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Social Reproductive Labor and Uto/Dystopia: An Analysis of *Leila, Midnight Robber* and *Woman World*

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary science fiction and speculative fiction with utopian/dystopian aspects from South Asia and the Caribbean have rarely been studied in tandem. Furthermore, no scholarly work has analyzed such texts produced under conditions of contemporary capitalism in the light of social reproduction theory which considers social reproductive labor that rejuvenates labor power. I study *Leila* (2017) by the Indian writer Prayaag Akbar, *Midnight Robber* (2000) by the Jamaican-born Nalo Hopkinson, and *Woman World* (2018) by the diasporic Indian writer Aminder Dhaliwal to connect social reproductive labor and utopianism and argue that social reproductive labor rejuvenates the labor power of utopian agents in social reproductive spaces such as homes, schools, hospitals, gardens etc. resisting dystopian conditions, nurturing hope, and rejuvenating utopian thinking. I question how utopianism is related to social reproductive labor in postcolonial contexts of the Global South, and propose that 1) dystopian scenarios are brought about by control of social reproductive spaces and 2) progress/betterment is actualized with renewal and rejuvenation via social reproductive labor. I contend that relating twenty-first-century utopianism to social reproduction is a valuable and novel approach, especially in postcolonial contexts where conditions of labor have been determined by complex histories of colonialism, enslavement, and indentured labor.

Introduction

Major theorists in utopian studies today agree that utopianism goes beyond imagining ideal societies. Considering the "historical function" of science fiction, examples of the genre in the utopian vein often "defamiliarize[s] and restructure[s] our experience of our own present" rather than give us "future images" urging us to reflect on what progress means in a remarkable scrutiny of science fiction's "utopian vocation."[1] Utopia conceptually redefined as the "education of desire" or the desire "for a better way of being" whether it be "realistic or unrealistic" is an important intervention in understanding utopia in contemporary times.[2] Utopian thinking promotes discussions of "construct[ing] actual communities" based on "utopian principles."[3] Replacing ideas of perfection with progress, contemporary utopianism focuses on what is possible: "utopia is a programme for ... a gradual betterment of the present ... [operating] as a means toward political, economic, social, moral and pedagogical reorientation."[4] I argue that such a reorientation i.e., building of actual communities that provide "betterment" requires social reproductive labor in social reproductive spaces to rejuvenate a society/community. This article emphasizes the importance of those who undertake social reproductive labor as utopian agents capable of defying dystopian conditions, nurturing utopian hope, and

rejuvenating utopian thinking under challenging conditions of contemporary capitalism. The crisis of capitalism can be explained in terms of social reproduction theory; in "every form of capitalist society," there exists a crisis because of the following contradiction – while social reproduction is a "condition of possibility for sustained accumulation" capitalist tendency toward "unlimited accumulation tends to destabilize the very processes of social reproduction on which it relies."[5] Unlimited capitalist accumulation could lead to a crisis of social reproduction where the laborers are not reproduced or rejuvenated adequately for the capitalist system to maintain itself. In other words, social reproductive labor being a condition for the maintenance of the capitalist system could also be the reason for its downfall due to unsustainable demands on those who carry out social reproductive labor. Studying social reproductive labor in utopian/dystopian texts reveal how utopianism and progress or betterment can be related in given contexts.

The utopianism that has emerged in the globalized and hyper-connected digital world of the twenty-first century is one that resists planetary visions, opting instead to be rooted in local communities with transnational affinities and influences apparent in its anti-capitalist affirmations and methods for justice and survival. Practical survival is critical to twenty-first-century utopianism, contrary to notions of uniformity and idealism. It acknowledges the limitations of radical actions and is arguably the "least successful of totalizing planetary visions."[6] This vision does not aim to rewrite the laws of labor and social reproduction, or reach toward attaining an ideal society. Instead, it stresses responding to capitalist accumulation but does not necessarily recommend a holistic planetary alternative to the problem. This is most evident in the graphic novel *Woman World* (2018) by Aminder Dhaliwal, an example of twenty-first-century utopianism rooted in anti-capitalist survival. The novel's utopianism leans toward localized community actions and non-totalizing alternative utopian visions that often have transnational dimensions despite being culturally rooted. This emphasis on practicality and feasibility should reassure and inspire confidence in our ability to navigate the complexities of the twenty-first century.

I explore how the postcolonial dystopian novel *Leila* by the Indian writer Prayaag Akbar and the novel *Midnight Robber* by the Jamaican-born writer Nalo Hopkinson are contemporary examples of utopianism in light of social reproduction. Akbar's book focuses on the upper-middle-class Hindu woman Shalini married to Riz, a wealthy Muslim man, with their missing daughter Leila symbolizing the lost secular progressive thinking that had prevailed before the Purity Regime with the possibility of finding Leila gives Shalini hope. *Leila* is a feminist dystopia in the sense that it showcases the oppression of the totalitarian Purity Regime against women. Feminist dystopias foreground the "denial of women's sexual autonomy" showing women reduced "from subjecthood to function."[7] In the text, Shalini's body is subjected to medical surveillance, drugs, sexual harassment, violence, and exploitative labor. The difference between the victimization of three generations in *Leila* is only a matter of degree since climate change, attack on reproductive rights, and segregated urban housing conditions exacerbating inequality already exist.[8] Even as it takes the form of an ecological dystopia at times, *Leila* portrays the divisions between communities which negatively impact women; women's role in reproduction and their labor in social reproductive spaces in generating utopian potential to transgress and subvert authoritarian politics are crucial in the narrative.

