FEMINIST SCIENCE FICTION'S PROPHETIC METAPHORS:
THE DESTABILIZATION OF GENDER AND RACE
IN NALO HOPKINSON’S MIDNIGHT ROBBER AND SUSAN PALWICK’S SHELTER

by

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Abstract

In this thesis, I argue that science fiction's ability to reflect upon the moment in which it is written by exploring an imagined future or alternate reality allows it to problematize and destabilize restrictive understandings of social norms such as race and gender. While science fiction's reputation as a "literature of ideas" often masks a tendency for texts in this field to fall back on oppressive norms in their portrayals of gender and race, an emergent, growing body of work within this field is specifically feminist and/or anti-racist. Much of this progressive science fiction (or "sf") imagines worlds in which existing repressive norms are overturned or vastly different. However, the two novels I read closely in this thesis, *Midnight Robber* by Nalo Hopkinson (2000) and *Shelter* by Susan Palwick (2007), envision futures in which the norms of race and gender that persist in the early twenty-first century have shifted, but remain fundamentally unchanged. Rooting my understandings of gender and race as artificial cultural constructions in the work of scholars Judith Butler and K. Anthony Appiah, I contend that, in imagining societies in which restrictive social norms are re-enacted, these texts critique such norms by highlighting the harm that can result from allowing ingrained assumptions regarding social categories such as gender and race to stagnate. Further, I argue that these two novels offer alternate visions of gender and race that destabilize these concepts through their deployments of science-fictional signifiers of otherness, specifically intelligent machines and aliens. Both novels portray these science-fictional beings as living race and gender in ways profoundly unlike the humans who encounter them, forcing each text's human protagonist to re-evaluate the roles gender and race play in establishing what Butler calls a culturally intelligible identity. My reading of sf texts as both extrapolating from their moments and employing sf tropes as metaphors of difference also insists on the importance of viewing these two approaches to sf, the
extrapolative and the metaphorical, as implicated within one another, rather than treating them as separate reading and writing strategies as has prevailed in much sf scholarship to date.
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Chapter I

Introduction: "A Literature of..."?: Celebrating and Troubling the Progressive Capacity of Science Fiction

Science fiction [or "sf"] literature is often cast as a type of narrative that allows for a questioning or rethinking of accepted concepts. Scholars of sf express this fundamental tenet of the genre in various ways: The critics Adam Roberts and Wendy Pearson both describe sf as a "literature of ideas," while Elisabeth Anne Leonard refers to the genre in similar terms as a "literature of possibility" (Roberts 4; Leonard, Into Darkness 4; Pearson 149). I agree with this assessment of the sf field: Science fiction is frequently able to provide readers with the space to imagine otherwise, and is often willing to entertain possibilities that can allow the reader to examine her or his own environment or preconceptions through a helpfully disorienting lens. In this study, I will explore the ways I see two recent science fiction novels, Nalo Hopkinson's Midnight Robber and Susan Palwick's Shelter, engaging in this positive destabilization, particularly in their use of the science-fictional tropes of the technologically-advanced future society, the alien, and the artificial intelligence to question the norms associated with the persistent sociocultural concepts of gender and race.¹

It is, however, hardly a foregone conclusion that any science fictional text will be so open to possibility. Celebration of science fiction as a literature of new ideas, while often very justified, elides discussion of the places from whence these ideas come, of the fact that authors of

¹ Nalo Hopkinson is a writer of science fiction and fantasy who was born in Jamaica, spent her childhood throughout the Caribbean, and now lives in Canada. She is Professor of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside. Susan Palwick is an American writer who works in several genres, including science fiction. She is an Associate Professor of English and an Associate Clinical Professor of Medical Education at the University of Nevada, Reno.
this type of fiction are as grounded in their sociocultural moment as any other writers. This in turn obscures a significant tendency in this field toward retrograde stereotypes and attitudes in the representation of gender and race, which do anything but prompt re-evaluation, allowing instead for many examples of this literary form to sink back unquestioningly into a status quo dominated by white hegemony, patriarchy, and heteronormativity. This tendency in the sf field has increasingly become a point of discussion in the scholarship surrounding the genre. In the same moment in which she acknowledges sf's reputation as "the literature of change," for instance, Veronica Hollinger points out that "for the most part [this literature] has been slow to recognize the historical contingency and cultural conventionality of many of our ideas about sexual identity and desire, about gendered behaviour, and about the natural roles of women and men" (Hollinger 126). Similarly, Pearson's construction of sf as a "literature of ideas" is immediately qualified by a move to point out that sf is often deficient in exploring ideas (such as sexuality, the set of social categories Pearson's analysis is concerned with) that many readers and writers take as "natural," as "quite specifically not [ideas]," but concrete and inalienable norms (Pearson 149). Sf's power to look beyond the norms of its moment is not inherent. Nevertheless, the reputation sf has developed as a genre with the potential to expand and question established ideas is far from unwarranted, and the works by Palwick and Hopkinson that my analysis will focus on in the following chapters are part of a tradition of specifically feminist sf texts interested in problematizing social norms that has been growing since at least the 1960s. Before proceeding with my examination of texts that I contend undertake such questioning, however, it is important to establish the literary history of the sf field out of which I contend this questioning grows, and sf literature's history shows this to be a field that often reifies and enforces retrograde understandings of gender and race, rather than upsetting them, and in which significant moves to make the genre more inclusive and thoughtful, while often successful, have not gone unopposed.
In this opening chapter, then, I will contextualize my analysis of Hopkinson's and Palwick's novels with a brief history of the sf genre and its portrayals of race and gender, as well as an overview of the scholarship on this field and the methodologies this scholarship has used to approach sf narratives, methodologies I will be blending and repurposing in later chapters.

Before I can embark on this contextualization of the sf genre, however, I must first establish how I am defining the two terms that my study examines Hopkinson's and Palwick's sf works in relation to, specifically gender and race. Throughout this project, I will define both race and gender as socially constructed fictions, extraordinarily powerful but not in any sense innate or natural. Both gender and race are fictions, I will contend, but fictions of the most grounded kind, rooted firmly in the material bodies, societies, and histories of the human beings they affect. The two critical theorists whose thought will inform my approach to gender and race most closely are, respectively, Judith Butler and Anthony Appiah.

In defining gender as an artificiality, I will attempt to be mindful, as Butler urges in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, not to regard gender as simply "a cultural construct which is imposed upon the surface of matter," but rather as a deep-seated and constantly adapting set of social impositions made on how the body acts (Butler, *Bodies* 2). The concept that gender--and particularly the category of woman, the dimension of gender that often stands at the center of discussions involving the term--is socially shaped on a fundamental level is articulated by Simone de Beauvoir in her foundational work *The Second Sex*, when she states that "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman," and continues by clarifying that "[n]o biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product" (Beauvoir 283). This emphasis on gender as a powerful but artificial social construction will guide my interpretation of the concept in my work. Butler's thought takes up and expands Beauvoir's
concept of the category of woman as a constructed other, emphasizing that the body itself, and its biological sex, forms "part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs" (Butler, *Bodies* 1). In this understanding of gender, the materiality of a body and the normative assumptions made about what this material experience ought to consist of, such as its adherence to a binary between male and female, and its assumed perpetuation of heterosexuality, form an integral element in the imposition of regulatory codes or "discursive practices" on individuals' performances of gender (Butler, *Bodies* 2, 1).

However, while Butler certainly does insist that there is no such thing as gender in concrete, essential terms, she also takes pains to emphasize that in practical terms the social construct of gender has been imposed upon us so vigorously that in many situations we cannot opt out of it and retain understandable identities, even if its guidelines are frequently destructive (Butler, *Bodies* 6). We must, she suggests, have some way of talking about these things we arbitrarily group together under headings like "sexuality" and "gender," and so, even if these constructions must be constantly identified as intensely problematic, as they "produce as well a domain of unthinkable, abject, unlivable bodies," they are vital to "cultural intelligibility" (Butler, *Bodies* xi, 2). It is in the pursuit of this train of thought surrounding the norms that make one culturally intelligible at any given moment that I see Butler's approach to gender as being particularly sensitive to temporality, to the importance of social norms of gender as continuously transforming rather than monolithic, an attentiveness which, as I have already hinted at above in my initial discussion of the problems inherent in constructing sf texts as removed from their moment of production, will be particularly useful in examining this genre. As suggested by her acknowledgement of gender as an artificial frame of reference, Butler does not see these normative assumptions as foreclosed or irresistible. When describing the process whereby "regulatory norms materialize sex and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration
of those norms," Butler insists that the need for such continual reassurances that patriarchal normativity remains in control of the perception of embodiment indicates the potential for bodies to exercise their own agency by performing their gender in ways contrary to these norms (Butler, *Bodies 2*). Butler sums up her vision of both repressive and liberatory constructions of gender as equally curtailed by shifting social norms in the introduction to *Undoing Gender*, stating that "One only determines one's own sense of gender to the extent that social norms exist that support and enable that act of claiming gender for oneself. One is dependent on this outside to lay claim to what is one's own" (Butler, *Undoing 7*). Her work, in *Bodies That Matter* and later, positions norms of gender and sexuality as constructions not in the sense that they are nonexistent, but in the sense that they are ever-shifting fabrications.

At first glance, Appiah's argument on the subject of race does not contain any claims for the inextricability of the concept from current social structures as does Butler's discussion of gender--quite the opposite. Appiah clearly considers the concept of race somewhat ridiculous, stating that he thinks no such thing exists (Appiah 38). However, his commentary on race, though phrased differently than Butler's on gender, in fact reaches a similar stopping point. Specifically, Appiah distinguishes between "races," which he maintains do not exist, and "racial identity" which people perceive themselves or others to have, showing race to be manufactured by individual and social actors in much the same way gender is (Appiah 38 and 32). While denying the existence of any concrete thing called race, Appiah emphasizes that concepts of racial identity have social effects (Appiah 78). Further, he insists that race is a construct that changes temporally, stating, for instance, that "current ways of talking about race are the residue, the detritus, so to speak, of earlier ways of thinking about race" (Appiah 38). In making this distinction Appiah's method is, again, similar to Butler's, and perhaps refines it by further arguing that changes also take place locationally, contingent on the circumstances of the person
defining race (Appiah 33-34). His vision of social constructions as variegated is more individual, focused on the assertion that "what people can do depends on what concepts they have available to them" (Appiah 78). For example, he draws attention to the manner in which perception of one's race can shift when one travels, and to instances in which people may choose, based on individual concerns, to declare their racial identity a certain way--as, for instance, in Appiah's hypothetical example of a person who identifies as African-American despite bearing many of the phenotypical markers associated with whiteness, in order to assert solidarity with some members of their "mixed-race" family and mark their distance from others (Appiah 31). Yet despite this more precise grassroots focus, Appiah does certainly emphasize the importance of society-wide temporal shifts in norms and attitudes, as in his reference to the "great intellectual chasm which opens up with increasing speed through the nineteenth century," a chasm that affects normative social concepts such as race via a readjusted understanding of the biological sciences (Appiah 49). In short, despite their differences, Butler and Appiah's views of constructions of gender and race both rely not only on the artificiality but also on the contingency of these constructions, on their subjection to time. Both recognize that setting up gender and race as monolithic constructs that never change but only ossify constitutes, in Diana Fuss' words, "[buying] into essentialism in the very act of making the charge" of essentialism (Fuss 21).

In keeping with his grounded approach, Appiah's conception of the fiction of race highlights its political deployment, both as a means of excluding certain groups from social power and as a form of solidarity. He of course deplores the former, but while he acknowledges the latter's usefulness he is also cautious of it, recognizing that claiming identity via normative categories can lead to circumscription. Just as Butler writes of social norms acting as frames of reference for how one can claim one's gender, so Appiah's approach to race defines it as one of
"a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society" from which "[w]e make up selves" (Appiah 96). "We do make choices" regarding our identities, he asserts, "but we don't determine the options among which we choose" (Appiah 96). He considers that, while racial identities are important as a response to racism, "if we are to move beyond racism we shall have, in the end, to move beyond current racial identities" (Appiah 32). One of Appiah's most compelling examples of why imagining beyond current racial categories in the way he advocates is and will continue to be necessary comes when he turns to an anatomy of the ways in which repudiation of one trope may lead to the embracing of another, or the social perception that such an embracing has taken place. In the context of pointing out the potential reductions undertaken by the need to make cohesive demands in identity politics, he invokes a comparison of problematic tropes, stating that "If I had to choose between Uncle Tom" (the mild-mannered, accommodating African-American servant in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel Uncle Tom's Cabin) "and black power, I would, of course, choose the latter. But I would like not to have to choose. I would like other options" (Appiah 99). Tellingly, neither of the works I will focus on as emblematic of the movement against stereotyping in sf attempts to imagine race completely out of existence, indicating that these texts and the science-fictional possibilities they ask their readers to confront remain very consciously grounded in their moments of production.

Appiah's approach, then, is more grounded in the lives of the (sometimes hypothetical) individuals he discusses than is Butler's. However, I must now qualify my description of Butler's method as less precise. In the opening moments of Bodies That Matter, Butler refers to the concept of sex so integral to her reading of gender performativity as a "construct which is forcibly materialized through time," and while this statement certainly applies on a broad scale to the evolving nature of norms and stereotypes of gender, nested within this broader application is an implicit focus on time as experienced by the individual body as its sexuality is interpellated
into societal gender norms (Butler, *Bodies*) 1. Where Butler expresses concern for the impact an
individual's sociocultural context has on that individual's lived experience through her theoretical
explanation of the harm these constructions do, Appiah uses philosophical micro-stories to
illustrate the effects these contexts have. While my focus on science fictional narrative and texts'
engagement with the norms of their day via the vehicle of story is aesthetically drawn to the
latter approach, I will draw on both to buttress the readings that follow.

