TAKING FLIGHT

Caribbean Women Writing from Abroad

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONSUMING THE CARIBBEAN

Sexuality, Social Norms, and Belonging in *Here Comes the Sun* and *Land of Love and Drowning*

> In its happy tourist avatar, the Caribbean has long figured as the utopian respite from the mechanized, work-driven, capitalistic routines of the overindustrialized world.
>
> —SUPRIYA NAIR

As Angeletta Gourdine asserts in *The Difference Place Makes*, the term "Caribbean" "denotes a specific geographic locale and connotes paradise, relaxation and adventure. Herein the myth of the Caribbean . . . is born" (81). Also writing on the constructed image of the Caribbean, Amar Wahab finds that the "trope of paradise is an enduring one that continues to stabilize the Caribbean as a site of consumer fantasy" (29).[1] This chapter investigates how Nicole Dennis-Benn's *Here Comes the Sun* (2016) and Tiphanie Yanique's *Land of Love and Drowning* (2014) undercut the paradise myth through critical representations of tourism, sex tourism, and land development in Jamaica and the Virgin Islands.[2] The works explore the interplay of structural inequalities, foreground the emotional and economic impact of exploitative practices, and question who benefits from the commoditization of land and women's bodies.

The novels point to female sexuality as susceptible to scrutiny while the sex-tourism and land-development industries are largely unregulated. In doing so, the works call attention to the relationship between power, economics, and the surveillance of sexuality. In *Consuming the Caribbean*, Mimi Sheller notes that the Caribbean region has a "deep history of relations of consumption, luxury, and privilege for some" (37). My argument extends Sheller's understanding of the tropical holiday as a "safe new means of consuming the Caribbean environment" by reading the service economies

in the novels as a set of consumptive industries that are reliant on consumer fantasies (37).[3] In *Land of Love and Drowning* and *Here Comes the Sun*, development works not to ameliorate poverty, but to serve the interests of the economic elite. While the authors take tourists and developers to task for their destructive conduct, they are careful not to depict residents as victims of Euro-American power. To be clear, the Caribbean "is never a passive landscape only acted upon nor are its residents simply inert victims," as Supriya Nair observes (8).

The hypersexualized image of the Caribbean that the authors engage with relies on an understanding of Caribbean sexuality as excessive, pathological, and unruly. Like the paradise myth that Gourdine identifies, the conception of the Caribbean as an exotic, resource-filled region is grossly inaccurate and has fueled a culture of exploitation. The novels center the space of the beach and the movement to reclaim that space to highlight the consequences of trespass on land and women's bodies. The works illustrate the costs of crossing individual and cultural boundaries, the norms that "make us upstanding citizens" (Amato 223). The women in Yanique and Dennis-Benn's novels resist attempts to control the spaces they inhabit through their own social, political, and aesthetic means. In the texts, environmental devastation parallels the trauma associated with sexual transgression. Eeona, the protagonist of Yanique's novel, copes with the loss of her father, a man who arranged her marriage to end their incestuous relationship, in the space of the newly transferred Virgin Islands. Margot in Dennis-Benn's text is sold into sex work at a young age and later becomes a madam for a hotel developer who razes her town of River Bank. In *Land of Love and Drowning* and *Here Comes the Sun*, the authors use the protagonists' moves away from home, their respective quests for affirmation, to position home as a site of individual and collective trauma.

REGULATING FEMALE SEXUALITY

Yanique's novel, her first full-length fiction work, is set on the islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and Anegada. Anegada is especially significant because it is the childhood home of the protagonist's mother and the place that the Spanish named "the drowned land, because it has a history of drowning ships" (Yanique 51). In *Land of Love and Drowning*, Yanique develops a parallel between the regulation of female sexuality and the ownership of land by setting the narrative on the eve of the transfer of the islands from Danish

to American rule in 1917. Surveillance over the protagonist's burgeoning sexuality primarily comes via her mother, Antoinette. As discussed in the previous chapters, sexuality frequently operates as a force of regulation that prompts women to cover "that which should not be exposed" (Johnson and Moran 9). One example of Antoinette's attempts to constrain her daughter's sexuality is when she instructs the teenage Eeona to pull her dress down. Antoinette asks Eeona to adjust her dress "so it cover the knees at least. . . . That is freedom" (Yanique 13). With this exchange, Yanique frames sexuality as a liability by highlighting the fact that women are responsible for controlling visual access to their bodies. Antoinette's instruction is representative of how girls such as Eeona are taught to be embarrassed of their bodies and to be afraid of unwanted attention. For Antoinette, the suppression of female sexual expression affords protection and thus freedom. During the course of the narrative, Eeona learns that her body is not fully hers but is instead subject to "the gaze of others but also to touch and to violence" (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 21).

Eeona's body, though, is not the only one that is subject to observation. In *Land of Love and Drowning*, women are often placed on display for the enjoyment of men, and readers are positioned as witnesses to the enjoyment that men such as Owen Arthur obtain from gazing on women's bodies. The novel opens with a scene of Eeona's father admiring the body of an unnamed girl. The girl is being used in a demonstration of electricity, a parlor trick-like display in which her hair shoots off in all directions with the touch of a vial to her nose. Through the use of a young woman's charged body, Yanique cements the patriarch's status as a "certain kind of man" who admires young girls' bodies (5). Representative of this is when Owen Arthur admits that "the first half of him desired that he had created this little girl. She was a pretty yellow thing. The lower half of him desired the girl. How young could she be?" (Yanique 4–5). Here, Yanique paints Owen Arthur's sexual proclivities as recognizably dangerous. In adopting the voice of a sexual predator, the author simultaneously exotifies and commodifies the girl as a "pretty yellow thing." In this scene, Yanique repeats, but also distinguishes between, two forms of desire; the first use of the term is rooted in reproduction and patriarchal ownership, while the repetition of the term shifts the focus to an inherently sexual meaning. This passage speaks to the liabilities that female sensuality creates, but it also characterizes the father as a potential danger to the unnamed girl. Specifically, the inclusion of the words "little girl" and "desire" acknowledge the girl's youth, and hence the illegality of a sexual relationship with her. The second use of the term "desire" connects

male genitalia, vaguely referred to through the phrase "lower half," with the thought of intercourse with the unnamed girl. Interestingly, sex is central in both references; by terming Eeona's father a "certain kind of man," Yanique lays the groundwork for the trauma that follows (5).

Notwithstanding the fact that Owen Arthur's pursuit of censured sexual activity affects his entire family, it is his eldest daughter, Eeona, who bears the brunt of her father's actions. Owen Arthur's obsession with his daughter brings him to collect the "pieces of her hair from the brush and burns them himself, so that no one can steal them and put a curse on her" (Yanique 6). Eeona, a young woman "so beautiful that many call her pure" and her father's firstborn and "only child, thus far, who has survived to life," is groomed for this intimate attachment (Yanique 6). In *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf comments on the psychological element of female sexuality. Wolf writes, "What little girls learn is not the desire for the other, but the desire to be desired" (126). Wolf's conclusions on desire mirrors Judith Herman and Lisa Hirschman's assertion that "the fairy tale most commonly repeated in Western culture warns girls to expect nothing but abuse from women, and teaches them to look to men for salvation" (1). These claims are important because Eeona's need for salvation renders her susceptible to her father's approach. Owen Arthur's longing to be the sole recipient of his daughter's affection inspires a reciprocal response. Eeona's romantic feelings for her father, admittedly outside the bounds of social norms, are a result of the grooming process.[4] In beginning a sexual relationship with his daughter and treating her more like a mistress than his child, Owen Arthur preys on Eeona's need for validation. Eeona yearns to be claimed, to be desired. In Yanique's novel, attention is conflated with and substituted for affection. Because Eeona's emotional needs are largely unmet, she confuses her father's sexual advances for attention.