Meanwhile, in Hopkinson's speculative novel *Midnight Robber*, Tan-Tan survives incestual rape by her father Mayor Antonio on the planet Toussaint governed by Granny Nanny (an advanced Artificial Intelligence network) and is rejuvenated in the douen village of the prison-planet New Half-Way Tree. Tan-Tan pretends to be, or rather, masquerades as the West Indian (Trinidadian) Carnival character of the Robber Queen to cope with her trauma and crosses the interdimensional veil to escape as a fugitive to the alternate dimension of New Half-Way Tree. The character of Midnight Robber has been described as a "transcultural Carnival Trickster" in a black sombrero hat who uses verbal prowess and subversive speech to speak back to power within the carnival space; he is also a shapeshifter and is distinct from the traditional/folkloric West Indian trickster figures such as Anansi and Brer Rabbit because he is a Carnival manifestation.[9] Tan-Tan takes revenge on her father Antionio by killing him and is at large in the douen village, hiding from Janisette, her father's widow. In *Woman World* (2018)

by the Indian diasporic author Aminder Dhaliwal (a graphic novel published by the Canadian publisher Drawn & Quarterly), each page spread is a micro-narrative portraying a post-apocalyptic world where men have become extinct and women have moved beyond capitalist accumulation. The graphic novel is a consolidated version of a set of Instagram webcomics of the same name and the narrative is refreshingly hilarious and thought-provoking, effacing any robust cultural markers except for "historical" pop culture references, portraying women's practical utopianism without serious political agenda but posing pertinent questions about labor, capitalism, and feminism.

Both *Leila* and *Midnight Robber* have technologized landscapes with cyborg characters and the sacred/folklorish with regionally rooted themes and motifs; I argue that social reproductive spaces of the school, home, and workspace in *Leila* function as spaces of rejuvenating labor power while being dystopian spaces featuring control. Meanwhile, the douen village functions as a temporary rejuvenating space for female/feminized collectives due to the social reproductive labor of the douen community taking care of Tan-Tan. In contrast, *Woman World* envisions twenty-first-century utopianism in terms of quotidian life with transformed human relations without explicitly thematizing women's labor but with an implicit mapping of the labor of social reproduction into the narrative and with oblique references to regeneration and reproduction. I explore post-capitalist survival and social reproduction in twenty-first-century utopianism of the graphic narrative which moves away from radical notions of revolutionary change and resistance and toward liberal ideas of justice, inclusion, and social change.

Social Reproductive Labor and Rejuvenating Labor Power

The foundational arguments in Marxist feminism about women's labor inside the household considered the value of their labor and the factors that allow eliciting labor from women. Housework in the capitalist system has "a specific privatized character" and the labor of the working-class housewife being "necessary does not turn it automatically into socially necessary labor in the sense used by Marx."[10] By socially necessary labor, Marx meant factory work, which required framing or defining the use-value of housework in the capitalist system. The working-class housewife is not comforted by the fact that "her labor has no value" in the capitalist system.[11] Characterizing capitalist housework or domestic labor carried out by women who produced a surplus was the fact that "the exchange between their labors" and other family members' labors was elicited on the "basis of marital or filial relations."[12] Women's domestic labor was seen as a "visible and . . . necessary complement" of the labor of the male members of the family.[13] The family is a unit of production, consumption, and reproduction that shrouds the labor carried out by its members. Arguing for "wages for housework," Federici (1980) points out that housework is seen as a "natural attribute rather than . . . as a social contract" and its unwaged character helps reinforce the idea that "housework is not work."[14] Demanding wages for housework means recognizing that housework is not an "expression of [women's] nature."[15] Women struggling for wages for housework means struggling "directly against [their] social role" and demanding a restructuring of "social relations" by breaking "capital's plan for women".[16] Moreover, allocating wages for housework would entail a recognition of women's labor, rendering the "work visible" and allowing to "reappropriate that money which is the fruit of [women's] labor" while undermining "capital's power to command forced labor" from women.[17] The debate about wages and housework has thus considered the role of the family in socializing women to accept domestic labor as unwaged, acknowledged the power of the wage to make the labor of the housewife visible, and claim value for that labor inside the capitalist system.

