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Today, one of the iconic images of *vacation* is a broad, sandy beach framed by palms and lapped by azure tropical waters. For many, including some historians of tourism, the attractiveness of hot-weather resorts confirms a natural human hedonism[1]—a belief constantly reinforced by resort and cruise advertisements. But places with warm climates did not attract many tourists before 1900, and not merely for lack of infrastructure and air conditioning.[2] Far from reflecting human nature, contemporary promotional materials for such resorts still bear the signs of the twentieth-century rearticulation of a venerable climatic determinism that linked warm climates to ill-health and backward, dark-skinned peoples. This rearticulation was instrumental in the emergence of places such as Florida, Southern California, Mexico, and the Caribbean as vacation destinations between 1880 and 1940.[3] Marketing "the tropics" as an elixir of horticultural fertility and the racial youthfulness attributed to the locals, travel businesses portrayed leisure as a natural resource instead of a social privilege. In doing so, they transformed climatic determinism from a pillar of white supremacy into a vehicle for reimagining the relationship between whites, the tropical environment, and nonwhite peoples in a positive light.

This transformation relied upon and contributed to a shift toward romanticism in the popular conceptualization of both race

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and nature. The romantic perspective—rooted in the eighteenth-century assertion of particularity, emotion, and nature against Enlightenment universalism, rationalism, and civilization—emphasized the spiritual importance of human interaction with untrammeled nature and celebrated nonwhites for their greater intimacy with the natural world—an intimacy rendered in garden-variety white supremacy as a primitive lack of mastery over both self and the environment. For early-twentieth-century bohemians and avant-garde artists, nonwhites exemplified humanity free of the psychic and social deformities imposed by civilization. Similarly, the tropics represented nature in its most fertile and giving aspect, places where people enjoyed perfect well-being without having to labor, as they had long ago in Eden.[4] Although by no means staffed by cultural radicals, the tourist industry used such romantic attitudes to sell tropical cruises, tours, and resorts. This reversal of the valence of climatic determinism resonated with the cultural claims of many antiracist and anticolonial movements at the time and helped to popularize cultural pluralism.[5] At the same time, it reinforced and elaborated on a centuries-old view of the American tropics as a cornucopia at the service of northerners, sustaining the region's history of environmental and economic spoliation.

As will already be obvious, I do not use *the tropics* in the scientific sense of "located between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn," or 23°26'22" north and south of the equator. Instead, I follow the usage of tourist entrepreneurs and tourists, who at times used the term to refer to any climate warmer than those of the northeastern and midwestern United States or northwestern Europe. Although writers also often distinguished between Mediterranean, semitropical or subtropical, and tropical zones, they attributed the same kinds of racial characteristics to people living in all three and advertised the pleasures of a visit to them with similar imagery—palm trees, endless sunshine, abundant flowers and fruit, and broad, sandy beaches. The very ubiquity of these attractions in places as different as Southern California and Jamaica signals the continuity and the transformation of ideas about climate, geography, and human nature that I analyze in this essay.

White Man's Grave[6]

In a fable set in the 1850s and published in the U.S. magazine *Overland Monthly* in 1870, two young white American men sail from New York for the California goldfields. As they wait for canoes to take

them across the Isthmus of Panama, one falls ill with "Isthmus fever," and a young mixed-race woman lovingly tends to him. Although her care preserves the man's life, it leads to a fate worse than death: he decides to stay in Panama with her. "It was a regular Arcadia that he had contrived in his imagination," sighs the narrator:

> While we other poor devils were to go up to the mines, and there delve and wear out our strength, and become toil-bent and haggard in our profitless pursuit of the glittering metal, or . . . find all our labor lead to no pleasant result, since our very riches would involve us in the entanglements of a vicious and artificial civilization. . . . He would marry his native flame. . . . The fruits of the ground would be their food, and the birds should sing around them. . . . In such an oasis of pleasant days their lives would gently glide along.[7]

Here are all the dangers of the tropics in a single passage. First is the physical, the fever evoking the deadly yellow fever and malaria that European expansion and slave trading spread to all of the world's warm places. Then, with death postponed, the moral danger, in which the appeal of a life of leisure and self-indulgence undermines ambition and racial difference, culminates in the wholesale rejection of civilization.

Behind the fear lay two discourses on the tropics. The first was a venerable fantasy of a return to Eden, that place before original sin condemned humans to labor for their sustenance, free of both the economic hardships and the political corruption typical of Europe. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this vision of the tropics was gradually marginalized by the second, a pessimistic version of climatic determinism that gained currency as genocide, plantation agriculture, and slavery degraded the physical environment and its utopian social prospects. Reinvigorated by the U.S. and European imperial scrambles and the expansion of white settlement in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this discourse posited that people's character and well-being depended on daily temperatures and seasonal changes, wind, humidity, and the quality of the soil, among other factors. On a collective level, warm climates produced dark-skinned people who were hot-blooded, emotional, and indolent, whereas temperate climates generated light-skinned people who were cool, rational, and hardworking. Scholars argued about whether racial differences derived from climatic differences and, therefore, might change with migration or whether God had created each race to occupy its own climatic zone, in which case races were immutable. The fear that whites might become dark-skinned—might "degenerate," in the racial language

of the day—limited North Americans' and Europeans' capacity to exploit tropical riches that imperialists were loath to accept.[8]

The linkages among race, health, and climate remained strong well into the twentieth century, and American geographers were among their most fervent advocates. Ellen Churchill Semple asserted that "[t]he intense heat and humidity of most tropical lands prevent any permanent occupation by a native-born population of pure whites."[9] Where whites did not thrive, such scholars concluded, civilization would not arise. Ellsworth Huntington, another American geographer, made this argument most exhaustively in *Civilization and Climate* (1915). Beginning with this principle—"it is generally agreed that the native races within the tropics are dull in thought and slow in action"—he undertook painstaking experimental and statistical research to conclude that his unexceptional hypothesis was correct: "The civilization of the world varies almost precisely as we should expect if human energy were one of the essential conditions, and if energy were in large part dependent upon climate."[10]