Throughout, Yanique centers the importance of purity/virginity. Eeona's parents' obsession with their daughter's sexuality reflects their concern over sexual purity. One example of this is Antoinette's decision that "if Eeona did not pitch away her virginity, for she was a girl too aware of her beauty, they would marry her off early" (Yanique 17). Arguably, Eeona's physical attractiveness is a liability for her. If a "woman's body is an ornamented surface [and] women must make herself 'object and prey' for the man," then Eeona, who is keenly aware of her beauty, can be viewed as a subject positioning herself as an object (Weitz 31, 34). Significantly, the use of the phrase "pitch away" simultaneously positions the daughter as an active agent

and interprets her virginity as an asset. Also intriguing is the use of "they"; the inclusion of the pronoun reinforces Antoinette's role in the socialization process. Regardless of the fact that Antoinette plays a rather superficial role in parental decision making, the use of "they," as opposed to "he," stresses her role in reproducing and reinforcing social norms.

In *Land of Love and Drowning*, Yanique stages the incestuous relationship of Owen Arthur Bradshaw and his daughter Eeona against the backdrop of island beaches and within the context of shifting political allegiances. By characterizing the beach as neither land nor sea, public nor private, the text collapses boundaries and questions the line between acceptable and unacceptable sexual expression. The author uses the beach and the politicized reclamation of that space as a means of discussing sexual citizenship and the surveillance of female sexuality. Sexual citizenship, as Diane Richardson lays out, reflects "normative assumptions about sexuality" (211). By situating Owen Arthur's trespass on his daughter's body within the geographic space of the Virgin Islands, Yanique draws the parallel between body sovereignty and land rights as she illustrates the aftermath that results from the rupture of what Carole Pateman terms the "sexual contract."[5] In short, Owen Arthur is unsuccessful in mediating the sexual impulses that drive him to lust for Eeona. These unresolved libidinal impulses cannot be suppressed, which results in a violation of the sexual contract.

In *The Social Construction of Sexuality*, Steven Seidman finds that "sexual behavior that is defined as natural may be celebrated [but that] unnatural desires are condemned and may be harshly punished" (xi). Following Seidman's observation, Owen Arthur's death can be read as closely related to his sexual perversion.[6] Understood thus, it becomes clearer that perhaps the pivotal event of the novel, the patriarch's death, can be read as a suicide. With Owen Arthur's untimely passing, the threat of continued transgression is removed. To explain, the father's death comes the day after he directs Eeona to marry her suitor, Louis, and "go away with him" (Yanique 57). It is not sufficient for Eeona to marry or be "claimed" (legally or sexually) by another man. It is possible that Owen Arthur recognizes that his perverse desire for his daughter requires distance in order to be diverted. Although his death can be interpreted as him having been "called to the island, as though by a siren," an alternative reading infers that he was pushed to the reef by his siren-like daughter and his refusal to let her go (Yanique 59). His inability to pursue a legitimate union with his daughter, "who knew she could sink ships," could be what drove Owen Arthur to crash his ship into a reef near the "drowned

land" of Anegada (Yanique 60). That is, he likely dies because he is unable to conform to social norms. While Owen Arthur drowns "for love of [Eeona]," the women he leaves behind must cope with the consequences of his sexual transgressions (Yanique 177).

BLURRED LINES

The author explores the impact of sexual and political power by joining patriarchal and political overreach. Yanique broaches the silence surrounding incest[7] through the vehicle of historical fiction. Although the father figure's demise does not come as a surprise, the consequences of his relationship with Eeona do not become clear until much later in the text. Ketu Katrak's work on female sexuality proves useful in understanding how Eeona is affected by her father's advances. Katrak writes, "In cultures where any talk about female sexuality is repressed and silenced, we need to look more carefully for the relations between 'sexual desire' and 'political power'" (14). In *Land of Love and Drowning*, Owen Arthur emerges as a deeply insecure man who is unable to "bear the thought of his women going on" (Yanique 5). This sense of possession is rendered explicit with the use of the terms "his" and "own" throughout the novel. Also notable is an exchange between father and daughter after an intimate swim. Eeona proclaims, "I love you, Papa" to which he replies, "I love you, my own" (Yanique 42). This is followed by the image of the pair with "wind blowing into [their] sea-wet faces that were pressed cheek to cheek" (Yanique 43). If sexual politics concern the codes that govern moral and sexual behavior, as Saskia Wieringa and Horacio Sívori point out, then the Bradshaw family stands as an example of what happens when social norms collapse (14).

The blurred lines of the relationship between father and daughter bring Eeona to see herself as a young woman who "belonged only to [her] father" (Yanique 42). This sense of belonging transcends death. Several years after her father's passing, Eeona remembers, "I had not wanted to think at all about Owen Arthur having another woman and that woman not being me" (Yanique 65). The lack of proper "claiming," whether from her father or from suitor Louis Moreau, leaves Eeona feeling orphaned; Eeona laments that there is "nothing for which she could say, 'I belong to you'" (Yanique 68). Although there is ambiguity surrounding Owen Arthur and Eeona's sexual relationship, readers learn that he "came to Eeona's room. This was something he had not done since she had left the nursery. This was not a

thing that fathers did" (Yanique 57). Moreover, Eeona wonders if her father would "really own her now? With Mama just on the other side of the house? Would he not wait until they could sail away together?" (Yanique 57). In deploying an unnamed narrator to introduce the potential of sexual abuse through terms such as "this" and "thing," linguistic choices similar to the use of "there" to refer to Eeona's genitalia, the author makes it clear that Owen Arthur knowingly defied social convention in his relationship with Eeona. This passage rapidly moves to Eeona's perspective and in the process avoids overidentification with the patriarch. The author's inclusion of "own," likely a thinly veiled reference to sexual intercourse, reiterates the trope of sexual advance and reinforces the extent to which Eeona has been groomed for a romantic relationship with her father. Instead of offering judgment, Yanique highlights Eeona's subservient position by placing her father as the one who would determine when the relationship would be consummated. It is not Eeona who can determine when she will be "owned"; it is "he" who will make that decision. Eeona imagines losing her virginity to her father at the same time that they "sail away."

Apart from the narration of Owen Arthur visiting Eeona's room are several intimate depictions of the two. Eeona relates, "We swam in the sea, nude as the Lord made us. The ship a large shield from prying eyes. I would imagine that it was only we alone in this family" (Yanique 42). With this, Eeona imaginatively erases her mother and sister and views herself as the sole recipient of her father's attention. It is significant that religion is invoked to somewhat normalize the image of father and daughter swimming naked. This reference to a religious figure downplays the biological relationship between the pair, collapses kinship, and stresses divination. The passage shifts when Eeona asks her father if he had ever performed oral sex on her mother. When he responds that he had not, Eeona thinks, "Good, his mouth is mine"; Eeona's sense of satisfaction, a claiming of her own, is dashed when she learns that it was Rebekah, her father's mistress, who introduced Owen Arthur to the practice (Yanique 178).

