainability and tallied well with the stated goals of ET as did their scepticism of tourism

⁷⁸² This is the approach taken in Carrier's Jamaican fieldwork which looked at the competing narratives of resource management at the Montego Bay marine park. The stories of expatriate environmentalists involved in park management stand in contrast to those of fishers. Here the contrast is used to underline the pernicious impact of what is dubbed a 'western neoliberal' system of valuation on both groups and which obscures the personal meanings they attach to the landscape of Montego Bay. See, Carrier, James G. *Biography, Ecology, Political Economy: Seascape and Conflict in Jamaica* in Stewart, Pamela J. & Strathern, Andrew Eds. *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives* Pluto Press London 2003

⁷⁸³ To put this in context one of my supervisors during the stage of preparing a research question to apply for funding stated that, "in order to contemplate writing a thesis you need to have consulted between 4000 and 14000 sources"!

⁷⁸⁴ This means that the agency of tourists is not demoted to a component of a particular moral scheme and nor is it situated in an assumed set of practices and structures. There is nothing innately Foucauldian about viewing the exercise of agency as the performance of virtue, in the case of tourist consumption this is characterized as an 'alternative hedonism'. I say this because critics who have made this point in defence of agency are assuming that virtue is about sincere efforts to transcend the self, "I would definitely want to question myself whether an account in terms of practices of virtuous display and self distinction can provide the whole of the story, in part because of an intuitive sense that those who turn to green and ethical consumption will be rather less likely than most to be interested in using consumption in a purely emulative mode; but also because, in many cases the 'consumption' involved is a non-consumption, a matter of withholding purchasing power, and leaves little clear material trace" (Soper, K. in Soper, K. and Trentmann, F. Eds. 2008:196-197). Such an account of authentic virtue with reference to environmentalism is complicated by the activities of environmental groups and ecotourism enterprises. These are either not sincere environmentally aware people, which is doubtful, or they simply hold a differing set of beliefs about virtuous conduct to those outlined here as being authentically virtuous. I would argue virtue is nominally whatever people want it to be in relation to what they see as vice and this is as true for consumption practices as anything else. See, Soper, K. 'Alternative Hedonism' and the Citizen-Consumer in Soper, K and Trentmann, F. Eds. *Citizenship and Consumption* Palgrave London 2008

⁷⁸⁵ There was perhaps a hint of jealousy on my part at the exuberance with which difficult to pin down THA officials would flock to the camera.

businesses which adopted ecologically themed nomenclature but stopped short of embracing certification schemes like Green Globe. One of the duo was the son of Trinidadian professionals who had emigrated to the UK the other was from northern England. We met a few days later at a local pizza franchise in Scarborough to discuss their film. In explaining the topic of the film they were bluntly to the point, “It boils down to a question of ignorance in both islands. You see what these people are doing with their resources and wonder, what the fuck? They have everything, what other people would kill for and they do nothing with it... In Trinidad and here they spend 5 years messing it up, argue for another 5, complain for 15 and then they start talking and start again the same. It’s that whole postmodern thing like in the UK I suppose”. Chiming in with her colleague the second student remarked incredulously, “People don’t know what they have here, everyone we have interviewed talks about education like people need to learn about wildlife being important”. Both stressed that for them their documentary was about family, children the future of the planet and the need to preserve for future generations. The incredulity of this pair, like many visitors and some locals was that anyone would even think Tobago had a history, still less that it was home to the oldest protected rainforest on the planet, “You wouldn’t find that out from anyone around here” he scoffed. Ecotourism in their documentary was about converting people to smarten themselves and surroundings in presumably sustainable ways, “Well like people here don’t know how to present themselves, you see shacks and places and the shops are like way poor. You know as a visitor I find they make me a bit wary. Its like they need help marketing what they have... they need this development to make the real Tobago more accessible”⁷⁸⁶. A concept of Ecotourism as a path to development as presented in this encounter unites a wide range of beliefs on the part of the two film students. Salient are questions of property, specifically the obligations of stewardship that must be openly performed in order for ownership to be deemed ecologically valid.

The views expressed are typical of the tendency toward resource valuation as a prime motive for conservation, frequently dubbed with the sobriquet neo-liberalism, itself something of a moral pejorative term as much as the appellation of a given ideology⁷⁸⁷. The notion of a real

⁷⁸⁶ Interview UK film crew 07/09/06

⁷⁸⁷ For example Carrier’s account of fieldwork in Jamaica makes this connection and the subsequent connection to a uniquely western notion of nature. This should be treated with some scepticism. Elsewhere Carrier has endorsed the view of the Caribbean as a site for studying modernity and consumption in a troubling manner. In describing and endorsing Miller’s work in Trinidad Carrier describes it as an opportunity to, “study modern capitalist society in a region that lacked the historical depth and baggage of Western Europe” (Carrier in Trentman Ed. 2006:287). In the example of Jamaica he simply deploys the concept of family land as a cultural trait that explains the dissatisfaction of fishers

Tobago, an authentic space and culture was expressed forcefully, the problem with this desirable authenticity, so key to the ecotourism experience in the view of the filmmakers, was that they couldn't find it in an accessibly consumable form⁷⁸⁸. This is an illustration of the logical outcome of holding particular beliefs about how others should perform economic activities, the obligations inherent to any concept of conservation and the inevitable desirability of sustainability⁷⁸⁹. What this suggests is that ecotourism is not particularly unique alongside other forms of recreational travel. At the same time it is by no means insincere. Worryingly comments like those made by the UK film crew are passionately expressed with the full weight of moral authority⁷⁹⁰.

Similar arguments were made at an Earth Day conference by a director of the Buccoo Reef trust, an English expatriate fisheries scientist whose specialism was in Canadian fisheries, but

who have lost out to Jamaica's marine parks. See, Carrier, James G. Biography, Ecology, Political Economy: Seascape and Conflict in Jamaica in Stewart, Pamela J. & Strathern, Andrew Eds. *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives* London 2003 and Carrier, J. The Limits of Culture: Political Economy and the Anthropology of Consumption in Trentman, F. Ed *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World* Berg Oxford 2006

⁷⁸⁸ This is not solely the case for ecotourism. In another example of morally desirable approaches to development in Tobago one researcher looking for women's microcredit schemes was despondent at not finding any that lacked government support. Having begun the project with the view that Tobago was a place with, "a history of mutual co-operation... where economic self-reliance is virtually exalted" (Levine 2003:372), and having failed to discern that something might be glaringly wrong with this paradox and its possible impact on THA policy, she preceded to vent her spleen against the THA. Critiquing a THA project aimed at women entrepreneurs for which she had volunteered to act as a consultant, despite misgivings that the project did not meet her expectations of what, in relation to the Grameen bank case, a microcredit scheme should look like. She took the view that, "Yet rather than offering access to small loans, a practice that is intended to instil lending practices, recipients of the REACH Project would receive 'handouts' in the form of government grants. Tobagonians are not averse to government handouts; in fact they are virtually conditioned to wait for government assistance" (Levine 2003:378). Clearly this American student encountered a morally repugnant form of state intervention that contradicted her expectations of what a development project should be as well as her expectations regarding what the historical inheritance of the Caribbean has been. This account of a THA project also contains an illustration (but far from an endorsement) of the project's more plausible intent as a desperate government led attempt to put locals into a stronger position in an economy deemed to be falling under expatriate and Trinidadian control. One supposes that miniscule handouts to vulnerable small businesses would have been acceptable if they had been called loans and made by private entrepreneurs or better yet external agencies. See, Levine, Cheryl A. *Mediating the Model: Women's Microenterprise and Microcredit in Tobago, West Indies*. Thesis University of South Florida 2003

⁷⁸⁹ More simply put, Tobagonians were not fulfilling the role of colourful and compliant natives.

⁷⁹⁰ This is a little more complex than simple eco-centricism. It may be reminiscent of infamous examples like the WWF slogan, "He's destroying his own Rainforest. To stop him, do you send in the army or an anthropologist?" (A 1994 WWF campaign slogan) but the question of intention is somewhat different. After all this was not an advertisement in a national newspaper in another country. The film students clearly saw the inhabitants of Tobago as the principal agents and principal beneficiaries of the comments they made and would probably have found a sympathetic audience amongst many in government and the NGO movement regarding remarks about energy use, work ethic and personal appearance. It would appear that the statements they made were designed to show an intellectual awareness of development issues and they were performed through the arrangement of desirable terminology.

who had happily accommodated to studying the Buccoo Reef. He tempered his invective against local misuse of resources with repeated references to the precautionary principle and various international treaties. Tobagonians needed to be precautionary as well as improving themselves and respecting their resources was the general gist. His speech came following a film presentation in which fishers and tour boat operators were recruited to repeat Trust goals in suitably fetching dialect form to the camera. Meeting with a degree of scepticism over the vague pronouncements he had made he responded, "These are scientists, we are scientists, not crazy doom mongers, these are serious respected people"⁷⁹¹. It is tempting to use this as evidence of a discursive strategy to privilege scientific knowledge and accommodate other forms of knowledge as supporting evidence⁷⁹². But such temptations are all too easy given the climate in which tourism and conservation are discussed amongst researchers⁷⁹³. Such an analysis tends to privilege the consequences of a repeated form of utterance at the expense of

⁷⁹¹ This speech had actually begun with the words, "preservation and looking after our reefs is not just about protecting tourism and fisheries but about our heritage, it is a moral obligation". Guides and fishers were carefully prompted in these terms to connect the concepts of heritage and community, so crucial in the local politics of self representation, to the goals of the Buccoo Reef Trust. To underline the point about desirability, morality and divination the film was dedicated to, "Tobago's future". This presentation took place at the Earth Day 2007 Symposium (23rd April to 24th April) at the Tobago Hilton. The event had the Rumsfeldian subtitle, *Vanishing Species: State of Unknowing*. It was exclusively attended by Government, media and NGOs (incorporating some UWI students). One recent recruit to ET's staff was surprised that people employed to know something would have a 2 day conference about doing their jobs and then have a drinks party rather than doing them. Even so ET members were amongst the contributors and 'panel facilitators'.

⁷⁹² This was not just a statement of scientific certainty but a more familiar play for entitlement based on a particular series of practices and experiences with moral validity in relation to property and residence, "I've lived here for six years and dive in seldom visited spots" was another response offered to a question. It was asserted by this speaker that a swamp that was part of the Hilton site was cleaner since work began than before Hilton's landscaping programme. This rather missed the point being made by those who doubted the claim; that is that the Hilton itself was a form of pollution rather than necessarily a cause of pollution.

⁷⁹³ This refers to critiques of science and tourism as the discursive impositions of western modernity. There are vigorous assertions about the benefits of tourism and conservation that deny the legitimacy of attempts to condemn the discursive implications of travel and conservation. These can rely on equally problematic assertions of relativism. The argument is that tourism does not 'commoditize' culture and stage or diminish authenticity but builds identities, pride and the ever nebulous empowerment. These arguments tend to see tourism as potentially beneficial provided that culture is owned by its legitimate custodians even when it is marketed. This conclusion seems to rely less on its theoretical insight and more on its moral definition of concepts like progress, community and ownership. Certainly the motives of tourists and the types of inequality that underpin them are often downplayed. Endorsements of tourism can sometimes sound uniquely dismissive precisely because they present the case for tourism as that of an object endorsed by their informants. A researcher investigating ecotourism in Trinidad cast expatriate pioneers as agents of benevolent change, "bringing relief to a community which, since the 20s, has been in continuous decline". This benevolence won the plaudits of local residents, "Has tourism 'developed' Grande Riviere? The villagers, at any rate, believe so". See, Harrison, David. Cocoa, Conservation and Tourism: Grande Riviere, Trinidad. *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol.34 No.4 2007. For an overview from a perspective that combines that of researcher, entrepreneur and NGO activist and is highly critical of accounts like that of Mowforth and Munt see, Cole, Stroma. Beyond Authenticity and Commodification. *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol.34 No.4 2007

asking how someone came to make in the first instance, in this case by asking who can afford to spend time pontificating at two day long workshops followed by a free lunch.

There is a distinction to be made about the consequences of claims to the moral authority of sustainability, conservation or ecotourism and the personal logics that inspires such claims. When returning from a walk in Tobago's forest reserve I encountered a couple of lost and bedraggled middle aged American tourists. Offering them a lift to the next village they asked what I did and so I tried to explain as concisely as possible my project. The lady's eyes lit up, "You're working to understand their culture so they can make it more sustainable for the new century!" she exclaimed joyously. On the face of it this seems similar to the earlier examples. It transpired that her daughter was an anthropology student working in Nicaragua on the impact of tourism, she didn't pretend to understand but she was immensely proud of her daughter and by extension anyone doing something even loosely similar. One of the film crew had certainly been motivated by a sense of being partly Trinidadian and therefore obligated and entitled to condemn what he saw as wasteful behaviour. In contrast this lady was trying to make sense of a chance encounter in a tropical downpour in a rainforest based largely on what she recalled of accounts of her own child's experiences. The point of commonality between these examples is they are both illustrations of how people perform their beliefs in what they deem to be morally desirable. Researchers bemoaning the intrusion of tourists seem in part to be condemning what they see as morally undesirable and disguising it behind a borrowed politics of indigeneity or plain intellectual elitism. The origins of moral concepts are personal and complex and their grammatical structure is dynamically contingent on other moral concepts. The key similarity in each case is that the differing versions of tourism have something to say about the property, obligations and behaviour of others. To reiterate, the difference is one of underlying intention.

Alongside critiques of ecotourism's ethical underpinnings comes a consideration of whether claims about its economic viability ring true. In the case of the Caribbean tourist industry and especially in Tobago there has been quite a lag in adopting ecotourism as a marketing slogan. This has not stopped Tobago's Main Ridge reserve winning a UN backed ecotourism award⁷⁹⁴. Claims that ecotourism offers a way to make conservation pay through guided tours to visitors, whether neoliberal impositions or simple pragmatism, might actually not be true. Ecotourism in the case of Tobago is particularly troubling in this regard.

⁷⁹⁴ World's Leading Ecotourism Destination, 2003, 2004 and 2005.

At the time of my fieldwork there were approximately 35 qualified tour guides in the island and not all of these were involved in forest hikes. Other informants in government and private employment had previously worked as guides and used the job as a stepping stone to more lucrative and stable work. Their personal stories tended to reveal that this was far from an easy process and not one easily emulated. From the villages bordering the reserve there were barely over half a dozen persons actually employed as guides and this group worked to a rota system allocating visitors in turn when more than one guide was at the trail head. The experiences of these guides were indicative of the fluctuating fortunes of the tourist industry in Tobago.