Yet U.S. and European colonization of "tropical" areas continued, and colonial officials had to find solutions to a problem many geographers regarded as insoluble. Like others of his ilk, U.S. Army doctor Charles Woodruff argued that whites could survive in the U.S.-occupied Philippines and other hot places only with the proper prophylaxis: "*Day clothing should be opaque*. . . . The hat must be of wide brim and thick enough to exclude all the rays [of the sun]," and houses, schools, and hospitals must be kept dark. He also recommended avoiding strenuous physical and mental activity.[11] Other physicians called for special layers of clothing to protect the kidneys and advised whites to be abstemious with alcohol, food, and sex.[12] Service in the colonies most certainly was not a vacation.

Contributing to anxieties about tropical places were common ideas about seasonality. For centuries, European and American Christians had understood the seasonal cycle as a worldly enactment of the promise of eternal life. In this scheme, spring was a time of rebirth and courtship, summer of fruitfulness, autumn of mature preparation for the scarcity to come, and winter for old age and inevitable death. Without the last, there was no hope of spring, God's renewal of life. In this way of thinking, those who lived in perpetual spring or summer never grew up properly; they remained careless children, living without a thought for a harsh tomorrow. In the scientific mode, the importance of seasonal change became an emphasis on variation in the production of civilization. "In contrast to the monotonous extremes of climate in the hot and cold zones," Semple wrote, "temperate lands are characterized the intermediate degrees

of annual temperature and marked seasonal diversity which are so favorable to human development."[13] In a lighter tone, *Travel* magazine praised winter for endowing people with "the wine of health; the tonic of real happiness."[14] Taking a less sanguine view, Iowan C. W. Johnston dismissed Southern California's horticultural and human products because "cold weather is essential to the production of good fruit, the same as fine specimens of human beings."[15]

Yet, new developments at the turn of the twentieth century suggested that whites might find means of surviving in the tropics. The rise of germ theory demonstrated that diseases such as malaria and yellow fever could be prevented. More importantly, the theory implied that if individual microscopic creatures were the true cause of ill-health, rather than a racial mismatch between a person and the environment, then there was no reason why white people could not thrive in warm climates by using the proper prophylactic technologies: mosquito netting, screens, good sanitation, and good drainage. For many white Americans, the near elimination of yellow fever from Havana, Cuba, and the Panama Canal Zone while these sites were under U.S. control confirmed the nation's imperial benevolence and their own racial superiority.[16]

In the view of some American and European thinkers, however, the mere fact of improved physical health only made the moral danger of the tropics and its long-term result, racial degeneration, more acute. Both the climate and the proximity to people already degraded by its influence—that is, the local nonwhite population—posed a serious danger to whites in the tropics. Although visiting whites might avoid the initial bout of "Isthmus fever," they might still be seduced into abandoning civilization and its rigors. The ever-gloomy Huntington wrote, "In tropical countries weakness of will is unfortunately a quality displayed not only by the natives, but by a large proportion of the northerner sojourners," citing gambling, lying, drunkenness, laziness, and sexual promiscuity.[17] British traveler Stephen Graham agreed: "Apathy, listlessness, no doubt, is the chief danger [to whites] in Panama, and that being a spiritual danger it is more to be regarded than the material danger of disease."[18] Johnston, having noted the climatic degeneration of Southern Californians, believed that the same would inevitably occur in Panama: "The [local] people have no life nor energy to do anything, the same as all humanity similarly situated in hot climates. . . . That which is accomplished worth while [*sic*] is done by constantly infusing new blood from colder climates."[19]

Of course, few, if any, scientists or colonial officials thought that a visit of a few weeks or a few months incurred the same risks as a

prolonged stay or permanent settlement in the tropics. With malaria and yellow fever under control, a little tropical tourism probably would not hurt the average white American. Even Woodruff, who concluded that eventually the tropical sun would drive the strongest white man mad, thought a brief sojourn could be beneficial, and the curmudgeonly Johnston predicted Costa Rica's fame as a tourist resort.[20] But a lack of danger was insufficient to make Florida, Southern California, Mexico, and the Caribbean into tourist attractions. Nor can it explain why many of the resorts that sprang up in these places after 1880 advertised themselves—with extraordinary success—as especially healthy and reinvigorating precisely because of their tropical climates and dark-skinned residents. To understand this startling about-face, we must examine how the pleasure-travel industry and travel writers recast climatic determinism in a romantic, instead of a tragic, vein.

"Luxuriously Hot"[21]

Although cautious investors might have regarded it with some doubt in 1880, the tourist industry in the southern reaches of the United States and its nearest neighbors was flourishing by 1900. The development of pleasure travel went hand in hand with the development of transportation and accommodations. Florida's major entrepreneurs, Henry Flagler and Henry Plant, built railroads and hotels on the peninsula's east and west coasts, respectively, beginning in the 1880s. By the time of his death in 1913, Flagler's rail line ran all the way to Key West, serving the destination resorts he established in Ormond, Daytona, and Palm Beach, as well as the booming new city of Miami, and offering steamer service to and a luxury hotel in Nassau, the Bahamas.[22] On the Pacific Coast, the Southern Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe railroads competed for traffic to Southern California after 1883 with fare wars and both luxury and tourist-class train service and hotels. The elite Raymond & Whitcomb tour company and local entrepreneurs built resort hotels, gardens, entertainment piers, and golf courses from Santa Barbara to San Diego and points between. Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, the Automobile Club of Southern California, and the All Year Club produced reams of advertising and paid lecturers to travel the country touting the region. The establishment of the film industry in Hollywood in the 1910s added considerably to Southern California's attractions.[23]