Throughout, the novel offers a space to consider the repercussions of "unnatural love." Owen Arthur is largely unsuccessful at navigating socially constructed boundaries. This becomes evident when he admits that his bond with Eeona runs counter to social norms. He reflects, "We have always known that this is not the way of a good father or of a good daughter" (Yanique 58). Altogether, Yanique avoids a scathing critique of the patriarch and leaves it up to the reader to evaluate his reasoning. Yanique's use of "good" in opposition to the unarticulated "bad" or "deviant" distributes blame without regard to

age, gender, or power dynamics. Consequently, the novel reflects the rhetoric of victim blaming. Perhaps unable to face his perversions, Owen Arthur asks the object of his uninhibited desire to shoulder part of the moral burden. Laurie Vickroy's work on sexual abuse sheds light on the impact of victim blaming. Vickroy explains that "perpetrators promote forgetting and defend themselves through secrecy, silence, denial, rationalizing, and undermining the victim's accusation. In short, they try to define reality counter to victims' experience" (19). Indeed, Owen Arthur endeavors to rationalize his relationship with Eeona; rather than accept this logic, Eeona delivers a wholesale rejection of her father. Her rebuke, offered after she is summarily rejected by him, can be read as an attempt at redirecting shame.[8] Melissa Harris-Perry has cogently argued that "because shame is connected to collective rules and shared expectations, it is a basic tool by which societies create moral order. . . . Shame makes us view our very selves as malignant" (107, 109). Eeona's response to her father and his death, then, can be viewed as intimately connected to the maintenance of moral order. Instead of admitting that their actions cannot continue, as Owen Arthur points out, Eeona declares, 'Then I wish you would die, Papa. I wish you would just die" (Yanique 58). The outcome of her directive is a "telegram [that] came the following evening: '*Homecoming* wrecked on Anegada reef. Two survivors. Captain not among them'" (Yanique 58).

CLAIMING

In stark contrast to Owen Arthur's sense of shame is his wife's self-assuredness. Antoinette is painted as "wild" and is often admonished for her behavior. For instance, Owen Arthur chastises Antoinette when he tells her that her "influence is causing [Eeona] to have [her] same wildness. She is becoming bold, going beyond herself" (Yanique 15). Given this, it is possible that Owen Arthur began abusing his daughter to "tame" her, to prevent the very self-assurance that Antoinette is known for. The text specifies that Antoinette's condition was a "nervousness brought on by the pregnancies and miscarriages. A woman's wildness" (Yanique 16). The protagonist reflects: "Mama had wild and wandering tendencies. . . . If a woman was not self-possessed, she was in danger of the wildness" (Yanique 24). In contrast to her mother's "wildness," Eeona craves to be "owned," to transfer responsibility for her wellbeing to someone else. The protagonist remarks on her need for escape following rejection/loss when she admits that "hadn't she, in a wild way,

wanted to be stolen?" (Yanique 195). Eeona views herself, and in particular her body, as property that another can easily stake a claim on. In *Land of Love and Drowning*, "wildness" is mediated by external sources, be it developers or patriarchal influence. In evoking questions of ownership and possession, the author highlights the precarious nature of female agency.

Unable to effectively negotiate the events of her adolescence, Eeona seeks to "go where no one would know her history, her losses, and her transgressions" (Yanique 137). In response to her lack of "claiming," she purchases land on the island of St. John and opens an inn; "She owned the inn. . . . She had made her own inheritance. Just so" (Yanique 263). On St. John, Eeona jests about being invisible and wishes that she could "be like a witch flying in the night" (Yanique 252). Speculation about the protagonist mounts when Franky, Eeona's brother-in-law, wonders if she is "one of those women who preferred women" (Yanique 254). Collectively, reactions to the absence of a husband and an inability to successfully procreate reflect the pressure placed on women and the damage that social mores can have on those who cannot or will not conform to norms.[9] Near the conclusion of the text, rumors abound. Eeona is said to have been seen "with her hair flying wings, seen on the road, wandering as though lost" (Yanique 330). Yet another depiction paints her "wandering the roads at night like a ghost. . . . Just last night she *was* a cat with long silver fur in mats and curls" (Yanique 333). More than illustrating what is often identified as a Caribbean hyperactive imagination, Eeona's demeanor points to the tendency to pathologize women who defy social norms. Importantly, such logistical leaps reify the link between hysteria and women. In *Land of Love and Drowning*, Yanique explores the consequences of what society deems "unnatural." An example of this is when Anette, Eeona's sister, wonders if Eeona "had finally gone crazy. No children. No husband. And all that nastiness Mr. Lyte had talked about" (Yanique 333). In this line, Anette's sentiment perpetuates a view of incest as something that the survivor should be ashamed of; in referring to the exchange as "nastiness," Anette, furthers a view of her sister as tainted. This response highlights what happens when there is no outlet to successfully negotiate the effects of abuse.

In the conclusion of the narrative, Eeona finds peace on the island of Anegada, a land that "called Eeona" (Yanique 339). As Lyonel Norman, Antoinette's fiancé (prior to her relationship with Owen Arthur) observes, "People always coming back here trying to find who they belong to" (Yanique 340). Eeona brings closure to her past when she visits the wreckage of her father's ship and "flew, like a witch, above *The Homecoming*" (Yanique 343).

This cathartic event, in which the ship functions as a symbol of collective trauma, draws Eeona from a dissociative-like state. "Eeona awoke. And she was not herself. Not herself at all. She knew where she was. She knew how she had gotten there. She knew she had not made it to touch *The Homecoming*," the narrator recounts (Yanique 344). Significantly, she didn't need to touch the desk to cope with what happened on that ship. "Eeona had never wanted, really, to be anything but her father's daughter" but was unable to cope with the loss of her father or the resulting disintegration of her family structure (Yanique 344). As a whole, the novel deals with secrets and their effects. This is evident when Yanique reveals the double meaning of the protagonist's name. Mr. Lyte, the inn's gardener, explains: "He Own Her. That's the elder daughter. He Own Her because the father hold the girl first. . . . He ask too much of the girl. He Own. Her turn out witchy" (Yanique 308). In connecting ownership, sexual transgression, and loss, Yanique illustrates the vast effects of personal trauma.[10]

NO TRESPASSING

Paralleling Yanique's discussion of women's bodies and psychological health is the author's treatment of the Caribbean environment. The author expands her investigation into the consequences of patriarchal power with a critical view of beach privatization. In *Land of Love and Drowning*, resistance to beach privatization comes in the form of the BOMB, or the Beach Occupation Movement and Bacchanal.[11] An unnamed narrator relates, "We were marching on the sand and doing wade-ins and soak-ins and—for those who could—swim-ins. Running to the beaches in the middle of the night, past the guards and the dogs" (Yanique 312). Specifically, protesters pretend to be Afro-American tourists by donning hats, cover-ups, sunglasses, and sandals. Once on the beach, the protesters reveal themselves, turn on a radio, scream, "We is the Virgin Islands," rip off their costumes, and run into the water (Yanique 313). This humorously subversive act of announcing themselves and taking back the beach often yielded calls to the police and demonstrators in jail. At the same time, Yanique's inclusion of guards and dogs strips the passage of levity and develops a contentious political atmosphere. Motivated by the contrast between the locals, who are faced with "NO TRESPASSING" signs, and tourists, who are invited onto beaches without passes or permission, protesters combine activism and pleasure by bringing "coolers of rum and Coke" to the beach—hence the term "bacchanal." It is important to note

that the events Yanique details are not fiction. "By 1970, only two of the more than fifty beaches on the island of St. Thomas were open to the 'public.' Even though the Open Shorelines Act of 1971 [allowed] public use of the coastal zone . . . , access to that zone to this day is not legally mandated" (Johnston).