With the theoretical foundation of my reading established, I will now briefly examine the
definition and history of the commercial sf field, with a focus on this genre's relationships,
declared and otherwise, with contemporary social norms of gender and race. Science fiction has
multifarious influences and branches, making it extraordinarily difficult to define. Roberts says
of sf that it is a form of imaginative literature that is "predicated on some substantive difference
or differences" between the world of the text and the reader's reality, but with the significant
caveat that, for the work to be meaningfully science fictional, this difference "requires material,
physical rationalization, rather than a supernatural or arbitrary one" (Roberts 4, 5). Darko Suvin,
one of the foundational scholars of sf criticism, describes sf as a "literature of estrangement,"
introducing the term "novum" to describe an sf text's "point of difference" from the realistic -- a
term that has become standard vocabulary in sf scholarship (Roberts 6-7). Sf, in short, is
generally thought of as concerned with speculation grounded in rigorous extrapolation.

Beyond this general definition, it is important to examine the process that shaped sf as a
market category in order to provide context for the field's representations of otherness. However,
this overview comes with the caveat that I will of necessity focus entirely on the development of
sf in the North American market for which my focus texts are written. This is a significant
restriction. As Nnedi Okorafor has noted, North America, while an influential market for sf, is
not the world's largest. That largest market internationally is China, with the most popular
Chinese sf magazine boasting, at the height of its popularity in around 2009, a number of subscribers very roughly ten times that of the most popular current North American magazines, which have seen a significant downturn in recent decades with the growth of the book market (Okorafor, *Writers* 179).

In his *Science Fiction*, Roberts summarizes three potential starting points for the genre's history. The first of these marks the beginning of science fiction with the advent of the heliocentric and materialist vision of the cosmos, and, textually, with early lunar romances by authors such as the seventeenth-century writer Cyrano de Bergerac, and with utopias such as Margaret Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1668) (Roberts 38-40). The second takes Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) as a foundational text, and asserts that "modern sf was born out of, and presently has much in common with, the subgenre of gothic fiction" (Roberts 42). These first two histories exemplify many of the most complex component parts the sf field would ultimately incorporate. The first history informs us that the literary forms that would so influence the shape of sf were already drawing upon such inherently timely techniques as satire to comment on their moments of production--and sometimes, as in Cavendish's work, doing so in explicitly proto-feminist ways (Khanna 25).

Even more crucially, the arguments for *Frankenstein* and works like it as science fictional reveal the encounter with perceived otherness "in material form" as a concern built into the fundamentals which grow to form the sf genre (Roberts 45). The third history Roberts proposes dates the genre from its conscious construction by editor Hugo Gernsback, who founded *Amazing Stories*, the first pulp magazine consciously calling itself a magazine of "scientifiction" (quickly adjusted to "science fiction") in 1926 (Stableford 31, Roberts 51). Both Gernsback and John W. Campbell, the second major editor of sf pulps, believed sf should be explicitly instructive, and should present science and the future in a positive light (Roberts 51-52). Patrick
Parrinder has identified this early period as a crucial stage in "prophetic science fiction,"
describing the field as "a genre shaped by writers who are almost missionaries for science, and
whose fiction proclaims that it has something to divulge about the future" (Parrinder 25). Indeed,
Gernsback went so far as to explicitly call for "prophetic vision" in science fiction writing
(Attebery, *Magazine* 32). Much of the pulp material that forms the first result of this explicit
declaration of science fiction as a form consists of, as Roberts puts it, "kinetic, fast-paced and
exciting tales that are also clumsily written" and "hurried in conception" (Roberts 52). Beyond
the generalizations that can be made (and there are, of course, numerous exceptions) about the
rudimentary nature of the writing in the sf pulps, Edward James states that "the American Pulps
may have bequeathed a largely unfortunate heritage to SF in the second half of the twentieth
century," due largely to "their concentration on action not thought, on power rather than
responsibility, on aggression not introspection, on wish-fulfillment not reality" (James qtd. in
Roberts 52). The simplistic nature of much of this early pulp writing relegates the satirical
criticism and sympathetic interest in the other so notable in the precursors to genre sf that make
up Roberts' first two histories of the field to a subordinate position. Yet it is the pulp magazines
explicitly marketed as purveying science fiction that construct the broad framework within which
these more complex elements can eventually return and be presented as things which the genre
of science fiction, specifically, can do (Roberts 56). Given my focus on sf as a specific genre, I
will adhere to this last, shortest history.

As the originators of science fiction as a specific genre in the North American market, the
pulp magazines of the 1920s and 1930s act as a first litmus test for the genre's engagement with
otherness. While there are certainly exceptions to be found within this large body of work, on the
whole they acquit themselves terribly. Roberts notes a tendency in the early pulps toward
"demonizations of otherness" (Roberts 52). As a "nicely representative" example of these
caricatured portrayals, Roberts draws on a remarkably putrid theatrical blurb from a 1931 edition of the popular sf magazine *Astounding* cited by the critics John Clute and Peter Nicholls in their *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, which runs: "From Earth & Sub-Venus Converge a Titanic Offensive of Justice Upon the Unspeakable Man-Things of Torg" (Clute and Nicholls qtd. in Roberts 52). He then goes on to highlight the often lurid quality of the cover images on the pulps, which he describes as often featuring "men in spacesuits and women in less complete clothing being menaced by insectile, ape-like, or otherwise monstrous aliens" (Roberts 52). John Rieder, meanwhile, has identified writing from the lost race fiction of the 1890s to acclaimed sf author Isaac Asimov's early pulp work as perpetuating colonial storytelling patterns, frequently involving the formation of a bond between white, colonizing explorers and a "good native, who looks and thinks the way they do" against (inevitably darker-skinned) foes within the indigenous society of the land being explored, thus transforming "invasion and conquest" into "alliance and rescue" (Rieder 41-42). While these stories may often be exciting, and may posit technological or social developments that are in many ways genuinely thought-provoking, their depictions of the feminine and the racialized alien frequently demonstrate a remarkable poverty of imagination on the part of the "literature of ideas," reinforcing the retrograde stereotypes of their moments of production rather than introducing new possibilities as is supposedly sf's mission.

Too often sf criticism dismisses this pulp material as embarrassingly ridiculous in an atemporal way, rather than acknowledging its affirmation of simplistic, aggressive constructions of otherness. For instance, in his discussion of science-fantasy, Brian Attebery presents popular pulp author Edgar Rice Burroughs and his planetary adventures beginning with *A Princess of Mars* as a kind of unintentional bad joke incapable of internal consistency, stating that Burroughs' "disregard of fact led him to commit scenes of hilarity no less enjoyable for being unintentional" (Attebery, *Strategies* 112). A brief glance at the othering tactics employed by this
specific text may act as a helpful—if generalizing—illustration of the pulps' demonization of
difference. *A Princess of Mars* was first published in novel form in 1917 (though it had been
serialized previously). Set during the late nineteenth century, it tells the story of former
confederate American soldier John Carter's accidental transportation to Mars, his adventures
there among the planet's warlike people, and his eventual marriage to a Martian princess. Though
ostensibly a story filled with improbable people and incidents, Burroughs' tale relies on the same
methods of stereotyping Stuart Hall has described as being commonly deployed by popular
media in the portrayal of black subjects in his "The Spectacle of the Other." For example, both
indigenous people and Burroughs' supposedly alien "green Martians" are reduced to caricatures
valuing only violence. During Carter's brief encounter with indigenous North Americans at the
novel's beginning, the text refers to his indigenous adversaries as "savages" numerous times,
describing them as delighting in the capture of white men "for the fiendish pleasure of the
torture" (Burroughs). The green men of Mars, meanwhile, are portrayed as similarly "hideous
and bloodthirsty," with "atrophied" sentiments, desiring only to do war (Burroughs). The
representations of the indigenous North Americans and the fantastical Martians are, in Hall's
terms, both "reduced to their essence," to their supposed capacity for cruelty and violence, much
as the representations of black men and women Hall discusses are frequently reduced to an
imagined all-consuming sexuality (Hall 245, 230). More, both represented groups are reduced,
despite science fiction's claim to be the literature of imagination, in precisely the same manner,
using precisely the same type of condemnatory terminology to paint the text's "alien" beings as
merely another version of the already-imaginary stereotypical indigenous people. The portrayal
of Sola, the one kindly character Carter encounters among the green Martians, only reinforces
this naturalization, as she is explicitly declared to be "an exception," "an atavism" (Burroughs).
The sweeping generalizations often made about the green Martians, such as the statement that
they are "without high intellectual development," clearly demonstrate this reductionist
naturalization, and the degree to which such depictions mirror those of real-world indigenous
groups in the same novel is indicative of the text's grounding in the racist stereotypes of its age
(Burroughs). Attebery positions Burroughs' text as something wholly unanchored from its
moment, and this is just not the case. The early sf pulps of which Burroughs' work is
representative, though frequently energetic and inventive, often present only lazy reiterations of
the most retrograde stereotypes available in their depictions of otherness, working counter to the
supposedly inherent imaginative qualities of their genre to support, rather than debunk, the
norms of their day.

Well-known pulp writers such as Burroughs hardly wrote alone, and in the matter of
American pulp era sf's approach to the other are representative of a larger culture of exclusion.
As gatekeepers adjudicating not only quality but also content, editors were vested with a great
deal of power to, in many cases, reinforce the norms of this culture. For instance, though his is
another individual case, the attitudes displayed by the editor John W. Campbell, whose tastes and
opinions dominated the field for well over a decade, reveal much about the willingness of the
pulp scene to assert whiteness as a normative standard. Campbell repeatedly put forward overtly
white-supremacist views in his editorials, claiming that "the white race has a higher allocation of
intelligence and ability compared to that of the black race on a distribution curve" (Lavender
134). Such views proved effective in limiting the degree to which African-American writers
could work in the pulps so central to the field's popularity: According to Isiah Lavender only one
African-American pulp science fiction author working in the 1930s, George Schuyler, has been
definitely identified, though as Samuel R. Delany has noted several black authors published
important proto-sf texts prior to the genre's codification as such, and there is no real way of
knowing that numerous pulp era writers who communicated with their editors only by letter were
not African-American (or indeed Asian or Hispanic, for example) (Lavender 33, Delany). Even with Delany's important qualifications taken into account, that an entire field of popular writing, however young, could contain only one verifiably African-American practitioner remains telling. As shaped by figures like Campbell, the pulp era's adherence to racialized discourse, both in the fiction produced and the authors producing it, seems to have been almost complete.

The genre's relationship with women, as authors, readers, and characters, throughout the magazine era is, however, more complex. Jane L. Donawerth has dispelled the common misconception that women writers were absent from the sf pulps, citing the work of numerous authors including Clare Winger Harris, Sophie Wenzel Ellis, and Lilith Lorraine, while also highlighting tendencies in women's writing in this field such as an empathy for the alien, a trait that has carried through much feminist science fiction to be expressed in a complicated but positive way in the texts I will study closely (Donawerth 137-8). The inclusion of women as writers and characters in the supposedly rigorous and rational genre of sf was, however, never uncontested during this period. In her examination of the beginnings of science fiction feminisms in the pulps, Helen Merrick is careful, as Donawerth has been, to correct the assumption that women did not write sf during this period or participate in debates, particularly regarding their own right to inclusion in the field. However, she also illustrates the resistance they faced, citing, as examples of the normative assumptions about female intelligence embedded in sf culture, a letter from one fan declaring that "[a] woman's place is not in anything scientific," and an editorial that constructs women readers of sf as exceptionally imaginative, rather than scientifically interested in the way their male counterparts were presumed to be (Merrick, Secret 34, 40). Merrick also notes a tendency, in debates about the inclusion of women during the magazine era, for male participants in the debate to equate the participation of women as writers and characters with the intrusion of sexuality into the sf field (Merrick, Secret 37). Even if their
works could be published, and women could be represented within those works, women writers often faced restrictions. Donawerth, for instance, suggests that early women writers of sf were limited "by their assumptions about literary form," specifically the inherent masculinity of the protagonist in sf stories, as, while women in these texts were often problem-solvers in ways uncommon in men's pulp writing, they were almost never narrators or protagonists, and were frequently depicted as dependent on men at critical moments (Donawerth 145). In the realm of authorship rather than portrayal, meanwhile, Merrick draws attention to attempts made by editors to conceal the gender of C. L. Moore, the most prominent of the early woman pulp sf writers—and an author whose story "No Woman Born" anticipates the works of writers like Palwick by questioning the need for independent human consciousness to be housed in a human body, presenting a cyborg being who, as Hollinger writes, "questions the distinction between being a woman and performing femininity" (Hollinger 127). Moore's talent was readily acknowledged, but the fact that this talent belonged to a woman was systematically obscured (Merrick, Secret 52). Campbell's assumptions are once again indicative of the state of the field, despite the numerous contributions women did certainly manage to make. Campbell explicitly assumed that his core readership was gendered male, believing them to constitute a group of "technically trained, mature men" whose grasp on the rules of science granted them a certain implicit superiority (Campbell qtd. in Attebery, Magazine 37-38). Though sf was marginally more flexible in its inclusion of those the white male elite considered gendered others than of racial others, as white female writers such as Moore and Harris did take strides toward incorporating women's subjectivities and interpretations of the field into sf in ways African-American authors could not, the overwhelming impression of the early years of these literatures of imagination is of fields very ready to reflect the normative assumptions of their day.
Science fiction has continued to develop in both popularity and subject matter as it has moved away from the pulps and into the book market. John Huntington notes an increase in sf’s intrusion into popular consciousness in the 1960s due to the popularity of individual texts such as Robert Heinlein’s *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) and Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965), which offered more sociological, less technophilic speculation (Huntington qtd. in Roberts 61). However, women and non-white writers and characters remained marginalized to a degree. Despite the reaction against the traditions of Campbellian pulp sf, and the fact that, according to Merrick, feminist critiques of the representation of women had at least established themselves as a part of the conversation in the science fiction community that could not be wholly ignored by the early 1970s, male commentators still reacted with a degree of "defensiveness," epitomized by the resistance to the critiques mounted by feminist authors and critics such as Joanna Russ (Merrick, *Secret* 58-60). These defensive reactions to feminist criticism of the portrayal of women in sf maintained that, in the words of writer Powell Anderson, "women simply are not relevant to much sf," hinting at the continuation of the argument promulgated in the editorial letter columns of the 1930s conflating the feminine with sexuality, emotionality, and the body, and demonstrating the degree to which sf remained anchored by a strong core of technophilic masculinity in the 1960s and 1970s (Anderson qtd. in Merrick, *Secret* 59). Particularly in the case of the representation of writers of colour, this marginalization continues to the present day, as Lavender notes when he calls attention to sf culture's tendency to take one or two black sf writers--often Octavia E. Butler and Samuel R. Delany--as representative of the field and abandon the rest (Lavender 81). Indeed, in some cases the mechanisms of sf storytelling and culture, beyond simply not enabling engagement with alterity, have been deployed in a specific attempt to mask such engagement, as illustrated by Octavia Butler's recollection that she was once asked by an editor to remove black characters from a story and "use an alien instead and get
rid of all this business and all these people that we don't want to deal with" (Butler qtd. in Lavender 34). A certain construction of whiteness and maleness as default assumptions, in both the genre's participants and its portrayals, has continued to be common in sf.