The Main Ridge reserve in Tobago is deemed to be the island's main selling point as an environmentally friendly destination for holidaymakers. The nearest villages are Bloody Bay and Parlatuvier at the north side and the small town of Roxborough on the windward coast⁷⁹⁵. The area is deemed to be in need of special attention for economic rehabilitation and tourism has been high on the agenda. Beyond government works schemes the economic mainstay is fishing with some remaining agriculture including small quantities of cocoa. The principal access for visitors to Main Ridge is a series of trails on the Roxborough/Bloody Bay/Parlatuvier road which bisects the island. These traces are predominantly located along the road above Bloody Bay village. The two main trails are the Gilpen and Nipleg traces. The former is the route of the old cross island road which was altered during public works construction programmes in the 1950s. The movement of the road has led to the gradual relocation of Bloody Bay village. On lower stretches of the path it is possible to encounter the remains of house and garden plots in the undergrowth, although the Gilpen trace itself only reaches about 3.5km between a point in the reserve and an unmanned forestry hut and pit lavatory on a summit immediately above Bloody Bay. The route of the old road continues through the bush to a point where the coast road winds down to a bridge over the mouth of the Bloody Bay River. The Nipleg trace is more recent and was cut by the Forestry Division. This path runs roughly parallel to the road on the opposite side to Gilpen and its name is simply a reverse of that of the older path⁷⁹⁶.

⁷⁹⁵ But the villages of L'Anse Formi, Charlotteville, Speyside, Delaford and the tiny hamlets of Hermitage and Cambelton also border the reserve's Northern and Eastern portions.

⁷⁹⁶ There have been several official discussions about properly designing and maintaining the trail network but none has come to fruition at the present time. "The Forestry Section, Division of Agriculture, State Lands and Settlement, began maintaining the existing trails in the forest reserve around 1984. The trails have undergone limited improvement works. To date there is an absence of a definitive management structure. This phenomenon has limited the development potential of the

During my period of fieldwork Forestry Division staff was undergoing preparatory training on GIS for designing a new management plan and the THA was taking steps to upgrade the reserve's status as a protected area. Environment Tobago, the THA, tour guides and hunters all had a vested interest in some change to the reserve's status but all had differing ideas as to what should motivate that change and what the outcomes should be⁷⁹⁷. ET had serious reservations about the activities of tour guides in the forest and claimed to have evidence of groups as large as fifty persons being escorted along the Gilpen Trace and addressed through a bullhorn⁷⁹⁸. They had also been pressing for a moratorium on hunting in the reserve and ideally the island as a whole. Surveying the reserve was a priority for ET as there was severely limited information on the habitat and dynamics of various species in the area⁷⁹⁹. The reaction to these developments by the tour guides who operate on the Gilpen and Nipleg traces were mixed. The views they put forward illustrate the interaction between localised moral beliefs about the activities of tourists and government and the moral approaches to consumption that are found in the international marketing of ecotourism.

All the guides interviewed were keen to stress the costs of tour guiding and the additional burdens brought about by government policy decisions. Alongside this they held other more general concerns about the impact of what they saw as inappropriate developments. In making these points they were keenly aware of the need to cater to the expectations of visitors. This was an active process through which they linked their own concerns about the forest and the area in which they lived to their interpretation of what constituted an

resource and has contributed to it's under utilisation" *Terms of Reference for the Design of a Trail System for the Main Ridge Forest Reserve, Tobago WI*. THA October 1997

⁷⁹⁷ The move to make the Forest Reserve an Environmentally Sensitive Area was passed on November 23rd 2006. During the debate one member of the THA described the site as, "a valuable piece of real estate". This assemblyman seemed to be suggesting that the reserve should be protected as a step to enhancing its revenue potential for government. He said something similar but less blunt to the local press shortly afterwards in which he listed the economic benefits of what he more diplomatically referred to as a, "natural treasure". Protecting the Ridge *Tobago News* 27/04/07

⁷⁹⁸ Interview ET Director 29/08/06 I made a point of spending as much time as possible in the forest in order to interview guides, tourists and hunters and I never saw a group over a dozen or a bullhorn nor anyone who could recall such a thing. Tobago had a very small cruise season during 2006-2007 so it is possible this was a phenomenon associated with cruise visits but it still seemed unlikely given the distance between the reserve and the main cruise port at Scarborough and the relatively short stays by vessels.

⁷⁹⁹ At some point before my visit ET had approached certain staff at UWI asking about an updated survey of Main Ridge. No survey had been successfully attempted since the 1940s. The Professor who was approached refused bluntly saying there was no need as all of the island's species had been listed. Since then younger UWI students have worked on specific projects in collaboration with ET (such as trying to establish the range of one of the island's 5 known endemic frog species The Bloody Bay River Frog) but the data set remains very limited (Interview ET Director 29/08/06). One ET activist bemoaned that a list of species in the reserve had been compiled and updated by a visiting herpetologist from the Smithsonian, the list was submitted to DNRE and filed in their library with little visible action taken.

appropriate experience for visitors. This was frequently manifested in the ways that guides managed the experience of tour groups. The first time I encountered it was when I noticed that guides stressed the absence of hunting in the Main ridge area. This was patently untrue but quite logical. It was not simply the case that they were creating a managed product but also a reflection of personal preferences⁸⁰⁰.

The question of cost is paramount in any consideration of how viable tour guiding work might be. The process of becoming a guide in Tobago is quite laborious, especially if you start off without ready transportation. "When you start you have to get a pack from the Tourism Division. That's TT\$50 and it tells you all you need to do to get qualified. Then you have to apply for the courses, a whole lot of them and you have to pay, you know, history, hospitality, dealing with people, first aid. Altogether it come to about TT\$6700⁸⁰¹". After these formalities comes the actual challenge of the job, "Well I would say you don't do tour guiding just for money. You have to love the work, enjoy the exercise and meeting people. Now is the quiet time and it real slow. This month will be cruise ship season but the government haven't improved the harbour so only 7 ships will stop this year and [from] a ship of 4000 people perhaps only 2 minibuses come this way. The government really don't know what they doing. Just when you think things are picking up they put on the brakes, put down their foot and then things go slow again, real slow. It's a whole lot of money to get trained to do tour guiding so you'll take out loans and you'll have your house loan or building loan or a car loan and you'll have bought your own equipment, like a cutlass, with a proper sheath, electric torch, first aid kit, and so this can't be your only job. If a man has two, three children, he has too have two jobs especially if he wife not working, but even she have to have some job too because you've got books, school uniforms, transport, the whole lot and I like this job but year round is not enough see?"⁸⁰².

⁸⁰⁰ One successful guide based elsewhere in the island took small parties on the trails at Main Ridge. His product consisted of dressing in an elaborate safari outfit and zebra patterned jeep. Whilst others noted the obvious success of this with envy there was also an element of mirth about the incongruous image it projected to visitors of what was after all only a walk in the woods.

⁸⁰¹ Not all the guides I interviewed were so precise but most quoted similar figures with courses priced around TT\$700-800. The figure of TT\$6700 refers to the total cost of all the basic courses required by a tour guide. Additional courses such as languages or regional accent and dialect identification for English are also popular but at least one informant had attempted and failed to complete German and French courses.

⁸⁰² Interview rainforest tour guide 04/10/06 The list is pretty representative of the financial concerns of other guides but doesn't include the public and personal insurance costs that are also a requirement as well as the climbing gear, "In case some peoples slip and go and fall down a steep hill or off a cliff". A favourite memory of training from some of my informants was an exercise when the examiner would join a tour party and hide or lag behind to make sure they were doing regular head counts for just such

Tour guiding is portrayed as a special kind of job in which guides use their personal experiences to explain why they chose it to complement other forms of employment⁸⁰³. As a result the work of tour guides can be connected to other aspects of moral performance which make both public and more intimate claims. One guide explained his attachment to the forest, "I know the forest, as a boy, hunting, trapping, messing around, so even though I qualified to work anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago it would be here". He'd been through an acrimonious separation from his common law wife. His mother in law had come to some arrangement with the courts over custody of his son, "Its not just who you know but who knows you... you have to find someone who'll show you the way"⁸⁰⁴. He had been upset as his mother in law used to leave the boy to play on the floor of the bar she ran and he had successfully secured visiting rights at a subsequent hearing. At weekends he took his son to the forest to draw animals and see his favourite bird, the Mot Mot⁸⁰⁵ and the freshwater crabs that scuttle around the pools and streams on the forest trails. Using his knowledge as a guide was for him part of being a better father and showing that he did not conform to the stereotype of Tobagonian men which he felt had unfairly prevented him getting custody when his wife left him for another man. He felt strongly that guides had the opportunity to lead the way in environmental education in schools and that time in the forest generally made people happier. He illustrated the point describing the reactions of visitors, "My favourite is when people see the bachacs, leaf cutters for the first time, when they've only ever seen them on T.V. I wish that we as tour guides, there are only 35 of us in Tobago now working, could go into schools and share our knowledge and skills. We have some school parties come up but is the Forestry Division guys show them around as they know the ecology better. But I think we as tour guides could also perhaps show children what it is that our work means in educating visitors and to show them, talk to them, about how you have to apply yourself to be a good tour guide"⁸⁰⁶.

The role of tour guiding in performing personal and public notions of desirability took other forms. Accounts that focus on western and non western discourses of nature, that style valuation based approaches to conservation as neoliberal, run the risk of occluding how such ideas are actually manifest in personal accounts of tourism. Various forms of relativism may

an eventuality. It should be stressed that getting hold of the items listed, plus good quality walking boots and the boots that most guides rent to visitors, can be difficult in Tobago.

⁸⁰³ Alternative jobs varied, high food prices had made part time farming viable for one, others worked as daily paid labourers on road projects, taxi and transfer work.

⁸⁰⁴ This is to suggest that he was not sure whether personal favouritism, corruption or, "simply a woman thing", had motivated the judge.

⁸⁰⁵ Folk name 'The King of the Woods'.

⁸⁰⁶ Interview rainforest tour guide 04/10/06 and the same individual 29/04/07

spring from a particular ethical stance but their logical implementation legitimates certain parameters for comprehending how the natural world is comprehended by others. This can overlook the personal and politicised character of tourism and conservation at the micro level. This happens even as relativistic interpretations attempt to provide a global and historical context for questioning the ethics of tourism and conservation. One guide previously employed as a forest ranger had moved from the windward coast to the north coast, “to be nearer to nature and fishing and sea, it’s a real nice place here”. His view was that protecting the forest was critical to protecting the essence of Tobago, “The reserve is a crucial part of Tobago heritage and it as a major part of our livelihood. At Forestry I learned all about how the forest is essential to our watersheds. The other day I see a guy out hunting and I say why you doin that? People visit Tobago for the nature, the birds and the plants, the animals are vital in so many ways to our way of life and you just be killin dem out. I see he killed 5 tattoo⁸⁰⁷ and that made me real sad. You have to think how much people would pay to come and see them alive. Yeah in recent years this is where most hunters been comin and the animals are harder to find as a result”⁸⁰⁸. Personal beliefs about identity, ownership, experience and knowledge have particular histories that relate to the political process of positioning the conduct of the individual in relation to the conduct of other individuals.

Heritage, identity and public virtues have not so much come to be blurred with external conservation concerns but they have come to be incorporated into the grammatical structure of the morals that are performed by tour guides. This can produce intriguing accommodations between particular beliefs for some: “Well in Tobago land is now very dear because of this problem of foreigners buying land. It is not so bad as it was, as land is now very expensive. Here in the village there have been few problems because back when this was happening a lot of people had no title to land or it was in their grandparents names and they could not afford back taxes. When foreigners try to buy land people take their money but the land cannot be sold, a lot of German get ripped off so luckily is not such a problem here”. This individual was a keen advocate of the tourist industry but that didn’t stop him seeing the tricking of foreign land buyers as a desirable way of keeping his home village free from foreign nationals. His concerns as a tour guide bore similar hallmarks which also incorporated a language of belief familiar to those scanning through the brochures of tour operators, “I like it here it is quiet.

⁸⁰⁷ Armadillo

⁸⁰⁸ Interview Rainforest Guide 09/10/06. These comments also indicate the distinction between the impression of the reserve as unspoilt and protected that is presented to visitors and the actual lack of wildlife protection. Even with new management arrangements it seems improbable that the resources exist to either get accurate ideas of species numbers and distribution or to protect them effectively.

The problem is the government are either too commercial or they do nothing. They are inconsistent. They are always stopping and starting and now tourism is declining. Take that hut there (the Forestry hut at Gilpen), it doesn't need a fancy bar or anything commercial, just a new roof. People will like that more because it is undeveloped. The village is very undeveloped. Many of the houses are still made of wood. If things get too commercial we might benefit but we would lose the beauty, the aesthetics"⁸⁰⁹. Being employed in tourism and enjoying it is not as antithetical as it would first appear to a personal suspicion toward the merits of foreign investors. The aesthetics that underpin eco-tourism may well have different origins to those espoused by Tobagonians but this case shows they might well employ identical language. Here underdevelopment is taken as an aesthetic value rather than an indicator of poverty, something the speaker was concerned would worsen if visitor numbers remained erratic or declined further. The flipside was that underdevelopment was also jeopardised by foreign investment and settlement. The problem was that the THA should, in this individuals view, have been trying to secure a middle route that secured the combined virtues of tourism, local land ownership and local economic independence without embracing the vices of loud entertainment, large numbers of outsiders and insensitive architecture. This was as much as anything else an argument about the neglected responsibilities of government (as opposed to an outright condemnation of government in relation to a virtuous market) especially along the more isolated villages of Tobago's north coast⁸¹⁰.

A major concern of guides during a poor tourist season was the fall off in visitors. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office had strengthened the wording of its travel advisory. Neighbours who worked at larger resorts told me that they were being asked to advise guests to stay on the grounds. It was not just that visitors and locals had become targets for criminals but that the police force was either failing to make arrests or arrests simply didn't lead to convictions⁸¹¹. This atmosphere had combined with the lack of what guides thought of as needed facilities to make their jobs much harder. The situation had been partially exacerbated in the eyes of some by a Forestry Division supported drive to make waterfalls on the windward coast into fee charging community run attractions⁸¹². These employed a small number of local

⁸⁰⁹ Interview Rainforest Tour guide 24/10/06

⁸¹⁰ A frequent complaint was the absence of a community centre in Parlatuvier. Many who considered themselves concerned Tobagonians would raise this point even if they had no direct personal ties to the village.