A similar pattern emerged in Mexico, where American and British investors in Mexican railroads began promoting pleasure

travel in the 1880s. After the worst fighting of the Mexican Revolution (1911–20) subsided, both U.S. and Mexican businesses and the Mexican government promoted American tourism by improving rail and highway transportation, upgrading and expanding hotel accommodations, and producing a plethora of material on what to see and do.[24] In the Caribbean, not surprisingly, steamship travel proved critical. The extension of U.S. military and economic involvement in the region after the 1898 Spanish-American War and the opening of the Panama Canal under U.S. management in 1914 encouraged the proliferation of steamship lines carrying a rapidly growing number of passengers. Hoping to make the southward journey profitable, the banana-growing Standard Fruit and United Fruit companies launched cruise lines, and the latter also built luxury hotels near its plantations in Jamaica. In the 1920s, American and European passenger steamship lines developed a new line in pleasure cruises, and the Caribbean was a major arena for them. By the mid-1930s, several commercial airlines flew to cities in the United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean.[25]

In short, by 1930, Americans could reach beaches and palm trees for as little as the cost of gasoline between the Midwest and Florida, and "tin-can" tourists living out of their cars became a regular, if sometimes unwelcome, presence.[26] Wealthy travelers could pay as much as $1,500 (about $18,400 in 2007 dollars) for a luxury suite on board a Grace Line cruise ship traveling from San Francisco to New York via the Panama Canal and rent a berth for the automobile for a mere $100 ($1,200 in 2007) more.[27] Tens of thousands took advantage of these opportunities. "Before spring comes again," reported the *New York Times* in the Depression year of 1938, "more than 1,500,000 Americans will have sampled the pleasure of Winter [*sic*] vacations in latitudes far removed from the so-called 'Temperate Zone.'"[28] How did tourist businesses and local boosters achieve this extraordinary transformation of attitudes in just a few decades?

One of the simplest and most widespread tactics that promoters adopted to ease potential tourists' fears of the tropics was to deny that the place in question was really hot at all. As the editor of a journal for U.S. expatriates in Mexico complained, "With the thermometer ranging above ninety [degrees Fahrenheit] in the American cities, people there are prone to contemplate with horror what they imagine the weather must be a thousand miles south of the Rio Grande."[29] Tireless California booster George Wharton James echoed, "There are those, unfamiliar with California's climate, who assumed that because it is warm and congenial in the so-called winter months, it must be fearfully hot in the summer."[30] And just as the expatriate editor said with exasperation, "They do not

stop to consider that a great part of Mexico is a high plateau and that here . . . , the temperature is uniformly cool and pleasant all the year around."[31] James insisted, "Nothing can be further from the truth."[32] A travel writer similarly pooh-poohed northerners' prejudices against Florida summers: "In summer a perpetual breeze blowing from coast to gulf neutralizes the heat along with a refreshing daily shower."[33] Cruise lines emphasized the "refreshingly cool trade winds" that blew over their decks and by the 1920s offered electric fans in staterooms that were already, of course, all large and airy.[34]

Boosters also took advantage of the fact that people living in temperate climates had long sought warmer ones in the hope of curing ailments associated with cold weather, especially tuberculosis. Florida and Cuba hosted such ailing travelers in small numbers from the early nineteenth century, but the difficulties of travel and the lack of high-quality accommodations limited their success. By the 1880s, as the railroads extended their services south and westward, entrepreneurs began to tout their locale's health-giving climate and mineral waters, as in Newton Chittenden's exhaustive 1884 guide to "health and pleasure resorts" along the U.S. Pacific Coast.[35] In 1901, Mexico's Gran Pacífico Railroad proclaimed that visitors to the town of Cuernavaca would find there a cure for "shattered nervous systems, consumption, liver and heart affections [*sic*]."[36] Such promotions both rebutted the assumption that warm places were unhealthy and underwrote the establishment of high-quality hotels, many of which quickly became pleasure resorts rather than convalescent centers.[37]

This pursuit of health stimulated a relatively new phenomenon, wintertime pleasure travel, which particularly benefited tourist promoters in warm climates. Whereas eastern and midwestern resorts served primarily a summer trade, travelers aiming for Southern California, Florida, Mexico, and the Caribbean mostly went between November and March, avoiding both the supposedly unbearable tropical summers and the harsh winters at home.[38] "It was February in New York; it was a bright June morning when, four days later, we dropped anchor"[39] in the Caribbean. Or, en route to California, one might be grateful that "[g]enerous nature has so ordained that, without leaving Uncle Sam's broad domain, and in only four days [*sic*] time, we can be luxuriously and speedily transported . . . [a]way from the frost-blighted foliage of the north, into the land of perpetual verdure and perennial bloom."[40] The United States was not the only nation so blessed: "As peculiar as it may seem to us, [in Mexico] even the seasons do not follow our standards. Fruit and vegetables ripen all the year 'round, and I hope that without seeming

unpatriotic, I may venture that there is much to be said in favor of this arrangement."[41]

As the uneasiness in this last quotation suggests, wintertime travel to the tropics threatened the proper order of things, in the common understanding (here presented as proudly American) of the seasonal cycle as the instrument of human development. In fact, winter tourist regions, by portraying travel southward as a trip back in time, promised precisely that eternal youth that geographers warned against: "The calendar seemed literally reversed when the ship sliced through the ocean,"[42] although it could have just as logically represented a move forward. This move associated summer with other results of turning back the clock—a return to childhood, a retreat from the burdens of adulthood and civilization, and a return to Eden, marking the reemergence of this centuries-old fantasy of the tropics. Because "The Seasons Stand Still in Puerto Rico,"[43] the visitor gained access to the perpetual youthfulness long attributed to tropical peoples. As the Illinois Central Railroad and Standard Fruit and Steamship Company urged, "Forsake the frets and cares of the humdrum workaday world . . . and be off to a land of gaiety where spring reigns throughout the year."[44] In more fanciful language, another writer promised that "in but two days' time from New York," the traveler "can reach the enchanted isles . . . where the Frost King may not follow, or claim [the traveler] for his own."[45] Florida had a bit of an edge in the youthfulness battle, thanks to Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon's mythical search for a fountain of youth there: "As I gazed on the marvelous spring," a zookeeper wrote of his expedition to capture an alligator, "the spirit of the Fountain possessed me and I dreamed that I had found what Ponce de Leon so long and so vainly sought. . . . Perpetual Youth of the spirit is one of the Florida Enchantments."[46]