In fictionalizing the beach-access movement in the Virgin Islands, Yanique calls the efficacy of public trust doctrine into question. Despite legislation that holds that "certain natural and cultural resources are preserved for public use, and that the government owns and is required to protect and maintain these resources," residents in *Land of Love and Drowning* are often blocked from accessing the island's beaches (Felix 421). According to public trust doctrine, the land above the "mean high-tide land, or dry sand, is often privately owned. . . . As a result of this 'trust,' the public has a right to use the lands and waters [to the land seaward of the line]" (Felix 424). Currently, the US Virgin Islands "upholds the principles of the public trust doctrine through the Open Shorelines Act," which is the same act referenced in the novel (Felix 422). While the act is in place and is enforceable, hotels and property owners often find indirect ways of limiting access. The residents in Yanique's novel, through their protest, fight uncontrolled development and assert that they should have equal access to the shoreline. In 1971, the protest resulted in the creation of an Open Beaches Committee and the Open Shorelines Act. Although the Open Shorelines Act "cemented a right of public use of the coastal zone . . . access to that zone . . . is still not effectively enforced [largely because] . . . there is no specific language [mandating] a right to access these shorelines" (Felix 430, 434).

The BOMB movement, as depicted in Yanique's text, was short-lived. Within one month, the protest was over. The Free Beach Act, officially termed the Virgin Islands Open Shorelines Act, was passed shortly thereafter. When the legislation went into effect, the "last mean hotel and the last stingy family had to take down their PRIVATE signs and remove their chains. [Locals] lay on the beach and felt [their] self-worth rise with the tide" (Yanique 324). This passage is particularly significant because it ties present-day economic disparity to the island's history of imperialism and servitude through the inclusion of the word "chains." While the author artfully connects historic events, the critique of tourism is perhaps more interesting. When discussing life after the BOMB movement, the narrator concludes that the "authenticity, which was really poverty, was pulling in the tourists once again" (Yanique 315). In the end, Yanique's novel calls readers to question whether the destruction of a lighthouse to build a Marriott hotel that will "shine brighter than anything" is worth the cost of a historic landmark (329).

SELLING SEX

As in the Virgin Islands, tourism and sex tourism are multibillion-dollar industries in Jamaica. Ibrahim Ajagunna and Ann Crick observe that sex tourism functions as a separate economic sector and is now a "common practice in many Caribbean Islands" (182). The easy assertion may be that tourism is responsible for the rise in sex tourism. Although the growth of mass-market tourism can fuel sex tourism, it is important not to conflate the industries. The narrative reveals that the sex-tourism industry in Jamaica relies on exoticism and a hypersexualized view of women's bodies. Belinda Edmondson, among others, has linked the public image of Caribbean women with various forms of nationalism. For the working-class characters in Dennis-Benn's text, Jamaica "is no paradise" (44). While islands may be associated with tropical fecundity, for residents such as Margot, Jamaica is not a utopia. As an employee at an all-inclusive resort that relies on the four Ss (sea, sun, sand, and sex), or the key elements that construct the Caribbean picturesque, the protagonist, Margot, is one of many in "a country where they [the help] are as important as washed-up seaweed" (Dennis-Benn 9). This conception of identity recalls European ideas regarding the treatment of colonial lands as places as brimming with limitless resources. As Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin point out, "Settlers set about rendering them [the colonies] productive and profitable through imported methods rather than by accommodating them to local circumstances" (8). Also addressing how the Caribbean region has been exploited, Kamala Kempadoo explains that "territories that once served as sex havens for colonial elite are today frequented by sex tourists, and several of the island economies now depend upon the region's racialized [and] sexualized image" (1). In *Here Comes the Sun*, Dennis-Benn details how tourists' conceptions of Caribbean women translate into profit for the protagonist, Margot, and her boss, Alphonso Wellington.

In her debut novel, Dennis-Benn exposes the hypocritical surveillance of female sexuality. In the work, heterosexual sex (including prostitution) is permissible while the stigma against homosexual intimacy functions as a site of social control and an important element of state power. Sex work offers economic and psychic escape for the protagonist, but comes at a cost. Although Margot gains social and economic mobility as a result of her involvement with sex work, that lifestyle is possible because she exploits others, most notably by recruiting and training young women to be sex workers and by tricking her girlfriend into abandoning her land to make way

for a resort. In *Here Comes the Sun*, Dennis-Benn contrasts the normalization of exploitative practices such as prostitution with the demonization of same-sex intimacy to comment on the ramifications of heteronormativity in Jamaica.[12] By developing an atmosphere that combines pious devotion, exclusion, and the commodification of women, the author calls attention to the relationship between power, economics, and the surveillance of sexuality. Dennis-Benn inverts the colonial gaze and centers the environmental implications of hotel development. The novel calls readers to meditate on the racial, sexual, and economic complexities of Jamaica's service economies. Dennis-Benn utilizes Margot's move to a beachfront villa and the subsequent eviction of River Bank's residents to position the town as a site of personal and environmental loss.

The author deploys the protagonist as a touchstone for the emotional implications of sex tourism and land development. As Dennis-Benn reveals, Margot's "real job" is to provide sexual services to vacationers; she later trains and supervises a group of women who service hotel guests. Each night, "She goes to the employee restroom to freshen up . . . and powder her face before sauntering to the client's room. . . . She doesn't see it as demeaning. She sees it as merely satisfying the curiosity of foreigners; foreigners who pay her good money to be their personal tour guide on the island of her body" (Dennis-Benn 10). Here, the "tour metaphor" affords a reexamination of the long-standing commodification of Caribbean women's bodies and renders questionable the intentions of unnamed foreigners. Notably, the use of the term "curiosity" reinforces gender, racial, and class division and implies that a process of self-relationing is occurring. In the narrative, tourists' curiosity is often fed by racist ideology and stereotypical images of Caribbean women. It is implied that the clients are curious about black and brown women's bodies, curious about what "exotic women" are like as lovers. They pay to satisfy this curiosity. At the resort that Dennis-Benn constructs, a space that was redecorated to remove the "vibrant colors, palm trees, and artwork by Jamaican artists," sex tourism is socially normalized (Dennis-Benn 47). The author writes, "Each man has a girl or two—local brown girls . . . [who] sit around the men like decorative flowers, pretending to listen to the conversation as the men absently stroke their bony thighs" (Dennis-Benn 137–38). In this way, then, the women function as props, ornamented bodies that are positioned just so. By staging these interactions within an environment that reimagines Europe and diminishes the Afro-Caribbean environment, the author calls attention to the impact of appropriation and erasure in Jamaica.