⁸¹¹ Claims that offenders were solely from Trinidad were beginning to look somewhat threadbare by this time.

⁸¹² One shopkeeper in Roxborough laid the blame on the CEPEP mentality and complained that there had been a decline in business from through traffic because foreign nationals were afraid to stop. He

guides but had led to congregations of young men at key points on the windward road who would run in front of passing vehicles with rental plates shouting, “waterfall, waterfall” before trying to get aboard and rob the passengers. This had escalated from an older problem of unlicensed guides charging exorbitant fees to the unwary. The guides at Main Ridge had seen a decline in advance bookings that year and were forced to rely even more than before on passing groups on the forest road. Despite this, guides broadly supported the view of environmental groups that an access fee should be charged to the Main Ridge. This feeling remained even though there was a view that policies, like the waterfall projects, that privatised the landscape and associated outdoor recreation with tourists and their exploitation had backfired. Instead of a change of policy the guides urged a tightening of enforcement and stressed their role in such work, “I think trail fees would be a good idea because if we had a sign, and perhaps a pay desk, or a security guard, it could be a few dollars for the community and to protect the forest. I find that a few visitors go in by themselves and they drop litter”⁸¹³. The emphasis here linked the guide’s own activities with stewardship and commercial benefits as well as their own preferences. This went further with recollections of earlier problems with crime being used to explain their motives, “A few years back, two or three, we were having a lot of problems with bandits on the trails. You know they might see me wid my cutlass and take off but they see a white guy then they might rob dem see. This was real bad for business so that is why at least one of us is always up here during the day just to keep an eye out. When it was bad before, the police and the army would walk the trails to make sure there was no one lying and waiting for us and the tourists”⁸¹⁴. The personal role of guides was seen as crucial to promoting correct community values and keeping an eye open for outsiders who might be bandits. As the guides themselves felt they had an insecure financial position for large parts of the year they were far from sympathetic to groups and individuals who attacked tourists. This is understandable not least because the tactics of waiting at beauty spots and waving down cars employed by criminals mimic the ones that the guides at Main Ridge have to use to get business. The desire to brand criminal behaviour as being contrary to Tobagonian values here worked to obscure the underlying lack of economic alternatives for many younger

and other informants warned specifically about the activities of one would be crew that gathered outside a supermarket on the outskirts of Roxborough. Forestry officials were extremely proud of the projects which in their view showed that the department was meeting its obligations to local communities and placing itself at the cutting edge of international best practice. Interview Forestry Officer 14/09/06

⁸¹³ Interview Rainforest Guide 09/10/06

⁸¹⁴ Ibid. This conversation developed into a swapping of anecdotes amongst the guides about their exploits capturing bandits on a couple of previous occasions.

people in north east Tobago⁸¹⁵. Downstream employment in north east Tobago extends to a small number of women selling refreshments. For example, the sisters of tour guides rely on their relatives to tip them off when sizeable tour parties are expected at the reserve or other attractions⁸¹⁶. Despite the benefits to themselves and their extended families tourism was far from a certain employer for the guides I spoke with.

Despite a climate of uncertainty about tourism's future in Tobago, an imbalance in the location of accommodation, and a neglect of other economic sectors, EU funded consultants have identified ecotourism as the future of north east Tobago. The documentation produced by the consultants largely reiterates the easily available published sources on north east Tobago. Notably this includes the assertion that Tobago's forest reserve exists to protect watersheds whilst at the same time conducting no research to suggest how valid this 18th Century hypothesis might be and how the current vegetation might actually be achieving this stated objective⁸¹⁷. The idea also persists that Hurricane Flora has damaged the Main Ridge as opposed to having been simply a part of the life cycle of a Caribbean tropical forest. Tourism is highlighted as a driver of future economic growth principally on the basis of a small poll conducted by a UWI researcher in the 1990s which reported that 85% of people thought tourism would be a good thing⁸¹⁸. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) results drawing mainly from village council members showed a public interest in an attempt at agricultural revival, but tourism was what appears to have driven the researchers. Despite gathering information on the island's agricultural past researchers concluded, "the history of agricultural production on Tobago has been a series of boom and bust. As a result there is little incentive for engagement in the sector"⁸¹⁹. By contrast, "North East Tobago is an area of outstanding natural beauty with scenic landscapes dominated by the rugged topography of the Main Ridge, a spectacular coastline and beautiful beaches. It supports a range of biologically diverse and sensitive

⁸¹⁵ This is underlined by the distribution of CEPEP and URP workers noted in chapter 6

⁸¹⁶ The sisters of two guides are particularly active in seeking business for sales of home made cakes and drinks. They keenly contrasted their approach to others who sought to catch the small passing tourist traffic and whom they saw as being less willing to move around. There are several roadside shops run from stalls beside houses and also bars that only open when business is guaranteed in advance in addition to the more frequented bar and shop in the centre of the village.

⁸¹⁷ The researchers used Beard's 1944 short study as their baseline. Beard, J.S. *The Natural Vegetation of the Island of Tobago, British West Indies Ecological Monographs* Vol. 14 No. 2 1944. The surveys of Trinidad that Beard conducted as the Trinidad Conservator of Forests have been radically overhauled in light of the research conducted as part of the abortive National Parks plan. See, Nelson, Howard P. *Tropical Forest Ecosystems of Trinidad: Ecological Patterns and Public Perceptions* Thesis University of Wisconsin-Madison 2004

⁸¹⁸ Ragoonath, Bishnu *Development in Tobago: Twentieth Century Challenges* UWIpess 1997

⁸¹⁹ The Environment and Development Group Ltd & Kairi Consultants Ltd. *North East Tobago Management Plan: Interim Report* 2002:105

ecosystems, including tropical rainforest and coral reefs, in more or less pristine conditions. This unspoilt natural environment offers a range of opportunities for the development of a sustainable, environmentally based tourism industry based on low impact recreational activities such as hiking and bird watching⁸²⁰. Yet despite this emphasis and an acknowledgement of high levels of unemployment and underemployment culled from PRDI figures, the report suggested that hotel capacity had been reached if not surpassed for the island as a whole, if not for the north east specifically. It seems unclear as to where the great expansion of eco tourism will emerge from as an employer beyond what already exists⁸²¹. Agriculture is written off as being responsible for past environmental degradation (despite the island being pristine) and more condemnatory yet, is subject to the vagaries of the economic cycle. Agriculture can only exist legitimately when it provides linkages to tourism providers and not as an independent economic sector. Not so ecotourism; the moral certainty of the ecotourism project defies the vulnerabilities that effect other economic sectors⁸²². The vision of ecotourism put forward for north east Tobago drew heavily on earlier ecocentric initiatives in National Parks and Protected area management in Trinidad and Tobago⁸²³. This emphasised stakeholder (read government and NGO) concerns that called for more stringent access restrictions and visitor management practices as well as more forceful implementation of existing legislation. Were this plan to be followed, the principle of public access to state lands for recreation would no doubt be in serious jeopardy⁸²⁴. There is little concrete suggestion as

⁸²⁰ Ibid p102

⁸²¹ The tourism carrying capacity figures are drawn from Ibid p105-106. These in turn draw on government data the contestation and flexibility of which has been discussed in chapter 6. The room capacity for North East Tobago is estimated at 400 and is currently at 215 yet it should be noted that the number of rooms in the south west exceeds what was then the projected carrying capacity. It would seem unwise to double the number of visitor rooms when infrastructure throughout the island doesn't even meet local needs, let alone those of current visitors. Despite this there are certainly voices in the business community who feel the THA has been slow in meeting the demands of tour operators and airlines to expand capacity.

⁸²² Here the report has the legacy of Hurricane Flora coming to the rescue, "The decline of agriculture on Tobago since Hurricane Flora further reduced the potential for conflicts of interest concerning land use with the surrounding human population" The Environment and Development Group Ltd & Kairi Consultants Ltd. *North East Tobago Management Plan: Interim Report* 2002:56

⁸²³ For the origins of these approaches see Fairhead, James and Leach, Melissa. *Science, Society and Power: Environmental Knowledge and Policy in West Africa and the Caribbean*. Cambridge 2003:129-133

⁸²⁴ Not to mention the likely growing association between conservation activities and foreign interests. This seems especially plausible given the widespread attitudes to external investors. Ironically there are several other terrestrial areas of immense natural beauty in Tobago that are rarely visited by tourists. One example would be the Hillsborough Reservoir. Controlled by WASA the reservoir and dam sits high up in the catchment of the Hillsborough East River. The area is difficult to reach on rough roads that are in poor repair despite current works. Instead of guides visitors are shown round for free by staff who explain the reservoir's layout and operation as well as highlighting the bird life, not to mention it is the easiest place to spot Caimans in Tobago. One staff member reckoned that about four small parties of eight a year would visit the dam. At one time boat tours were offered but this has long since ceased as

to where new employment opportunities might come from except the inevitable linkages with ecotourism through micro enterprises⁸²⁵. In this sense ecotourism and microenterprise are portrayed as moral certainties beyond the banal realms of economics and politics. They have become simply too desirable to be deemed fallible⁸²⁶.

the dinghy used has sunk. There had been problems with admitting visitors because a) a permit was theoretically needed in advance and b) a senior technician claimed that a credible terrorist threat from Jamaat al Muslimeen to poison the water supply existed. This latter story was deemed surreal by other staff who saw it as matter of pride to show tourists a dam that many had learnt about in school. Interview WASA employee, Interview Security Guard 29/09/06. The focus on Main Ridge as an ecotourism product is peculiar. It is worth noting that the most common way to enter the reserve was once from the Castara/Mt St George Road now blocked by the reservoir and totally inaccessible to all but the well equipped. Reopening this road to vehicular traffic has been suggested in recent years and is mentioned in the physical infrastructure segment of the current development plan, much to the chagrin of environmentalists and some at the Forestry Division.

⁸²⁵ The one scheme to seriously have emerged from the plan is the construction of the L'Anse Fourmi/Charlottesville road. It is hard to be sure just how this issue was raised at public meetings and consultations and the report is cryptic on the issue, "the necessity of upgrading the L'Anse Fourmi – Charlottesville road is obvious". Yet having stressed the need to keep the road from increasing access to the reserve except as a circuit drive for bus parties the report adds of its PRA exercise, "The L'Anse Fourmi – Charlottesville link Road was not a major issue for many, but definitely of interest. It is perhaps the only issue generating a full range of opinion, from 'do nothing about it' to the wish to see it as a two lane paved road comparable to the Roxborough – Bloody Bay cross island link. What was not in dispute was the need, 'to do something about the road'" (EDG & Kairi 2002:108). This issue gets more bizarre. A member of one village council commented, "They came by and asked us what we wanted from the road, then they left, the road was cut and now nothing happen since" (Interview 28/09/06). One guide also recalled the consultants, "I remember the plan, there were two guys, European, they were working with the THA. They said they were interested in tourism and how it impacted on the environment and the society but mainly they were interested in the road... They asked around but afterwards nothing much has happened" (Interview 24/10/06). The individual who had worked in Forestry was more voluble, "That road make no sense to me. It makes no sense that people would use that road as tourists. Mostly Hermitage relies on fishing, although Parlatuvier is mainly fishing to. The road was better natural, you know unpaved because then the animals would move around freely. That is what visitors come to see not pitch surface roads. I think it may have had an impact on the forest and the soils. So I don't know who thought that road would help Tobago but it has not done anything yet although some people get jobs on the road I don't see what good it will do them in the long term" (09/10/06). This is far from the ringing endorsement suggested by the plan. It also suggests that those who would theoretically benefit most, tour guides and a politically influential guest house owner and shopkeeper, were most sceptical about the benefits the road would bring to their businesses. Given the environmental impact noted earlier in the chapter it is hard to find anyone who can point to a direct link between the road and ecotourism beyond the use of the latter to justify the former. Why the consultants included the scheme is hard to fathom but it appears that an association between the desirability of roads and the expansion of the market was uppermost. The moral advantages of ecotourism, as opposed to discernable or contestable ones, appear to have coincided with the desire of certain politicians and government agencies to be seen as active. Given their reliance on other data sources it seems likely that the consultants themselves also wanted to be sure that some clear output of their own making found its way into their recommendations. For an alternative to the view of roads as engines of development see, Fairhead, James. *Paths of Authority: Roads, The State and the Market in Eastern Zaire* in *The European Journal of Development Research* Vol.4 No.2 1992

⁸²⁶ This can lead to assertions about the benefits of ecotourism, "done right" rather than a questioning of the actual practices and intentions that comprise ecotourism in a given context.

The ecotourist bubble is not simply a creation of tourists themselves or of marketing practices by multinationals. What is seen and unseen by eco-tourists is much the same as what is seen and unseen by other visitors, or for that matter many local residents. Ecotourism itself is not so much a definable and globally recognisable activity but, like tourism and environmentalism more generally, it is the intersection of performed moralities. As a form of consumption ecotourism is not ultimately about the consumption of people and spaces by other people but about the performance of acts of moral obligation toward people and places defined as moral objects. In return, those consciously engaging in ecotourism expect a degree of reciprocation that recognises the morality inherent to the performance of consumption with specific intentions.

The case of development planning in north east Tobago illustrates not so much the successes and failures of state and market but the more immediate competition between desirable and undesirable visions of economic and social activity concealed by the adherence to particular concepts. The emergence of ecotourism as a particular moral object supported by a sense of absolute certainty in its goodness should not obscure the wide range of beliefs that individuals attach to this particular concept and the diverse histories that inform those beliefs. The shift to more explicit valuation approaches to Tobago's Main Ridge Reserve is not simply about neoliberal hegemony but involves the intersection of numerous beliefs about property and the proper public performance of property by visitors, local residents and government agencies. Bubbles remain a nice metaphor for communicating the absence of broader context in the experiences and consumption practices of eco-tourists, but the origins of this apparent absence are far from straightforward.

Concepts and the beliefs behind them are not simply a matter of discourse without agency but often a troubling reminder of the way that agency operates through the enactment of sincere beliefs. In the case of Tobago's Main Ridge it is clear that there is a risk of economic alternatives, like agriculture and its varied history and connections, being obscured to create a new, coercive and exclusive practice of land use. The landscape this creates will not be rooted in a colonial past, as might be argued for older national parks elsewhere in the world, but in this instance will be a worryingly logical outcome of what many Tobagonians see as a desirable and morally correct future⁸²⁷. This will be the pursuit of a particular and morally contingent vision of what makes conservation desirable. In this sense what has happened has a great

⁸²⁷ One consolation would be the very slow and often only partial implementation of THA projects and this may well fall by the wayside like similar initiatives.

many similarities to the brand of environmental awareness that compelled the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations to find a sustainable and more scientifically aware form of slave based agriculture.