A key aspect of this youthfulness was a joyful, carefree attitude and warm hospitality, both of which drew on the conventional notion that people raised amid the abundance of the tropics knew no scarcity and therefore never developed a mature caution in the disposal of their resources. Often, horticultural luxuriance stood in for the locals or obscured them entirely, particularly outside the United States. According to the Grace Line, "the bougainvillea . . . flames its welcome in the tropic sun."[47] The American Lines declared, "Bountiful nature has placed at our very threshold these gorgeous islands [the West Indies], a riotous revel of palm and poinsettia, of myriad forms of cacti and creeper, smiling an ever-ready welcome to those who seek their shelter."[48] When people were visible, they were equally welcoming: "Cubans," travel writer Sidney

Clark declared a few years after Fulgencio Batista's 1933 military coup, "are among the most buoyant, happy, hopeful people on earth," and this trait made for "a wonderful feeling of freedom" among tourists because it allowed them simply to enjoy themselves.[49] A Panama Mail Lines passenger wrote, "In this land of the marimba, where the air [is] heavy laden with rich odors of spices, the perfumed banana and other tropical fruits . . . , the people are loving and loved, and hospitable almost to a fault."[50] By the time the American Automobile Association's Elmer Jenkins told delegates to a 1931 Pan-American Union meeting that "your people are innately courteous and hospitable," the sentiment was thoroughly clichéd.[51]

The result was an entire region where leisure—which imperial moralists preferred to call laziness—was a major natural resource, just like bananas. Journalist Harry Foster rehearsed all the usual stereotypes in characterizing "the Latin-American": he "lived completely in the present, with scarcely a thought of the morrow"; "being indolent, he has infinite leisure for entertainment. At all times he is friendly, agreeable, and courteous." But unlike the theorists of racial degeneration, Foster rather liked this approach to life: "There was something pleasant and carefree about this Mexico that proved infectious," a fever he had no wish to avoid.[52] As another travel writer put it, "Everyone ought to go to Mexico, for in that Republic you will find all the time there is, and if our share thereof is not enough almost anyone there will have some to spare which he will gladly give away. To those people whose time is money, therefore, a trip into Mexico is a bargain."[53] Leisure, in this view, flowed from the place and its people rather than from the privilege of being a tourist.

But if tropical lands and their peoples were natural hosts, without American commercial acumen and industrial prowess they would never be able to extend the gift of their graciousness to the world. Many accounts of the rise of these popular tourist destinations emphasized that Americans discovered and put to their highest use the natural attributes of soil, climate, and race through agribusiness and resort development. "Once [the Spanish] had [Florida], no one seemed to know what to do with the place . . . , a sandy, apparently worthless waste," wrote one author: "Juan Ponce de Leon might well be termed the patron saint of winter tourists. . . . Unfortunately for him, however, he was born too soon. The world was not yet ready to make use of what he had discovered." Readiness arrived with a "shrewd, hard-headed, practical businessman"—Henry Flagler.[54]

Similarly, the Spanish colonists of Southern California, their American usurpers declared, had failed to take advantage of the rich opportunities the region offered. An ardent advocate of Latin gai-

ety and the climate that produced it, George Wharton James claimed that "a few Americans took a leaf of wisdom from the books of the Mexicans, though they read into it far more golden profit than the natives ever dreamed of."[55] In the Caribbean and Latin America, the Panama Canal was the ultimate such argument: U.S. know-how and good sanitation opened the whole world to whites by making the pestilential tropics safe for travelers. Advertising its 1935 cruises, the Grace Line proclaimed, "Here you have the spic-and-spanness of American enterprise. . . . [W]here fever and death once convinced the French that no canal would ever be built . . . [is] now one of the most healthful spots in all the world."[56]

Nowhere was the argument that American enterprise was making the tropics serve civilization more evident than in the sudden availability of tropical fruit in the United States, and that availability went hand in hand with the development of the pleasure-travel industry. The appearance of oranges, bananas, pineapples, and other tropical fruits on American grocery-store shelves depended on the existence of large plantations and a network of railroads, steamships, and corporate distribution and marketing throughout Central and North America. As well as being important local boosters in California and Florida, fruit growers were also sometimes tourist entrepreneurs. To ensure that his trains traveled fully loaded, Henry Flagler subsidized Florida agriculture at the same time that he constructed beach resorts. Coming to the same combination from the other direction, the United Fruit and Standard Fruit companies both sprouted Caribbean cruise lines, and the former played a large role in developing Jamaica's tourist industry.[57]

Even those fruit growers who did not actively invest in the leisure-travel industry did their part to spread the word that a warm climate meant well-being, pleasure, and beauty.[58] Advertising their products as marvelously healthful, they plastered their shipping crates with brightly colored labels portraying, among other things, lavishly fruitful landscapes and beautiful white and "Latin" maidens, embodiments of tropical fertility and hospitality (see figure 1). Advertisements for Caribbean and Mexican destinations often featured colorfully clad Indian and black women carrying baskets of fruit on their heads or men carrying bananas, portraying the tropics and their residents as eager fonts of tropical wealth (see figure 2).[59] The proliferation of tropical fruit in American markets went hand in hand with the increased circulation of images of tropical landscapes and tropical people, some of whom were white.

