Islands Literature: From Paradise to the Postcolonial
English 356, Fall 1997

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Office Hours: MWF 9-11, and by appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS:
Cristina Garcia, Dreaming in Cuban
Vilsoni Hereniko, Last Virgin in Paradise
Keri Hulme, The Bone People
Earl Lovelace, The Dragon Can't Dance
Herman Melville, Typee
V. S. Naipaul, Miguel Street
Derek Walcott, Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays
Albert Wendt, Sons for the Return Home

Library Reserve Readings, indicated by **

PROPOSED SCHEDULE:
Sep.  3  Introduction
     5  Melville, Typee
     8  Melville, Typee
    10  Melville, Typee
    12  **Darwin, from The Voyage of the Beagle "Tahiti and New Zealand." New York: Bantam. 1972
    19  Wendt, Sons for the Return Home
    22  Wendt, Sons for the Return Home
    24  Wendt, Sons for the Return Home
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

This course pursues the perennial inquiry into the poetics and politics of literature, focusing on the island literatures of the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Our readings include a brief examination of island narratives written by British and U.S. explorers, traders, and missionaries from the early modern period to the present. Accounts by nineteenth-century Pacific Islands and Caribbean missionaries further establish the historical and cultural bases of the twentieth-century literature that will be our primary
focus. We will examine these writers' use of both oral and written forms, by way of considering island aesthetics and the island as a cultural cross-roads.

I will expect you to develop, over the course of the semester, analyses of the ways writers' formal techniques relate to larger cultural and critical issues. As a result, you will be expected to read and think about the material before each class, and present your ideas in short papers, class discussions, weekly e-mail discussions, one ten-minute oral presentation, and two seven-page papers (standard fonts and one-inch margins on all papers, please). You are required to meet with me during the week prior to your presentation. Additionally, I encourage you to meet with me for individual writing conferences (do not wait until the day before the paper is due). In-class writing workshops will allow you to benefit from others' suggestions as well, when you go over papers or working drafts in a small group. Unannounced quizzes on the readings, as well as a mid-semester exam and a final exam, will help ensure that you keep up and allow you to make connections between the readings. I am happy to talk with you at any point about the readings or about your writing. If you cannot make my office hours I would be glad to arrange another appointment.

Attendance and participation are essential and will affect your grade, which will be figured as follows:

Papers 40%
Oral presentation 10%
Weekly contributions to e-mail discussion 10%
Class discussion, attendance, unannounced reading quizzes 20%
Mid-sem and Final 20%

You are allowed three excused absences and you are responsible for any material covered or assigned during your absence. Your final grade will be dropped as much as a whole letter grade for each absence over three. Please do not be late to class. Papers are due on or before the date indicated, and must be turned in at the beginning of the class. Late papers will be penalized (one-third of a grade for each day late, for example, from a B to a B-). To avoid plagiarism, all quotations and paraphrased ideas from other sources must be cited, in accordance with the Honor Code. Any violation of the Honor Code will result in a failing grade. If you have any questions, please see me.