Performing with Animals: Morality, Animals and Visitors

Beliefs about animals are a key part of the tourist product on offer in Tobago. The animals in question are predominantly marine animals and especially the turtles that nest on the island's beaches. Along with marine and terrestrial fauna are the less trumpeted roles of domestic pets and livestock. What people believe about animals, not to mention the symbolic roles and characteristics attached to them, gives more than a few clues to the relationships between people in the same context. As has already been observed in the accounts of tour guides there is an expectation amongst those whose livelihoods depend in part on tourism that visitors are primarily interested in the island's animal life. Tourist beliefs about animals are not restricted to beliefs about non domesticated creatures. Neither is it only tourists who have come to hold beliefs in which relations between people and animals have a metaphorical connection with broader social concerns. The presentation of these beliefs occurs in numerous settings, training workshops for game wardens and beach patrols, newspaper letters, NGO information sheets and day to day conversation. What people believe about animals sheds considerable light on the politics of land use and the changes that have occurred to the landscape of Tobago since independence. What makes this all the more important is that as of the time of writing there is very little known about the numbers and distribution of the island's terrestrial fauna.

It took several weeks before I began to notice a pattern in letters written by foreign visitors to the Tobago News. Alongside complaints about crime and policing and the abuse of nesting turtles were a series of laments about the condition of the island's dogs. Dogs have an intriguing part in the history of Tobago with dog taxes being the formal cause at least of one 19th Century riot⁸²⁸. Dogs crop up in older folk songs with some intriguing suggestions about equality and public morality⁸²⁹. Many Tobagonians keep dogs as pets, and some small packs

⁸²⁸ 1867 in Mason Hall. The motives for increasing the dog tax were certainly punitive but to what end, other than a riot, seems rather unclear.

⁸²⁹ The song in question relates to the story of white planter James Kirk Jnr who was Chief Revenue Officer and Inspector of Police. He arrested the First Revenue Officer for embezzlement in 1879 and was subsequently jailed himself in 1885. During this period corruption in public office was rampant in the West Indies and was all the more glaringly obvious because of the collapsing revenues of smaller islands at the time. The song satirises Kirk's predicament in jail:

Granderry wall, high wall

Granderry wall, Granderry wall

are kept for hunting. What visiting tourists said about dogs has some disturbing similarities to the way dogs have stood in as metaphors in other contexts⁸³⁰. Even more worrying were face to face confrontations between local residents and expatriates over the treatment of domestic animals.

Seemingly stray dogs are a common sight in Tobago. It's worth noting that many seemingly stray dogs are actually owned. This said, the level of interest shown by owners can vary. Hunting dogs are sometimes maintained with considerable devotion. Others may own a dog but simply leave the dog to fend for itself instead of taking any active interest in its welfare. The result is a steady stream of letters from tourists bemoaning the state of strays around the island. One of my neighbours, the Bajan born husband of a return migrant from Trinidad, was deeply affected by the state of many animals in the village. He decided to adopt a puppy that scavenged in the pile of refuse left by burst bags at the bin collection point at the end of the street. This led to a frosty encounter with the dog's owner. As my neighbour saw the matter, the dog was malnourished, untrained, ridden with vermin and suffering from open sores. If nobody else was going to do anything about it he would. The dog's owner saw things differently. The dog was one he had acquired for hunting but, deciding it was unsuitable, he had left it to run loose. This in no way altered his perception of ownership. The dog was renamed Fleas and adopted into my neighbour's household where, despite some errant behaviour, he was a much loved and instant hit. One day Fleas and his new owner passed a group of expatriates gathered outside a house further along the trace. The expatriates asked my neighbour why he had a dog; after all they pointed out, dogs don't like the smell of black people. Before he could respond he was regaled with a series of examples of how dogs were mistreated locally because of racially set attitudes to animals. He was furthermore informed

Granderry nuh buil' fuh me one
 White darg ah go – Jim Kirk
 Black darg ah go
 White darg ah go – backra Jimmy
 All a' we ah one, Oh!

The final line has a suggestion not just of equality before the law but of equality of human fallibility in the eyes of the law with the dog standing in as a metaphor for the lowest common denominator of which colour is no predictor. Dog related insults are popular in Tobago especially in relation to public officials. During one of the constitutional consultations in the island one of my informants, a middle aged farmer, publicly compared the attributes of his pet dog, Sparkle, to former President Ellis Clarke who was on the panel. Poultry also do a nice line in threatening analogies, a personal favourite being, "Ah gonna wring he, wash he and cook he". For this folk song and the political context see, Craig, Susan. *The Evolution of Society in Tobago: 1838 to 1900*. Theses London School of Economics 1995:411

⁸³⁰ The neglected role of canine protection and official attitudes to dogs in relation to broader colonial policies is dealt with for Namibia in Gordon, Robert J. *Fido: Dog Tales of Colonialism in Namibia* in Beinart, William & McGregor, JoAnn Eds. *Social History and African Environments* Ohio University Press 2003

that allowing blacks to keep pets damaged tourism because foreign visitors were disgusted by the treatment of animals that they saw⁸³¹. A repetition led to my neighbour varying his walk for a couple of days to avoid another such conversation. The relationship between the treatment of dogs, expatriate views of the local sense of responsibility and the necessity of intervention justified in economic terms is highly pertinent to any discussion of conservation. This is not least of all because of the way it intersects with beliefs about desirable forms of land use, economic activity and the rights and obligations inherent with ideas of ownership and management.

Hunting in Tobago is a popular activity amongst many men. As a domestic leisure activity it often comes into conflict with the sensibilities of environmentalists, tourists and the officials charged with managing wildlife. Hunting is also a catch all expression that frequently encapsulates both recreational hunting, commercial bush meat capture and agricultural pest control. Nominally hunting in Tobago has an open and a closed season policed by game wardens of whom there are 3 plus a small body of volunteers drawn mainly from the environmental movement and tour guides. Despite this hunting is an all year activity. Until recently Tobago lacked the sort of representative body enjoyed by hunters in various districts of Trinidad. There had been a wildlife management group of sorts but this had collapsed sometime in the early 1980s as a result of various personal disputes that nobody could or was willing to recall the particulars of. In recent years a new body has formed under the auspices of Trinidad's Southern Hunters Association, in part as a result of the opposition of hunters in Trinidad to a proposed moratorium in the late 1990s. What hunters and their detractors have to say about animals and how it is communicated is indicative of the way that public morality has come to be performed in contemporary Tobago. Immanent to these discussions are

⁸³¹ The point is not that all visitors who complain about the treatment of dogs are overt racists of the variety described. Instead it should be noted that I never saw a single letter about local poverty, economic deprivation, sexual exploitation or any other social issue other than crime and poor customer service. Letter writers sometimes made recommendations that usually involved educating people to spend money on looking after animals and strict sanctions for those who did not comply, irrespective of how affordable or feasible such a plan might be. Crime stories in particular often carried an overtly racial characterisation of problems encountered by visitors. One graphic description of a sexual assault commented, "It seems to me that leatherback turtles are better protected in Tobago than white skinned tourists – after all locals actually care about them, and they even have laws to protect them" also noting that, "Tobago has one of the most beautiful anthems that I have ever heard but maybe when you sing it you can substitute 'easy pickings, white face' for 'one creed, one race'". Another Endangered Species at Dingolay. Letters to the Editor *Tobago News* Friday April 20 2007. Tourists describing the treatment of dogs often contrasted it with positive aspects of their visit, "If we and our fellow guests were upset by the state of the dogs then the issue must be leaving tourists with a poor image of Tobago in the area of animal welfare, something that may detract from the otherwise welcoming and kind spirit of Tobagonians". Dogs Treated Badly, Letters to the Editor *Tobago News* Friday March 30 2007

competing claims surrounding the legitimacy, desirability and authenticity of particular types of behaviour and livelihood.

The terrestrial species hunted in Tobago are numerous but the most popular include Agouti, Iguana, Armadillo, Peccary, Cocrico and Caiman⁸³². The department responsible for regulating hunting is the wildlife section of the DNRE. This is a relatively recent development with Forestry and Wildlife services merged under the Agriculture and Environment label. A suggestion sometimes made is that this stemmed from a desire on the part of the THA to break down older departmental loyalties to central government departments. There has been an attempt to produce a wildlife management plan but pilot studies focusing on agricultural pests have not been successfully implemented⁸³³. The absence of any reliable picture of terrestrial animal and bird habits is partly down to the shortage of trained staff. There are only two zoologists and one of these is recently employed. Along with these are the three full time game wardens. The result in the words of one wildlife official, “the hunting issue, there is some people saying numbers have increased or decreased but we really have no hard evidence at present”⁸³⁴. The zoologists are uneasy about the Forestry Division’s relationship with the Hunter’s Association. When farmers complain about pests a cull is often organised through the Association but this is deemed highly undesirable.

The problem is that in the absence of hard data the zoologists don’t feel they are in a strong enough position to challenge hunting practices. In this context the ideology of planning and

⁸³² One or two individuals raise pet Caiman’s for meat. One worker at the Hillsborough Reservoir had one which he used to dress in a T&T football top before he deemed it large enough to eat. Anecdotal evidence, although flimsy suggests that attitudes to large snakes like the Boa Constrictor have changed slightly in recent years. Whilst it is still normal for many people to kill them out of hand on sight or drive at them intentionally on the road there seems to be a growing association between returning snakes to the forest and the assertion of masculinity. When large Boas were found in chicken coops near where I stayed it was not uncommon for younger men to eagerly volunteer to lift the animals into a pick up truck for transportation to the forest reserve. Most of these seem to have reached their destination although what impact this practice has on the distribution of snakes is hard to say.

⁸³³ Efforts to map the habitats of Orange Wing Parrots and Cocrico were carried out by the wildlife section. This lack of data is not seen as a problem, as in the view of the department’s staff there have been visits from eminent researchers who have found new species in the forest. It is these expatriate studies that take the place of the links that exist between government agencies and the UWI in Trinidad. It should be added that the wildlife section staff shared the general fear of data theft by foreigners, albeit unspecified and before the time of the current staff. At the time of writing, one member of DNRE staff has begun to undertake studies of the relationship between vegetation cover and bird distribution as part of a Masters program at a UK institution. The preliminary findings confirmed this individual’s suspicion that the bamboo forest that accounts for a lot of the secondary re-growth around the island is not actually very good for birds. Whether this research will be published or lead to changes in forest or farm management remains to be seen. I am indebted to Mr Darren Henry of the DNRE for informing me of this development.

⁸³⁴ Interview Wildlife Officer 27/03/07

management has proved seductive and with its shortcomings come a range of pejorative frustrations for the zoologists concerned. In voicing this mix of idealism and exasperation this frustration becomes all too evident, “The issue of hunting, the culture of the people maybe? They father hunt, they hunt, it is what they are used to and it is what they consider a right, but we will have to change that, we are seeking to develop away from that”⁸³⁵. In this statement a vision of modernity and hunting become incompatible. The frustration further finds its way into suggestions that everyone in the island knows the dates of the open and closed season, that out of season hunting, “is about a general attitude of lawlessness in the country today”. Hunting is seen not just an undesirable behaviour but an immoral one connected to wider social concerns. The solution is tighter management, a greater role for expert science and a language of zero tolerance enforcement borrowed from populist statements about policing. The process of conservation becomes about not simply the collection of data or the management of habitats but about the reshaping and enforced performance of new moral norms. These may derive many concepts from the language of international conservation management but they are entwined with many of the beliefs of desirable public action in Trinidad and Tobago and readily connected to topical issues.

The organised hunting associations of Trinidad and Tobago are an effective lobby group nationally. In Tobago, the hunter’s group has built up a network of sympathetic farmers and has links to the Forestry Division through community forestry programmes. The language of conservation has become a staple of the self representation of hunters in Tobago, “I am a hunter and I am a conservationist, I want to hunt every year and to do that you must conserve every year”⁸³⁶. The association represents an estimated 30-50% of hunters in the island. In response to growing concerns amongst environmentalists and wildlife managers, hunters have been keen to stress that they merely represent a “different view of conservation”⁸³⁷. The hunters in the association are keen to stress their function as a responsible community group supporting government and small farmers. This has led to a growing emphasis on particular forms of hunting with commonly used large calibre airguns being frowned upon by the association. Through their association with wildlife management hunters are keen to promote themselves as skilled marksmen who utilise conventional firearms. There are other reasons for emphasising the use of guns. Complaints about animals dying elsewhere as a result of airgun wounds show that hunters are keen to show themselves as respecters of hygiene and public

⁸³⁵ Ibid

⁸³⁶ Interview Hunters Association President 14/09/06

⁸³⁷ Ibid

health rather than animal welfare⁸³⁸. It was emphasised that the association always respected the wishes of land owners unlike unlicensed hunters who were portrayed as trespassers prone to vandalism⁸³⁹. Here a contrast was drawn with an expatriate conservationist, involved in an earlier wildlife plan who had attempted to found an eco lodge and tried to pressure neighbours into prohibiting hunting. Gaining the support of the THA in this regard had been a success that underlined the association's role as a respecter of local values and a legitimate community body⁸⁴⁰. This can manifest itself in other ways as well, the majority of hunters in the area where I lived were aware of the association but were not members. Membership was increasingly being seen as necessary amongst these recreational hunters who claimed to have been told that it was easier to get a hard to obtain firearms license if you joined the association⁸⁴¹. Whether this was gossip or a reflection of some informal understanding was impossible to ascertain. What it suggested to me was that joining the association was for some at least a likely route to making hunting a more respectable leisure activity in the face of conservation concerns.

Wildlife protection has produced some more complex moral stories in Tobago. The main reason for this is the perceived need for action in the absence of data when data has become more important than intent. Whilst hunters make a pitch for moral authority in the conservation debate environmentalists have developed their own tactics. Despite adopting a seemingly neutral language of 'sustainable harvesting' Environment Tobago's education literature provides a lengthy list of extinct species. Some of these extinctions are pre Columbian, others caused by large scale changes in land use as a result of estate based sugar cultivation and in one instance concern an introduced species. Hunting may not have caused any of the listed extinctions but is suggestively positioned as a possible cause, with testimony

⁸³⁸ Although this was a view expressed from within the Hunters Association it was more generally widespread amongst hunters. One out of season hunter explained that cutting and burning was an essential part of hunting. Whilst the hunting of the game uncovered was for recreation and not meat it was important to perform a public service by burning and cutting bush and removing or burning carcasses, "It responsible see, it keep de place clean an I don't leave nuttin dead behind me neither"(Interview Hunter 22/04/07). Out of season hunters are as eager as those who hunt only in season to show they are engaged in a respectable management of the landscape. They do so in accordance with a broader grammar of belief in relation to the presentation of property and stewardship. One farmer I interviewed used to allow hunters only if they kept trails clean with a cutlass and complained frequently when this was not done to his satisfaction.