Such images were inducements to travel as much as the advertisements of the tourist industry proper. Indeed, flowering orange

Figure 1. La Reina brand crate label, Collection 319, a Collection of California fruit labels, box 1, UCLA Special Collections.

groves and oranges were Southern California's chief attractions for several decades. Above images of an orange grove and a packing house in a souvenir booklet, frequent traveler Lottie S. Tillotson scrawled "familiar scene."[60] The "ultimate object" of many visitors, a travel writer claimed, was "to eat oranges that they have themselves picked."[61] Riding through the streets of Pasadena, California, in 1893, Augustus Tripp and his wife visited several groves and at one received permission to eat all they liked: "We 'pitched in' and made a laughable exhibit of ourselves with our faces buried in the delicious fruit"[62]—exemplifying, in a small, self-deprecating way, the erosion of civilization in the form of table manners by tropical abundance. Such horticultural pleasures were not unique to Southern California. Gates Tours of St. Louis regularly featured plantations on its Mexican itineraries: "Lunch will be served on a large coffee plantation, shaded by orange and banana trees in full bloom—a charming spot and a never-to-be-forgotten occasion."[63] Opportunities to visit sugar mills and banana plantations appeared in many cruise brochures and guidebooks throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Tropical fruit and tropical travel were inseparable.

Figure 2. Cartoon strip showing locals bringing their goods to tourists, Grace Line cruise brochure, itinerary page. Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection, no. 1094, Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum, Los Angeles.

But the consistent equation of tropical peoples with tropical nature via climatic determinism implies a twist in an otherwise predictable tale of imperial commodification and consumption.[64] The development of Florida, Southern California, Mexico, and the Caribbean by American whites and their travels there meant something in addition to the spread of U.S.-style white supremacy and economic dominance. Many of the people who moved to or simply moved through these landscapes of plenty believed themselves to have changed or wanted to be changed because they did so. California's biggest fan, George Wharton James, claimed that "[t]here is that in the climate of California . . . that makes one feel *different.* The primness, the stiffness, the formality, the reserves of life seem to fall from one." The result was a "Festival Spirit . . . in many respects, equalling that found among the Latin races of Europe."[65] Another enthusiastic son of California proclaimed, "The Californian is unfettered by conventions; his spirit is free. The naturalness of childhood holds on into age. . . . The true Californian plays at living, and perhaps, nay, no doubt, this is the better way to live!"[66]

One did not have to settle permanently in California to enjoy these happy effects. American Express Travel Services assured travelers on its 1939 West Indies cruises that the mountain air and "the carnival spirit of the colorful native life up there [La Guayra, Venezuela] make you feel absurdly young and happy."[67] In the Bahamas, "no shrieking motor horns are heard to shatter the peace and contentment of your rediscovered Eden. The 'natives' [*sic*] smiling disregard of the rush and bustle that characterize our large cities will give you a clearer viewpoint from which to estimate the value of worry and work."[68] Mexico visitor Elise Haas wrote to a friend, "What a lesson we hurrying, scurrying Americans can learn from the leisurely Mexican and how many tired, strained faces could be smoothed into serenity by the calm, unhurried manner of living of these people."[69] Wells Fargo assured its travelers to Mexico that "the very Indian village of Yautepec . . . will tempt you to 'go native' and spend the afternoon lounging under its splendid trees and listening to the unending song of wild birds that crow in the leafy branches."[70]

Few actually did go native in any politically meaningful sense, but the growing numbers of well-to-do American whites who bought tickets and went south suggests that the tropical elixir of indolence amid natural abundance was something they greatly desired. Moreover, tropical tourism arose at the same time that a growing number of employers began offering paid vacation time in response to reformers' arguments that a dose of leisure made workers more productive.[71] This notion was highly congenial to travel businesses, which eagerly promoted it. Yet, far from being merely the beneficiary of broad cultural changes in attitudes toward leisure, the tourist industry played an important role in rearticulating long-standing assumptions about the relationship between health and race so that self-indulgence became the key to well-being, not a sign of degeneration.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of this contribution lies in the changing meaning of sunshine. After centuries of prizing pale skin, European and American whites began to tan in the 1910s and 1920s. Initially a carefully calculated medical practice,[72] sunbathing was by the 1930s the aim of much hot-weather tourism, especially at the emerging beach resorts: "The principal thing that most tourists do is to loaf in the sun, usually with as few clothes on as the law permits; at any rate, to loaf . . . , to loll undressed out of doors in Winter [*sic*] as well as in Summer [*sic*] and absorb into one's system the health-giving rays of the sun with the least physical exertion."[73] Disregarding physician Woodruff's stern warning that too much sun caused nervous breakdowns among whites, the New York & Cuba Mail urged its passengers to "[c]omplete your sun-cure . . . add the finishing touches to that coat of tan. You'll look and feel like a new person."[74]

And that new person was not white in the same sense as his or her nineteenth-century ancestors, though he or she was certainly not nonwhite, either. "The desired degrees of tanning," reported Stanley Hoffland in a 1926 *Los Angeles Times* article, "run from the color of weak cocoa to a deep, rich chocolate suggestive of African shores."[75] Southern California's beaches, like those elsewhere in the United States and at many Caribbean resorts, were racially segregated, and attempts by people born brown to use areas reserved for whites often met with violence.[76] Nevertheless, according to this campy article, beaches were also the crucible of racial transformation, for scientists had proved that future Southern Californians would all be olive-skinned and brown-eyed. The process of change, Hoffland argued, was painful but ultimately beneficial. Although "[n]obody sympathizes with a sunburned elderly bachelor," suffering through this stage to achieve a deep tan would work wonders: "What a husky dog he is, and quite young-looking! Brown as an Indian."[77]

