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Journal of Historical Geography

Volume 29, Issue 4, October 2003, Pages 554-581

Regular Article

Island dreaming: the contemplation of Polynesian paradise

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<https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.2002.0461>

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Abstract

Images of islands, especially in Polynesia, critically of Tahiti, emerged and evolved in the aftermath of island encounters with outsiders, many of whom were male. Visions of utopia dominated discourse, in different phases, as distance and smallness enhanced enchantment, yet remained centred of Tahiti, after subsequent encounters with diverse groups. Perceptions of dystopia and the "ignoble savage"™, and the need for redemption from outside, never displaced alternative notions. Islands became incorporated into distant lands in different ways, eventually in islander diasporas, yet utopia persisted in new artistic and literary forms, supplemented by photographs, postcards and stamps, film (including travelogues), popularised anthropology and geography, and eventually tourism and television. In turn islanders replenished old images and reconstructed new ones in the shift from an imperial to a remarkably similar post-colonial politics of place and people. 2003 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.



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