(Re)Scaping the Caribbean: Imagined Tropical Geographies and their literary Renderings

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The Albany project in Nassau, Bahamas serves as one of the more recent examples of rescaping the Caribbean. This reconfiguring takes on a number of significances in the imagined geographies of colonialism from the days of Columbus’s renderings of the Bahamas as a highly fertile, mountainous land to what Derek Walcott refers to in his Nobel lecture as the erosion of culture. The Bahamas is, however, not alone in this rendering; Grenada and Puerto Rico are among other islands whose scapes are being re-imagined to fit into a tropical frame. Krista Thompson discusses this making picturesque of the Caribbean in An Eye for the Tropics. But what has changed is the lack of attention at the local social and literary levels to this radical razing/erasure of natural Caribbean scapes and their re-inscription with new images of what the Caribbean should look like. Travel writing has re-scape the Caribbean for centuries; the new reality is the physical rescaping that now accompanies the imagined tropicalisation of the Caribbean.

This paper will examine the work of Rosario Ferre, The Video Clip, Such Is Life, The documentaries, The Operation and Operation Bootstrap, and the Derek Walcott’s presentation in the Bahamas in 2009 as well as his Nobel Speech of 1992 and will compare these to a few examples of travel writing.