Just as the travel writers and tourist promotions promised, imbibing the sun and leisure of the tropics would convert weary, overworked whites into youthful, healthy people with a greater connection to nature, a little less white, a lot more attractive. What pessimistic geographers condemned as racial degeneration would be both pleasurable and beneficial. As Hoffland explained, "The public likes wholesome-looking people, and the way to look wholesome is to live a natural fetter-free existence, and take advantage of every possible ray of health-giving sunshine." He did not shy away from the implication that "wholesome" meant "brown": "Yes, the styles in human hides are changing materially as we sever barbarous Puritanical [*sic*] repressions and borrow more and more from the earlier, morally and physically wholesomer [*sic*] ages not too far removed from Eden's fig-leafed bathing beaches."[78]

Thus the broad, sandy beaches popularized by advertisements for tropical resorts turn out not to be a self-evident site for recovering human nature at its best, but fig leaves, at once masks concealing and symbols revealing the relationships we imagine among climate, race, and health. On the one hand, the romantic racialism that connected "brown as an Indian" with youthful vigor gave whites a reason to listen to the claims of antiracist and nationalist ideologues on the dignity of nonwhite peoples. Mexican and Brazilian nationalists are only the best known of those who championed tropical civilization and its mixed-race peoples in this mode.[79] On the other hand, the accompanying infatuation with hot climates sustained the centuries-old European and North American exploitation of the tropics. As Americans went south, literally on cruise ships or vicariously by eating bananas, the tourist industry and agribusiness carved massive single-crop plantations out of forests and built company towns and first-class hotels with showers and flush toilets in every room, swimming pools, and golf courses. In many cases, these enterprises degraded both the physical environment and the political one; the Southern California of Latin gaiety was also an open-shop bastion of corporate power.[80] The same romantic racialism that encouraged greater appreciation for nonwhite peoples reinforced the idea that limitless abundance was a natural resource rather than the product of the tourist's social privilege.

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Notes

[1] For example, see Fred Inglis, *The Delicious History of the Holiday* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 3.

[2] Effective means of mechanical cooling appeared in the 1930s and so cannot explain the rise of hot-weather resorts beginning in the late nineteenth century.

[3] The Mediterranean (particularly the French coast) became a resort region as early as the 1860s and was a reference point and competitor for these American places. See John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); and Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750–1840,* trans. Jocelyn Phelps (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[4] David Arnold, *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 141–49; Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); and Fredrick B. Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

[5] Wilson J. Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); and Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 23–46.

[6] A common epithet for the tropics. For an example, see Stephen Graham, *In Quest of El Dorado* (New York: Appleton, 1923), 151, 163.

[7] "Potts, the Troubadour," *Overland Monthly,* August 1870, 170–71. I deal with the question of sexuality in another paper, "'Warm, Voluptuous Scenes of Tropic Lands': Sex, Race, and Tourism in the Southland, 1880–1940," presented at the "Connexions: Histories of Race and Sex in North America" conference held at New York University, 7–8 November 2008.

[8] The literature on climatology is extensive. Here, I draw on Warwick Anderson, "Geography, Race and Nation: Remapping 'Tropical' Australia, 1890–1930," in *Medical Geography in Historical Perspective,* ed. Nicolaas A. Rupke (London: Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, University College London, 2000), 146–59; Arnold, *Problem of Nature,* 141–55; and David N. Livingstone, "Human Acclimatization," *History of Science* 25 (1987): 359–94, and "The Moral Discourse of Climate: Historical Considerations on Race, Place, and Virtue," *Journal of Historical Geography* 17, no. 4 (1991): 413–34.

[9] Ellen Churchill Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment on the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthropo-Geography* (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 37. On American fervency, see David Arnold, "'Illusory Riches': Representations of the Tropical World, 1840–1950," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 21, no. 1 (2000): 6–18.

[10] Ellsworth Huntington, *Civilization and Climate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1915), 34, 219.

[11] Charles Woodruff, *The Effects of Tropical Light on White Men* (New York: Rebman, 1905), 4, 323 (original italics), 326, 328, 334–35, 340, 345–46.

[12] Arnold, *Problem of Nature,* 152; and Mark Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in Indian, 1600–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 80–85.

[13] Semple, *Influences,* 629; and Michael Kammen, *A Time to Every Purpose: The Four Seasons in American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[14] "The World's Progress," *Travel* 8, no. 2 (February 1905): 134.

[15] C. W. Johnston, *Along the Pacific by Land and Sea: Through the Golden Gate* (Chicago: Rand, McNally, 1916), 179.

[16] On germ theory, see Livingstone, "Human Acclimatization," 379–88; and Dane Kennedy, "The Perils of the Midday Sun: Climatic Anxieties in the Colonial Tropics," in *Imperialism and the Natural World,* ed. John M. McKenzie (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1990), 120–21. On American pride, see Huntington, *Civilization and Climate,* 40; A. Hyatt Verrill, *Cuba Past and Present* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1924), i, ii, 11; and "Healthy Havana," *Four-Track News* [later *Travel*] 1, no. 5 (November 1901): 8.

[17] Huntington, *Civilization and Climate,* 41. Kennedy ("Perils," 131) details the same fears among Britons.

[18] Graham, *In Search of El Dorado,* 165.

[19] Johnston, *Along the Pacific,* 252, 248.

[20] Woodruff, *Effects of Tropical Light,* 111, 190; and Johnston, *Along the Pacific,* 249.

[21] *Mexico? Si Señor* (Mexico City: Tourist Department of Wells Fargo, 1938), 7.

[22] Gregory W. Bush, "'Playground of the USA': Miami and the Promotion of Spectacle," *Pacific Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (1999): 153–72; David Leon Chandler, *Henry Flagler: The Astonishing Life and Times of the Visionary Robber Baron Who Founded Florida* (New York: Macmillan, 1986); and Susan R. Braden, *The Architecture of Leisure: The Florida Resort Hotels of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002).