While this history of the sf genre's tendency to exclude writers and stereotype characters based on race and gender is important to acknowledge, the closing section of this chapter will map the increasingly strong resistance to this history of stereotyping in women's sf writing. In spite of the continued resistance I have just been discussing, Merrick states that by the 1960s women's contributions began to complicate the portrayals and voices possible in science fiction, and Hollinger identifies the 1970s as a period that built on the foundations laid by women sf writers as far back as the pulp era to continue this trend (Merrick, Gender 246, Hollinger 128).

For instance, many of the short stories written by James Tiptree Jr., (the pseudonym Alice B. Sheldon maintained for years) throughout the 1960s and 1970s adopt the hypermasculine voice common to science fiction--the sort of voice and tradition that Donawerth has noted caused women pulp writers such difficulty when attempting to imagine a place for a feminine narrator in sf--for the purpose of critique. In "The Women Men Don't See," for example, the male narrator is baffled by the decision of the two women he is travelling with to depart the world in the company of aliens, unable to understand, in Roberts' words, that they "are as happy to live in the chinks of the world machine of an alien spacecraft as in the interstices of a male-dominated society" (Roberts 77). Tiptree did not appear in public, and "his" use of so "male" a narrative voice sparked illustrative debates in the sf community about what constituted "masculine" and "feminine" writing. The prominent sf author Robert Silverberg, for instance, initially dismissed the suggestion that Tiptree could possibly be a woman as ridiculous, claiming that her writing contains "something ineluctably masculine"--though his later retraction, that "she fooled me beautifully, ... and called into question the entire notion of what is masculine or feminine in
fiction," acknowledges the effectiveness of Tiptree's experiment (Silverberg qtd. in Roberts 77). C. J. Cherryh, a prolific author of intricate science-fictional future history series, destabilizes patriarchy from another direction, by portraying women as having the capacity for abusive, self-destructive acts of violence to the same degree as men, one of the most notable examples from her prolific catalogue being Ariane Emory, the enormously gifted but abusive head scientist who looms over the novel Cyteen (1988). While authors such as Tiptree and Cherryh twist and reappropriate performances of gender long considered the province of masculinity, other authors attack entrenched patterns of gender from alternate directions during this period: In a literary experiment the author herself has problematized in retrospect as "a safe trip into androgyny and back, from a conventionally male viewpoint," but which has still proved compelling for many readers, Ursula K. Le Guin's novel The Left Hand of Darkness (1969) attempts to imagine a society of androgynous humans in which the binary categories associated with maleness and femaleness do not exist at all, while Joanna Russ' "formally experimental deconstruction of female subjectivity in The Female Man" (1975) presents the reader with fragmentary, sometimes contradictory female characters often driven by a rage that is never apologized for (Le Guin, Language 171, Hollinger 128). These few examples do not so much as scratch the surface of the eruption of thought-provoking work done by women in sf in the latter half of the twentieth century, but they do, I hope, provide a contextual glimpse at the widely varying ways in which feminist science fiction has worked to imagine women-centric patterns for stories within this frequently masculine narrative realm.

Consideration of race and racialization has, admittedly, a shorter and less crowded history in sf narratives than does feminist work. I have already discussed the pulp era's policing of racial boundaries, which extraordinarily reduced African-American expression through science fiction to a single recorded author. Even in more recent years, Leonard notes that the field of sf
continues to be dominated by white writers, and that sf addressing racialization remains uncommon, both in general and in comparison to sf addressing other issues of representation such as gender (Leonard, *Race* 253). However, "little progress" is not "no progress." Confronting stereotypical portrayals and narratives of racialization is another front on which sf began to push outward during the 1970s and 1980s, and, along with male "writers of colour" such as Samuel R. Delany, who is often cited as a key writer in the establishment of sf's ability to examine racialization in studies of the field, various narratives by women played important roles in this expansion (Leonard, *Race* 253, Lavender 20). Octavia E. Butler, who, having begun her career in the mid-1970s, was the first African-American woman to make a living as a writer of science fiction specifically, has long been considered to be at the forefront of this expansion of sf's canvas; Okorafor, for instance, considers it impossible to discuss "writers of colour" in any field of imaginative fiction without acknowledging Butler's influence (Merrick, *Gender* 249, Okorafor, *Writers* 181). In her *Lilith's Brood* series (1987-89), Butler reappraises processes of racialization through the lens of a kindly alien invasion. Butler confronts her human characters with the oankali, a species who take continual genetic mixing and mutation as a way of being. Having rescued a small number of humans from a nuclear disaster that renders Earth uninhabitable for many years, the oankali supervise the repopulation of the Earth while intertwining themselves with human society and reproduction in ways the humans cannot help but find to be impositions, even though the aliens are apparently benevolent, necessitating interspecies communication and acceptance of difference. Roberts points out that one of the story's central conflicts comes in the form of the human characters’ struggle to accept the never-ending difference and hybridity that their oankali saviours bring (Roberts 108). However, Lavender complicates this argument by drawing attention to the dearth of choices the oankali generally give their human charges in the positive but distinctly unequal partnership Butler envisions. He
summarizes the effect of *Lilith's Brood* by stating that "Butler contests racial constructions both directly" (through confronting humans with continual genetic alterity) "and indirectly by crafting a metaslavery narrative that is clearly linked to the history of slavery through its alien colonization" (Lavender 74). The *Lilith's Brood* books seek to celebrate difference as a necessary and positive, if highly stressful, thing, rather than abolishing it. Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber*, which I will discuss in my following chapters, takes up and pursues this vision of the encounter with the alien as a positive experience, but one fraught with a sometimes irreconcilable difference, and also with a colonial relationship--albeit with humans as the colonizers.

As central as Butler is to sf's erosion of racializing stereotypes, she is hardly a lone monolith. Lavender also notes stronger movements in the work of writers in the last decade to challenge racialized stereotypes both in the realm of authorship and in narratives themselves. Sheree R. Thomas' *Dark Matter* anthologies (2000 and 2004) of both essays and short fiction by writers "from the African diaspora" work to demonstrate that while "these works are seemingly invisible to readers, [they] yet have an indisputable pull on the genre" (Lavender 32). One of the authors whose work I will examine closely, Nalo Hopkinson, who Lavender identifies as "one of the most celebrated in a new generation of black sf writers," is also central to the increasing interest in race in sf (Lavender 35). This tentative movement validates Leonard's observation that the genre may be "moving towards an opening up of its past insularity" in a manner similar to the shift that opened a path for sf to begin exploring gender and demanding an expansion of the ways women could signify in genre narratives in the 1970s (Leonard, *Race* 261).

While, I hope, not eliding earlier significant contributions by women writers as pointed out by scholars like Merrick and Donawerth, I have presented sf literature as a genre that has, since the late 1960s and early 1970s, begun to express its power to imagine ways of living, thinking, and being embodied that diverge from the white male middle-class norm in more overt
and complex feminist terms. I have also presented this narrative genre as having pursued a similarly overt examination of racialization somewhat less enthusiastically, but with growing depth in the first decade of the twenty-first century. It is hardly surprising, then, as I move into the brief overview of the academic literature on race and gender in science fiction that will end my contextual establishment of this field, that a similar imbalance of interest can be found in the genre's scholarship. Feminism is taken up in studies of sf much earlier than anti-racist discourse.

According to James Gunn, serious academic study of science fiction began--some isolated early projects aside--with the establishment of *Extrapolation*, the first journal in the field, in 1959, and the publication of the first scholarly monographs in the 1960s (Gunn xvii-xviii). While Gunn goes on to point out that even by the beginning of the 1970s sf studies found itself "lacking almost all the tools of scholarship" in the form of histories of the field and theoretical approaches, scholars swiftly began filling this void with theorized criticism of sf throughout the 1970s (Gunn xvi, Broderick 61). As I have noted above, the community of editors and readers surrounding early sf valued what Gernsback called "prophetic vision" very highly, and the selection of "Extrapolation" as the title for one of the academic community's first major contributions to the sf conversation reinforces this emphasis on rigorous exploration of the future. However, as Parrinder outlines in his "Science Fiction: Metaphor, Myth, or Prophecy?," a shift toward recognizing sf as metaphorical rather than prophetic took place throughout the 1960s, alongside the first growth of sf into the academy (Parrinder 27-8). Thus, the scholarly culture of science fiction studies has been immersed almost from its inception in views of this genre as a timely literature, rather than one with the power to look ahead. Suvin's theory of sf as a "literature of estrangement" distinguished from reality by its novum (or "nova" if plural) might not seem to rely heavily on metaphor, but other crucial commentators on the field, such as Robert Scholes and Damien Broderick, have adopted more overtly metaphorical approaches than
Suvin, though his concept of the novum has continued to be central to the critical understanding of sf (Roberts 10-14). However, Suvin's influential concept of the novum, and of sf as a "literature of estrangement," are themselves metaphorical, insofar as the estrangement he sees sf as offering acts to defamiliarize the world in which that text is produced, in order that we might see it more clearly. I do not wish to imply that all or most sf criticism is interested in the genre's metaphorical capacity to the exclusion of all else. There is, however, as Roberts puts it, broad consensus on "a sense of sf as a symbolist genre, one where the novum acts as symbolic manifestation of something that connects it specifically with the world we live in," envisioning this literature as inherently of its moment (Roberts 14).

The trend toward this metaphorical understanding of sf was led not only by scholars, but also by fiction writers such as Le Guin, who declares in her introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness* that sf novelists are not concerned with the future, but with "what the weather is now" (Le Guin, *Left Hand* ii). She goes on to elaborate the argument for the worlds imagined by sf texts as metaphors for their moments of production, stating: "This book is not about the future. ... Yes, indeed the people in it are androgynous, but that doesn't mean that I'm predicting that in a millennium or so we will all be androgynous, or announcing that I think we damned well ought to be androgynous. I'm merely observing, in the peculiar, devious, and thought-experimental manner proper to science fiction, that if you look at us at certain odd times of day in certain weathers, we already are. I am not predicting, or prescribing. I am describing" (Le Guin, *Left Hand* v). While the years since, as novelist and critic Brian Aldiss puts it, "sf discovered the present," have seen this metaphorical approach become the default when discussing the genre, and I personally find it a useful and appealing perspective, I feel it is worthwhile to ask whether it is always the only reasonable way to talk about science fiction. Might the long-discounted view of sf as a kind of extrapolation or hazy prophecy still have some value, at least in a
qualified form? More, are the prophetic approach and the metaphorical approach necessarily mutually exclusive? I will be investigating these questions periodically throughout my analysis, meshing the analysis of sf as metaphor and sf as prophecy in a way previous scholarship has not by troubling the conception of sf as strictly metaphorical as I explore Palwick's and Hopkinson's novels as works that are shaped by their moments of production, but which also attempt to forecast the possible consequences if these norms are carried forward into the future in an extrapolative way.