In one of the earliest works on the labor of social reproduction, i.e., the labor of reproducing the laborer, it has been observed that Marx's emphasis was on "production and accumulation of profit" rather than on "social reproduction," i.e., he did not adequately consider "the family and the state" as "agents in the labor market."[18] The processes of social reproduction involve the labor of birthing, nurturing, rejuvenating, and maintaining conditions necessary for sustaining the labor power of the laborers. In the capitalist system, the accumulation of capital brings about the separation between

"processes of production and processes of social reproduction of the laboring population."[19] The capitalist system introduced "a change in the meaning and objectives of the social system" with the household reproducing its members and the capitalist economy using the laboring population for "accumulation of the capital."[20] The function of social reproduction theory is to theorize "the relation between labor dispensed to produce commodities and the labor dispensed to produce people" in the capitalist system.[21] Thus, processes of social reproduction involve producing laborers or people, i.e., the laboring population and this labor of social reproduction which reproduces labor power being separated from the capitalist sphere of production is a consequence of capitalist greed.

The institutions of social reproduction relieve the family of "certain costs of social reproduction" with interventions by the state in "social welfare, education and healthcare" along with the "expansion of the consumer market."[22] Moreover, these "social relations" extending between institutions of social reproduction are "sustained and coproduced by human labor."[23] Spaces of social reproduction include households, schools, hospitals, gardens, etc., where the laborer is reproduced and rejuvenated where social reproductive labor is not just the labor of reproduction/rejuvenating labor power but also comprises the physical and emotional work of maintaining the health of the laborer and the quality of labor power.

About Postcolonial Dystopian Fiction

There are three reasons why I chose to discuss dystopian fiction from the South Asian and Caribbean contexts: 1) differences in forms of postcolonial utopianism, 2) history and conditions of labor, and 3) representations of reproductive labor and social reproduction in contemporary dystopian fiction from these contexts. Ashcroft notes that postcolonial cultural productions have as a "core feature" the "utopian spirit" which can provide "the vision of a transformed future" or "a particularly intense rhetoric of the future characterized by its engagement with imperial power."[24] In postcolonial utopian or dystopian fiction, such visions of "transformed future(s)" are then informed by postcolonial thought and limited by the same. Ashcroft's observation about the "intense rhetoric of the future" is notable because it focalizes the simultaneous yearning for the future, progress, and a sense of stagnancy ("rhetoric of the *future*") despite the utopian and decolonial impulse. The utopian turn in postcolonial thought was due to some strands of postcolonial analyses seeing "colonial engagement with imperial power" as "a simple anti-colonialism" i.e., the ambiguity of the postcolonial subjectivity must be acknowledged.[25] This bold claim contextualizes the rise of postcolonial utopianism taking varied forms. Due to differences in colonialism, forms of utopianism that arose in response also vary, differentiating the "utopianism of Tagore and Gandhi in India" from the "function of an archipelagic consciousness in the Caribbean."[26] Thus, discussing utopianism in these disaparte contexts indicates how utopianism manifests differently in postcolonial contexts presenting alternate future visions even as they engage with specific colonial pasts.

My second reason is that apart from postcolonial histories, the history of indentured labor connects the Indian subcontinent with the Caribbean archipelago. As an adjacent form of labor to slave labor, indentured labor often formed a tentative reserve labor force. Indentured servitude in the Caribbean ensured that the British colonial officers and industrialists had Indian and Chinese laborers as "buffer[s]" between themselves and the African enslaved laborers.[27] Indentured labor had also helped maintain conditions of "economic oppression" and uphold "hierarchies of labor and race" over time.[28] With this history of oppressive labor conditions forming the background, juxtaposing utopian/ dystopian texts from these vast geographical regions addressing the theme of reproductive labor and social reproductive labor becomes significant. The representations of reproductive labor in select texts serve to show how reproduction can either present as pain (dystopian suffering) and/or renewal of life (utopian possibility). At the level of society, the necessity of social reproductive labor to nurture, effectuate, and maintain utopian thinking, along with the manifestations of utopianism as seen in social reproductive spaces, is crucial to my argument.

Settler colonies like North America, South Africa, and Australia with songs and folklore, have an established utopian basis for colonization.[29] Scholarly work on comparative utopian studies sheds light on "non-western" utopian traditions and the need to revise the Western concept of "utopia" to "intercultural imaginaries of the ideal."[30] Dutton analyses indigenous utopian traditions informed by the comparative religions/mythology framework of Seligman (who questions the hegemonic role of the utopian paradigm as a product of Western civilization) and breaks with him by critiquing his approach because it circumscribes the study of comparative utopias with reference to comparative religions.[31] Meanwhile, Pordzik's *The Postcolonial Utopia* (2001) analyzes texts from settler-colonial contexts (Australia, South Africa, North America) in conjunction with other postcolonial contexts.