[23] Clark Davis, "From Oasis to Metropolis: Southern California and the Changing Context of American Leisure," *Pacific Historical Review* 61, no. 3 (August 1992): 357–85; and Tom Zimmerman, "Paradise Promoted: Boosterism and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce," *California History* 64, no. 1 (1985): 22–33, 73–75.

[24] Dina Berger, *The Development of Mexico's Tourist Industry: Pyramids by Day, Martinis by Night* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Alex Saragoza, "The Selling of Mexico: Tourism and the State, 1929–1952," in *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico since 1940,* ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 91–115; and Catherine Cocks, "The Welcoming Voice of the Southland: American Tourism Across the US-Mexico Border, 1880–1940," in *Bridging National Borders in North America,* ed. Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew Graybill (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

[25] "Cool Vacation Cruises/To Foreign Lands Nearby/From New Orleans/Havana/Nicaragua/Panama/Old Mexico" (Illinois Central Railroad and Standard Fruit and Steamship Co.), unfoldered miscellaneous, Ocean Cruise Pamphlets

collection, Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum, Los Angeles. Several United Fruit Company cruise brochures are among in the Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection at the Seaver Center and the Kemble Maritime Ephemera collection at the Huntington Library. The contents of both collections reflect the entry of European passenger steamship lines into the Caribbean cruise industry and that industry's enormous growth in the 1920s. On United Fruit in Jamaica, see the Kemble Maritime Ephemera collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; and Frank Fonda Taylor, *To Hell with Paradise: A History of the Jamaican Tourist Industry* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993). On airlines, see Anita Brenner, *Your Mexican Holiday: A Modern Guide* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), 296.

[26] Kenneth L. Roberts, *Sun Hunting: Adventures and Observations among the Native and Migratory Tribes of Florida, Including the Stoical Time-Killers of Palm Beach, the Gentle and Gregarious Tin-Canners of the Remote Interior, and the Vivacious and Semi-violent Peoples of Miami and Its Purlieus* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1922), 85–102.

[27] Grace Line brochure, Grace Line folder, Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection (see note 25).

[28] John Markland, "Cruises Head South/Short Trips to Caribbean, Longer Voyages to South America, Lead in Popularity," *New York Times,* 11 December 1938, 203. On the expansion of tourism in the 1930s, see Michael Berkowitz, "A 'New Deal' for Leisure: Making Mass Tourism during the Great Depression," in *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America,* ed. Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 185–212.

[29] Editorial, *Modern Mexico* 7, no. 2 (August 1899): 8.

[30] George Wharton James, "The Influence of the Climate of California upon Its Literature," printed brochure (n.p.: Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, n.d., ca. 1900–10), 7.

[31] Editorial, *Modern Mexico,* 8.

[32] James, "Influence," 7.

[33] Maude Littlefield Baillard, "Creating the New Florida," *Travel* 38, no. 3 (January 1922): 9.

[34] "Cool Vacation Cruises."

[35] John E. Baur, *The Health Seekers of Southern California, 1870–1900* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1959); Billy M. Jones, *Health-Seekers in the Southwest, 1817–1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967); and Newton H. Chittenden, *Health Seekers', Tourists' and Sportsmen's Guide to the Sea-side, Lake-side, Foothill, Mountain and Mineral Spring Health and Pleasure Resorts of the Pacific Coast,* 2nd ed. (San Francisco: C. A. Murdock, 1884) (first edition, 1881).

[36] "Cuernavaca as a Health Resort," *Modern Mexico* 10, no. 4 (January 1901): 3.

[37] On the shift from convalescence to leisure, see Jon Sterngass, *First Resorts: Pursuing Pleasure at Saratoga Springs, Newport & Coney Island* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). The large literature on the rise of beach resorts in England also maps this shift.

[38] On the newness of winter vacations, see "Where to Go This Winter for Rest, Recreation, or Sport," *New York Times,* 4 January 1903, WR1. Cruise and tour brochures and advertisements all schedule southern vacations between about October and March.

[39] Gloria Goddard, "The Flowery Crescent of the Caribbean," *Travel* 50, no. 2 (December 1927): 8.

[40] "The Land of Mid-winter Roses," *Four-Track News* [later *Travel*] 1, no. 6 (December 1901): 5.

[41] Arthur W. Page, "Our Nearest Latin Neighbor," *Travel* 16, no. 3 (January 1911): 114–15.

[42] Goddard, "Flowery Crescent," 8.

[43] "The Seasons Stand Still in Puerto Rico," advertisement, *New York Times,* 17 May 1938, 24.

[44] "Cool Vacation Cruises."

[45] "Bermuda and the West Indies," *Travel* 15, no. 3 (1909): 132.

[46] A. W. and Julian Dimock, *Florida Enchantments* (New York: Outing, 1908), 6.

[47] "The Exclusive Grace Cruise Route/between New York and California visiting en route/Colombia Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and, Eastbound, Havana" (Grace Line, hand dated 1935), Grace Line folder, Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection (see note 25).

[48] American Lines (1911), Kemble Maritime Ephemera collection (see note 25), 2.

[49] Sidney Clark, *Cuban Tapestry* (New York: National Travel Club, 1936), ix, 98.

[50] "Souvenir and Log of My Voyage" (Panama Mail Steamship Co., n.d., ca. 1930): 1, Kemble Maritime Ephemera collection (see note 25).