Though struggles for definitions often dominate the conversation in science fiction scholarship, the study of the field has also developed a robust body of texts treating issues of representation. Feminist and, to a lesser extent, anti-racist reevaluations have formed the backbone of these representational studies. Women had been asserting their relevance as commentators in the letter columns of science fiction magazines since the 1920s and 1930s, but Merrick identifies Joanna Russ' article "The Image of Women in Science Fiction" (1970) as "the founding text of feminist sf criticism" (Merrick, Secret 106). In this piece, Russ calls science fiction to account for its frequent assumption of a glorified version of the middle-class male as normative, declaring that "[s]cience fiction writers," with one of their declared purposes being the inventive imagination of other forms and ways of life, "have no business employing stereotypes [of masculinity and femininity], let alone swallowing them goggle-eyed" (Russ qtd. in Merrick, Secret 108). Both in her references to "stereotypes" in this 1970 piece, and in a later essay in which she compares Tiptree's position and approach in the writing of a story focused on a "battle of the sexes" to those of men writing similar but less nuanced fiction, Russ takes the sociocultural location of the works she discusses as significant, highlighting another important dimension of the trend toward understanding sf as a timely, metaphorical literature, specifically the recognition that the perspective an author brings to their work shapes the kinds of thought
experiments or extrapolations of which they are capable (Russ 56). The ensuing decades have seen feminist science fiction criticism become increasingly active. This evolution has included both examinations of sf texts through a variety of feminist lenses, such as Marleen S. Barr's *Alien to Femininity* (1987) and the same author's edited anthology *Future Females* (1981), and feminist reclamation of women's contributions to the genre's early history, as in Donawerth's efforts in her contribution to *Worlds of Difference* (1994) and elsewhere to emphasize women's writing in the pulps. Both these strands of criticism have continued strongly into the twenty-first century, with texts such as Barr's second anthology *Future Females: The Next Generation* (2000) presenting feminist essays addressing more recent texts, and work such as Justine Larbalastier's *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction* (2002), Lisa Yaszek's *Galactic Suburbia: Recovering Women's Science Fiction* (2008), and Merrick's *The Secret Feminist Cabal: A Cultural History of Science Fiction Feminisms* (2009) continuing the work of historical reclamation and documentation of the field in greater depth.

Anti-racist sf criticism has a much shorter history. Leonard's observation that sf has "so far paid very little attention to the treatment of issues relating to race and ethnicity" applies to the genre's scholarship as well as its fiction (Leonard, *Race* 253). Lavender identifies the concept of afrofuturism, defined in 1993 by Mark Dery as "African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically-enhanced future," as the first spur to discussions of race in North American sf (Dery qtd. in Lavender 37). More recently, in *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia* (2003), De Witt Douglas Kilgore argues for the potential of the sciences explored by technologically-focused sf, and particularly space flight, to create a more equal, anti-racist, utopian society (Lavender 39). In practice, Lavender finds both these theories profoundly unsatisfactory for treating race in sf specifically, with afrofuturism too broad, seeking to form "its own aesthetic register," and astrofuturism much too narrow (Lavender 38-39).
However, as Lavender notes, these general theories have provided starting points for thinking about sf's interaction with race, both as perpetuator and demolisher of racist tropes. This foundation has begun to bear fruit in collections such as Leonard's *Into Darkness Peering: Race and Color in the Fantastic* (1997), and in sustained examinations of the subject such as Lavender's own *Race in American Science Fiction* (2011). As is the case in the genre's feminist scholarship, much of this more recent anti-racist commentary is inextricably bound up with the notion that sf reflects the social norms of its moment of production. Leonard provides a blunt but effective example of this approach in her comparison of Butler's *Kindred* and Orson Scott Card's *Pastwatch*, both time travel texts that imagine encounters with slavery in the Americas, locating the authors sociopolitically, stating in reference to the relative happiness of Card's novel's conclusion that "it is easier to be hopeful about an end to oppression if one is not part of an oppressed group" (as Card is not and Butler, as an African-American woman, is) (Leonard, *Race* 261). Anti-racist sf criticism is thoroughly focused on locating texts in the moments and social circumstances they speak to and from.

Gender and race--and more specifically femininity and blackness in the North American context the texts I examine are produced within--remain, of course, sites of continuing discrimination and oppression in the moment in which I write. Indeed, my work on this project has been bracketed by two horrific gun crimes in the United States that, at risk of minimizing the specific tragedies surrounding each event, might be taken as emblematic of the ways these forms of continuing oppression remain not just active in some nebulous, general sense, but urgent concerns with the power to cause extreme harm. The first of these events, the shooting of unarmed black teenager Trayvon Martin by the "mixed race" white and hispanic George Zimmerman, took place in February of 2012. While it is impossible to say definitively whether Zimmerman's actions were racially motivated, the charged conversation that has grown around...
the incident illustrates the inevitable relevance of race to the public's interpretation of the issue. Laurie Penny, writing for *The New Statesman*, summarizes the ways in which Martin's image has been taken up as an icon in protests against systematic abuses directed specifically at African-Americans, stating that his likeness has been "carried on placards across the US as a symbol of the structural violence perpetrated against black men by police and state and security personnel" (Penny). The adoption of Martin's killing as such a representative case highlights the ways in which the US justice system is frequently open to racial prejudice. In a piece for the *Christian Science Monitor*, Patrik Jonsson points out that "[t]he Zimmerman verdict"--he was found not guilty in July 2013--"fit into a long narrative of juries refusing to convict white vigilantes on serious charges ... for violence against black men" (Johnson). Law professor Darren Hutchinson elaborates on this pattern by calling attention to the racialized deployment of the "stand-your-ground" laws successfully appealed to in Zimmerman's defence, stating that it is "harder for black defendants to assert stand-your-ground defence if the victim is white, and easier for whites to raise a stand-your-ground defence if the victims are black," suggesting that it is "really easy for juries to accept that whites had to defend themselves against persons of colour" (Hutchinson qtd. in Johnson). Meanwhile, the second of these two incidents, the killing spree perpetrated by Elliot Rodger in Isla Vista California on May 23rd, 2014, is only weeks old as I am working towards the conclusion of this project, and thus the context surrounding this crime is less clear. However, in the "repulsive manifesto" Rodger distributed prior to his killing spree, he states it as his explicit intention to conduct a "war on women," to "punish all females for the crime of depriving me of sex," bluntly giving voice to a frequently recurring patriarchal assumption that women will be sexually available to men (Beekman, Rodger qtd. in Beekman). I do not cite these terrible events in order to claim them as in any way representative of everyday reality. Rather, I see these tragedies as eruptions of racism and sexism into a social moment in which these
discriminatory phenomena are often assumed to be on the decline as events that, while extraordinary, are also systematic, as periodic outbursts of racist and sexist prejudices abetted by the maintenance of seemingly everyday retrograde norms of racialization and patriarchy.

These oppressions are infinitely larger than the sf field I am discussing here. However, the manner in which sf is able to defamiliarize the environment it is written in, to reflect that moment back to its readers through a speculative lens, is one I find extremely helpful in my attempts to understand the recurrence of these prejudices. In particular, I find the ways Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* and Palwick's *Shelter* make use of sf apparatus such as the alien and the artificial intelligence in this defamiliarizing, metaphorical fashion, while also projecting retrograde norms of race and gender forward into their imagined futures for the purposes of critique in a more extrapolative way, illuminating as a suggestion of, on the one hand, the damage these norms may continue to do if carried forward into the future, and, on the other, of the sorts of profound shifts in perspective that will be necessary in order to shake loose from these norms, to reflexively value all people as people.

The narratives I will explore are not manifestos on these complex issues of gender and race. Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* tells a science-fictional coming of age story in which the protagonist, Tan-Tan, grows up first on the planet of Toussaint and then on the prison planet of New Half-Way Tree, where she is accidentally sent along with her exiled father. Matters of gender-based and interracial violence manifest themselves in the book overtly in the form of, respectively, the abuse Tan-Tan suffers at the hands of her father Antonio and the horrific treatment the human colonists inflict on the douens, the non-human population of New Half-Way Tree, but the narrative focus remains firmly on Tan-Tan's personal struggles, rather than conducting didactic arguments about these larger matters. *Shelter*, meanwhile, tells the story of two women living in mid-twenty-first century San Francisco, the wealthy Meredith Walford and
the working class Roberta Danton, tracking the ways their lives intersect with one another and with the emerging phenomenon of artificial intelligence. The novel is deeply invested in expanding the boundaries of personhood via an empathetic approach to the question of whether or not intelligent machines can be considered subjects, portraying its artificially intelligent characters as persons in what seems to me a fairly unambiguous fashion--the final section of the novel is subtitled "The Hidden Human," for instance (Palwick 505). This science-fictional attempt to stretch the limits of the "human" drives the text's narrative trajectory, and does not overtly appeal to gender or race. However, throughout my exploration of these texts in the ensuing chapters, I contend that both narratives can be read as critiquing norms of gender and race. This critique is accomplished, I will contend, by presenting the reader with imagined future societies that initially appear relatively prejudice-free and then showing these societies to in fact reiterate norms that allow race and gender-based forms of violence to reoccur, while also, via the novels' science-fictional alien and computerized characters, imagining radically non-normative ways of living, or declining to live, gender and race as a means of revealing the artificiality of the norms surrounding these categories. Having contextualized the sf genre and its approach to race and gender in both fictional and real-world spaces throughout this opening chapter, in the following chapters I will turn to a close analysis of Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts. My second chapter will outline the social context I see these two novels' treatment of gender responding to, and then go on to discuss the ways in which norms of gender and race initially appear to be critiqued in these texts largely through a minimization of their importance, rather than via an acknowledgement of the harm they cause or an exploration of alternate gender performances. However, my third, fourth, and fifth chapters will build on and complicate this initial impression by exploring the productive critique of gender norms I read in these texts more fully. The sixth and final chapter will deepen and complicate my readings of these texts' anti-normative projects
further by investigating the ways in which these texts also critique norms of racialization in
general and colonialism specifically. Throughout this analysis, I hope to make the case that sf
like Hopkinson's and Palwick's novels can, in addition to being entertaining, contribute in a
small, limited way to an understanding of the underlying causes of the often incomprehensibly
violent outbursts of prejudice I have gestured to above, via the extrapolative mapping of
normative trends, and the simultaneous defamiliarization of these norms.
"Feminism fades away": Identifying "Post-feminist" Perpetuations of the Gendered Status Quo in

*Midnight Robber* and *Shelter*

In this second chapter, I will take the first step in my reading of Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* and Palwick's *Shelter* as sf texts that approach gender in productive ways. However, I will begin this reading by focusing on an element of these texts' representations of gender norms that may at first seem distinctly unhelpful, specifically their construction of future human societies that reproduce gender norms, such as the masculine-feminine binary, rather than overturning them. While such reiterations of the status quo in these texts' moments of production might reasonably seem inherently counterproductive as part of science-fictional critique, in fact the depiction of recognizable norms projected into these imagined futures acts as a crucial foundation upon which these novels' moves to trouble the normative can rest. Hopkinson's and Palwick's sf texts critique the restrictive gender norms and persistent male hegemony current in their moments of production at the start of the twenty-first century not by envisioning this hegemony's overthrow in their novels' imagined futures, as do many examples of feminist sf, but by highlighting the restrictiveness and artificiality of the norms that perpetuate the status quo. Only once the persistence of these norms has been highlighted by forecasting their resilience in the future, and the harm such resilience may continue to do, can these texts embark on the metaphorical work of stretching the concept and categories of gender by applying them, or declining to apply them, to imaginative science fictional beings, specifically non-human aliens in *Midnight Robber* and artificial intelligences in *Shelter*.
At the time early in the twenty-first century when Palwick's and Hopkinson's texts are published, Western society finds itself caught in a moment in which we are often told that the long-sought after state of gender equality has now been achieved. Angela McRobbie interprets this frequent insistence as an attempt on the part of hegemonic cultural forces, including the state, to reintrench patriarchal commonplaces such as the primacy of male subjectivity and heteronormativity. A limited degree of elasticity in these norms is offered up in exchange for this reinscription, a meager freedom that expands normative conceptions of masculine and feminine gender identities, rather than overturning them. As McRobbie puts it, "[t]he young woman is offered a notional form of equality, concretized in education and employment, and through participation in consumer culture and civil society, in place of what a reinvented feminist politics might have to offer" (McRobbie 2). Women, she summarizes later, are allowed to step forward as active working, consuming, individual subjects "on condition that feminism," and, crucially, awareness of the norms of gender identity and sexuality that it works to expose as constructions, "fades away" (McRobbie 56). These frequent moves in public discourse to position gender discrimination as a relic of the unenlightened past do not, of course, accurately reflect a sociocultural reality that remains in many ways intensely patriarchal and male-focused. Numerous feminist scholars and activists have anatomized the systematically unequal treatment Western society has historically accorded to men and women, and this institutionalized inequality, while elements of it have been altered or lessened through long struggle, remains very much in force in the moment at which I write, and at which the science fictions I discuss are produced. For example, Adrienne Rich, writing in the mid-1980s, highlights the gendered division of labour that constructs women first and foremost as mothers and nurturers, as well as the privileging of male subjectivity in matters of government and cultural influence, when she states that "the makers and sayers of culture, the namers, have been the sons of the mothers"
(Rich, *Born* 11). Decades later, McRobbie's (2009) survey of public discourse shows this normative vision of divisions of labour to remain in force, though this enforcement now includes shifts to allow for the desirability--but not the normality--of male parenting (McRobbie 80-81). As this example focused on gendered labour illustrates, assumptions may have flexed and shifted in recent decades, but have not fundamentally changed, despite, importantly, often being represented as having done so. In short, despite attempts to paper over the long history of deep-seated gender inequality with the sorts of placating gestures toward achieved equality that McRobbie describes, the norms that govern gender still have the potential, in Judith Butler's words, to "undo one's personhood, undermining the capacity to persevere in a livable life" (Butler, *Undoing* 1). These shifting assertions that seek to reframe genuine progress in feminism's work in recent decades as the completion of that work, when inequality in fact still looms large, illustrate the elasticity of normative conceptions of gender identity, an elasticity I will contend Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* and Palwick's *Shelter* also harness, albeit to ends that, while no more explicitly revolutionary, are ultimately far more liberatory.