⁸³⁹ This was a view shared by environmentalists. One ET member who owned an estate was enraged when a hunter from a neighbouring village burnt down a sizeable area of woodland in an attempt to remove an iguana from a tree. This association between out of season hunting and the idea that Tobago was at risk from rampant criminal tendencies was used as a contrast by licensed hunters when describing themselves as legitimate hunters who supported the community.

⁸⁴⁰ Interview Hunters Association President 14/09/06

⁸⁴¹ Interview Hunting Party 26/03/07

from officials and older hunters held up in lieu of hard evidence to suggest a decline. The introduced species, the Red brocket deer⁸⁴², is described as an “ex-Tobagonian”⁸⁴³. The attempt has been to build not only links between people based on self interest through references to tourism but to build moral bonds that make animals a part of the national community. During the Earth Day conference mentioned earlier in this chapter a similar descriptive idiom was manifest. When the group of UWI students presented their findings on the distribution of the Bloody Bay frog one environmentalist asked, “Why should we conserve this little frog?”, the response, after some meaningful stares from the audience and a degree of prompting was, “Because it is our frog and it is a part of our heritage”. Of course this building of moral bonds between animal and nation is not new to Trinidad and Tobago, the larger island has long been proclaimed the land of the hummingbird and Tobago has adopted the Cocrico. In the case of the latter it has not stopped people eating it. Yet at public conservation events it is important to be seen to endorse this emerging idea that animals are a component of a vaguely defined concept of heritage. This can sometimes lead to conflicts between key personalities involved in conservation work in the island. The THA is after all committed to a policy language that makes it and by logical extension its staff the arbiters and guardians of heritage.

Volunteers from SOS Tobago and ET regularly patrol the beaches during turtle season. This is mainly to deter poaching but volunteers also rescue injured animals reported by the public. When volunteers from SOS and ET went to the aid of a turtle that had been struck by a boat propeller they found that it required a shell patching procedure. A conference call was arranged between a local vet and a Florida based expert. At the moment this was scheduled to begin wildlife officials arrived, flashed their identification and declared the ailing beast a ward of DNRE before taking it into custody. The turtle eventually got its shell repaired but only after some voluble exchanges between one of the SOS activists and the wildlife department and a delay of several days. This surreal incident was a logical outcome of a whole range of beliefs bound up with the protection of wildlife in Tobago. Wildlife officials are keen not only to be heard speaking the language of policy documents but to be seen implementing it and asserting it. The process of enacting policy is not in any way related to a specified outcome because beyond being knowledge based, securing data from foreign appropriation and guarding

⁸⁴² See notes in Chapter 2 for the list of species and extinctions recorded by Lavaysse in the 1790s.

⁸⁴³ Environment Tobago *Fact Sheet No.4 Sustainable Harvesting of Game Animals: A Strategy for the Conservation and restoration of Tobago's Wildlife* January 2006 The sheet states that the last Red Brocket was shot sometime in the 1970s but an informant in Lowlands was certain that a neighbour had hit one with a car sometime in the early 1980s. Dates for this extinction vary depending on who you ask. All that is certain is that there are no deer left today.

heritage, there is no specified outcome. The bemused turtle in this instance became an object in a moral performance quite distinct to that intended by the conservation volunteers.

The discussion of out of season hunting was almost always in the form of moral lessons and condemnations. As already indicated it was frequently asserted in the absence of any proof that hunting out of season was linked to rising national levels of violent crime. Conservation training workshops for honorary game wardens, beach patrols and tour guides carried a quasi religious atmosphere of spiritual duty and obligation. This blend of the managerial and the spiritual followed a predictable format, introductory prayer, personal introductions, a power point presentation of key facts, a Q&A session that led to accusations of wrong doing and ignorance, a concluding moment of thought and a casting into a box of cards inscribed with visions of the future 20 years hence, when the problems had been solved⁸⁴⁴. These events often concluded with claims of thanks and of repentance and effusive claims to a renewed understanding of what was at stake. These meetings often contained scurrilous and quite possibly truthful rumours about who was involved in poaching. During one such meeting the President of the tour guides association reiterated that the island's guides had been excluded from helping to police wildlife laws. Game wardens countered that guides were either in league with poachers or that they and their tour parties were part of the problem⁸⁴⁵. The response was an angry one that led to the objection that not every one who called themselves a tour guide was a trained tour guide. The counter point from the game warden was that licensed guides didn't obey the turtle rules anyway. As another attempt to object was made a cry of, "foreign dollars" came from a group of Forestry staff at the back of the room. The situation was defused by one of the wildlife officers changing the subject to describe how the supposed aphrodisiac properties of turtle meat would not be enough to satisfy her. This example rather neatly blended the moral presentation of legitimate sexual activity with legitimate food consumption by a creative play on the word 'appetites'. It was a moral lesson that further developed with the suggestion that formal churches and their harvest festivals

⁸⁴⁴ These were not read out as often happens at management workshops but were frequently retained. It was the process of thinking about the future that mattered. Henkel and Stirrat's comparison of participatory workshops to revival meetings can be seen in a whole new light in the context of Tobago where Spiritual Baptism is a key feature of island life. Henkel, H. and Stirrat, R. Participation as Spiritual Duty; Empowerment as Secular Subjection in Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. Eds. *Participation: The New Tyranny?* Zed Books 2001

⁸⁴⁵ In the case of turtle tourism this is a frequent complaint by those involved in beach patrols. Suggestions that turtle watching tourism is a benefit to conservation and the local economy might well be overstated given some of the encounters described by environmental activists in Tobago. Certainly the crowded image of a turtle mobbed by photographers in Harrison's Grande Riviere study is not the clear cut case of an all round win that it is presented as. See, Harrison David. Cocoa, Conservation and Tourism: Grande Riviere, Trinidad. *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol.34 No.4 2007

were a major problem in regard to bush meat consumption. A Game Warden highlighted this inherent hypocrisy by telling how he had apprehended a, “young man dressed for church seen trying to catch an iguana with one hand and holding his bible in the other”⁸⁴⁶. Game Wardens here portrayed themselves as guardians of a spiritually imbued natural heritage who worked to combat the inherently immoral aspect of every Tobagonian.

The moral performance of conservation in Tobago has come to draw increasingly on a grammatical arrangement of beliefs that attach the qualities of an unwinnable but desirable spiritual struggle to wildlife management. This places animals as spiritual objects linked to the responsibilities of not only individuals but also the government agencies charged with protecting a concept of a morally desirable heritage to which animals belong. In the absence of any hard information about wildlife populations this has left ample room for mythologies to develop about how and why animals should be treated in particular ways. These myths are part of a series of contests over property and individual responsibility and stewardship that are seemingly inseparable from wider concerns over personal and collective identity and a desire to be seen engaging in moral behaviour⁸⁴⁷. The problem is that the underlying state of wildlife numbers remains as obscure as ever as do many of the causes for the fluctuations in species distribution and habitat. With conservation established as a moral good it can equally be appropriated by environmentalists, government agencies and hunters. There is little fear of contradiction provided the innate benevolence and legitimacy associated with the concept remains and by extension the legitimacy this confers on a range of beliefs among Tobagonians and visitors alike.

⁸⁴⁶ This particular workshop was for turtle beach patrols and was held on the evening of 12/04/07 at the Botanic Gardens compound in Scarborough.

⁸⁴⁷ This can be an extremely personal series of associations. An elderly white Trinidadian with close ties to tour guiding and environmental activism in Tobago told the story of hunting from a uniquely personal perspective that emphasised conservation as a sort of spiritual awakening, “I became an environmentalist when I was a young man. My grandfather founded the field naturalists club in Trinidad in 1891. We were all hunters, him, my father and now me, until I stopped. I haven’t fired my gun since one day when I was about 25. I remember it because it was a strange event. I’d been reading books about the natural world and its destruction from since I could read. I lived by a swamp. The ducks were coming in, beautiful wild game, it was evening and I knew the pond where they would land. I took my gun and I went down to the swamp and I shot two of them and I brought them home. My wife said, ‘What are you doing with those?’, I said ‘I’m going to cook them’, she say ‘where?’ I said, ‘In the kitchen’. She said, ‘not in our kitchen. You’re a damn hypocrite talking about nature and shooting these beautiful birds’... she was right and I was nothing but a damn hypocrite. That’s why I put down my gun for good... I’m Trinidadian born, I lived elsewhere and thought I was British but when I had my old West Indian passport they wouldn’t let me into Mexico. They said it wasn’t worth the paper it was printed on. Then I knew I wasn’t British but that I was from Trinidad”. Interview Environmental Activist 12/05/07

After the Storm: Agriculture and the Changing Landscape

The decline of Tobago's agricultural industry has sparked a fierce series of debates. At the heart of this are a series of connected mythologies. These mythologies are highly varied; they range from beliefs about sturdy and self-reliant peasants so central to claims of Tobagonian cultural authenticity, to claims about an island-wide problem broadly headed 'work ethic'. The legitimacy of pest control is a question that riles farmers, environmentalists and wildlife officers alike. Agriculture occupies a further peculiar position. What was once the island's dominant private sector employer has been displaced by tourism and the public sector. Tourism and agriculture do not, as a consequence, make the easy bed fellows that some development advocacy would suggest. Buried in these debates are clues as to just how substantial the transformation of Tobago's landscape has been in recent years and how this transformation is as much a reflection of the moral fall of farming as any more physical event. All of this is set against a regional and national economic backdrop where food imports are a major cause of concern to economists and politicians, who are all too aware of the history of national and regional slumps in exports and foreign exchange earnings⁸⁴⁸.

In accounts of agricultural production in Tobago, government actions and inactions exist alongside memories of the 1963 hurricane and the 1970s oil boom. Policy documents are routinely produced but often these are not even seen by agricultural officers let alone articulated into actions that are visible to farmers. One experienced agricultural officer who enjoyed a degree of popularity amongst farmers remarked, "The present policy in agriculture? It is hard to say. There is a 2002 action plan and the current development plan from last year. What happens in practice is that we get a new secretary in charge and they articulate a policy verbally, then change their mind and then they switch portfolios. I am told that the current policy is to achieve food security by enhancing short crop production but it is not something that I have seen much evidence of because private sector farming receives little or no support except extension visits to deal with diseases and drainage. Support for agriculture is at bottom at the moment"⁸⁴⁹. The political process certainly takes the majority of the blame for the current decline of farming in the island. By contrast the 1970s subsidy programmes that kept

⁸⁴⁸ The resulting collapses in public expenditure are more than capable of returning a comparatively wealthy country like Trinidad, that for more than a decade has seen the 2nd highest growth in the Americas, to a state of grinding poverty. Most observers are acutely aware of the contribution to the problem made by importing 95% of the country's food, not to mention what would happen if such imports were reduced as happened in the 1980s during the country's structural adjustment programmes.

⁸⁴⁹ Interview Agricultural Officer 05/02/07

agricultural productivity afloat are largely ignored. These subsidies account in no small measure for the disparate dates offered by farmers when making statements about when precisely Tobago was, "the breadbasket of Trinidad". This common refrain is often heard by those seeking to show that farming has not only been viable in the past but is also a critical component of the identity of Tobagonians, the legitimacy of which must be historically quantified and asserted. What is clear is that since Hurricane Flora a vast area of agricultural land has gone out of production and that farming as a full time activity is now restricted to a small number of people⁸⁵⁰.

Farmers in contemporary Tobago tend to divide themselves into two types, those who farm full time and those who farm part time alongside other jobs. Some full time farmers can be quite scathing about part time agricultural work and style themselves as real farmers⁸⁵¹. Their experience of dealing with officials has made them all too aware that many in the public service regard farming as work for the ignorant and those incapable of a full time job. One of my informants would regularly complain that part time farmers had no time for serious agriculture and that the remaining agricultural societies were weak political vehicles. He himself was not immune though to criticisms of his faltering efforts to keep the family farm in operation. He made occasional trips to Guyana, looking for cheap labourers and cut price livestock and he contrasted his friendly reception from Guyanese officials to those in T&T, "If I just go and say to the government fellas there that I a Tobago farmer then they say, 'oh really' but if I wear a suit and say I the CEO of a mixed farms company then they are, 'How can we help to assist you sir'? you see what I getting at? Farming has to move beyond a small time

⁸⁵⁰ Tobago has a total land area of around 30 044 ha, about two thirds is deemed unsuitable for production because of drainage problems or soil erosion with only 11000 ha being deemed suitable for agriculture. Of the total area 13907 ha is under forest cover of which 3958 ha is within the reserve. About 10% of agricultural land has been used for urban development in the south west. Of the rest of this remaining third, most is encompassed by the large estates that dominate the valley bottoms along the coasts. These comprise around 2400 ha in private hands with 4139 ha being in government hands although this figure has increased in recent years. Placed in perspective the peak area under short crop cultivation after WW2 was approximately 770 ha (Administration Report Agricultural Department 1961. The report's author noted that the increase was entirely the result of subsidies. The only surviving copy of this section of the report is at the London School of Economics). Of the agricultural estates included in later surveys several have subsequently become hotel developments and some were already operated as such. Two cattle farms in the island have subsequently closed and two others have significantly reduced herds. The last comprehensive agricultural study was undertaken by the Inter American Institute for Co-operation on Agriculture. Although this is the source for most of the above figures its authors explicitly noted the lack of sound data and flaws in existing data on cultivation in Tobago. IICA *Trinidad and Tobago: Agricultural Sector Study of Tobago* 1994.

⁸⁵¹ The question of who is a real farmer seems to be something of a hierarchy of authenticity. An agricultural officer pointed me to a cattle producing former coconut estate in the south west that had been in the same family for over a century. Although he said it was something of a time warp it was in his view one of the only real farms left in the island compared to when he was a boy.