[51] "Discurso del Señor Elmer Jenkins/Gerente de la Oficina de Turismo Nacional de la Asociación Americana de Automovilistas," 7 October 1931, IV Conferencia Comercial Panamericana, Archivo Genero Estrada de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores [Genero Estrada Archive in the Ministry of Foreign Relations], Mexico, III-192–99, typescript, p. 2. The speech actually reads "[V]uestros pueblos son innatamente [*sic*] gentiles y hospitalarios," old-fashioned Spanish into which Jenkins's speech was probably translated either before or after he gave it in English.

[52] Harry L. Foster, *A Gringo in Mañana-Land* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1924), 49, 65, 9.

[53] Page, "Nearest Latin Neighbor," 113.

[54] John E. Jennings, *Our American Tropics* (n.p.: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1938), 20.

[55] James, *California Romantic and Beautiful: The History of Its Old Missions and of Its Indians; A Survey of Its Climate, Topography, Deserts, Mountains, Rivers, Valleys, Islands and Coast Line; A Description of Its Recreations and Festivals; A Review of Its Industries; An Account of Its Influence upon Prophets, Poets, Artists and Architects; and Some Reference to What It offers of Delight to the Automobilist, Traveller, Sportsman, Pleasure and Health Seeker* (Boston: Page, 1914), xii.

[56] "The Exclusive Grace Cruise Route/between New York and California visiting en route/Colombia Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and, Eastbound, Havana" (hand dated 1935), 7, Grace Line folder, Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection (see note 25).

[57] David Leon Chandler, *Henry Flagler,* 132; and "Cool Vacation Cruises, Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection." This collection and the Kemble Maritime Ephemera collection include several United Fruit Company cruise brochures. On Jamaica, see Taylor, *To Hell with Paradise.*

[58] Douglas Cazaux Sackman, *Orange Empire: California and the Fruits of Eden* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 84–116; and Virginia Scott Jenkins, *Bananas: An American History* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 45–49, 56–125.

[59] Advertisements featuring people carrying fruit: man carrying fruit, ad for "Cook's Tropical Cruise," *Travel* 34, no. 1 (November 1919): 53; man carrying bananas, ad for Raymond & Whitcomb Caribbean cruises, *Travel* 44, no. 3 (January 1925): 4; black people bringing fruit and flowers to shore for cruise ship passengers, ad for Great White Fleet [United Fruit Co.] Caribbean Cruises, *Travel* 50, no. 1 (November 1927): inside front cover; woman with basket on her head, "Cruise De Luxe/Around & About Central & South America," Los Angeles Steamship Co. menu card (ca. 1919), Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection (see note 25); and Grace Line, "Itinerary/Scenic Cruises Every Two Weeks of the Year," Grace Line folder, Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection (see note 25).

[60] "Souvenir Views of Pomona, Cal., and Vicinity" (n.p.: Bailey Bros., 1893), 5, Lottie S. Tillotson collection, Autry National Center of the American West, Los Angeles.

[61] Arthur Paine, "In Southern California," *Travel* 16, no. 2 (December 1910): 64.

[62] Augustus Franklin Tripp, "Notes of an Excursion to California," ca. 1893, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, 22–23, 38.

[63] Gates Tours 1896, 30; see also Gates Tours 1904, 37, and Gates Tours 1907, 12 (Gates Tours brochures are at the DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University).

[64] On the historical and contemporary tourist exploitation of the Caribbean, see Krista Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and the Framing of the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Polly Pattullo, *Last Resorts: The Costs of Tourism in the Caribbean* (London: Cassell, 1996); and Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[65] James, *California Romantic and Beautiful,* 165, 373.

[66] Peter MacFarlane, "California the Land of Promise," *Sunset* 33, no. 1 (1914): 44.

[67] "Sailing from/New Orleans/3 West Indies Cruises/On the Transatlantic Liner/S.S. Rotterdam 'The Pride of the Spotless Fleet'/Winter Season 1939," American Express folder, Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection (see note 25).

[68] "Six Superb Cruises to the/West Indies/South America & Panama Canal/by the Sister Ships Volendam & Veendam" (Holland-America Line, 1933), Holland-America folder, Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection (see note 25).

[69] Elise S. Haas, *Letters from Mexico* (San Francisco: privately printed, 1937), 6.

[70] *Mexico? Si Señor!,* 32.

[71] Berkowitz, "'New Deal' for Leisure," 187.

[72] Woodruff, *Effects of Tropical Light,* 127.

[73] Frank Parker Stockbridge and John Holliday Perry, *So This Is Florida* (New York: Robert M. McBridge, 1938), 25.

[74] Woodruff, *Effects of Tropical Light,* 127; and "Havana Cruises/7 Days/All Expenses/On T. E. L. 'Oriente'/$65 minimum" (New York & Cuba Mail Steamship Co., n.d., probably 1930s/40s), unfoldered miscellaneous, Ocean Cruise Pamphlets collection (see note 25).

[75] Stanley Hoffland, "Tan Is the Smart Shade This Summer, and Olive Oil Will Cure the Smart," *Los Angeles Times,* 18 July 1926, B7. The comparison of nonwhiteness to tasty treats underscores the extent to which the beach vacation was another kind of tropical fruit, much like oranges or bananas.

[76] Lawrence Culver, "The Island, the Oasis, and the City: Santa Catalina, Palm Springs, Los Angeles and Southern California's Shaping of American Life and Leisure" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2004), chap. 6; Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 121–53; and Taylor, *To Hell with Paradise,* 147–52.

[77] Hoffland, "Tan Is the Smart Shade," B7.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Marilyn Grace Miller, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race: The Cult of Mestizaje in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

[80] On environmental and political degradation, see Pattullo, *Last Resorts;* Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean;* Davis, "From Oasis to Metropolis"; Steve Striffler and Mark Mobert, *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); and William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). "Issues and Agendas in Writing the Tourism History of Mexico (1940–2008): A Comparison of the Acapulco and Cancún Development Plans," an unpublished paper in possession of its author, Barry Carr, notes local resistance to the appropriation of land and other resources for resort development.