European territorial expansion was based on the commodification and exploitation of non-European peoples and environments. Colonial domination was naturalized by a discourse that denigrated or erased the culture of colonized people. Plantation agriculture and scientific botanical gardens were deeply implicated in maintaining economic, political and cultural control in the colonies. In My Garden (Book), Gardening in the Tropics, and In Another Place, Not Here, Jamaica Kincaid, Olive Senior and Dionne Brand, respectively, re-imagine the Caribbean garden not as a site of subjugation, but as a space from which to reclaim their bodies, their landscape, and their culture. They form a collaborative relationship with the Caribbean nature to recuperate the (re)productive power of their bodies and establish their economic independence from colonial and neo-colonial oppressors. Through their particular, often secret understanding of the nature of this region, the Caribbean gardeners are able to form authentic connections to this landscape and recover a sense of belonging to place. The gardeners in these texts also use their knowledge of the Caribbean environment to challenge the discursive control of the colonizer. By gardening, and writing about gardening, Kincaid, Senior and Brand mount a creative resistance to the artificial division between nature and culture on which the colonial project is founded. Their texts recreate the Caribbean landscape according to their lived experiences, and the gardens created by these writers become texts that oppose the objectification and containment of the Caribbean people and environment in the language of the colonial discourse. Through their labours in the garden, Kincaid, Senior and Brand recover their creative agency and affirm their identity as Caribbean women.
Senior's poetry collection, Gardening in the Tropics, asserts the need for identity distinctions and dynamic exchanges, deploying the garden, in its ambivalent history as a space of colonial exclusion and postcolonial hybridity, as a figure for these processes. Senior both embraces and problematizes the rhizomatic and creolizing theories of Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Edouard Glissant. Jamaica Kincaid is not exactly romantic about her gardens. In her garden writing, Kincaid connects the dots between hollyhocks and cotton and paints a not-so-pretty picture that casts aside romantic garden notions and excavates deep-rooted issues like colonialism, slavery, socioeconomic class and prejudice. In "My Garden (Book)," published in 1999, Farrar, Straus and Giroux paid attention to design. If I had seen the book in the book store, I would have known it was "fluff" by flipping through a few pages. I've read other books that were equally useless and dull, and I suppose I held Ms. Kincaid to a higher standard since she writes so well. My advice to her would be to follow the rule of good writing, stick to what you know. This book first published 2007 by Cambridge Scholars Publishing 15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE 5 2JA, UK. British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library. Copyright © 2007 by Joyce C. Harte and contributors. All rights for this book reserved. This book has its genesis in the actual loss of my beloved aunt, Nellie Ann Mitchell in February, 2005. A school teacher in colonial Guyana, she used to read to me as I sat at her knee; it was thus that my own love of language and literature was born. — Jamaica Kincaid. The literary work of Caribbean women writers is permeated by loss, placing their writing within contemporary discussions of mourning.