It is evident that Palm Star Resort privileges the economic and political interests of the West. The hotel operates as a place of refuge and exploration for vacationers, but for the protagonist, the resort's gate sharply divides the highly cultivated property from her "shabby neighborhood" in the town of River Bank, a former fishing village that lost its industry to construction and drought (Dennis-Benn 9). Within Margot's community, a place that becomes a site for mapping power, sex work is stigmatized and is viewed as morally corrupt. Although Margot fears judgment from her community and largely succeeds in keeping her source of supplemental income under wraps, sex work affords her a "deep calm, a refuge in which she hides" (Dennis-Benn 59). Amidst a homophobic environment, Margot, a lesbian who is not yet out to her family, is intimate with male clients to support her sister's education. The protagonist's involvement with sex work offers financial gain as well as self-empowerment, and the racial-sexual economy serves as an area for self-definition. In River Bank, Margot navigates multiple subject positions. According to Lynda Johnston and Gill Valentine, "'home' is one site where our identities are performed and come under surveillance and where we struggle to reconcile conflicting and contradictory performances of the self" (111). In River Bank, Margot must evade judging glances, but within the confines of the resort, she enjoys the fact that men become "unquestioning and generous as children, even protective" when around her; her body yields power and she deploys her body's erotic potential (Dennis-Benn 43). For Margot, her clients offer an acceptance that is missing elsewhere. The clients' protectiveness works to combat feelings of childhood betrayal, the most notable of which was when her mother sold her into sex work. It is also possible that performing heterosexuality affords a brief respite from the pressures of being gay in Jamaica. It is by engaging in heterosexual relations that Margot can imagine herself as a woman whose sexual preferences do not need to be "fixed."

In the single depiction of Margot's sexual relations with clients, she draws on her relationship with Verdene, her lover, to navigate a sexual encounter with a client named Horace. While with Horace, the protagonist pictures Verdene's "feminine lips parting, hungry for more than Margot's body" (Dennis-Benn 60). If the body is a "key site in the exercise of gender and racial domination and resistance," as Sheller finds, then Margot's imagined encounter with Verdene pushes back against the state regulation of homosexual activity and operates as an invisible but significant form of resistance (224–25). Margot is drawn to Verdene because she understands her true nature; Verdene sees "not her figure or the nakedness she so

willingly offers to strangers, but something else—something fragile, raw, defenseless" (Dennis-Benn 16). In transposing Horace's and Verdene's eyes, Margot imaginatively remains true to Verdene while intimate with Horace. The phrase "hungry for more than Margot's body," in particular, reinforces the idea that Margot craves an emotional connection. Dennis-Benn emphasizes the protagonist's embodied negotiation of power when Margot sets the terms for the sexual-economic transaction. Although Horace justifies his infidelity to his wife by convincing himself that he is "saving" Margot, the protagonist rejects this promise (Dennis-Benn 61). With this, Dennis-Benn develops a character who pushes back against such "generosity" and reinforces boundaries for herself. Margot takes steps to retain power; she declines offers to be "saved" because that response is what "keeps them coming back" (Dennis-Benn 61).

THE BOSS LADY IN CHARGE

Along with servicing tourists, Margot has a long-standing relationship with Alphonso, her supervisor and the white Jamaican owner of Palm Star Resort. Margot's involvement in sex work shifts when Alphonso approaches her with a business proposition. In this pivotal scene, Alphonso says, "The two of us can profit from this. You give me fifty percent of your profit and I make you into a wealthy woman. . . . We'll sell sex. Lots of it. . . . You will recruit and train girls you see fit for the business. You'll be the boss lady in charge" (Dennis-Benn 141). In this line, Alphonso positions himself as a partner in selling sex (via the use of "we"); yet the inclusion of "you give me" and "I make you" renders the nature of the arrangement explicit. The use of "make you," in particular, reconstitutes Alphonso's understanding of the relationship. To be clear, the issue is not Margot's pursuit of economic gain, but Alphonso's focus on acquisition and his manipulation of the unequal power dynamic that shapes tourism and sex tourism in Jamaica. The moniker "boss lady," in particular, points to the power differential between the two in that Alphonso likely bestows the nickname to encourage Margot's cooperation. Over the course of the narrative, Dennis-Benn suggests that the exertion of influence is a nuanced process; as revealed, Margot is involved in relations of domination as well as subordination. Throughout the text, Margot functions as a sexual agent who shapes and is shaped by the sexual-economic industry. While Alphonso certainly exploits Margot for his own gain, the protagonist also commands by engineering relationships of dependence.

As the "boss lady in charge," to use Alphonso's term, Margot deploys psychological tactics to spur demand; she exerts power by controlling the availability of the "island girls." Specifically, the protagonist renders clients "helpless" when she "tells them that a particular girl they requested isn't available. No one has ever made them feel so dependent" (Dennis-Benn 149). Margot plays on the clients' racialized sexual fantasies and exerts influence by manipulating power dynamics via the law of supply and demand. In terming the women that Margot supervises as "girls" and the clients as "dependent," Dennis-Benn emphasizes the protagonist's role in arranging paid sexual encounters. Both parties, interestingly, are reliant on Margot to satisfy their sexual or financial needs. The clients who visit "Margot's girls" "exit the hotel with long, conquering strides, whistling softly through the lobby. Days later they might return for another round, another hour with an island girl" (Dennis-Benn 149). The terms "conquering strides," "round," and "island girl" are striking. The young women, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, are not in a position of power relative to Margot and especially not to their clients; this is made explicit with the use of the word "conquering." In referring to an intimate encounter as a "round," which evokes alcohol and sports imagery, the author emphasizes clients' casual attitudes toward sex and sex work. This approach, rendered potentially problematic by the fact that underage women are involved, is made evident by euphemisms such as "banana" for oral sex and "sundae" for a kinky sex act (Dennis-Benn 10).

In *Here Comes the Sun*, Margot operates as both a pawn and an influencer. The protagonist functions as a madam for the women she trains. She "feeds them, dresses them, teaches them how to carry themselves among moneyed men" but in the next breath reminds them that they are worthless and disposable (Dennis-Benn 145). As Judith Butler states in *Gender Trouble*, "Sexuality is always situated within matrices of power"; this relationship certainly rings true in the text (123). Though Margot is largely in control of the young women, she is ultimately under Alphonso's thumb. Alphonso pursues financial opportunity with dispossession as the primary consequence of his actions. He is focused on acquisition and utility; his intervention in River Bank relies on taking advantage of the resources at his disposal. In short, Dennis-Benn places Alphonso at the center of this microcosm of the sex-tourism industry. Under his plan, Margot becomes known as the "biggest pimp on di North Coast," the individual who will manage the "hotel dey destroying River Bank to build" (Dennis-Benn 321). Through the character of a "boss lady" who was sold into sex work at the age of fourteen, Dennis-Benn highlights the traumatic and cyclical impact of sex tourism on vulnerable

populations. In focusing on Margot's influence on the young women under her supervision, the novel largely omits reflection from the protagonist. Instead, the most notable marker of how sex tourism shapes Margot is the disintegration of her romantic relationship with Verdene.