Dasheen and two Yam thing to be taken seriously as a business". Criticisms by neighbours of his optimistic ambitions were such that his wife had left him to care for nine children as well as the business. He blamed this on elderly gossips employed by CEPEP, "damn old women who paint rock" and had coached his sons and daughters to tell visitors that their father was not a farmer but a businessman⁸⁵².

In Tobago there is often a frequent reference to the agricultural past as being one of co-operative harmony. Agricultural officers spent most of the early 20th Century complaining of a lack of co-operation and mistrust and struggling to build functioning co-operative marketing structures⁸⁵³. By the 1950s these structures had become a show piece for imperial rural development projects. When remembering the hey day of agriculture older farmers would lament the decline of co-operatives as part of a broader sense of national decline, "what we need is a bit more solidarity", one complained over a swig of White Oak rum⁸⁵⁴. The steady self reliant peasant has given way to a stereotype of a feckless youth chasing tourist dollars and CEPEP money. A frequent refrain is a reference to the virtues of Len Han, a system of traditional co-operation widely touted by advocates of Tobago's distinctive character. Rooted in this system was Partner Work, groups of farmers offering each other labour for free on a rotating basis. This forming of co-operatives might not be as unprompted as it first seems nor have been as appreciated as some outside of agriculture recall. The co-operative movement in general was rooted in several decades of trial and error policy combined with subsidies for production. Its decline appears similarly to have been associated with the decline in subsidies

⁸⁵² The business relied on direct marketing, beside the road outside his house and from a stall in Scarborough market, the latter arranged with a wary eye on the merchandise on offer at neighbouring stalls. Other farmers sold to passing dealers with truck transport who acted as middle men for market stalls and guest houses. My informant also claimed to make sales to guest houses but he was not always precise about this and an extension officer with whom he worked closely was not sure that it was a regular arrangement. He also dealt in livestock which was fetching high prices at the time but was immensely cautious about who he sold to, even once lying to an agricultural officer who was looking for wedding party supplies. Praedial larceny especially in livestock remains a major concern in Tobago with at least one estate having ended production of goats and sheep as a result of thefts, although my informant claimed the owners simply hadn't been counting regularly enough to notice and word had got around. The estate owners blamed the problem on the corrupting influence exerted on local youths by Indian drug smugglers from Trinidad, eager to add to their repertoire of contraband. This statement suggests the outcome of simultaneously believing Indians to have affinities for both narcotics distribution and entrepreneurial activity as opposed to any truth about local crime. A local journalist was inspired in part, to take up his career in radio because of the level of official involvement in local Praedial Larceny that was being ignored by the press in Trinidad. A common scam was for police officers to steal livestock and claim it had strayed and been impounded. They would delay telling the owner until the pound fee exceeded the value and then buy the animal themselves at a preferential rate before selling it on at market value. Interview Journalist 11/04/07

⁸⁵³ See Chapters 3 and 4

⁸⁵⁴ Interview Farmer 17/12/06

and facilities. Many farmers can point to disused roads or the collapsed remains of cocoa processing houses and produce depots that litter the undergrowth of Tobago.

Partner Work should in many ways be viewed as both a part of this system and of a nostalgia for a golden era when neighbours worked side by side and Tobago was the breadbasket of Trinidad. My informant who was so keen to stress his identity as a driving apostle of the private sector amongst Tobago's small mixed farms was initially keen to emphasise the failings of Len Han and its invention as a tradition, "It was encouraged by the agricultural officers before independence. Now almost none of them leave the office and come up these bad road. My father used to work with eight other guys, each week they would work on one guy's land. Trouble was it didn't work because you spend one week in eight on your property and the bush grows up in that time so every time is like you starting again in a circle"⁸⁵⁵. A few days later on the ferry to Trinidad he offered a totally different view, prompted in part by a newspaper report of another shooting in Trinidad and the discovery of a woman's burnt body in the grounds of a closed hotel in Tobago. In this instance Len Han was transformed into all that was missing from modern society. Agricultural co-operation was no longer a burden to be shed as part of his self image as a businessman but became part of a story about national reconstruction and rehabilitation. As a concept this memory of agricultural co-operation, amidst the wreckage of so many failed co-operatives, has become bound up with beliefs about what it is to be a Tobagonian and part of a contingent moral heritage. It can, as in this example, serve as both a condemnation of government policies in the past and an attack on present social failures rooted in the policies of the present⁸⁵⁶.

Although farming has a low status in public perceptions of occupation it remains popular with a small number of elderly and middle aged men. Many of these individuals still maintain small plots either on family land or purchased land. Most of the gardens near where I lived were maintained by individuals with day jobs in Scarborough that ranged from daily paid manual workers for the government to bank clerks. Many had lost land or access to land with the growth of Scarborough and the building of the highway from the south west. For this dwindling number of older individuals the garden was a place of retreat from the bustle of life in Scarborough, an urban world that had eaten up previous plots. "The land there she no more

⁸⁵⁵ Interview Farmer 26/11/06

⁸⁵⁶ This example gets stranger. Two older farmers told a story about a group of young men who had taken money from a Scarborough businessman to grow Ganja for shipment to Trinidad. The joke was that none of them new enough of basic agriculture to keep the plants alive and that being of a criminal disposition they were incapable of working together in a traditional manner to maintain the secluded field they established.

good for gardens then.. for me gardenin a ting of love see? It a real skill to have your land and know she”⁸⁵⁷. The provision ground in this instance is not so much about a collective cultural identity as asserted in some accounts but is about the nostalgic performance of skills deemed crucial to keeping touch with a simpler life. The agricultural trace that led from the main road to the next village often had individual men sitting beside their cars, reading a book and smoking a cigarette during a break in the heat of a Sunday afternoon. For these individuals a trip to the garden was their definition of natural beauty. The decline of adjacent plots as fewer people took an interest was proof of the ill effects of, “oil money and the myths of easy urban living”, said one, remarking that it was madness to buy overpriced imported foods when they could be grown locally. Some were old enough to have studied at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture and been on overseas exchange trips. One of them had travelled to Sierra Leone to study cocoa planting. “When the English ran things here they ran them there to”⁸⁵⁸, one man remarked as he vented his frustration that modern governments the world over appeared to have lost sight of how interconnected markets are whilst becoming more dependent on them. There was a general consensus that these activities were not about the monetary rewards. Many gave away certain crops to friends and family, although other crops such as sorrel provided a readily marketable ingredient to a popular seasonal drink⁸⁵⁹. When commercial farmers were critical of part time cultivators it was often a question of intent. Those who kept small gardens had various motives, some made money others did not, the objection of some larger farmers seemed to stem from a perception that small time cultivators gave their work a casual image. This seems to stem in part from the blanket grouping of all cultivation as farming. This was driven by an emphasis in reports and plans that assumes all agriculture is primarily a component of economic livelihoods. The state of farming in Tobago for probably the last 20 years suggests that those who still cultivate gardens part time are rarely driven by primarily financial returns. The assertion that they should be is implicit in many documents and is masked by the use of phrases about low efficiency and under productivity. The sentimental allure of cultivation is not easily separated from profit driven enterprises especially when there are similarities of scale as comparable as in Tobago, commercial farmers often expressed similar views about the opportunities to escape from village life and for being closer to animals, plants and nature. There is a blur between policies

⁸⁵⁷ Interview Part time farmer 24/08/06

⁸⁵⁸ Interview Part time farmer 24/09/06

⁸⁵⁹ Although commercial Sorrel drinks are available all year round they are most popular and visible at Christmas time. Buying fresh sorrel from pick up trucks by the roadside or by prior arrangement is a regular part of the festive season in Tobago.

designed to promote agriculture as a livelihood and those aimed at generating a particular moral relationship between people, land and cultivation.

The role of particular species of birds as agricultural pests is one of the most vexed questions amongst farmers in Tobago whatever scale they operate at. It is an issue that sets farmers on a collision course with environmentalists, wildlife officers and, rumour has it, tourism officials. Most farmers seem unanimous in their verdict, not enough birds are being shot. The government should give people guns and ammunition or the crops will be devoured⁸⁶⁰. This is a story where birds become the victims or the villains depending on where you stand but underlying it is a more fundamental truth about land use changes in Tobago. A leading environmental campaigner who owned an estate and styled herself as living quietly amongst the trees and near to nature was vociferous on the subject. The birds she told me, had lost their food in Hurricane Flora. As a result they had come down from the hills and the forest to eat the crops. The whole problem was down to the hurricane which had destroyed the agricultural sector as well as the bird's habitat. The birds were only doing what was natural and shooting them was cruel and unnecessary⁸⁶¹. This was a view shared by wildlife officers, just as out of season hunters were part of a criminal malaise so too were farmers complaining about pests, "The farmers exaggerate the problems they have because they just want to shoot the birds. This is an issue [stemming from] our current policy [meaning senior figures in the department] of allowing culling of Cocrico during closed season even though it is nationally protected"⁸⁶². The problem was clearly not the fault of birds, "The part time farmers have the most trouble and it is the responsible farmers who on the land all the time that have the fewest problems", asking if I had spoken to the environmentalist previously mentioned she added, "Hurricane Flora in whatever year it was, destroyed the food in the forest and the birds came down to the farms to feed and so their habits and their natural foods changed over

⁸⁶⁰ DNRE internal documents confirm this, *Survey on Bird Damage to Agricultural Crops in Tobago Conducted During the Month of April 1993 Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Marine Affairs THA*.

⁸⁶¹ The papers of Cyril Turpin make clear that even in the 1930s there were attempts to change bird behaviour by planting fruit trees (Cyril hoped the Yellowtails, of which he appears to have been fond, would appreciate his Ugandan plants) at points between areas deemed forest or game reserves and those allocated to crops. The idea that birds have experienced a post Flora food shortage has led some contemporary farmers to try similar techniques. There is no suggestion that now or in the past the birds were willing to see the defined boundaries and functions of plants in the same way. One farmer I interviewed had tried various combinations of trees and crops down the years with the identical result that all the fruits grown were eaten. Anything that survived was difficult to market anyway despite his attempts to approach the URP programme to offer a joint training course for workers and another attempt to get surplus citrus fruits distributed at schools. Interview Farmer 17/12/06

⁸⁶² Interview Wildlife Officer 27/03/07

time”⁸⁶³. Part time farmers, those lacking the rigours of full time work, were clearly at fault. The story about bird behaviour that had been disseminated by some in the environmental movement was well entrenched amongst public servants who had not even begun to gather data on what was actually happening⁸⁶⁴. Farmers who didn’t clear land were to blame for bird depredations and if they cleared land they were blamed for environmental destruction.

An intriguing phenomenon that emerged from interviews and archival research was that the impact of the hurricane had not created the bird pest problem. What did appear to have happened though was that the bird types encountered had changed as had their behaviour⁸⁶⁵. The bird most commonly identified as a pest today is the parrot, followed by the Cocrico, but older agricultural reports and articles stress the role of the Yellow Tail as the major pest⁸⁶⁶. Older farmers recalled seeing this bird in much larger numbers than before whereas the number of parrots had increased in their view. One explained that when he had been a boy, cultivation extended up to the borders of the reserve. At that time he would accompany his grandfather to the family cocoa plot above the village and other men and boys did likewise whilst women stayed behind to work in processing or domestic chores depending on the time of year. Once at the plot his grandfather would fire a few shots at the birds and the effect of this happening simultaneously on numerous adjacent plots created clouds of birds every dawn and dusk along the edge of the forest. He lamented that since then the birds had lost their fear of humans. There were two reasons he postulated for this, firstly there were fewer farms, especially in the interior and secondly fewer guns. The second point relates to tightened restrictions on firearms brought in since the 1970 revolution in Trinidad⁸⁶⁷. Beyond this there was another issue, ammunition had been handed out by Forestry officers in return for the heads of birds and the tails of squirrels. This bounty was fondly remembered. His grandfather had used to give him a small reward for collecting these and carrying them to the agricultural officer which had been common for other boys as well⁸⁶⁸. An agricultural officer made a similar observation. “When the birds came over you would get five or six guys firing into the

⁸⁶³ Ibid

⁸⁶⁴ It should be noted that there were some in Forestry who were less sanguine and more open minded on the issue of what had happened to bird numbers.

⁸⁶⁵ The failure of the wildlife officers to carry out a mapping study of bird distributions was attributed to, “the craftiness of the birds”, something that farmers often complained of as well.

⁸⁶⁶ For example an article in *The Tobagonian*, October 1940 branded the bird, ‘the planter’s enemy’. The Yellow Tail is known also as the Cornbird because of the crop it historically caused most damage to.

⁸⁶⁷ These are quite far reaching and extend to the import or wearing of combat boots or camouflage pattern clothes and bags. The law is sporadically enforced, but locals and unwary visitors alike can be targeted and it is not unheard of for officers to demand the removal of the offending garment on the spot. If this puts the offender in breach of decency laws then the attitude is that it is their lookout.

⁸⁶⁸ Interview Farmer 17/12/06

air. They didn't hit much but the birds were scared away and mostly kept to the forest. I don't think there are more pests than then but they have changed. There are more parrots in the open and what you do not see are Yellow Tail which were the major problem even when I first joined the department [in the 1970s]"⁸⁶⁹. What appears to have happened is that the decline in cultivation generally has transformed the habitat that exists in much of the island. Hurricane Flora certainly contributed to changes in the forest structure but the extent of the wooded area is considerable. It's difficult to walk through some wooded areas of Tobago without encountering former crop trees growing wild or tripping over drainage banks for cane or cocoa and potato terraces are tucked away beneath the bush on many hillsides. A formerly productive landscape has completely vanished and the changes in the numbers and type of birds are one of the results⁸⁷⁰. The conflicts over this are bound up with a broader problem, the relationship between the agricultural and tourist industries.

If beliefs about birds have seen farmers fighting a losing battle to convince many people that there is a problem it is in part because their proposed solutions are not palatable to many observers. Given that the problem is not so much the number of birds, but that the structure and location of their habitat has changed due to the large scale cessation of agricultural activity, it is hard to see whether the trigger happy solution would solve the fundamental problem. This problem is that the moral basis for desirable economic activity has come to adopt the language of tourism and conservation and reject that of agriculture⁸⁷¹. One woman grumbled, "the forest rangers have all become tour guides taking round tourists and the parrots have taken over the whole damn village... tourists bring in a lot of money so people would rather supplement their wages showing tourists the forest rather than coming out to the villages and shooting some of these parrots"⁸⁷². Tourism promoters have frequently stressed the need for responsible tourism to build links with local agriculture but in the case of

⁸⁶⁹ Interview Agricultural Officer 05/02/07

⁸⁷⁰ One long term observer of local bird life who was closely involved with the environmental movement made a similar observation, "Major changes [to Yellow Tail activity] caused by a loss of habitat through a decline in agriculture. The birds are still there but fewer and in the forest and on Little Tobago where they are less disturbed. They are an agricultural pest though, especially in the days of cocoa. Now the estates and farms have gone the cover trees and nest trees have also gone so they have gone back to the forest. Especially with agricultural land being used for hotels and housing" (Interview 12/05/07) His view was that marine birds were being severely impacted by poaching exacerbated by poor enforcement and the involvement of at least one former forestry officer in poaching and scams on tourists. Just what major changes have happened is hard to tell pending any detailed study.