Consider Ashcroft's observation about imperialism and utopia/dystopia: "Imperialism is a classic demonstration of the realization of a utopian dream, the legislation of which ensures its degeneration into dystopian reality."[32] In *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, Wilde has written, "Progress is the realization of Utopias." [33] The tension between Wilde's and Ashcroft's observations form the basis for colonial and postcolonial utopianism in the context of British imperialism. If, as Wilde says, progress is the realization of Utopias, then imperialism (which is/was very much a social reality) is the realization of the colonial utopian dream. Meanwhile, Wilde's quote gives rise to an understanding of how socialist collective dreaming can create a utopia of progress. Ashcroft observes how the social dreaming of colonizers usually ends up creating a dystopia for the colonized. Ashcroft writes about how in the colonized land(s), sharing "envisaged by utopia" was not of economic resources, but "as much as the political wealth of liberation," i.e., colonialism is responded to by liberatory movements which begin from the fundamentals of postcolonial utopianism, namely hope, anticipation, and future thinking.[34] Utopianism is characterized by its function of social critique; it acts to envision a better society. While imperial utopianism critiques the imperial home country's social reality and aspires to establish a better version of itself in colonized land, postcolonial utopianism critiques colonial past(s) and post-independence administrations that perpetuate colonial structures or neocolonial rule. Postcolonial utopianism aims to "open up a space for political action . . . buoyed up by the possibility, indeed, the probability of social change."[35] Thus, according to Ashcroft, social critique and social transformation characterize postcolonial utopianism. While utopianism in postcolonial texts is generally understudied, social reproductive labor and its relevance to utopianism in postcolonial dystopian fiction deserve attention and this connection is integral in understanding how cultural differences within postcolonial utopianism exist.

Social Reproductive Spaces and Hope in *Leila*

In *Leila*, ethnonationalist authoritarian politics have imposed literal divisions in the form of massive walls between religious and caste-based communities with restricted mobility across sectors. Despite her privilege, Shalini struggles to adjust to the repressive society owing to her interfaith marriage. The "Repeaters" come for their family during Leila's birthday party, terrifying their guests and leading to the disappearance or death of Riz. After a life-changing altercation, Shalini is sent to Purity Camp and Leila goes missing. Their maid, Sapna, with whom Shalini shares an uncomfortable dynamic, also goes missing. At the Purity Camp, Shalini and the other women are conditioned to live subservient lives through hard labor and drugs. Years later, forty-three-year-old Shalini plots to find Leila. Narrated through flashbacks and fragmented memories of Shalini's privileged past intercutting the present-tense first-person narration from Shalini's drug-addled perspective, the form of the novel emphasizes the contrast in her mental state. Her relentless search leads her to confront Dipanita, an old friend who has chosen conformity and Sapna, whose circumstances have changed drastically. This section focuses on the social reproductive spaces of Purity One wall, Yellowstone school, and the surveillance in the Towers where Shalini lives.

The social reproductive nature of Purity One wall is due to its ascribed sanctity since it is a sacred site of deadly competition in the name of devotion. The novel opens with Shalini and Riz (a figment of her drug-induced hallucination and long-term grief-fueled imagination) visiting the Purity One wall

which stands at sixty feet "wrapping around the political quarter, sealing off the broad, tree-lined avenues, the colonial bungalows, the Ministries, the old Turkic gardens."[36] The co-existence of the different kinds of privileges in the postcolonial cityscape within the wall makes the forms of Otherness of race and religion – colonial and old Turkish – within it disappear. Shalini observes a woman in "a sequined burqa" whose daughters in headscarves insert papers with prayers "into gaps between the bricks" of Purity One (4). The Muslim woman and her daughters subscribe to the sanctity of Purity One which goes beyond any single religion while standing for purity politics which extends to the political quarter and the heavily divided cityscape. The climbing of Purity One is a ritually sanctioned form of physical exertion and a competitive sport. At its core, it is an act of social reproduction of the laborer, comparable to how schools enable sports:

> Because they are not directly under the thumb of capitalist control, schools (and other institutions of social reproduction) can and do regularly make time and space to attend to the psychological and physiological impulses. They encourage children to tell stories, draw pictures, sing, play sports, and work together to solve problems, activities that are oriented to pleasure, affect, physicality, and sociality.[37]

As Ferguson explains, schools encourage sports to alleviate physiological energy and to encourage sociality. However, sports along with educational institutions, despite their social reproductive roles "are generally not structured in ways that provide frequent opportunities for value to be bestowed on working-class bodies."[38] Climbing Purity One is a parody of class war, an embodied and ritualized race to the death, with the privileged ensconced safely behind unscalable heights. The violence of the climb brings out the precarity of the sporting event in the diegetic world. In climbing Purity One, the dark-skinned man is risking his life, presumably to prove his devotion and/or physical prowess. Historically, sporting events emerged as nonviolent alternatives to reduce violence and resolve conflicts in a civilized society.[39] For working-class people, sporting careers could turn physical capital into economic capital.[40] Economic, cultural and other types of capital also have a "permanent influence" on sports participation and the development of the body.[41] Capitalist profits that enable better nutrition and chances of training impact sporting performances, whether they are recreational or professional. Thus, social reproductive activities like recreational sports are closely tied to class, rejuvenation, and reproducing labor power.

