

Sand Dollars: Sex Tourism and Coloniality of Power in the Dominican Republic

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Abstract : Over the recent three decades, the tourism industry in the Dominican Republic has had an enormous impact on the country's culture. The arrival of tourists from Germany, France, Italy, Russia and the United States has rewritten Dominican cultural identity and created a cultural palimpsest in the areas of language, gastronomy, habits, fashion, values, and gender relations. As a consequence of tourism, a prostitution network has flourished across the country. In the film *Sand Dollars* (2015) directed by Laura Amelia Guzmán and Israel Cárdenas, Noeli (Janet Mojica), a young mulatto woman, altogether with her boyfriend (Ricardo Ariel Toribio), strips tourists of dollars and euro through prostitution. One of her frequent clients is Anne, a mature French woman (Geraldine Chaplin). While Noeli's goal is to get all the euros she can, Anne falls in love with her and tries to bring her to France. Both the content of the film and its cinematographic languages are analyzed in light of theory of coloniality. This concept shows how European and American tourism, through the power of money, perpetuates colonial discourse, i. e., how race and ethnocentrism permeate cultural activities in their former colonies. Moreover, in the content analysis of the film the concepts of exchange value and fetishism are crucial to understanding how the colonial body becomes sexual commodity. They facilitate grasping the film's inequity in terms of power in the relationship between the two women: the white old European woman and the young, poor, third-world mulatta. Even though the film attempts to break away from compulsory heterosexuality, the power relation between the two women persists due to the presence of the axis of race, ethnicity, age and gender. Both the novel *Les dollars des sables* written by Jean-Noel Pancrazi, and the film *Sand Dollars* offer an interesting insight into sex tourism and coloniality and shed additional light on the power relations between the former colonizers and its colonies.

Keywords : coloniality, ethnocentrism, exchange value, Europe, fetishism, money, power, prostitution, sex tourism, United States of America

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