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler interprets both gender and sex as culturally constructed, and bound together in this construction (2-3). She further maintains that sexed and gendered identities are so vigorously and insistently constructed as a part of the background noise of the everyday that incorporating some versions of these artificial concepts into the performance of one's identity is almost required to make that identity recognizable, suggesting that sex may be a "fiction," but that it is "one within whose necessities we live, without which life itself would be unthinkable" (Butler, *Bodies* 6). Thus, any text written, just as any life lived, must in some way react within the manifestations of sex and gender normative in its moment, and, as Raewyn Connell points out, in the industrialized Western world from the nineteenth century onward this means the assumption that binary determinations of sex and gender will be instrumental in
constituting personhood (Connell 68). As discussed in my opening chapter's overview of the field, many works of feminist sf respond to norms of sex and gender, such as those surrounding binary gender, by troubling them very overtly, with varying degrees of success. For instance, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* imagines a (supposedly) genderless society, and seeks, according to Le Guin herself, to investigate the extent to which people in the moment of the novel's writing "already are" androgynous (Le Guin, *Left Hand* v). Meanwhile, works such as Joanna Russ' "When It Changed," Joan Slonczewski's *A Door Into Ocean*, and James Tiptree Jr.'s "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" contribute to a tradition of speculative all-female human societies in an attempt to imagine a way past violent male hegemony (Hollinger 128). By contrast, Palwick's and Hopkinson's fictions construct their futures' approaches to gender around the same dynamic ostensibly in legal force within the societies of Western countries at the moment of this writing, but which these societies are in actuality far removed from: a social structure in which a person's gender and sexuality and the way she or he performs them cannot, in theory, curtail that person's opportunities or place them at risk. This does not, however, mean that these texts take the triumphal claims of gender parity McRobbie identifies in public discourse at their word in an uncritical way. Both *Shelter* and *Midnight Robber* often seem wedded to gentle, ostensibly non-threatening versions of the norms current in their moments of production, depicting futures that follow a trajectory similar to that McRobbie describes, in which normative concepts of gender and sexuality, such as the oppositional binary between the masculine and the feminine and the institution of heteronormativity, have stretched further rather than snapping. However, this apparent reification allows the novels to expose the ways these gender norms are constructed as irrelevant and harmless by presenting them in a world made strange, before turning to illustrate the oppressive power these familiar narratives of gender still retain in this unfamiliar setting. Thus, the portrayal of *Midnight Robber's* and *Shelter's* futures as
ostensibly equal sets the stage for a critique of the limitations inherent in a potential future that grows out of the normative binaries in these novels’ moments of production.

As presaged above, the most notable instance in which both these texts adhere to the norms of gender as understood at the time of their writing is their depiction of future human societies that continue to operate based on the conception of gender as a binary between the "masculine" and the "feminine." However, these societies imagine seemingly defanged, nonthreatening versions of this binary. The humans of *Midnight Robber’s* Toussaint are almost all readily categorizable as either male or female, masculine or feminine. Tan-Tan's mother Ione, for instance, is repeatedly described as dressing in a manner that emphasizes a very normative sexualized femininity, a point to which I will return in the following chapter when I consider the retention of patriarchal attitudes in the future of *Midnight Robber’s* Nation Worlds (Hopkinson 31, 54-5). Boundary-blurring practices such as cross-dressing, meanwhile, are positioned as part of the "ecstatic license of Carnival," present, but marked as separate from the everyday (Hopkinson 55). However, there are apparently no limitations on, or judgments regarding, the gendered division of labour on Toussaint, and in particular the work women can do. In the society Hopkinson imagines, women occupy highly physical roles ranging from pedicab runner to martial arts instructor (Hopkinson 4, 40). Admittedly, Tan-Tan's father Antonio, who acts as a focus character in the early portions of the book, voices social disapproval of the pedicab runner in the form of his defence of the tax placed on the runners' insistence on labouring themselves rather than using machines, but this is due to her status as a runner, not as a woman (Hopkinson 8). So removed is the society of Toussaint from the concept of separate gendered spheres of labour that Tan-Tan is shocked at the very idea that humanity's history might contain such norms. When her house computer, or eshu, informs her that "[t]ime was, is only men used to play the robber king mask. ... Men could only do some things, and women could only do others," she
finds herself totally unable to comprehend how such a history might have been shaped (Hopkinson 28-29). In his "The Only Way Out Is Through: Space, Narrative, and Utopia in Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber,*" Eric D. Smith proposes that the colonists' journey from Earth to Toussaint under the auspices of the Marryshow Corporation provides the break with history necessary to give the people of Toussaint the impression that norms and forms of oppression located prior to this break are no longer relevant to them (Smith 140). Smith's argument focuses on representations of colonial and globalizing pressures in Hopkinson's text, using the concept of the gap between humanity's previous history on Earth and the supposedly utopic Toussaint as a step toward discussion of the latter as a "false utopia" that "erases its own history" (Smith 141, 146). However, the "bulwark" he sees this gap between Earth and Toussaint as providing against knowledge of past injustice might just as easily be applied to representations of gender, positioning Tan-Tan's dismay at the suggestion that women's roles have ever been restricted as honest ignorance that the gender binary embraced by her society has, in the past, been vigorously contested and enforced (Smith 140). As I turn from the scene-setting exploration of these novels' presentations of relaxed adherence to current norms of gender to an investigation of the critiques they launch against these norms, we will see this ignorance on the part of Toussaint's citizens providing a vehicle for the re-enactment of the dynamic McRobbie describes, in which a widely-purveyed assumption that gender inequality is no more allows patriarchal values to return.

*Shelter*'s location on Earth in the speculative mid-twenty-first century, rather than across the wide reaches of interstellar space centuries hence where *Midnight Robber* is set, makes a definitive break between the society in which Palwick's text is written and read and the one it depicts, of the kind Smith identifies in Hopkinson's novel, difficult to pinpoint. However, in the particular case of the insistent but relaxed depiction of the masculine feminine binary in the novel, the apparent mass-shift in religious observance in the United States from Christianity to
Gaianism at some time prior to the beginning of Shelter may offer a suitable point of departure. This shift appears to be total, barring isolated references to the "old Christians" and to Christmas, and introduces "Mother Earth" on an equal footing with "Father Cosmos" (Palwick 138, 426, 466-7, 145). Such a marked turn in national religious practice away from male-centric monotheism, and toward a faith that enshrines male and female principles as equal objects of worship (and indeed privileges the "goddess," for Father Cosmos is almost never mentioned by the characters in their day-to-day lives), constitutes a sociocultural version of a novum, Suvin’s term describing the "point of difference" between "the world we recognize around us" and the world an sf text portrays (Roberts 6-7). Palwick’s use of the rise of the Gaia Temple as a novum, then, imagines a future that elevates a "feminine" spiritual entity to a position of cultural primacy, thus presumably minimizing masculinity's power to privilege itself over femininity, while leaving the skeleton of the binary opposition of these two categories in place.

This relaxed maintenance of the masculine-feminine binary results in gentle but insistent forms of reification. For instance, while Dana, Shelter's one minor "intersexed" character, states that "gender's a continuum, and we all travel along it," Shelter's society's conception of this continuum is shown to remain thoroughly dominated by the notion of masculine and feminine poles (Palwick 144). This continued reliance on uncomplicated male and female markers is illustrated by a brief scene during Meredith Walford's time at the Gaia Temple in which Dana appears dressed half in blue and half in pink, two colours frequently, and stereotypically, seen as marking male and female gender respectively (particularly in infants) (Palwick 170). Dana may slip fluidly between the masculine and the feminine, but can always be safely assumed to be locatable somewhere between these two reliable poles. Dana's introduction momentarily hints at a disturbance of the peaceable, elasticized version of binary gender Shelter's future America clings to, as the character admits to occasionally getting irritated when people "use the wrong
pronouns," those that do not correspond to Dana's "gender mood" at a particular moment (Palwick 144). However, while this need to keep up with what Meredith describes as the sometimes "impenetrable" signifiers of Dana's gender moods hints at a more vigorously enforced binary, Dana's long-suffering sigh when admitting to annoyance when people misremember positions "intersexed" status as a matter of personal importance to Dana that other members of the Gaia Temple community will be expected to adjust to and value, rather than a choice for which Dana might fear censure from a prejudiced society (Palwick 149, 144). Meanwhile, all AI or robotic ("bot") characters who are given names in Shelter find themselves branded either "he" or "she," firmly incorporating them--and their potential personhood, which is argued for throughout the novel--into the binary of femininity and masculinity. However, this gendering is portrayed as a convenience, reducing gender to an easy tag, a "figure of speech" (Palwick 317). I will explore the arbitrary nature of this move on the part of Shelter's human characters, and the extent to which this arbitrariness shows gender to be an imposition that may be deeply relevant to humans but is of no significance whatever to the AIs, in greater detail in my fourth chapter. For the moment, it is enough to point out that this attribution of gender pronouns once again furthers a gentle, consequence-free reaffirmation of the masculine-feminine gender binary, marking as it does the presence of a system of constructed gender inculcated into society's model of identity thoroughly enough that capitulating to it makes signifying personhood easier. The shift toward both a male and a female principle in national religion gives the impression of having depoliticized or "unproblematized" appeals to gender binaries in Shelter, as the break from Earth has done in Midnight Robber, without making any fundamental changes in the way such binaries are perceived and composed.

The futures imagined in Palwick's and Hopkinson's texts also elasticize normative concepts of masculinity and femininity while ultimately reifying them in the portrayal of
homosexual relationships. I am aware that addressing the deployment of homosexuality in these novels at this moment conflates sexuality with gender. However, these two concepts are unavoidably bound together, both in the futures imagined by these novels and in theory. For instance, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes the connection between sexuality and gender in terms of the privileging of heteronormativity inherent in any system based on binary gender, stating that "the ultimate definitional appeal in any gender-based analysis must necessarily be to the diacritical frontier between different genders. This necessity gives heterosocial and heterosexual relations a conceptual privilege of incalculable consequence" (Sedgwick 276). Applying Sedgwick's point to the societies imagined in these novels, which continue to value binary gender so highly as an integral part of identity, it becomes clear how inextricably norms of gender and sexuality inhere in and strengthen one another in Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts. Butler reinforces this point, noting that "[g]ender norms operate by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones that are almost always related to the idealization of the heterosexual bond. In this sense, the initiatory performative, ‘it's a girl!’ anticipates the eventual arrival of the sanction, ‘I pronounce you man and wife’” (Butler, Bodies 231-32). In line with this, Palwick and Hopkinson portray their science fictional societies as negotiably, flexibly normative on the matter of homosexuality in ways that match their elastic reinforcement of binary gender. Both Shelter and Midnight Robber portray homosexuality as a rarity in their science fictional landscapes, a deviation from the assumed norm of heterosexual partnership. However, as McRobbie points out, public discourse in our supposedly post-inequality present often emphasizes the tacit "recognition that same sex love carries the full weight of social disapproval, even when officially there are rights and entitlements for gay and lesbian people," and any degree of such censure, which of course ranges widely from the deployment of offensive slurs to physical abuse, is remarkably absent in both these texts.
(McRobbie 118). Indeed, the societies of both texts seem to welcome diverse relationships. On both occasions in Shelter on which homosexual couples introduce themselves as "partners," this status goes entirely unremarked by the characters they are interacting with (Palwick 143, 355). A similar sense that homosexuality is considered entirely unremarkable, but remains a departure from the institutionalized norm of heterosexuality, pervades Midnight Robber. Beata the pedicab runner's references to "my baby father and my [wives]" and the deputy sheriff Claude's relationship with both the male Sheriff One-Eye and the female Aislin the doctor in the settlement of Junjuh on New Half-Way Tree are clearly considered standard practice in a way that, as McRobbie points out, is unlikely at the time of writing (Hopkinson 4, 7, 130, 138).

Meanwhile, the men who plan the Jonkanoo parade in Cockpit County, "life partners and business partners since God was a boy," are beloved pillars of the community (Hopkinson 39). Heteronormativity remains ascendant, but departures from this norm are not threatened or discouraged.

One specific moment in Midnight Robber's opening pages deserves particular attention as an emblem of the quiet, non-belligerent reaffirmation of heterosexuality as the normative standard that characterizes not these texts themselves, but the societies they depict. As the eshu, the artificial intelligence that narrates the novel, describes Tan-Tan in mythic, superlative terms, it states that "she leave a trail of sad lonely men--and women too, oui?--who would weep for days if you only make the mistake and say the words "brown eyes" (Hopkinson 2). The acknowledgement of homosexuality's potential presence in the narrator's construction of this sentence reveals much about the position homosexuality holds in the novel's future. Lesbian desire, the narrator's construction implies, is a readily thinkable, non-threatening possibility among the Nation Worlds, as Tan-Tan's attractiveness to women "from Garvey-Prime to Douglass sector" is celebrated alongside her beauty in the eyes of men (Hopkinson 2). However,
this possibility that heteronormativity will be upset remains an aside, a grammatical annex to the norm that is the "trail of sad lonely men," acknowledged alongside but not in conjunction with the assumable heterosexual norm (Hopkinson 2). Even if we read the narrator's pointed observation of Tan-Tan's attractiveness to both men and women as deliberately mischievous, as tweaking heteronormativity's nose, a reading I find very convincing, this requires that a heteronormative order still exist to have its nose tweaked. As Jiselle Liza Anatol has noted, "queer relationships dot the narrative landscape" in *Midnight Robber* (Anatol 123). However, by marking the acknowledgement that women as well as men are attracted to the legendary Tan-Tan, an acknowledgement that is never dramatized openly in the parts of her legend the reader is exposed to in the novel proper, as such a conceptual annex, Hopkinson's text imagines a theoretically more equal future in which the presence of homosexuality can be assumed as a non-threatening given, but a future that remains tied to and shaped by the sociocultural norms of the novel's moment of production that grant heteronormativity pride of place.

