

The superlative texts I have been given for commentary both engage explicitly with the idea of travel to the Caribbean islands. The first text is a print advertisement for a cruise line from the 1920's—probably appearing in a newspaper or similar periodical (in black and white because it is old)—and the second text is a recent newspaper article about the development of land in the Caribbean for tourism purposes. While the first text is meant to be positive and enticing, paired with the second it ironically brings to light the mindless exploitation caused by tourism and perhaps even suggests the deep roots of corporate imperialism.

The first text is an advertisement for the “Great White Fleet” and its reduced rate summer cruises to the Caribbean. The ad consists of a large, stylized masthead, a map of the Caribbean and a drawing (presumably) of the customers aboard the cruise. A few things immediately stand out because of the design of the advertisement. First of all, the map of the Caribbean suggests that maybe the intended audience would not be very familiar with geography. At least, the map is a suggestion that this cruise will go somewhere different and exotic, a place not like home. This part of the advertisement is partly informative and partly a means of selling a product. The product in the ad is obviously the cruise but it is also the exotic place and the luxury of the trip. The luxury is clearly suggested in the image of the well-dressed people. It is almost funny that the people on the cruise seem dressed for winter but this “cool” cruise depiction is meant to assure people that on their exotic trip they will not be too overwhelmed. The people in the image, most importantly, are pampered. Of course, they are not only pampered, they are white. The cruise line is called “Great White” and, since the customers are also Caucasian, we can assume something about the intended audience (that they are Caucasian) but also about their relationship to this exotic place: these people are “great” and different from what they will find on their journey. The main selling point of this ad seems to be the “coolness,” the “greatness” and the luxury (and perhaps exclusiveness) of a trip where “only first class customers are served.”

The second text seems like a straightforward informative piece of journalism. This excellent text, however, also reveals some bias against the people who are buying land in the Caribbean. The article describes how companies are coming to the islands in order to buy beach front property for future tourism development. It also shows how people who have lived on the land for years are losing their land. Through the use of words such as “threatened,” “disputed” and “colonialism” it is clear that the article portrays the outsiders as negative when compared to

the local people. The article starts with a startling and sad depiction of the poor residents of the property who have to battle “tsetse flies” but it also shows that they have lived on this land for years (in fact almost forced to live on this land as they have been “relegated” to it) but that at the same time it is a “stunning archipelago.” The article builds sympathy for the local people by naming them, quoting them, and describing their families. The developers never get a name and are clearly in league with the also impersonal “security” forces. The article ends in a way that shows us the bad nature of the situation by stating simply that the bad guys will use “any means necessary to get the land from the people.”

These texts are much more interesting to consider when looked at together. After reading the newspaper article we are pushed to reconsider the more troubling aspects of the advertisement. First, we see the people not only as privileged and white but as possibly unwitting exploiters of island people. This is compounded when we see that the cruise line is owned by the “United Fruit Company.” Though we may not have noticed this before, it seems obvious that this is just the kind of company that may have exploited the Caribbean in the same way that developers are exploiting the people today as shown in text 2. What is the role of the intended audiences in both of the pieces? How are the audiences (of today and yesterday) supposed to respond? Today we can clearly see the possible exploitation in the first text and we are obviously supposed to be sympathetic in the second. But both audiences, though separated by time, are in fact very similar. Both pieces have been directed at a literate, affluent audience. The audience today is assumed to be liberal and caring but wouldn’t their direct ancestors have been the very people to take the depicted cruise? Wouldn’t these same newspaper readers of text 2 also somehow unwittingly engage in exploitation? The two texts taken together indicate that though readers may be more attentive to concerns about colonialism and exploitation, really both pieces show that the more things change the more they remain the same. The first text aims to persuade but in the end informs us of the relationship between exploiter and exploited in the Caribbean while the second text may start as explanation, become more of a persuasion about exploitation, but then turns into a persuasion for the reader to see the Caribbean, once again, as still an exotic place to visit. Both audiences can remain “great” and “cool” as they consider the exotic “other.” In both pieces the “writer” and the audience or reader can remain above the fray and content in their homes.

In conclusion it is easier to understand subtexts and suggestions when these texts are put together than it would be when they are on their own. While the second text is clearly about exploitation, we may not notice the hints at the beauty and exotic nature of the Caribbean (though we don't want to be developers, we still might want to visit and explore in a less harmful way this "stunning" place) if it weren't for our reconsideration of our position as a possible cruise goers. On the other hand, if it weren't for this second piece, we might take the first text, the advertisement, as a very straightforward enticement to visit and enjoy the islands rather than as a somewhat racist and imperialist (admittedly partly because of the time period) and blindly positive ad.