A LOSS OF REFUGE

Dennis-Benn's narrative supports Seidman's observation regarding unnatural sexual desires. In the novel, female sexuality is policed through a combination of "rules, norms, laws, and structures of inequality" (Sheller 277). In particular, the author develops the character of Verdene Moore to explore the vilification of homosexuality and position same-sex love as something to be condemned. Readers are introduced to Verdene by way of Thandi, Margot's younger sister. Thandi grew up hearing that Verdene "lures little girls to her house with guineps so she can feel them up. . . . Verdene Moore is the Antichrist . . . the witch who practices obscene things too ungodly to even think about" (Dennis-Benn 28). Here and throughout, Verdene is depicted as a predator to be feared; indeed, it is her homosexuality that emboldens her neighbors to imagine predatory encounters. Community members reinforce heteronormativity when they indirectly address Verdene's sexuality by deeming her a threat to "little girls." A number of individuals suspect that Verdene is a lesbian and invent rumors to drive her into exile. In equating Verdene with the Antichrist, residents absolve themselves of any responsibility to be civil to her and evoke religion to vilify homosexuality; her neighbors understand same-sex intimacy as "obscene" and "ungodly" and collectively police same-sex intimate relations. In the environment that Dennis-Benn develops, non-procreative sexual intimacy is sanctioned while the sexual servicing of tourists is conveniently ignored. Women who are read as homosexual face exclusion and violence from their community while sex work, though stigmatized, continues in the confines of the resort. The contradictory restriction of sexuality, as Michel Foucault concludes, supports the state's investment in procreation and is central to the exercise of state power. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault finds that bio-power, or the state's regulatory management of its population, operates as "factors of segregation and social hierarchization" that reinforce relations of domination (141).

The social norms surrounding sexuality abrade feelings of belonging for the protagonist and her girlfriend. The author describes the emotional consequences of exile by developing characters who are marginalized by

their community. For Margot, her community's adherence to moral order brings her to imagine her own paradise. Margot dreams of leaving Jamaica. Specifically, she longs to "get as far as possible . . . maybe America, England, or someplace where she can reinvent herself. Become someone new and uninhibited; a place where she can indulge the desires she has resisted for so long" (Dennis-Benn 14). As a result of rampant homophobia, Margot cannot label her bond with Verdene; she cannot "see herself this way" (Dennis-Benn 65). Instead, Margot terms her attraction to women as "this." Margot cannot be openly intimate with Verdene in Jamaica and views migration as a means of regeneration and self-identification in a more accepting environment. By repeating the term "uninhibited," used previously when describing Margot's behavior with clients, Dennis-Benn recalls how tourists can be "uninhibited" when away from home and stages a fantasy respite for the protagonist. In this imagined reverse migration, the author links location with feelings of belonging and counters the nation's picturesque image with an alternative paradise. This conception, perhaps problematically, projects the romanticization of ideal places on an unfamiliar environment and shifts the image of paradise from Jamaica to England and the United States.

Because Margot struggles to be sexually intimate with Verdene while in River Bank, she dreams of moving to a more accepting environment. "Her mind races ahead to the possibility of leaving River Bank for a nice beachfront villa in the quiet, gated community of Lagoons—a place far from River Bank where Margot could give freely of herself, comforted by the cool indifference of wealthy expats from Europe and America. It would be like living in another country," Dennis-Benn writes (75–76). This passage introduces the possibility of remaining in Jamaica; herein, the phrase "cool indifference of wealthy expats" stands in for terms such as "progressive" and "liberal." With this, the author positions the expats' antipathy to homosexuality as an antidote to local homophobia. Similar to the fenced-in nature of Palm Star Resort, a space that functions as an invented site/sight of discovery for tourists, the remote place that the protagonist imagines would allow the couple to live "without the neck strain from looking over their shoulders" (Dennis-Benn 76). In other words, Dennis-Benn calls attention to the alienation inherent in all-inclusive resorts by replicating the environment in a residential setting. Through the protagonist, who craves the presence of "indifferent" expats, the author highlights the impact of regulating sexuality. Although the character dreams of life with Verdene in a beachfront villa away from prying eyes, that way of life is replaced with "an office with good air-conditioning, a chair that adjusts to her back as though it is made for her, a mahogany desk with her

name on it, a better view of the beach, the ability to slip out of her shoes and wiggle her toes, and a door she can keep locked" (Dennis-Benn 286). While Margot's office affords refuge from direct involvement with sex work, it cannot fully eradicate the reminders of River Bank.

Michelle Balaev's work on the relationship between individual trauma and cultural forces sheds light on how trauma operates in the text. Balaev finds that "the trick of trauma in fiction is that the individual protagonist functions to express a unique personal traumatic experience, yet, the protagonist also functions to represent and convey an event that was experienced by a group of people" (155). Following Balaev's claim, Margot's resulting numbness can be read as both her experience and as representative of one of the many ways that survivors can respond to trauma. Margot remains haunted by the "memory of what her mother had done to her" (Dennis-Benn 15). As previously mentioned, Dolores sold fourteen-year-old Margot's virginity to an unnamed cruise passenger for six hundred dollars to "fix her." Sheller's work on sexual citizenship in the Caribbean considers the relationship between sexual surveillance and the state. Sheller observes that the "desire to constrain women's eroticism thus concerns both eradicating nonreproductive queer sexualities *and* constraining the over-reproduction of heterosexualities of the working class" (240). Likewise, Richardson argues that "hegemonic forms of heterosexuality underpin constructions of citizenship" (212). Dolores's quest to eradicate her daughter's homosexuality, then, can be read as rooted in her adherence to the social norms that condemn same-sex love and her understanding of sexual citizenship in Jamaica as reliant on heterosexuality.[13] Dolores attempts to exorcise the "devil" in Margot by rendering heterosexuality compulsory. She rationalizes the sale of her daughter's virginity as being the "only way dat [she] could save [Margot] from [her] ways" (Dennis-Benn 261). Similar to Margot's description of her attraction to women as "this," the use of "ways" deploys euphemism to emphasize Dolores's evasion of her daughter's sexuality. For Margot, the trauma of sexual exploitation leaves her emotionally "sick." In *Here Comes the Sun*, Dennis-Benn uses Margot's experience with sexual exploitation and exclusion to examine the upshot of regulating female sexuality.

If the trauma novel "explores the effects of suffering on the individual and community in terms of the character's relation to place," as Balaev claims, then the collective loss of land for River Bank residents places Margot's individual trauma in a larger cultural context that reads trauma as connected to the tension between capitalism and relationships (160). Like Dolores, the developers value income over people. The town of River Bank, as a result of

hotel development, is transformed from a place of individual suffering into one of collective loss and upheaval. If the landscape is a "referent for the individual's sense of self or identity," then the waterfront area, the contact zone between residents and tourists and the location where Dolores sold Margot into prostitution, can be read as a metaphor for Margot's struggle with same-sex intimacy (Balaev 161). That is, the waterfront can be interpreted as a site where the struggle for money as well as sexuality is constantly negotiated but never resolved. The annexation and subsequent demolition of River Bank homesites, occasioned by the hotel development project that Margot is involved with, is symbolic of the protagonist's shift to an indirect involvement with sex work. In situating the sale of Margot's virginity in River Bank, Dennis-Benn connects the town with individual suffering. It is perhaps because of this linkage that Margot is more willing to see the town demolished and repurposed. With the character of Margot, Dennis-Benn situates sexual exploitation and environmental devastation as parallel forces of destruction. The author positions land development as a potentially traumatic process, one that, for Margot, comes with mobility, but results in displacement for the collective. In essence, Margot and Verdene's exile precedes the mass eviction of their neighbors. By relocating the protagonist, the author can more fully explore the collective suffering that comes when River Bank is transformed into a space for touristic consumption.