In contrast to Purity One, the Yellowstone school is a hopeful eutopian enclave in the novel. In social reproductive spaces such as schools, "the hierarchies reproduced are said to relate to knowledges, skills, understandings, value orientations, ideology etc." through formal education in schools and informally at home, or other places.[42] The reproduction of hierarchies and ideologies persists; education and socialization are significant for employment and carrying out social roles.[43] Education, then, is an avenue of social reproduction to maintain capitalist hierarchies and in *Leila*, these hierarchies are also along caste and religious lines. Each sector has its own school and social conditioning is carried out quite efficiently. As Shalini explains to Dipanita, children who do not belong to any sector, or are of mixed heritage are placed in abusive Council schools that follow the Council's rules: "they've made homes for them, Dipanita. Council schools. Hundreds of kids, no visitors. Where they learn only the Council's rules"(195). Separated from their parents, the children grow up socially conditioned by the Council's "education" and sanctioned ways of living inoculated by notions of purity. Earlier in the novel, Shalini meets a young Sikh boy named Roop fleeing the Repeaters, and she muses that had he been found, they would have taken him "wherever it is they take our children" (31). Shalini suspects that both Leila and Roop are in Council schools and fears that Leila might be in more danger due to her mixed heritage; she laments that Leila never attended the inclusive Yellowstone school:

> When Riz and I were students, the best schools were independent, but by the time Leila had reached the right age almost every school in the city was affiliated with a particular sector. The richer communities had acquired the better schools and put them behind one set of walls or the other. Yellowstone, the oldest and best, was the final holdout, the last mixed school in the city. (105)

Yellowstone was later "gutted" and Leila never attended her parents' school (105). As Ferguson notes, schools, households, hospitals, prisons, etc., are spaces of social reproduction of the laborer in a "daily and generational" manner enabling the smooth functioning of the capitalist economic system (123). During Shalini's party, Dipanita mentions her hesitancy to send her child to Yellowstone since "any mother would think of safety first"(144). The choice between safe conformity and resistance hinges even on choosing the school for your child which becomes a political choice. The destruction of Yellowstone School is a crucial moment in the dystopian novel indicative of how not protecting a social reproductive space leads to worse crises; or rather, the destruction itself is a sign of the crisis promulgated by ethno-nationalist authoritarian politics as seen in the novel. Progressive social reproductive spaces tied to socialization like the Yellowstone school and the East End, the sector in which Shalini and Riz live, are demolished.

The Purity regime controls social reproductive spaces and exerts control over the female reproductive body through medical surveillance and re-education to ensure women's subservient labor. After the violent gatecrash by the Repeaters, Shalini is sent to Purity Camp where women who choose to defy the rules of purity undergo re-education and laborers practicing subservience and conformity. The Camp functions under Dr. Iyer, a quasi-spiritual guru who provides the women with advice, and pills that "help [them] sleep" and find peace (144). The women find "desperate little things" to remember normality (21). At the Purity Camp, women's reproductive bodies are monitored: Dr. Iyer asks Shalini about her last menstrual cycle and assures her that the Camp was founded to restore order (143). The Purity Camp functions as a dystopian space of re-education eliciting women's labor and monitoring reproductive capacities to deter possible subversion. The single women in the Towers find community while trying to rebuild their lives, organizing badminton courts and tea gatherings (25). At the Revenue Ministry, Shalini engages in clerical work, or performs "peon duties, take papers around, dust the desks, keep the appliances working," and even serves lunch and washes food containers used by the officers (24). The social reproductive labor she engages in is assigned to her presumably because of her status as a woman from the Towers. Her transgressive choices that resulted in her stint at the Towers also defined her office duties – Shalini's hours at the Ministry "were long" and the commute "terrible," and she suffered from constant exhaustion (24). The peon duties Shalini undertakes are evocative of the disproportionate social reproductive labor undertaken by women of color within the capitalist labor force:

> From the increasingly ubiquitous condition of relying on wages to obtain life's necessities to the conversion of unpaid reproductive activity into paid productive work to the wholesale transformation of socially reproductive work into commodities, reproductive labour was thoroughly reorganized by capitalism, even if unwaged work endured.[44]

Shalini's paid reproductive labor ensures the smooth functioning of the Revenue Ministry and deters her from resisting the Council in any significant way. The novel is an indictment of ethnonationalist politics and strongly critiques caste and class privilege. Importantly, however, prevails the ties of social reproductive labor to rejuvenating labor power in social reproductive spaces of the novel which mostly function as hopeful spaces.

Social Reproductive Labor and the Posthuman in *Midnight Robber*

In *Midnight Robber*, the sentient A.I. entity Granny Nanny, which controls the *eshus* (named after Yoruba trickster deity), runs the planet of Toussaint basing the justification for its omniscience on references to Caribbean colonial history. Granny Nanny's 'Nansi web of control is an instance of "alternative societal configurations embedded in different relationships to power, knowledge, and the legacies of slavery and colonialism."[45] Granny Nanny A.I., named after the seventeenth-century Jamaican anti-slavery leader "Nanny of the Maroons," is in the novel a "technological fighter, protector and magician" becoming a guide and information repository for the smooth functioning of Toussaint.[46] The gathered surveillance ensures peace

and security for the people of Toussaint since the whole of Toussaint is connected through Granny Nanny's nanomites, forming a well-coordinated surveillance system.[47] However, as a part of the Marryshow Corporation, Granny Nanny kills the indigenous nature to produce a "domesticated environment solely controlled" by her on Toussaint.[48] In Hopkinson's novel, mechanization is embraced and the continued extractive exploitation at the cost of environmental degradation using technology becomes the choice of individuals and societies.[49] Hopkinson draws from the colonial figure of Granny Nanny to narrate the story of the protagonist Tan-Tan.