The ways I am understanding the redeployment of early twenty-first century gender norms in these sf texts as "foundations" for critique can be clarified at this point via an appeal to the methods of analysis employed by sf scholarship. Specifically, I will now move toward reading the apparent normative reinforcements in these novels in terms of the categorization of sf as metaphorical or prophetic, though I will not necessarily discover these normative elements to fit into either of these categories in an uncomplicated way. Kate Schaefer's commentary on her experience as a judge of the James Tiptree Jr. award for the exploration of gender in speculative fiction emphasizes the problematic elements of taking gender equality for granted in imagining the future without explicitly addressing the norms surrounding this assumed equality, as my analysis of *Shelter* and *Midnight Robber* would suggest they do, were I to explore these texts no further. As Schaefer states, in a work that addresses gender equality as "deep background, gender
is not explored or expanded: it's resolved" (Schaefer qtd. in Merrick, Secret 274). Based solely on the examples I have already highlighted in which the societies portrayed in Midnight Robber and Shelter approach gender amiably, with a degree of elasticity, but ultimately reinforce binary categorizations, a skeptical reader of my argument might easily come to suspect that these novels engage in precisely this resolving, rather than a more overtly challenging opening outward of possible approaches to gender.

At best, then, my portrayal of these texts thus far might slot them into a tradition of works that imagine a future that is broadly more equal without working to challenge the norms by which this equality is kept at bay in our present moment. At worst, the reification of seemingly "safe," nonthreatening versions of heteronormativity and the masculine-feminine binary that keep these norms intact while allowing for apparent equality remobilizes the writing strategies advocated by figures such as the prominent mid and late twentieth century sf editor Lester Del Rey. As Helen Merrick notes, while Del Rey calls the advent of a number of new women sf writers in the 1970s one of the "healthiest" signs for the future of the field during this period, he argues that stories set in the future should focus on supposedly universal issues such as the development of new technologies, rather than on political matters like the "women's movement," which will, he maintains, "have been resolved, one way or another" prior to the nebulous future sf is concerned with (Del Rey qtd. in Merrick, Secret 57-8). This move to take social changes as read in sf concerned with the future, coming at a time when feminist criticism was making sustained in-roads into the sf field in the fiction and commentary of authors such as Joanna Russ, contains, in its reluctance to actually go through the messy process of acknowledging and working to counter male hegemony, remarkable anticipation of McRobbie's more recent assessment of broader public discourse as advocating an assumption of equality and an "undoing of feminism" (McRobbie 5). In addition to blithely ignoring the fact that institutions such as
patriarchy alter the lives of both oppressors and oppressed in significant, long-term ways, Del Rey's attempt to separate sf from overt feminist struggle in effect opposes this struggle by dismissing the importance of actively writing against patriarchal norms. Diana Fuss, paraphrasing Luce Irigaray, emphasizes the need to perform such overt re-evaluation when she states that feminist politics does not stand on its own, but is "inseparable from the project of putting the feminine into history, into discourse, and into culture" (Fuss 67). Applying this perspective to science fictional narrative suggests that portraying an imagined feminist future cannot meaningfully denaturalize gender stereotypes, and tendencies to exclude women from power and from history, without devoting significant attention to the struggle that has allowed this future to come about.

I do not, however, interpret Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts as falling into either of the traps I have just outlined: These texts do not simply portray gender as resolved, nor do they dismiss it as Del Rey does. I am not willing to deem feminist sf texts that oppose the gender norms of their moments of production openly more effective by definition than those that reinscribe these norms for the purposes of showing them to be without merit or actively dangerous. Certainly, many of the works by women that did such invaluable work carving out feminist space in sf and exposing the genre's masculinist conservatism throughout the 1970s challenge naturalizing narratives of gender by specifically reshaping them, by imagining worlds in which gender is thought otherwise (Merrick, Gender 247-8). Prominent within this tradition is the subset of works Joanna Russ has called "feminist utopias," which focus at least in part on societies made up entirely of women. Crucial works in this subgenre include, but are certainly not limited to, Marge Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time, Russ' own When It Changed, and, ambiguously, Tiptree's "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" (Merrick, Gender 248). However, I am not contending that Hopkinson and Palwick's texts represent the contemporary gender norms
avoided by other types of sf like the feminist utopia thoughtlessly, or for the purposes of placation, but rather that they do so for the purposes of critique. Midnight Robber and Shelter engage in feminist rewritings meant to counter gender binaries and glorifications of heteronormativity as actively as do texts of feminist utopia, but they do so from within, by reflecting these norms into the future in order to highlight their artificiality (and, I will maintain in the following chapters, harmfulness). Only once this critique of normative reiteration has been established do these texts find themselves able to envision alternatives.

In "Science Fiction: Metaphor, Myth, or Prophecy?," Patrick Parrinder summarizes the strong trend in the 1960s and 1970s among both authors and critics of sf toward considering sf's creations and explorations to be "at bottom metaphorical" that I introduced briefly in my opening chapter (Parrinder 27). Parrinder specifically mentions feminist texts as an exemplar of this metaphorical sf (Parrinder 28). However, while admitting that this metaphorical mode is still dominant in the early twenty-first century, he then goes on to suggest that it has become impossible to "take these [metaphorical] fictions seriously any more," citing their focus on what he derisively refers to as sf's "nostalgic theme park of futures past," on galaxy-wide space travel and other concepts and types of exploration that have been understood as increasingly unlikely throughout the twentieth century (Parrinder 34, 27). He suggests instead that a "return to prophecy" in sf, and readings of sf, may be warranted, but with a specific focus on digitization and the "information age" (Parrinder 31-2). I welcome this discomforting of the idea that sf is automatically metaphorical, which has now been institutionalized within discussions of the field to the point at which it is in danger of becoming common sense. However, in advocating this return to prophecy, Parrinder seems to discount the usefulness of the metaphor in social science fiction, such as feminist sf, locating sf alongside "predictive" scientific theories that "assert that the regularities observed in the past will hold good in the future," rather than acknowledging the
importance of sf speculations in the sociocultural sphere, as well as the technological (Parrinder 31). In disparaging the tropes of metaphorical sf, such as talking robots and aliens, as no longer credible, Parrinder seems to set up a dichotomy between readings of sf as metaphorical and readings of sf as prophetic that I argue is wholly unnecessary.

My analysis of Shelter and Midnight Robber draws on both the metaphorical mode and Parrinder's return to prophecy: If we read the reiterations of normative gender in Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts, from the location of transgressive cross-dressing specifically within the "ecstatic license of Carnival" on Toussaint and the categorization of gender as a "continuum" in Shelter's future America to the positioning of homosexual desire as a grammatical annex to heterosexuality, as simple affirmations of the status quo, then, yes, certainly, they can be seen to resolve gender rather than expanding or interrogating it. If, however, we read these normative moments as prophetic, as deliberately placed to forecast the kinds of futures these texts see as reasonable based on the conditions of possibility in their moments of production, then they become indications of the degree to which these norms are entrenched, and of the ease with which it can be imagined that they will recur unchallenged for the foreseeable future. Numerous apparently innocuous points in these texts, including the reintrenchments of binary gender and heterosexuality I have already highlighted, can be reread from this prophetic perspective. From Meredith and her friend Raji's instinctive slip into assuming that the mother in a family will be the primary care-giver when discussing the usefulness of a robotic house system in Shelter, to the apparent inconsistency between Tan-Tan's uncomprehending dismissal of the very idea of gender inequality as a "stupid thing" and her mother Ione's preoccupation with "look[ing] nice" in a very stereotypically "feminine" way in Midnight Robber, these moments, can be read as Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts forecasting how easy any future human society may find it to slip back into these ingrained norms (and whether these forecasts are entirely conscious or not is, I think,
irrelevant to their usefulness as extrapolations) (Palwick 193, Hopkinson 29, 45). Viewed as extrapolations, these moments can be understood not as gentle versions of current gender norms designed to "resolve" gender, but rather as depictions of futures that remain in many ways thoroughly normative, and thus, as I will explore in the following chapters, leave themselves open to the reiteration of openly oppressive, patriarchal actions. Both Hopkinson's and Palwick's novels attempt--just as Parrinder recommends in his suggestion that a return to prophecy may be warranted in sf--to extrapolate futures that are thinkable based on the conditions observable in their moments, but the observable conditions on which these futures are based are social, not scientific (Parrinder 27).

However, my approach to Hopkinson's and Palwick's works does not rely solely on a return to prophecy. Rather, I see the ways these novels operate to critique gender norms reintegrating metaphor in significant ways. The metaphorical elements Parrinder so dislikes, such as "life-like robots and contactable intelligent aliens," are still strongly present in these texts (Parrinder 27). As I will explore in the next two chapters, these metaphorical sf tropes are applied in order to highlight the limitations placed on potential future development by the conditions of possibility thinkable at the time of writing, calling attention to the continued need to recognize unfamiliar performances of gender as legitimate and worthy of respect in ways that each text's extrapolated human society, being preoccupied with normative reiteration, cannot. The pseudo-prophetic extrapolations these texts engage in, their projections of familiar norms forward into unfamiliar spaces where they can strike us as alienating, are essential ingredients in their science-fictional critiques of gender norms, but their uses of metaphorical speculative elements such as aliens and artificial intelligences are also invaluable components of these critiques, defamiliarizing gender in positive ways rather than in ways that clarify the concept's power to reiterate itself. As a brief example of the knitting together of the prophetic with the
metaphorical I am attempting here, a reading of Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* conducted along these lines might pay less heed to one of the novel's central metaphors, the genderless Gethenian society, as an indication that, as Le Guin says, in certain ways humans "already are" androgynous. Such a reading might instead focus more attention on the ways in which the use of this metaphor allows the text to highlight the male protagonist Genly Ai's frequently value-laden judgments of the Gethenians' "manliness" or "femininity" as a suggestion--or extrapolation--of the ways humanity's reliance on the masculine-feminine binary might continue to limit our capacity to recognize other ways of being gendered into the future. Such a reading would still address Le Guin's novel's sf conceit of a world without gender as a timely metaphor, but, crucially, as a timely metaphor that looks to extrapolate something about the thought processes that might be carried into the possible futures imaginable from the present time it speaks to. I do not read the societies Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts imagine as either strict metaphors or prophecies; rather, they are caught in-between, prophetic metaphors, or metaphorical prophecies. From this critical perspective that attempts to mesh an understanding of these texts as extrapolative prophecy with an understanding of the same texts as metaphorical, I can view their reuse of normative modes of gender in the construction of their future societies as a feature, rather than a failing. That these works do not envision the overthrow of normative configurations of gender, but instead construct futures that perpetuate such norms in order to highlight their irrelevance, stultification, and danger, is precisely the point of the feminist work they find to be thinkable in their moments of production in the capitalist West at the start of the twenty-first century.

Chapter III
"Men make things and women magic them": Radical Feminist Criticism of "Post-feminist Equality" in *Midnight Robber*

As I have argued in the previous chapter, *Midnight Robber* and *Shelter* extrapolate futures in which the sociocultural meaning vested in the arbitrary markers of gender has stultified, but then go on to critique the problematic nature of this stultification via engagement with the science fictional metaphors of encounters with, respectively, the alien other and artificial intelligence. However, the two texts pursue these science fictional critiques in ways almost diametrically opposed to one another. Specifically, *Midnight Robber* embarks on a radical feminist reemphasis of the need to take account of sex and gender in the formation of identity through Tan-Tan's interactions with the douen people, while *Shelter* launches its attack on gender norms from the opposite direction, completely depreciating the significance of sex and gender as markers of personhood among the AIs. Throughout this chapter I will explore *Midnight Robber's* insistence on gender's importance through its depiction of the douens, and the text's critique of its human society's refusal to acknowledge its continued reliance on patriarchal thought and action, before turning to an analysis of *Shelter's* depreciation of gender in the following chapter.

The alien douens who Tan-Tan lives among on New Half-Way Tree perform gender in such a way as to render it more significant, not less, enacting a radical feminist critique of the impulse to minimize gender's significance. Radical feminism is a school of feminist thought that acknowledges differences between men and women, emphasizing and celebrating women's capacity as women not as a means of portraying all women as essentially the same, but in order to avoid using masculine norms as a standardized index for human experience. In Adrienne Rich's words, this approach "looks to a transformation of human relationships and structures in
which power, instead of a thing to be horded by a few, would be released to and fro within the many” (Rich, Blood 5). Using this radical feminist lens, I will read the douens as offering an alternative to the dangerous normative stultification quietly maintained by the novel's human society.

