



What is the Earthly Paradise? : Ecocritical Responses to the Caribbean

Chris Campbell and Erin Somerville

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We live in a time of ecological crisis. Both concrete examples of environmental disaster hurricane, tsunami and earthquake and impending ones a potential bird flu epidemic and the melting of the Arctic ice cap consume the public domain. Previously colonised areas least prepared to cope are often host to both natural disasters and environmental degradation, creating a coupling of cultural and environmental crisis. The Caribbean is such a region; a geographic location prone to intense environmental activity and a history of environmental degradation leaves it ecologically and economically vulnerable. Annual hurricanes, tropical storms and floods regularly have devastating affects on national economic growth in a region where agriculture and tourism both industries completely dependent on the environment are the main foreign exchange earners. Increased migration to urban centres, continuing poverty and inadequate environmental protection policies add to the problem, while studies on climate change, tourism and agricultural development and the growth of cities forecast the situation to worsen. Divided into two sections, *What is this Earthly Paradise?* provides a double insight into the Caribbean environment by examining environmental problems in practice and cultural responses. *Development: Environment in Practice* identifies and discusses major environmental dangers in the region, including historical trends in island environmental crisis, ghettoisation, the questionable success of ecotourism and the development of tropical nature. *Responses: Literature and Environment* examines positive and negative cultural reflections on the Caribbean environment and environmental problems, embracing writers as diverse as V.S. Naipaul, Sam Selvon, Patrick Chamoiseau, N.D. Williams, Derek Walcott, Shani Mootoo and Ramabai Espinet.

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