⁸⁷¹ As already noted in Chapter 6 this is not the same as saying that there is a resounding official endorsement of either but there is a logical rationale for government officials believing them desirable. As for agriculture being rejected I never met a farmer in Tobago who did not launch into a tirade about Eric William's remarks about 'throwing away the cutlass and the hoe' at the slightest provocation.

⁸⁷² Interview Farmer 09/10/06

Tobago this has not happened⁸⁷³. The type of industry that many Tobagonian farmers actually want to see doesn't seem to coincide with this view.

Several estates and even some smaller farmers have sold property to developers or gone into property development aimed at higher end housing. Buyers and investors are normally from Trinidad⁸⁷⁴. Yet these are often pragmatic decisions undertaken with some reluctance in the face of uncertain income. The owner of one of the remaining cocoa estates who had returned home to the island about 15 years previously was planning such a development but was concerned that people saw selling land as easy money. This seems paradoxical until taken into consideration alongside views of tourism and labour. His investment was not in his view an easy money venture. He would have preferred to keep the whole estate in cultivation but couldn't find reliable workers, "When I first started I went away to the US and when I returned the crop had been stolen. The hired workers had helped take the crop... There is something ethnic perhaps, because you don't get this with Indians from Trinidad or Guyanese⁸⁷⁵. Here nobody wants to work on the land at all and if they do it is only short term... You might say it was something African or it could be when Dr Williams said down your tools and get an education. People took that the wrong way, to mean that only dumb people would work". Tourism was not his direct concern but he was sceptical and felt the impact that tourism had on farming export crops like cocoa, "Tourism is one big mistake for Tobago. This place has nothing to offer as entertainment. It is a second choice destination staffed by workers from Trinidad that agents use when hotels in Grenada and Barbados are over booked, and big places like Hilton or Great Courland are up for sale anyway because there is nothing to bring in the tourists. Building on agricultural land on a small island makes no sense to me. This used to be Trinidad's breadbasket and now the country as a whole imports 95% of its food and all they do

⁸⁷³ One industry NGO is trying this approach but deals with a relatively small number of farmers on a basis of demand and quality that excludes most of Tobago's farms and even the remaining large estates. It is very good at getting publicity though. When I asked if the scheme was modelled after the co-operatives that had previously influenced production and marketing I was vigorously corrected and told that it was an adopt a farmer programme not a co-operative. Adoption in this instance seems to suggest the acquisition of a deserving orphan by worthy hoteliers with an eye on community relations and international PR rather than an actual programme of rehabilitation. Several hotels and guest houses keen to advertise organic or natural fruits as part of their product simply have in house production anyway.

⁸⁷⁴ Whether large estates or smaller units my informants were often dismissive of attempts by politicians to describe land as a form of national heritage and viewed this as an intrusion on their property rights.

⁸⁷⁵ Farmers and tourist businesses alike were often of the view that migrant labour was cheaper and more dependable. The farmer who described his business trip to Guyana was also planning to hire labourers from this source to bring more of his land into production as part of a longer term business plan. His view was primarily motivated by a feeling that local wage demands were unreasonable.

is build more hotels... We have a lot of visions and a lot of plans but what are people going to eat when the oil runs out? If you ask me we should push for better agriculture and tourism is all the THA think about and the national government just see Tobago as tourism and never come here"⁸⁷⁶. Far from building links tourism has left export farmers cold. In the case of cocoa the operations of the cocoa marketing board have also stifled efforts to push niche products like organic cocoa and fair-trade sales with government taking the blame⁸⁷⁷. Despite this criticism of government it is tourism that is highlighted as having led government astray and sapped peoples will to work. In extreme cases tourism can even be held up as encouraging reversion to a primitive African state of lazily performing for visitors⁸⁷⁸.

The view that tourism is an unclean industry that thrives on local credulity and desperation and cravings for easy money has won some surprising converts. One American expatriate restaurateur had closed after problems with a business partner in the States. The restaurant had used a small garden for produce and he'd decided to expand into export and purchased a new plot. He'd hit a brick wall with government officials hostile to a foreign national buying property⁸⁷⁹. He was exasperated in part because his move from a tourist business to a farm had been governed by a growing disillusionment with the impact of tourism, "Well you've got tourists and travellers in my view. Here in Tobago they just don't know what they want. I mean they now want to talk about exclusive tourism. That is not what Tobago has to offer. They talk

⁸⁷⁶ His experience of bird pests added to his antipathy towards tourism and the THA, "Parrot is my problem. It is the job of Forestry, the wildlife section, to shoot pests but they don't make visits anymore to farms. I have to go to them and demand that they come out and sometimes that works. But when they come, they work from 8am to 4pm and they say, 'sir there no bird here' and then go because Parrot feed at sunrise and sunset and then I lose my crops. Parrots can't tell a ripe pod from one that isn't so they destroy the whole crop. I asked about this at DNRE and Wilson [Secretary for Tourism], who is always out of the country calls them from Tourism. I can't recall who, but they said they were told that they wouldn't shoot out the Parrots because they are nice for the tourists and so I lose my crop". Interview Farmer 25/09/06

⁸⁷⁷ The Cocoa Marketing Board has a monopoly on all sales of 10000lbs or less which is effectively all sales as this is far in excess of the output from 60 out of 300 acres cultivated on the largest remaining cocoa estate. The majority of cocoa was historically purchased from holdings of 2-5 acres by local co-operatives under the direction of the Agricultural Department. An account of farm sizes and land use in historic perspective can be found in, Ferrer, Vernon Oliver. *Some socio-economic aspects of peasant farming in Tobago, British West Indies and the possible function of medium term credit in the rehabilitation of low income farming areas in Trinidad and Tobago* Thesis Cornell University 1945

⁸⁷⁸ One farmer making this argument stopped himself mid sentence and added with a sardonic chuckle, "What are we going to do about it though, bring back slavery?" Interview Farmer 07/11/06 An elderly white estate owner blamed the tourist industry for bringing what she saw as a tidal wave of drugs and prostitution to south west Tobago, "This is what come of Williams telling them to throw away there hoe and their cutlass, I don't see many of them picking up a school bag these days... That's [tourist money] why there's a whole level of unnecessary savageness around Tobago today"

⁸⁷⁹ The first letter told him that his planning permission had been refused because of incomplete documentation. When he supplied the required documentation he was told the land had been rezoned to watershed protection by the central government in Trinidad.

about all inclusive, mass tourism, like they want to be Barbados or Jamaica. I mean get real. The tourism planners here don't even have any tourism training. They'll never catch up and I've come to realise that even if they do they'll destroy the island doing it... I personally think tourism is bad for the island, it brings crime, which I've always warned, ya know there's gold in the trees but it's easier to get what's in people's pockets. But what's worse is the big hotels, like the Hilton say, they pay minimum wage that's what, TT\$8 an hour? That makes these people no better than indentured servants in my view. It's not a wholesome or a rewarding way to work"⁸⁸⁰. This story roots the rejection of tourism in a personal account of redemption that draws on many familiar critical themes in Caribbean tourism. It was driven by an obligation to give something back to an adopted home, with this individual being a frequent speaker at village meetings, attacking planned tourist developments and urging people not to be bought off with offers of land elsewhere in return for lost beach access. This story is one more permutation of how property is performed as a part of a personal moral system. It draws on key concepts and beliefs that encompass local authenticity, discovery and personal responsibility. Like many of the accounts of agriculture in Tobago it was one that complained about the unreliability of local labour, especially young men, but appealed to agriculture as offering a special sense of reward beyond the purely monetary.

Belief is a Fragile Thing

Agriculture in Tobago has been rejected by some in policy making circles as part of a myth of a golden age. To a certain extent this is true, but possibly more complex in character than these objections suggest. What is not contested is that the agricultural sector has gone into decline. What appears to have occurred is a major shift in the morals of work and leisure. Agriculture has become a symbol of unrewarding work compared to the prospects on offer in the tourist industry, in Trinidad, or to some planners in a future based in gas driven electricity exports. Efforts to resuscitate agriculture are hampered in part by an environmental and tourist marketing emphasis on a vision of Tobago as a pristine and unspoilt landscape. This idea is also held by many within the THA, with the language of environmentalism, at least when convenient, being a badge of moral legitimacy. This is a landscape largely formed by the disappearance of the farming sector and much of the physical and social infrastructure that

⁸⁸⁰ Interview Farmer 26/09/06

once supported it. The vanishing of this landscape has created one that has inspired a crusading environmental movement but created few independently viable jobs⁸⁸¹.

What has not vanished are some of the vexed questions of property rights and obligations. These have been compounded by contests between those representing public and private sector bodies as to who should be seen as the legitimate employer in the island. Within this argument lie the expectations of tourists whose expectations, especially when inspired by the language of cultural authenticity and ecotourism, are as much a pejorative moral judgement on those they visit as they are a display of personal moral worth. Farmers, tour guides, hunters and many other ordinary Tobagonians have sought their own languages of legitimacy to try and secure political rights and economic security.

Some have been successful to an extent. My informant who was so keen to cast himself as a businessman was able to capitalise on statements about food security and foreign land ownership during the national election campaign. He had been trekking between the offices of the infrastructure and agriculture divisions to try and get someone to acknowledge the existence of his access track and render it passable. It suddenly became desirable to win the support of an authentic local small mixed farm operator and be seen to do it. His road was repaired overnight and his opinion of the DNRE's secretary went from one extreme to another. Despite this small success others are not so fortunate, the rainforest tour guides still often vainly try to flag down passing cars and convince visitors they aren't bandits even if cruise arrivals have increased slightly and bought in better pre booked business. The decline of agriculture has not been matched in Tobago by the wholesale adoption of tourism. It seems unlikely, given the nature of the product being offered, that an industry capable of employing those now in government work will emerge. This is all the more unlikely given how critical an antipathy to work in the tourism sector is in the moral grammar of policy in Tobago. When the oil runs out the only thing for certain is that the landscape will change again. When this happens it will be those who own less than others who will probably be accused of laziness and reversion to primal barbarism.

Perhaps the late Eric Williams and a generation of academics within and without the Caribbean who attacked the plantation economy as an external cultural system of oppression are partly to blame for being so publicly right. There is a certain irony to reading articles wondering

⁸⁸¹ The precise relationship between tourism, government expenditure and indirect employment remains unclear and would make an interesting study in its own right. The sort of occupational multiplicity this is liable to generate is poorly understood in the context of Tobago.

where the peasantry and the agro proletariat whose cause many of them championed have vanished to. When some articles suggest a programme of land reform and a wholesale reorganisation and reinvigoration marketing and training facilities to meet the volatility of markets, the issue of food security and address the legacy of the past, it is hard not think that this has happened before⁸⁸². But then belief is a fragile thing, especially when economic activity is so much at the mercy of public struggles to convince the self and others of ones ability to capture the moral zeitgeist. The idea of property as the interaction of performances of morals lends a new light to Marx's observation that in the presence of capitalism, "all that is solid melts into air"⁸⁸³. On the small islands at the historical epicentre of capitalism this moral logic is perhaps more apparent than elsewhere.

⁸⁸² This is the concluding recommendation of Weis, Tony The Rise, Fall and Future of the Jamaican Peasantry *The Journal of Peasant Studies* Vol.33 No.1 2006

⁸⁸³ The full quotation in context reads, "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind". Marx, K. *The Communist Manifesto* Penguin London 1967:83

Conclusion: People Say and Do the Funniest Things

This study began life as an investigation into the history of policy and landscape. It was never intended to encompass the subject of morality. Morality became a theme of the research through the medium of a seminar at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine, in Trinidad. The presentation I gave was far from my best effort but constituted an early draft of part of Chapter 3. Several times in this text, as in the finished chapter, I referred to colonial policies of improvement as constituting, “an agenda of moral development and environmental control”. Several members of the audience were rather flummoxed by this statement, “Surely that’s a good thing but there are times when you make it sound negative”, asked one confused fellow postgraduate student. What has preceded this conclusion has become in part an extended response to this statement. The effort has been to show not just that morality is abstract but that it is abstract and particular, as opposed to absolute or relative, even if its performance suggests otherwise. The statement showed me that morality itself was something of an object in T&T as was environmental management. By virtue of being good, and especially good in association with one another, neither concept seemed for many in the audience to be congruous with the history of the colonial past. This was to be my first opportunity to reflect upon the performance of development as a moral logic. It was at this point that I realised that in addition to having a particular history, concepts used in discussions of development in the Caribbean also had particular relational definitions. These concepts were underpinned by beliefs and linked by a moral grammar that rendered comprehensible much of the pejorative terminology I was encountering in interviews and contemporary and archival documents. The question ceased in effect to be about any problem that I chose to define as central to the policies that had created the landscape of contemporary Tobago. Instead it became a question of how the individuals I interviewed and the documents I consulted had come to define problems of development through specific orientations and arrangements of language and the practises that this inspired. This has profound implications for those who have sought to critique an apolitical managerial tendency in development policy documents. Such a phenomenon is not symptomatic of a decline in ideology or the triumph of a generic neoliberalism but I suspect is actually a product of how intersecting contemporary moral imperatives are performed. What I have sought to illustrate is the moral logic of development policy performed in Tobago, past and present, the beliefs immanent to that logic and the grammar that unites the concepts around which those beliefs are arranged. It is not

simply a case of whether something is a good thing or a bad thing but how and why certain things come to be seen as good or bad by specific individuals at specific junctures in history. It is this logic that best describes why people often seem to say and do the funniest things.

What I sought to do in the opening chapter of this thesis was to illustrate how moral beliefs have given a specific character to writings about both the history of social and economic development in the Caribbean and to development studies in general. One major corollary of this phenomenon and the debates that gave rise to it has been the exclusion of morality as an analytic object in many disciplines. Sometimes this has been the result of overt moral preferences, as in relativist liberal anthropology and sometimes it has been a consequence of a less directed moral logic such as in poststructuralist assumptions about culture and language. The lack of a specific engagement with the operation and consequences of individual moralities gets to the heart of a notable tension within anthropology between relativism and universalism⁸⁸⁴. This is because morality can be highly personalised in practice but is generally a universal human trait.