Since my reading of the douens contrasts them with Midnight Robber's human society, however, before directly analyzing the douens I will first examine the normative stultification in this human society, which the novel depicts as an unspoken but highly destructive force in the relations between human men and women. In my previous chapter, I argued that Midnight Robber's future society is characterized by "gentle," elastic versions of norms such as binary gender, yet now I am claiming that its gender politics are shown throughout the text to be aggressive and destructive. How can this be? Surely these two points are mutually exclusive? In short, this society's approach to normative gender appears equal and unassuming initially, because that is how it sees itself. As suggested by Tan-Tan's uncomprehending dismissal of the very idea of a time in which "men could only do some things, and women could only do others," the human society on Toussaint posits a future in which overt discrimination based on gender is very uncommon, at least in terms of the division of labour (Hopkinson 28-29). Women, we see throughout the novel, can occupy any profession from the traditionally "feminine" role of a seamstress to that of a manual labourer, martial arts instructor, or blacksmith, and be respected for their work, while men take on stereotypically "feminine" roles such as cooking (Hopkinson 34, 151, 26). In the future of Midnight Robber, "the liberal feminist notion of striving for equality" has been pursued to a point at which the absence of this supposed equality is unthinkable, though men and women remain distinct in their performances of gender (McRobbie 41). Such a liberal feminist approach takes the focus of feminist work to be the erosion of differences between women and men, in the process differing fundamentally with radical
feminism. While both these strands of feminist thought oppose the systematic exploitation of women that has historically been institutionalized in many societies, radical feminism does not aim to elevate women to a position from which they can share the hierarchical power that men hold in the status quo, but rather to work toward societies that abolish all such exploitative, dominance-based power structures (Rich, Blood 217). This liberal feminist approach to equality adopted by the society of the Nation Worlds, in which normative gender continues to be taken for granted, creates the conditions under which patriarchy can re-emerge within this culture.

Tan-Tan's father Antonio is deployed throughout the first half of *Midnight Robber* as a blunt instrument to demonstrate the potential for misogyny to reappear within a society that assumes it has achieved gender equality. In her exploration of motherhood in Hopkinson's novel, Jiselle Liza Anatol asserts that Hopkinson "uses Antonio Habib to critique conventional abuses of power and the ideology that Might Makes Right" (Anatol 113). While I certainly agree with this assessment, Anatol does not sufficiently account for the degree to which Antonio's actions are specifically misogynist. From minor, seemingly innocuous actions such as "[standing] to give himself some height over" Beda the pedicab runner during their negotiations, through squeezing Ione's hand hard enough to make her cry when declaring his intention to return to his family after he has punished her lover Quashee for "casting he eye 'pon my woman like he is big man," to the unrestrained beatings he administers to his second wife Janisette, Antonio consistently seeks to physically dominate the women he interacts with (Hopkinson 9, 44, 324). His personal desire for patriarchal primacy is illuminated even more thoroughly, however, by his valuing of Tan-Tan and Ione based on how totally they shape their lives around him. As the novel opens, we are told that Antonio is deliriously happy at the prospect of having a child, who he thinks of as "[s]omeone who [will] listen to him, look up to him. Like Ione when she'd been a green young woman" (Hopkinson 6). As Anatol summarizes, Antonio the "loving father," unable "to
distinguish between the two primary women in his life, ... eventually becomes a sexual predator," beginning to abuse Tan-Tan sexually after he steals her away to New Half-Way Tree, and fathering the child she carries throughout the novel's second half (Anatol 117). This "value-based," abusive approach to the women around him is also revealed by the shift in Antonio's attitude toward manual labour, which he categorizes as not "for people" on Toussaint, but as the province of women on New Half-Way Tree (Hopkinson 8, 147). Antonio's measurement of women's value based on how completely they serve his well-being and ego, coupled with his repulsive assertions that it is his love for Tan-Tan that he claims compels him to abuse her sexually, his extensive resort to gendered verbal insults, and his almost manic assertion of his own status as a "man" during the final instance of this abuse, reveals the places women hold in his personal conception of the universe to be those of canvases upon which he inscribes his masculinity, rather than of autonomous subjects (Hopkinson 141, 167-68). For Antonio, who takes on the joyous aspect of "a man in prayer" when he realizes that his exile to New Half-Way Tree frees his impulses to hegemonic power from Granny Nanny's moderating influence, very little has changed socially in the centuries that have supposedly passed since the moment at which the text he appears in is written (Hopkinson 128). His unspoken assumption is that women are objects present for a purpose, as implied as far back as Victorian culture's construction of women as the keepers of the sacred hearth (Rich, Born 49). Certainly, no reading of a single character can be used to draw conclusions about the entire society of the Nation Worlds depicted in Midnight Robber. However, Antonio's views and actions, beyond portraying him as an exceptionally misogynist individual character, hint that the society he lives--and, initially, prospers--within may be less effective in maintaining gender equality, and more hospitable to the reoccurrence of patriarchy, than it presents itself as being.
I am not suggesting that Hopkinson depicts the human society of the Nation Worlds as entirely, unrelentingly patriarchal. Misogynist views and actions are often overtly discouraged on Toussaint and even on New Half-Way Tree (though there are telling exceptions to this generalization, which I will discuss momentarily.) It is made clear, for instance, that if Antonio's sexual abuse of Tan-Tan, and later his physical abuse of Janisette, is discovered, his punishment will be severe (Hopkinson 141, 161). There is also no implication that Antonio's abusive relationships with his daughter and sexual partners are the norm in this future; indeed, Tan-Tan herself begins a respectful, loving relationship with Charlie, or "Melonhead," while she is living in Junjuh, and seemingly revives this connection at the end of the novel (Hopkinson 151, 304). However, while Antonio's misogyny and personal attempts to reinscribe patriarchal norms are far more aggressive than those of any other character in *Midnight Robber*, his domineering behaviour is covertly supported by the society that surrounds him, which frequently arranges itself, subtly or unsubtly, to benefit men. In her analysis of the "post-feminist" working environment, McRobbie highlights the potential for male dominance to persist in the work place due to the power the largely male corporate structure still maintains to dictate the terms on which "equality" will be permitted. For example, McRobbie reads the stereotypical femininity young women often feel compelled to perform in order to get jobs as an "post-feminist masquerade" designed to avoid appearing "unfeminine" (McRobbie 66-67). Given the roles "unfeminine" women such as the bare-hand fighting instructor, with her "bull chest" and "tree trunk" legs, play in the community of Cockpit County on Toussaint, the society Hopkinson prophesies based on current societal norms and conditions of possibility clearly does not directly reproduce the norms of behaviour deemed desirable by dominant masculine interests that McRobbie identifies in the early twenty-first century (Hopkinson 40). However, several moments in *Midnight Robber* point out situations in which human women are expected, either by specifically marked social
consensus or as a matter of course, to subordinate their well-being to the needs and desires of men. For instance, Tan-Tan's childhood guardian "Nursie" must appear to be "grateful" that Antonio has taken her in, despite the fact that he is responsible for demolishing her family by engineering her daughter Aislin's exile to New Half-Way Tree to conceal his own infidelity (Hopkinson 19). Janisette, Antonio's partner on New Half-Way Tree, goes beyond accommodating herself to male desires as Nursie does to actively interpellate herself into the role of patriarchy's agent. As Anatol notes, she "first refuses to protect [Tan-Tan] from the sexual attentions of her father, then blames her for them," claiming that "you tempt Antonio," and pursuing her to the douens' home in the Daddy Tree and back into human settlements in search of vengeance (Anatol 114, Hopkinson 323). Though Antonio's attitudes are individual, there is seemingly no social apparatus, either on Toussaint or New Half-Way Tree, to prevent those around him from being covertly coopted into supporting these attitudes.

The single clearest illustration of this tendency for the theoretically equal society of theNation Worlds to nevertheless position women as accommodating patriarchal masculinity, however, is Cockpit County's judgment of Tan-Tan's mother Ione when her adultery is made public. This response reveals the community as a whole, rather than only specific individuals, to be implicated in the perpetuation of male privilege. Ione identifies a double standard in Antonio's behaviour, telling Tan-Tan that "[h]e forget ... all the other women I catch he with," and this double standard is also evident in the larger community's reaction to Ione's actions (Hopkinson 25). Her sexualized self-presentation is a topic for social critique, and her sexual activities are subject to malicious public mockery, while criticism of Antonio is limited to mild exclamations that his "heart must be hard" for him to leave his daughter alone, with no mention made of his treatment of Ione (Hopkinson 31, 37-38, 22). Antonio's gardener Ben gives clear voice to this double standard's reinforcement of masculinity's social primacy, exclaiming that "a man have
him pride, you know! How you could expect him to live with a woman who horning he steady? ... You don't see the man have to have some respect in he own house?" (Hopkinson 32). Insisting on men's positions as property owners and the heads of their families is a frequent tendency in patriarchal societies, and the emphasis Ben places on it in his defence of Antonio shows this patriarchal trope to be fully operational on Toussaint. McRobbie has noted that, in the North American and European nuclear family in which the "husband and father" is often assumed to be the sole or primary bread-winner, "infidelity has been semi-institutionalized" (McRobbie 36). While Toussaint is much more equitable than the real-world context McRobbie is discussing, moments such as Ben's defence of Antonio's "pride" and Cockpit County's judgment of Ione's infidelity, when read as a system with a pattern rather than as individual normative outbursts, highlight the similarly retrograde potential Hopkinson's narrative critiques as the likely result of retaining twenty-first century gender norms in an unspoken form. Connell asserts that, "[m]ost of the time, defence of the patriarchal order does not require an explicit masculinity politics," merely a maintenance of the status quo, and Midnight Robber predicts and critiques the continued quiet yet resounding success of this strategy (Connell 212).

Tellingly, Midnight Robber shows patriarchal tendencies to be reiterated more blatantly in situations in which there will be no repercussions for doing so. This move back toward undisguised male dominance is glimpsed only briefly in the novel, during Tan-Tan's first visit to the lawless settlement of Chigger Bite on New Half-Way Tree, where patriarchy is an open institution. One of the town's residents, Alyosius, tells her that, in Chigger Bite, "[o]nce you dead, your woman go praise God that it have one day in this land she ain't have to slave for no man. Only one day, for you know that tomorrow some next man who couldn't find a woman before this go be sniffing round she skirts" (Hopkinson 242). Granted, Alyosius' individual evaluation of Chigger Bite can bear only so much weight, but the clarity with which his
description of the town recalls Tan-Tan's previous experiences among the humans of New Half-Way Tree, and casts these experiences as part of a larger trend toward the institutionalized objectification of women, lends it credence as evidence that misogyny endures within the future of the Nation Worlds. As she grows into adolescence in the vigorously-polic ed New Half-Way Tree town of Junjuh, Tan-Tan is repeatedly sexually objectified by the town's men. In one case, she finds it necessary to deflect a man's lecherous insinuations by reminding him of the brutal punishments dealt out to wrongdoers in Junjuh, suggesting that a subset of the men of the Nation Worlds continue to harbour misogynist views, and are prevented from objectifying women more aggressively not by any genuine consciousness of gender equality, but by the fear of the punishment that is liberally deployed in Junjuh but does not exist in Chigger Bite (Hopkinson 150-51). Both the subtle capitulation to Antonio's domination by those who surround him and the open declaration of a reversion to institutionalized misogyny demonstrate the readiness with which patriarchal attitudes can return among the people of the Nation Worlds, despite this future's retention of masculine-feminine gender binaries initially seeming like a toothless maintenance of past social norms with no power to harm or restrict. Midnight Robber forecasts a future state of ostensible gender equality that is incontestably greater than that western nations enjoy today, yet makes no systematic attempt to alter the social attitudes underlying sexism and patriarchy. Reading the recapitulations of misogyny, both overt and covert, that shape the society of the Nation Worlds, dragging it backward under the weight of norms unchanged since the moment of Midnight Robber's production, shows its growth beyond patriarchy to be largely cosmetic, and reveals the assumption that gender is an irrelevance in the world the Marryshow Corporation has built to be just as fictional as it is in the moment from which the novel launches its critique.
The lives of the douens represent a radical feminist reply to the detrimental assumption of equality and sameness that lurks behind young Tan-Tan's feminist outrage at the thought of any activity being segregated by gender, an outrage and incomprehension that marks the positive development of *Midnight Robber's* human culture, but also hints obliquely at its move to reinstate masculinity's dominance. As many feminist scholars have pointed out, the interpretation of gender equality as a project that seeks to afford women the same opportunities as men without exception, while clearly very positive in intention, runs the risk of establishing masculinity as a standard, normalizing those traits and desires thought to be masculine and in effect transforming the quest for equality into a project that shapes women into men. For example, Rich asserts that "masculine society" bestows "false power" on a small number of women, on the condition that they use it to maintain the status quo and "essentially think like men," while McRobbie points more specifically to the assumption in recent years that "women can be expected to become more like men in the work place" (Rich, *Blood* 5, McRobbie 147). Such uses of the behaviour or actions perceived to be normal or ideal for men as the yardstick for equality can lead to social situations in which equality is presumed to have been achieved, but is in fact only present in an ineffective, cosmetic form, as my analysis has shown to be the case in *Midnight Robber's* extrapolated future. By contrast, radical feminism, as summarized by Rich, seeks to "shape a feminist theory based on female experience," a theory and practice that, unlike the liberal feminist model that Hopkinson's text warns us is most likely to be reproduced based on current normative conditions, works to acknowledge and respect difference (Rich, *Blood* x). In keeping with a long tradition Hollinger notes in feminist sf to use the alien "to explore the perspectives and experiences of hegemonic culture's traditional others," *Midnight Robber's* depiction of the douens accomplishes this radical feminist insistence on the importance of difference by using the "inhuman" gender norms of a wholly-fictionalized alien culture as a lens through which to
highlight the artificiality of the semi-stultified human norms of gender the text imagines growing out of its moment of production (Hollinger 132). The douens are, in other words, deployed metaphorically, yet another in a long line of the "contactable intelligent" metaphorical aliens of the kind Parrinder so dislikes (Parrinder 27). I do not read these aliens, whose gender performances are by definition unworkable for humans, as metaphors for any non-normative gender performance in particular—a move that, in positioning "aliens" as representative of a specific group or way of being gendered, would risk obscuring rather than fostering understanding. Rather, I understand them as metaphorical of difference in gender performativity as a whole. These non-human beings are clearly marked as "feminine" and "masculine," but this gendering is arranged in ways that do not signify normatively for either Tan-Tan or the (presumably human) reader. This metaphorical defamiliarization works to re-emphasize the need to recognize non-normative ways of living within or between gender categories as legitimate.