THE EXPANSION OF MASS TOURISM

In situating the reader as both a literary tourist and a potential critic of the implications of the tourism industry, the novel harkens back to Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*. Like Kincaid's text, a work that presents a "sustained assault on Europeans' and North Americans' privileged place within the global postcolonial economy," *Here Comes the Sun* sheds light on Jamaica's economic divide and the exploitative practices of the country's economic elite (Huggan and Tiffin 76). At the heart of Dennis-Benn's novel is a critical discussion of tourism that recalls the anticolonial movement in Caribbean literature. Like Kincaid, Dennis-Benn suggests that the "battle is not against development or tourism as intrinsically harmful processes and activities, but rather against the often flagrant human and environmental abuses that continue to be practiced in their cause" (Huggan and Tiffin 79). While tourism is "one of the most important economic sectors for many countries in the Caribbean," studies indicate that tourism has vast social and psychological

consequences for residents (Thomas-Hope and Jardine-Comrie 94, 97). Although the hotel industry "requires an endless supply of 'pristine' beaches, 'untouched' coves, and 'emerald' pools, many islands struggle with the water and sewage demands of the hotel industry, and sewage is returned to the same sea in which guests swim" (Sheller 68). The growth of tourism also has implications for natural resources and local economies in that most of the income generated by guests never reaches residents. Although a number of scholars recognize that tourism can be positive for communities if their needs are considered, this is not the case for the residents of River Bank.

Scholars including Edouard Glissant have recognized the language of landscape as a transformative force in the Caribbean. If control of the Jamaican landscape can be read as a language of its own, then the loss of beach access that occurs when resorts such as Palm Star are built stresses how the asymmetrical power relations at play drastically alter the function of the existing landscape. In *Colonial Inventions*, Wahab reads landscape as history and a "way of European self-relationing, between the West and its other" (13). Although his work focuses on how Afro-Trinidadians inhabit the landscape of Trinidad, the concept of self-relationing is woven throughout Dennis-Benn's text. Wahab's study relies on the assumption that "colonial discourse is not given but constructed, is dynamic rather than static and concerns the constant interplay between sites of anxiety and sites of seeming repetition" (16). *Here Comes the Sun* focuses on how hotel development threatens the community of River Bank and denaturalizes the landscape while renaturalizing the island as a space of paradise. The work reimagines the colonial encounter by replacing colonists with developers who partner with lawyers to evacuate residents. River Bank, then, is turned into a site of anxiety, a place where racial and economic tensions play out while the trauma generated by a range of exploitative practices is replicated. Importantly, the hotels that line the coastline, largely indistinguishable from one another, become spaces for tourists to understand their position relative to the "other" and for residents to understand their place.

Dennis-Benn problematizes the impact of mass tourism and the use of development as social control. We would be remiss to forget that "at the center of Jamaica's ethnic and political complexity is race . . . the social and economic division between mostly white 'haves' and mostly black 'have-nots' runs deep"; this is reflected in the fictional resort at the center of the novel (Torregrosa). The resort property stands in for a host of projects dotting Jamaica's coastline. Hotels like Palm Star Resort attempt to bring "order" to the landscape by visually and geographically appropriating the

land of non-European peoples and shaping the identity of the surrounding environment. In the novel, tourists "dress like they're going on safari, especially the men, with their clogs, khaki apparel, and binocular-looking cameras" (Dennis-Benn 17). It is not evident who/what tourists are photographing with their telephoto lenses; they eat "fried fish . . . , their backs, shoulders, and faces red from sunburn, their tour buses parked out front" (Dennis-Benn 106). Overall, the author depicts tourists who do not fit in; their pale skin cannot withstand the harsh rays of the Caribbean sun. They come to document (through photos) and to be chauffeured from stop to stop along a tightly controlled itinerary. They misunderstand the culture in that their dress is more at home on an African safari than in the Caribbean. It is clear that readers are not meant to identify with the tourists but, like imagined locals, to laugh at the tourists' dress, behavior, and lack of belonging. In passages such as this, Dennis-Benn destabilizes the imperial gaze to position tourists as objects for readers' amusement. If tourism "can be understood as a form of embodied encounter between foreign travelers and local people that involves corporeal relations of unequal power," as Sheller finds, then Dennis-Benn's use of the counter-gaze is particularly significant (210). The author inscribes tourists with potentially laughable qualities to question the hierarchy of relations that situates the tourist as viewer and resident as object of that gaze. In calling on touristic relations of looking, Dennis-Benn foregrounds the island's occupants and pushes back against a picturesque view of Jamaica.

The text reveals how Jamaican women are sexualized and othered in relation to white, foreign tourists and counters that image with an exacting view of tourists and tourism. At hotels such as Palm Star Resort, Jamaican chefs are fired and foreign ones are hired because "tourists want to eat their own food on the island. They don't come to eat Jamaican food wid all dat spice" (Dennis-Benn 111). Palm Star Resort, a manufactured space that emphasizes cultural and economic differences, is built on a former plantation property. If landscape can be read as history, as Wahab calls for, then it is revealing that Dennis-Benn stages the repurposing of a site of oppression with the construction of a site that perpetuates exploitation. The resort affords vacationers time to "lie flat on their backs and bellies in the bright sun while maids dash in and out of rooms with mops and linens" (Dennis-Benn 285). To stress, the state of relaxation that tourists enjoy is dependent on the exploitation and near invisibility of lower-level workers. Palm Star Resort, while fictional, is an example of how all-inclusives delimit cultural exchange and are instead "built around security [wherein] the guests arrive

and they are on property for most of their stay" (A. Hall 62). By situating the narrative at a resort and depicting touristic encounters from the perspective of locals, the author levels a critique against neocolonialism and external (often white) influence in the Caribbean. Here and throughout, the author pushes back against the trope of the "lazy native" by centering the labor of working-class Jamaicans.

LAND DEVELOPMENT

In addition to zeroing in on the cultural impact of tourism, Dennis-Benn showcases the environmental implications of hotel development and uses the destruction of the natural environment as a signal for cultural loss. A number of scholars have highlighted the connection between the Western discourse of nature and the history of empire, and landscape can be read as an instrument of power and a "cultural image that structures or symbolizes surroundings" (Daniels and Cosgrove 1). If land is understood as a site of dignity, as Frantz Fanon claims, then the question becomes whose dignity is being upheld in River Bank. Palm Star Resort exists because the Wellington family, originally from Canada, arrived in Jamaica after Alphonso's father "fell in love with the country, and stayed" (Dennis-Benn 108). By crafting a hotelier who is a second-generation immigrant, the author calls attention to the economic division on the island and the privilege of a family who had the means to relocate out of attraction to a foreign land. The Wellington family's involvement with development attempts to control the landscape and forcefully removes residents from their land. It can be argued that Dennis-Benn narrates this separation to highlight the connection between colonialism's history of "forced migration, suffering, and human violence" and development practices that fail to center residents (Handley and DeLoughrey 4). The forced migration of residents becomes clear when they are met with "no trespassing" signs. Dennis-Benn sets the scene: "The construction workers with their tools aren't on site today. There is a sign that reads NO TRESPASSING on the beach. . . . The hotels are building along the coastlines. Slowly but surely they are coming, like a dark sea" (120). In this passage, residents are painted as "trespassers" who are denied access to the coast. In depicting the sprawl of resorts as an invading "dark sea," which can be read as a play on the loss of coastline access and the denaturalization of the landscape, the author emphasizes class and racial division between those who have access to the beach and those who do not.