The result of my fieldwork was a deep seated scepticism about scholarly usages of terminology in relation to the study of the Caribbean, Environmental History and the Anthropology of Development. The opening chapter of this thesis contains much of the material that might normally have been in a conclusion because in this instance to review the literature meant to question the a priori assumptions underpinning its moral logic. Only with this done was it possible to make sense of and present the products of my work in both archives and the field. Following from this I have sought to demonstrate the origins and peculiarities of the ethics that informed policies and transformed the landscape in Tobago. The key point to reiterate is that this has not been so much a history of an island and its inhabitants but a reflection upon the fortunes and consequences of various ideological trends that fall under the rubric of development. As such this has been a history of the idea of development and individuals who have believed in that idea at different times. This has been the genealogy of a concept and its associated beliefs and practises told from a specific geographic locale rather than a description of that locale and its inhabitants per se.

The language of development used by policy makers in the colonial period was particular to both their assumptions about and their intentions toward the Caribbean. The opening chapters of this thesis have sought to demonstrate the context and complexity of the origins of

⁸⁸⁴ Fassin, D. Beyond Good and Evil? Questioning the Anthropological Discomfort with Morals *Anthropological Theory* Vol.8 No.4 2008

the thinking that informed policy making. This genealogy of thought was informed by heated debates about the legacy of the slave trade, the obligations of the mother country and more far reaching concerns about the effects of certain forms of property, labour and more abstract discussions like the theory of rent. In this sense I have sought to illustrate how the interaction of individuals grounds local level discussions of policy in the colonial Caribbean in a more global ideological and ethical context. Concepts such as peasants and plantations emerged from these ethical debates but these concepts came to embody particular vices and virtues bound up with the sense of obligation inspired by beliefs in socialism, capitalism, nationalism, entrepreneurship and mission of empire itself. Re-emerging questions about private charity and public welfare do not look so novel when viewed against the backdrop of how socialist thought permeated the early 20th Century colonial establishment⁸⁸⁵. The sheer complexity of development's intellectual history renders simplistic accounts which speak of a one dimensional missionary zeal or an all knowing and seeing state⁸⁸⁶. Such accounts speak more to what their authors dislike about what they observe than about what they are observing.

The description of the past is a moral contest in the present in which the future is decided. Recent descriptions of development policy and practice have sought to show the social life of development, the processes of negotiation and brokerage by individuals that lie behind the production of documents⁸⁸⁷. What is often missing in these accounts is that they see consensus as something innately false and so identify disjunctures between presentation and reality. The absent element in an otherwise laudable focus on individual agency is that policy processes are the result of intersecting moral intentions rather than relatively straightforward actor interactions. When it comes to policy such discussions are about the past and the future as well as the present. Behind the often quite genuine confusion, misunderstanding and

⁸⁸⁵ For example the anthropological reconsideration of charity in light of debates around corporate social responsibility largely neglects a century of ideological turmoil that sprang directly from a rejection of charity in favour of public duty and state intervention. For the original argument's most influential contribution, see Attlee, C. *The Social Worker* G Bell London 1920 and for the anthropological rediscovery of the difficulties of charity, see Rajak, D. "I am the Conscience of the Company": Responsibility and the Gift in a Transnational Mining Corporation in Browne, K. and Milgram, L. Eds. *Economics and Morality*. AltaMira Press Maryland 2008

⁸⁸⁶ Stirrat and Henkel's attempt to ground development in a sketch history of missionary activity and protestant thought is worse than no history at all, ignoring as it does the complex changes in belief about the nature and intention of charity that precipitated the birth of both the welfare state and the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts. See, Henkel, H and Stirrat, R. Participation as Spiritual Duty; Empowerment as Secular Subjection in Cooke, B and Kothari, U. Eds. *Participation: The New Tyranny*. Likewise Post Development thought also works from assumptions about history that are not grounded in the detailed study of history.

⁸⁸⁷ For example Lewis, D. and Mosse, D. Eds. *Development Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Agencies* Kumarian Press Ltd Connecticut 2006

occasional malfeasance that constitutes T&Ts legendary bacchanal there is a quite logical explanation for the direction of written and verbal policy announcements. What is happening is that policymakers are often pursuing contradictory but equally desirable aims because the key concepts are grammatically linked in order to give the policy a meaning coherent to its authors if not all of its observers. This is significant for writers who see policy documents as discursive instruments or the products of a façade of consensus that either obliterates or obscures true political activity.

Mosse's account of DFID's operations in India takes policy to be a system for presenting an outward image of coherence but says very little about the history of ideological approaches to aid policy or broader changes to the operating ethos of the British Civil Service over the last half century or so. Changes of government are presented by Mosse as mere technical details creating inconvenient upheavals rather than being part of a formal ideological struggle waged through individual preferences about regarding past, present and future⁸⁸⁸. Whilst no policy document presents a detailed commentary on its preparation the text can reveal an awful lot about the thinking behind it, something that chapter 6 sought to illustrate in relation to the branding exercise undertaken by the THA. Plans are an exercise in divination that can only be understood by appreciating the precise relationship between past present and future that their authors intend to convey through setting down thoughts and prescribing practises.

There is a further dimension to the ethical character of West Indian history, one that is perhaps not so acutely unavoidable as in other social and geographic contexts. A type of moral commerce, the shifting arrangements of beliefs about the vices and virtues of ownership in all aspects of social life, has characterised the writing of ethnographic and historical accounts of the region. What chapters 2,3 and 4 sought to achieve was a sketch of how complex mythologies of ownership shaped beliefs about land use and the social conduct of private and public property rather than a broad sweep history of the island under various colonial administrative regimes. It is in regard to the consequences of these relationships of ownership, real and perceived, that subsequent historical and social theories of the Caribbean have overwhelmingly been addressed. This has not just been part of the ongoing imagination of identity in an abstract sense but one which consciously entwines sentiment and moral judgements with political economy. In no small part a legacy of the contribution of CLR James to West Indian social history. Its major consequence has been the formation of a complex

⁸⁸⁸ Mosse, D. *Cultivating Development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice* Pluto Press London 2004

moral language that judges past and present performances by individuals on the basis of particular accounts of what is and is not virtuous. Nowhere is this perhaps more apparent than in theoretical debates surrounding the appropriate description of creolisation and who can lay claim to the term and how.

Debates surrounding the concept of property and the beliefs that constitute and inspire ownership lie at the heart of the relationship between the physical and the metaphysical realms. In recognising the particularities of this interplay in the history of the ideas which have influenced West Indian land use policies it becomes possible to see how a shifting economy of vice and virtue has shaped economy society and landscape. Tobago is not a classically misread landscape in the sense that some key detail of its past has been obscured in favour of a convenient fiction, its ecological and social history misinterpreted in consequence. Of course there is certainly a great deal that is not known. Even with an agreement over key events and their impact there remains substantial disagreement over the future direction of policy. This is not the result of a disjuncture between knowledge and action. The disjuncture lies between what is known and what is believed about what is known and who believes it and why. This is the essence of knowledge as moral performance⁸⁸⁹.

The economic challenges faced by Tobago and many of the smaller islands in the Anglophone Caribbean from abolition to independence remained broadly similar; a struggle to find an economically and morally viable replacement for an industry that had failed as a financial, ecological and social enterprise. It was this moral conundrum that proved as crucial to planners, if not more so, than technical issues. In this period it is possible to find the origins of many key aspects of contemporary development policy in Tobago. The smallholdings and the major commercial plantations may have all but vanished but the beliefs they inspired, in areas ranging from land tenure to hygiene, have found a new place in current arrangements of belief. What happened is in many ways unique to Tobago. There are common themes with other islands that were once within the same administrative orbit, common turns of phrase assisted by inter island migration and trade, but the actual how of the matter remains specific. This is particularly acute in the case of examples like family land where a single concept found

⁸⁸⁹ Knowledge may not end with the individual but that is, in my view, where it begins. This is why an interpretation of meaning begins with the simultaneity of the individual and the utterance. Simply studying what is said can lead to argument by implicit suggestion on the basis of unjustified and unscrutinised personal moral criteria. The postmodern approaches to consumption or environmental history discussed in Chapter 1 would do well to reflect on Gellner's dictum concerning writing, "Philosophy is explicitness, generality, orientation and assessment. That which one would insinuate, thereof one must speak". Gellner, E. *Words and Things* Victor Gollancz Ltd London 1959:265

throughout the region has virtually never the same history in any two settings, despite the efforts of researchers and politicians in search of evidence of cultural homogeneity and commonality⁸⁹⁰. In other cases whole aspects of belief have vanished along with the physical and social infrastructure that made them possible and in so doing have had a major impact on how the landscape of Tobago looks today. This is evident in the ethos of estate owners in the early 20th and late 19th Centuries. Their struggles to be good capitalists, visionary imperialists and harbingers of science and civilisation are all but forgotten. The plants they introduced, the animals they hunted or protected and the landscapes they sought to forge remain, if not in the patterns that they intended. Similarly many of their ideas of race, property, political responsibility and labour and the reactions that they inspired have also outlived them and continued to preoccupy those who inhabit, govern and study the countries of the Caribbean. The moral conundrum over the future of the Caribbean economy was not resolved by the time of the collapse of the West Indies Federation and independence for some countries in 1962. The political future of smaller islands like Tobago was equally unresolved, at least from the point of view of many, some have become microstates, some have remained dependencies and some like Anguilla have tried being both. Even in the face of economic rationality there are plenty of Tobagonian politicians intent on separation from Trinidad⁸⁹¹. A majority of these and their supporters regard such threats as a valuable stick in the struggle over government funding even if independence remains elusive and probably impractical. The language of policy bequeathed by colonial planners and their detractors has tended to perpetuate rather than resolve the problems of economy and environment. These tensions are the outcome of the moral logic of policy and its underlying history.

In Tobago the contemporary landscape has broadly come to be seen as a resource for leisure rather than agricultural production. The question of whose leisure or what form it should take is dogged by the suggestive quality of newly desirable concepts of sustainability and environmental management⁸⁹². Such concepts mask the vulnerability of a fragile economy as much as they are at odds with the often violent transformations wrought by hurricanes, earthquakes and droughts that routinely impinge on human efforts to inhabit the island Caribbean. In seeking out new visions of Tobago's landscape, planners, environmentalists,

⁸⁹⁰ E.g. Besson, J. *Martha Brae's Two Histories European Expansion and Caribbean Culture-Building in Jamaica* Chapel Hill University of North Carolina Press 2002

⁸⁹¹ There are certainly a few academic enthusiasts for political autonomy or secession, see, Luke, Learie B. *Identity and Secession in the Caribbean: Tobago vs. Trinidad 1889-1980* UWIpress 2007

⁸⁹² In this much at least I identify the line of inquiry, if not the presumptions of the method, found in, Mowforth, Martin and Munt Ian. *Tourism and Sustainability: Development and the New Tourism in the Third World* 2nd Ed. Routledge London 2006

farmers and those involved in tourism have often consciously chosen to incorporate many beliefs entwined with what constitute the concepts of race and class in the Caribbean. Environmentalism in Tobago is predicated in part on a belief in the fundamental inability of the island's inhabitants to become suitably sustainable and ecological in their outlook and be glad for the increased expense. As in past circumstances this has not prevented interventions in education and calls for public awareness that have often profound spiritual qualities for those making them. At the time of my visit environmental groups in Tobago had not yet developed the more complex outlook on society and economy found in other contexts around the world. Paradise still carries an admission fee and this was no environmentalism of the poor. If ET's recent acquisition of a grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for a community conservation program is going to change this remains to be seen. The association of welfare and environmental management remains the preserve of government bodies that in documents and practice linked ideas of personal, ecological and societal transformation. This happened in ways that could leave those intent on preserving the pristine exasperated and sharing views similar to a business community hostile to government expenditure, of which several of them were a part.

Understanding the role of morality and the need to do and be seen to do what is right is essential to understanding human societies. Morality cannot be understood without an emphasis on agency and intention. In the case of recent studies of development, tourism and environment in the Caribbean agency appears to have been downplayed in favour of the power of abstract forces. These new deities have taken several forms. When considering tourism and environmentalism as the personal stories and meaning that people attach to the landscape of Tobago it is important to recall that concepts like capitalism and culture have no agency of their own; just as any study of the past cannot see imperialism as an impersonal force in the way that discourse analysis can reveal it⁸⁹³. The particular personal stories of Tobago's landscape are not human things to be obscured by an impersonal capitalism, they are capitalism. Policy is not a discursive machine that obliterates the politics and identities of people, it is the performance of the politics and personality of individuals⁸⁹⁴. This is why over

⁸⁹³ Although the alternative view of capitalism as a force that curtails and directs agency in the performance of tourism can be found in, James G. Biography, *Ecology, Political Economy: Seascape and Conflict in Jamaica* in Stewart, Pamela J. & Strathern, Andrew Eds. *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives* London 2003

⁸⁹⁴ Ferguson's anti politics machine is therefore either a useful metaphor for a particular type of political process or the unhelpful consequence of a theoretical approach; if the latter, then it appears to operate in an equally anti political manner. It does this by making some people the victims and others the

time the story of Tobago's landscape is one with an air of impermanence. The moral performance of property that has been an integral part of Caribbean history has been at the heart of this sequence of upheaval. Capitalism has been so potent in both its Caribbean heartland and beyond precisely because it is so entwined with what those who own, produce and purchase deem desirable. Historically the shock has come either when what was once desirable becomes either undesirable, unaffordable or both. Questions about the history and meaning of tourism, agriculture or citizenship are basically questions about the relationship between human agency and the ethics of property. If this sounds like an inductive arrival at something resembling dialectical materialism then that is what is intended.

As people have come to hold new beliefs about the concepts that are seen as a part of the history of the Caribbean landscape so they have found new inspirations for exploiting, protecting and possessing that landscape. What has so far not happened in Tobago is an attempt to devise a rationale that links together the various concepts of the moral grammar of policy. What instead pertains is a situation in which there is a logical conflict and commerce of beliefs about how the island should appear to locals and outsiders and why it should appear so. It is this commerce of beliefs without reason that will ensure that the moral conundrum of economy, environment and society in Tobago, if not the wider Caribbean, moves from one crisis of impermanence to the next for the foreseeable future.

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