As the reimagined historical reincarnation of Nanny of the Maroons in A.I. form, Granny Nanny is an ambiguous A.I. network with the novel countering historical amnesia in an attempt to revive and remember anti-slavery struggles. The exploitative actions of Antonio and Granny Nanny stem "not from the presence of technology alone, but also from the choices that individuals and societies make in its development and implementation."[50] Thus, the complexity of the Caribbean colonial inheritances informs the utopian/dystopian aspects of Hopkinson's novel. Granny Nanny's surveillance network includes *eshus* who are "local AIs" performing multiple tasks serving individual households capable of making choices to withhold information and "create misunderstandings and multiple interpretations."[51] The *eshus* in the narrative "correspond to Voudoun hierarchies and Taino notions of servitude."[52] These A.I. agents carry out the labor of social reproduction with the Granny Nanny A.I. network within the narrative being exploitative and subversive. When Tan-Tan interacts with her *eshu*, the house A.I., she occupies private space, but *eshu* extends into both domestic and cyberspace; *eshu* talks to Tan-Tan: "I tell you true, I don't always understand people so good;" it also conveys messages to Antonio and plays cartoons for her.[53] The house A.I.s or *eshus* are emotionally supportive despite not claiming to understand people as they enable communication and entertainment while serving the household members through social reproductive labor.

The New Half-Way Tree is Toussaint's shadow side (or dub side/alternate dimension separated by a "veil") and is portrayed as the past with Toussaint being the future.[54] The douen refers to both the fantastic folkloric beings and fictional species, in an act of naming that aligns with "earthly imperial nomenclature," revealing the "multivalence of language in a colonial context."[55] The douen village and the growing human settlements on the New Half-Way Tree are an ecological foil for the technologized Toussaint; the douen village becomes a temporary restorative space for Tan-Tan to recover from her trauma. While Toussaint is technologized, the douen community (indigenous alien species in New Half-Way Tree) becomes more human in Tan-Tan's eyes as she gets to know it. Three instances in the novel point out that the douens in the douen village are posthuman aliens: first, they use language ("we learn all oonah speech, for oonah don't learn we own"), second, they provide food and shelter to Tan-Tan and Antonio ("[Chichibud] made sure that Tan-Tan was comfortable beside her daddy") and third, they are masters of woodcraft (" . . . the douen people made better from wood") (95, 115, 152). The douen's "ethics of hospitality" ensure they are "protective of the dispossessed" and Tan-Tan becomes a "member of Chichibud's family."[56] However, it is not "being posthuman" that makes the douen care for Tan-Tan and her father; it takes the collective labor of the douen family unit to revive Tan-Tan from her trauma. By giving food and shelter as well as caring for Tan-Tan and her father, the douens' social reproductive labor and care of Chichibud's wife Benta, a mako jumbie who transforms into a douen woman, allows Tan-Tan to survive and recover. A mako jumbie with an oversized head, "hungry, dead-cold eye," and "sharp beak" is a bird-like creature from West African tradition and Trinidadian folklore. Species such as the rolling calf (of Jamaican folklore) and the mako jumbie add to the interspecies richness of the world of the New Half-Way Tree that, despite and due to its wildness, becomes a restorative space for Tan-Tan. Social reproduction theory enables an understanding of humanity as producing and reproducing labor power and laborer.[57] Here, social reproductive labor of multiple species and interspecies bonding and care enable human survival and hope even as social reproductive labor of eshus under Granny Nanny A.I. facilitate dystopian surveillance. Haraway writes that the "opportunistic and affectionate relationships with critters" in her own life experiences have taught her about "feral demands."[58] The mako jumbie is a feral being who has an affectionate

relationship with Tan-Tan; the interspecies bonding here and nurturing Tan-Tan comprises social reproductive labor.

The democratic douen community in the New Half-Way Tree is also aware of the ephemerality of community space and has solutions to move and rebuild their community if/when necessary. Nomadic survival is a priority in the multispecies imagined community of the douen village in New Half-Way Tree. The douen village has tribes or "douen nations" each of which has "its own daddy tree" with their own "food systems" used by the alien race (179, 195). The douen nations travel from place to place to survive and preserve their resources and their unique ways of life with the community of the New Half-Way Tree forming coalitions and rejuvenating the human survivor who joins them. The douen community's conception of the daddy-tree as a paternal all-providing system that does not have to be changed/improved upon is an idea rooted in Caribbean ecological thought. The study of contemporary West Indian Literature that discusses ecological thought involves "the reconfiguration of human and extra-human natures."[59] The douen community assists with the birth of Tan-Tan's child named Tubman; she hears the words "home," "food," and "thank you" and the douens arrange a nursery for all the "pickney-them" in the community (277, 275). In both instances, life-sustaining social reproductive labor is not anthropocentric but is extended and recognized as an ecological reality among multispecies coalitions.