The repercussions for residents extends beyond the loss of beach access. The narrator reflects, "Little Bay, which used to be two towns over from River Bank, was the first to go. Just five years ago the people of Little Bay left in droves, forced out of their homes and into the streets" (Dennis-Benn 120). With little regard for the families that live there, the developers, who used to "wait for landslides and other natural disasters to do their dirty work," turn to force to clear entire towns (Dennis-Benn 120). By repeating the term "dirty work," also used when discussing Margot's occupation, Dennis-Benn questions who is really engaging in unsavory practices. In repeating the term, the author sheds light on the emotional and cultural costs of development. In the above passage, locals are represented collectively, perhaps to illustrate how residents and developers function as differentially empowered groups. Residents resist through physical force by "blocking roads with planks and tires and burning them" and steal construction materials "to rebuild homes in other places" (Dennis-Benn 120). In short, Dennis-Benn includes examples of resistance to restore the dignity of displaced characters and to recall the historic struggle for land and resources in the Caribbean.

The town of River Bank functions as a socially constructed space where competing practices play out. Developers bemoan the difficulties of extracting people from their homes and seek a government contract to enforce their commands. The construction equipment wastes away in the sun, battered by the elements; the natural environment rejects those who attempt to unlawfully exercise power. Despite residents' assault on the construction tools, the bulldozers appear overnight; "They stand in place like resting mammoths, their blades like curved tusks. It's as though they landed from the sky or were washed ashore. One by one they begin to knock down trees in the cove and along the river. They also take a chunk of the hill, cutting down the trees that cradle the limestone, which they chip away" (Dennis-Benn 289). In this passage, the bulldozers function as alien figures that systematically erode the landscape. The bulldozers, like the tourists, do not belong. Perhaps an ironic representation of the hordes of tourists who invade the island's beaches, the bulldozers remove the natural defenses of protected spaces. They destroy the environment, lacking drivers, almost as if in a science fiction novel. In short, the bulldozers represent the way that those in charge (here the developers, and most notably, Alphonso Wellington), relieve themselves of responsibility. The bulldozers give those in power a way "out" by partially alleviating their discomfort. Like Alphonso, who mediates his relationship with sex workers by installing Margot as their supervisor, the developers are not directly operating the bulldozers. Instead, they can

point to foreign workers as the catalyst of destruction. In both cases, it is rich white men who act exploitatively and damagingly. Men such as Alphonso, who effectively annexes the town of River Bank, fail to take responsibility for the effects of their actions. Their deeds reference the region's colonial history and reimagine resistance to such behavior.

In the novel, the primary consequences of hotel development are environmental destruction and the displacement of residents. The narrator reveals that "the men fold the earth. . . . Bits and pieces of rock scatter as trees are uprooted. When they collapse, the earth shakes. . . . The clouds gather together, and the sun stands still and watches her world crumble" (Dennis-Benn 289–90). In contrast to the previously examined passage, the link between man and environmental destruction is clearly delineated. The men operating the machinery act as omnipotent figures who lay waste to the landscape. It is worth noting that Dennis-Benn specifies that it is men, rather than machines, who "fold the earth." When the destruction of their homes becomes imminent, "People begin to snatch their things from their shacks, forced into the unknown. . . . Those shacks are marked to be destroyed" (Dennis-Benn 290). What is intriguing, though, is the force that stops the bulldozers. The construction workers notice a woman's wild hand gestures, perhaps directing them to stop, and read her as an obeah woman at the exact moment that the earth begins to tremble. As a result, "The men clutched their helmets and searched for safety. They ran for cover, diving behind bushes and under sheets of zinc. . . . Later it was reported that what they had experienced was an earthquake. They decided to halt the construction until a later date" (Dennis-Benn 290). Here, the author stages the woman's presumed association with obeah as the momentary counter to the razing of the landscape. The bulldozers, left in place, serve as a warning with their "engines baring their teeth like a threat" (Dennis-Benn 290). The developers deploy machinery as a symbol of displacement; the "teeth" of the machines are visible for all to see. Much like the yellow tape all over town, the static bulldozers serve as a warning that "in a matter of weeks, River Bank will be no more" (Dennis-Benn 290).

In *Land of Love and Drowning* and *Here Comes the Sun*, Yanique and Dennis-Benn foreground extractive practices to challenge imperialist modes of dominance and shift representations of the Caribbean away from stereotypical depictions of paradise. In both works, ownership of land and bodies is problematic and is frequently tied to social norms. For the women in these works, traditional gender roles are imposed, transgressive sexual expression is punished via exclusion or violence, and purity can

be "plucked like a blossoming hibiscus before its time" (Dennis-Benn 96). The International Monetary Fund recognizes that "it is common for only 20 percent of revenue to be returned to the local economy" in all-inclusive Caribbean hotels; the works, therefore, can be read as a counter to the economic and environmental realities of mass tourism ("Caribbean Cruises Leave"). With their novels, Yanique and Dennis-Benn call the ethics of development into question.

In painting residents as participants in as well as recipients of exploitative practices, the authors disrupt the colonizer/colonized binary to complicate understandings of intersecting systems of oppression. Margot, who stands at the top of the hill, hires employees to populate her property because she cannot stand living alone. Like Owen Arthur, her sexual needs cannot be satisfied; she "lives from one orgasm to the next," missing Verdene but unwilling to reconnect (Dennis-Benn 334). *Here Comes the Sun* concludes with these lines: "Everything glitters in the new sunlight, just like Margot had always thought it would. Except for her lone, grainy figure on the water's surface, dark in the face of the sun" (Dennis-Benn 345). Margot, as a "pimp" as well as a lesbian, transgresses social norms and defies the heteropatriarchy, the combination of heterosexism and patriarchy that privileges the heterosexual and masculine. Less successful in flaunting social mores is Owen Arthur, a man who is ruled by paraphilic desire and whose actions have profound implications.

In the works, citizenship is associated with normative understandings of sexuality, and transgressing entrenched notions results in exile, loss, and violence for the protagonists and their families. The protagonists, whose parental figures both attempt to dictate their sexual choices, ultimately pursue seclusion to escape continued reprobation. The works detail the consequences of transgressing sexual norms and situate the environment as a symbol for challenges to the protagonists' physical and emotional wellbeing. The authors situate bodies as well as landscapes as sites of politicized struggle. Interestingly, it is at home where the characters come under surveillance; the characters' moves away from home, then, can be read as a rejection of the judgment and exclusion they face from their neighbors. In highlighting the impact of sexual surveillance and the consumptive nature of Caribbean service economies, the authors counter the tourist avatar image that Nair references. Collectively, Yanique and Dennis-Benn's novels position Jamaica and the Virgin Islands as places of false refuge for tourists and spaces of exploitation for residents.

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Photo by Thomas Donahue

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