Social reproductive labor in *Midnight Robber* is not just life-sustaining but essential to preserve multispecies community ties and to ensure Tan-Tan's survival. Recovery from trauma for the protagonists and the implications of such a utopia – process-centric, reflexive, feminist and dynamic – is to reject the static blueprint model of utopian thinking and, more importantly, to recenter the social reproductive labor and the indigenous in posthuman narratives. Braidotti's feminist posthuman concept of *zoe*-centered egalitarianism valuing *bios* or human life and considering all kinds of life, includes animals and nonhuman matter, including air is relevant here.[60] The holistic interdependence of *zoe*-centered egalitarianism furthered by Braidotti helps understand the utopian potential of interspecies dependence. At the same time, multispecies interdependency must come with the understanding that human/nonhuman material boundaries shift and are continuously stabilized/destabilized as they are "always already implicated in particular materializations."[61] These shifting boundaries can belong to human/nonhuman lives and living/non-living matter. Similar to ecofeminism and decolonial thought, social reproduction theory points out how the "exploitable other" is usually female, nature-related, colonized, or indigenized, be it communities, nations or ecosystems.[62] Thus, life-sustaining activities are also understood to be carried out by nonhumans/non-living elements contributing to ecosystems while these forms of labor do not fit into the capitalist system as such, despite their crucial role in sustaining it. Neoliberal systems of oppression have shamefully degraded and destroyed ecosystems rather than maintaining them. In contrast, indigenous cultures recognize how various life forms perform different kinds of labor to sustain life. Thus, sustainability and social reproductive labor are interrelated from a non-anthropocentric and decolonial perspective.

Anatol observes that maternity is complex and fraught with ambiguous responsibilities in Hopkinson's novel. Following the Caribbean critical tradition of being skeptical about imperial mother country discourses, the relationship between the colonial subject and motherhood is problematized. From the discourse of Granny Nanny as the mother of the people and the dystopian surveillance systems to the privileging of chosen families such as that of Chichibud and Benta, who adopt Tan-Tan, Hopkinson's novel explores complex maternities. Tan-Tan's relationship with her biological mother Ione, is fraught with tension, and her alienation from her stepmother Janisette, adds to her negative associations with maternal figures. Tan-Tan receives more life-sustaining care from the compassionate Nursie and the caring Benta (Chichibud's bird-like douen wife) and from Granny Nanny than she does from her biological mother, or stepmother.[63] When her baby is born, Tan-Tan leaves Melonhead, preferring to live with Abitefa in the bushes, associating maternal bonds with living inside a community and not within a nuclear family framework. Social reproductive labor allows Tan-Tan to revise her positionality *vis-a-vis* maternal relations and motherhood even while surrounded by alternate forms of maternity. Thus, life-sustaining and rejuvenative social reproductive labor is carried

out by the more-than-human douen community to heal Tan-Tan with birth and maternity not being a dreaded prospect for her in the end.

Social Reproduction and Post-Capitalist Survival in *Woman World*

In *Woman World* by Aminder Dhaliwal, an artist of South Asian origin based in Canada, the troubled waters and quiet places exist simultaneously. The narrative is an Instagram webcomic turned into a graphic novel premised on the apocalyptic event of male extinction. The story begins when the researcher, Dr. Sharma, tells his wife, Dr. Sharma, about his distressing discovery: men are dying out and will be completely extinct within a few generations. With Sharma's arguments in the background about lowering taxes, repealing environmental regulations, economic crises and only female births in the maternity ward, things begin to spiral out of control with extreme weather events like tsunamis, wildfires, tornadoes, and earthquakes. Under the banner of "Beyonce's Thighs," a rural democratic collective of women with their nudist mayor Gaia, run their village with minimal needs, experiencing love, loneliness, anxieties, and simple joys. A polaroid group photo with the characters Doctor, Ina, Emiko, Yumi, Gaia, Layla, Lara, Uma, Ulaana, and Naomi indicates the cohesion of this rural community which drives the narrative. Among these characters are the nudist mayor Gaia, the unnamed Doctor, and the old woman Ulaana, who has memories of when men lived. Ulaana's granddaughter is the young Emiko; she and her friend Naomi are the group's youngest members. Layla and Lara are a couple, and Ina has unrequited love for Layla. Reproduction, sanctioned and carefully monitored by the Capital, is carried out using women's stem cells for conception. Exploring the evolution of a world beyond capitalism and portraying new female subjectivities and solidarities, Dhaliwal uses irony and humor to present thought-provoking perspectives on political life, cultural memory, and the utopian impulse for post-capitalist survival in a post-apocalyptic world with only women.

The graphic novel is set in a world that explores what life might be like after capitalist totality where utopian imagination is allowed to grow. The women in Dhaliwal's text find strategies for survival in a post-capitalist future where the neoliberal economy has collapsed with the utopian impulse favoring collective labor and collective modes of social reproduction. The text offers a promising set of fresh perspectives on twenty-first-century utopian thinking and how small-scale communities and collective labor can sustain human relations. The graphic novel's structure helps in thematizing cultural markers, time, justice, and nature – after the initial apocalyptic event rendered in the blue, pink and purple colors, the narrative unfolds mostly in black and white comic strips with frequent larger page spreads that have some colo,r and occasional section dividers with the statue of the Lady of Justice overcome by creeping vines, moss and undergrowth to denote disintegration and passage of time, i.e., temporal advancement and the futility of the legal establishment in the post-capitalist woman-only utopian world of the graphic narrative. The post-apocalyptic setting becomes necessary to make a clean break for an act of radical feminist utopian imagination. Consequently, the eutopian enclosure within the capitalist present or the imagined dystopian world is resisted. In such a post-apocalyptic future, the post-capitalist women's utopia thrives with humor and affection, with each panel and frame in the graphic novel capturing such collective moments of community spirit.

As a self-governed community and a utopian collective, the village of women with Gaia as the mayor is aware of their responsibility to define their world's directions. The project of becoming utopian involves being a "radically reconfigured individual" who would be part of the collective utopian unit that brings about radical transformation: "the radically reconfigured person [is] one who is highly aware, embodying an erect posture, experiencing psycho-sexual freedom, and living a life that stands up to advanced industrial alienation in a healthy mixture of pleasure and work that can continue along a path of actualization."[64] Gaia, with her awareness and self-reflection uses strategic self-expression via her nudity as she actively rallies the villagers' support and becomes the elected mayor of the collective. The emphasis on participatory democracy here is consistent with utopian prefigurations that call for social democracy, radical democracy, or representative democracy

to ensure justice and the continuity of the utopian impulse. The political life of Gaia as a nudist mayor in a pastoral women's utopia is symbolic of how the apocalyptic crises have stripped the lives of these citizens down to their bare bones. Gaia's eager political involvement and representation show how her nudity as a utopian presupposition also informs her transparent governance style. The other female mayors from neighboring villages are also nudists, a commonality underplayed in the comic strip that makes humor out of this understatement.[65] The political reproduction of public nudity here is a part of creating utopian spatialities embodying transformational politics and everyday feminist ethics. Public nudism is "prefigurative practice – a utopia in formation... rooted in the textured concerns of the routinized everyday."[66] Gaia's nudity signifies how bodily self-expression can be utopian as it is associated with political leadership and being in touch with the body politic. By studying public nudism as an everyday utopia, Cooper notes that nudism is a political and social act divorced from sex and a radical way of occupying space, signaling not just the "fantasy of a better way of living" but one seeking to "educate desire" and advocating for being more attuned to the sensory and tactile world.[67] Nudism, therefore, can be an embodied way of knowing a society for a political purpose. While nudism is a form of self-expression, the narrative shows that women as political leaders embrace public nudity as a political form of self-expression and utopian prefiguration, asserting their political commitment to transparency, a better way of living, and downplaying the nudity to normalize it.

Gaia proposes that the village build a hospital, enlisting the help of volunteers who are artists, blacksmiths, carpenters, and others who can do "mad pull-ups" (40, 41). Gaia is actively shown to be laboring to build the hospital with the other workers. She enquires if anyone knows any hospital jokes that might lighten the mood since the hospital project "feels like a serious matter" (44). Proposing the building of a hospital becomes Gaia's first act of engaging with the work of her fellow villagers, a clear emphasis on the need to focus on social reproduction in the utopia. However, the labor of these women does not get serious engagement. The utopian spatiality does not come fully formed but actively evolves with daily seemingly insignificant actions of rebuilding and prefiguring change couched in humor. However, the choice to portray social reproductive labor by building public healthcare infrastructure and later engaging with education (via the recording of cultural memory by Ulaana) shows how collective modes of social reproduction could function in a twenty-first-century post-capitalist feminist utopia.

Conclusion

By bringing together utopianism and social reproductive labor in the South Asian and Caribbean contexts, this article furthers the conversation about how questions of labor inform utopian imagination and the utopian impulse in postcolonial utopian/dystopian literature(s). While acknowledging how postcolonial utopianism must be further contextualized within the socio-cultural, historical and political contexts from whence such texts arise, this comparative study yields a productive understanding of how rejuvenative social reproductive labor can be in disintegrating and/or dystopian scenarios. In this article, theoretical views on utopianism by Marks (2022), Vieira (2010), Levitas (2013), Moylan (2021) and Ashcroft (2017) on postcolonial utopianism have been used along with the framework of social reproduction theory as seen in Federici (1980), Bhattacharya (2017), and Fraser (2017). In *Leila*, social reproductive spaces such as the Purity One wall, schools (Yellowstone School) and living/work spaces (the Towers) briefly become utopian/dystopian spaces in the novel where hope is challenged. In *Midnight Robber*, survival is contingent on social reproductive labor in cyborg geographies surveilled by Granny Nanny A.I. Both these texts are important examples of how social reproductive labor assists in maintaining hope and survival; while *Leila* portrays social reproductive labor that rejuvenates labor power, *Midnight Robber* illustrates how survival facilitated by the indigenous douen community is supported by life-sustaining social reproductive labor. The graphic novel is a promising medium to portray twenty-first-century utopianism in *Woman World* with collective models of social reproduction and solidarities between women citizens being the basis for utopian recovery.

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Disclosure Statement

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