A brief description of the douens and the effects of their biological sex on their performances of gender will help to establish the imagined biology that allows them to live gender in ways unlike their human oppressors. The visually-perceptible differences between douen men and humans are largely cosmetic: their eyes are mounted on the sides of their heads rather than facing forward, for instance, and their legs "[look] like goat feet, thin and bent backwards in the middle" (Hopkinson 92). Douen women, or "hintes," however, are not recognized by humans as douens at all, travelling with douen men among humans in the guise of "packbirds" (Hopkinson 152). While several of their physical features, such as their feet, resemble those of douen men on closer examination, hintes grow into winged beings almost entirely analogous with birds, and are also much larger than douen men (Hopkinson 182). Tan-Tan's impression of Chichibud's wife Benta, as a beast of burden "large as a cow and as solid," prior to her time in the Daddy Tree when she learns the closely-guarded secret that "packbirds"
are in fact douen women illustrates the default assumption among the human settlers of New Half-Way Tree that the women of the alien species they encounter will look roughly analogous to the men, an assumption Chichibud gently exposes when he tells Tan-Tan that the douens find her certainty that "woman does look like man" amusing (Hopkinson 170, 182). This casting of douen women as avian creatures defamiliarizes "womanhood," but does not do so in order to re-establish the masculine as normative and the feminine as deviant, though Roberts acknowledges that there is certainly science fiction that deploys the concept of the alien to accomplish such foreclosure (Roberts 78). Rather, this defamiliarization attempts a radical feminist insistence on the value of women's experience and capacity as women, rather than as pseudo-men, providing a perspective on sex and gender that counters the liberal feminist assertions of Toussaint and New Half-Way Tree's human cultures by re-emphasizing difference.

The need to acknowledge hintes as women based on their identification as women within douen society, rather than dismissing their "womanhood" because it does not come housed in bodies Tan-Tan considers feminine, forms a central part of this defamiliarization. Tan-Tan initially struggles to remember that Benta is "a woman, not a pack animal," and must correct herself multiple times when she thinks of Benta as a "bird," or reflexively asks Chichibud a question about Benta instead of asking Benta herself (Hopkinson 182-84, 190). However, as she becomes a part of Chichibud and Benta's family unit, Tan-Tan comes to find both Benta's and her daughter Abitefa's physicality comforting, and even to wish in so many words that she possessed a hinte's physicality herself, both for the advantage their strength and size would give her when defending herself and for the ability to speak the special language that only the beaks of hintes can form (Hopkinson 235, 260, 232). As Anatol states, Tan-Tan comes to consider Chichibud, Benta, and Abitefa family (Anatol 119). Coming not only to accept but also to value the hintes precisely as women, if women unlike herself, is central to Tan-Tan's recognition of
this non-biological kinship. In her argument against taking for granted in feminist discourse that women "have gender identity in common," Elizabeth Spelman points out the potential for investigations of difference to make feminist networks stronger and more nuanced (Spelman 113). "If," she points out, "I am justified in thinking that what it means for me to be a woman must be exactly the same as what it means for you to be a woman, since we both are women, I needn't bother to find out anything from you, or about you, in order to find out what it means for you to be a woman. I can simply deduce what it means from my own case" (Spelman 113). At first glance, *Midnight Robber*'s depiction of hintes as essentially unlike male douens as a group can easily be interpreted as a move that leads the text directly into the trap Spelman is discussing, in which emphasizing the traits women share elides their particularities and individual circumstances (Spelman 2-3). However, Hopkinson's text does not imagine douen femininity in a vacuum, but rather in contrast with the supposedly gender-neutral, but in fact fiercely patriarchal, human society that grows out of the text's moment of production to prevail on Toussaint and New Half-Way Tree. If the douens' gender performances are read based on this juxtaposition, Hopkinson's mass-defamiliarization of gender roles through the science-fictional lens of the alien does not essentialize in order to advocate that masculinity and femininity be enacted in concretized ways, but to destabilize assumptions regarding how gender equality and femininity will function. In keeping with the need Spelman identifies to acknowledge a multitude of ways of doing gender and being gendered, Tan-Tan must recognize that a viable subjectivity, and one that, like herself, will answer to the signifier "woman," might be housed in a body profoundly unlike her own.

This marked difference in the biology of the douen sexes gives rise to "masculine" and "feminine" roles within douen society very different from the relaxed versions of early twenty-first century Western norms I have argued hold good among the humans of Toussaint and New
Half-Way Tree. Specifically, douen society divides certain forms of labour along explicitly gendered lines, with douen men undertaking tasks requiring dexterous hands, such as training trees to grow into specific shapes and wood-cutting, while douen women do work such as weaving that can be accomplished with claws and beaks, as well as using their greater strength and power of flight to perform most of the heavy lifting and hard labour in the community (Hopkinson 152, 96, 276). For example, when the Daddy Tree, the home of Chichibud and Benta's community, is discovered by humans and must be destroyed to protect douen secrets, the douen men chop up the branches and trunks of the massive, multi-tiered tree, but are entirely dependent on the hintes to carry these pieces to the sea where humans will never find them (Hopkinson 275-76). This division of labour, which is reliant on the text's defamiliarizing depiction of women as avian, insists that there are genuine differences between men and women, but not in order to demean either sex. Unlike the division of labour in the Western societies out of which Midnight Robber grows, in which men's work is rewarded with an unequal share of capital, while women's work is often denigrated--as shown, for instance, by the tendency among some men to "demean mothers and mothering"--the douens value men's and women's work equally (Spelman 82). This is evident in Chichibud's explanation of the division of labour that produces the beautiful examples of douen woodwork he sells in Junjuh. He states, "with pride," that "[d]ouen man grow them, douen woman paint them. ... The woman them does work obeah into them as they painting them. Is for so the patterns come in like they alive. ... Men make things and women magic them. Is so the world does go" (Hopkinson 153). While Chichibud's specific claims here that douen women work magic on the objects they craft are designed to appeal to Tan-Tan as a child and are presumably not true, his clear separation of the work done by men from the work done by women, and the equal degree to which he clearly values both spheres, illustrates the douens' radical feminist insistence on viewing not just work performed by
women, but work clearly marked as "woman's work," as of equal value to the work undertaken by men.

Women's unique capacity shapes douen culture even further in that douen men are completely reliant on hintes for access to flight. Chichibud states that, since hintes can fly while douen men lose the ability as they grow out of childhood and their wing-flaps deteriorate, "[i]s the saddest thing for douen men to remember how we used to be able to fly like them. If a douen man ever want to fly again, he have to partner with hin" (Hopkinson 184). In both its division of labour and its vision of a society in which hintes, who "only a madman would face down," control access to the highly-valued experience of flight, Midnight Robber's douen culture works to celebrate rather than depreciate the ways in which women are unlike men (Hopkinson 198).

Hopkinson juxtaposes this douen culture against the separate culture occupied by humans, in which Tan-Tan is immersed at the start of the novel. As made clear by the presence of douen workers in human settlements and of human artifacts in the Daddy Tree, human culture is encroaching on douen culture, and I will explore this encroachment in my sixth and final chapter, but at the time of the novel these two groups still definitely inhabit two separate cultural streams (Hopkinson 124, 282). Though Hopkinson's text does not overtly take up my reading's comparison of the radical feminist douens and the liberal feminist human society that reinstates retrograde gender politics, the narrative's effort to trace Tan-Tan's need to accept douen ways of doing gender as thinkable norms to live by confronts both protagonist and reader with the douens' ways of living gender as a means of critiquing the human concepts of masculinity and femininity. The ways of doing gender prevalent within human culture are initially constructed as "normal," yet gradually revealed to be profoundly dysfunctional as the text explores the reoccurring inequities in the human culture it portrays and the alternative the douens present.
Hopkinson's creation of an alien species that lives male and female sex and gender roles very differently from humans is not in and of itself progressive, and neither is this society's division of labour along gendered lines. However, presenting the douens alongside *Midnight Robber*'s humans, and highlighting the very different versions of the concepts of "masculinity" and "femininity" the douens have arrived at based on circumstances profoundly unlike those that have shaped human culture--albeit circumstances that are biological, rather than social--illustrates that the deeply-entrenched reiteration of early twenty-first century gender "equality" within which the humans of Hopkinson's novel live is not an ahistorical inevitability. The douens maintain a male-female, and masculine-feminine, gender binary, but defamiliarize what is assumed to be meant by terms such as "female" and "feminine" in metaphorical ways that perform science-fictional work by resisting, as Hollinger says of Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild," another sf story of human-alien contact, "any too-easy conflation of the sexed body with the culturally-determined gendered behaviours that are imposed upon that body" (Hollinger 130). One notable instance in which the douens in Hopkinson's novel disrupt such conflation is the strength and physical power of the hintes. When the hostile douen Kret attacks Tan-Tan upon her arrival in the Daddy Tree it is the female Benta, rather than the male Chichibud, who threatens him with overwhelming physical force (Hopkinson 181). This defamiliarization of the signifier "woman," which Chichibud applies to Benta in the immediate aftermath of her altercation with Kret, severs the link between masculinity and physical supremacy that has long been a commonly-held stereotype of maleness--and has been reinforced by Antonio and his desire to assert physical dominance over Quashee in the opening chapters of *Midnight Robber* itself (Hopkinson 181). Human society on Toussaint and New Half-Way Tree represents a more stable version of the regime of supposed equality that "liberal, equal opportunities feminism" maintains we enjoy in the early twenty-first century, under which men and women exist on nominally equal
social terms, but only so long as women accommodate themselves to, and reflect the values of, patriarchal society (McRobbie 14). The gendered lives Hopkinson's text imagines for the douens, in which biology marks men and women as suitable for different work but each respects the others' contribution, while women retain a substantial claim to social power through their capacity for flight, advance a radical feminist argument for the valuing of women as unlike men, rather than the measurement of women based on how closely they resemble men advocated by liberal feminism and malestream culture.
"Are you telling me it's sacred because it tried to hump a goldfish?": Gender as an Obsolete Signifier in Shelter

In marked contrast to Midnight Robber, Palwick's Shelter enacts its critique of the early twenty-first century norms of gender that persist in its future by imagining a group of beings for whom gender is not so much lived differently as it is irrelevant. Far from re-emphasizing sex and gender's capacity to play crucial roles in fashioning not only stifling social norms, but also more genuinely equal, radical feminist societies that respect difference without demeaning it, Palwick's text denaturalizes the binaries its human characters subscribe to by depicting AIs as wholly unconcerned with gender. The novel's human--or, adopting the terminology of the movement within the narrative opposed to the recognition of AI personhood, "born," as opposed to "built"--characters insist on measuring the AI characters' possession or lack of personhood based on how thoroughly they can be aligned with markers of sex and gender. However, the text shows this insistence to be an arbitrary, normative reflex that does not recognize the AIs as beings fully capable of forming subjectivities that allow them to act in the world without reference to the supposedly essential conceptual anchor provided by gender.

Before turning to the use of intelligent machines as a metaphorical lens through which to examine the imposition of normative binary gender in Shelter, however, I will first situate my analysis of artificial intelligence (or "AI") within a contextual definition of the concept. My guide in mapping what I mean by "artificial" or "computational" intelligence is N. Katherine Hayles' exploration of these terms and their history in My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts. The study of computation grows out of Alan Turing's description of
a theoretical "Universal Turing Machine" capable of performing any calculation. As a field, the
type of computation has continued to work based on Turing's assertion that, if a small number
of "logical operations" are assembled into a physical device capable of calculation and structured
correctly, they can "eventually arriv[e] at complexity so deep, multi-layered, and extensive as to
simulate the most complex phenomena on Earth," including "reasoning processes one might
legitimately call thinking" (Hayles, Mother 18). The suggestion that a computer might be viewed
as "thinking" through calculations also stems directly from Turing's proposal of the "Imitation
Game," or "Turing Test." This contest envisions a scenario in which an individual asks two
hidden beings a series of questions via a keyboard and visual display and, based on their
answers, must determine which is a human, and which a computer. If the computer successfully
dupes the test-taker into believing it is human, Turing argues, this proves that computers are
capable of complex thought (Hayles, Posthuman xi). In the ensuing decades, Turing's theories
have prompted numerous researchers to attempt to develop such intelligent machines (Hayles,
Mother 214-15). These efforts have met with considerable and continued success, to a point at
which Hayles contends that, while it is impossible to definitively state "in a philosophical sense"
whether any computer has successfully demonstrated sufficient "thought" to pass the Turing
Test, "[a]s the cognitions that intelligent machines can perform have deepened and broadened,
we can exclude what they do from our definition of thinking only if we narrow the range of what
counts as thinking so significantly that it becomes questionable whether many humans can think"
(Hayles, Mother 215). The extensive research into the thinking machine that has grown out of
Turing's Imitation Game has exerted significant influence on sf authors and their work. Beyond,
as Roberts notes in his survey of technology's appearance and use in science fiction, inspiring the
depiction of "self-aware" machines in texts such as William Gibson's Neuromancer, this ongoing
research into the possibility of the thinking machine has created a base of knowledge that allows
sf writers, including Palwick, to consider in more detail than previously how the uncontestable existence of AI might alter the concept of personhood, and under what circumstances these machines might be said not only to think, but also to possess such personhood (Roberts 130).

Meteoric advances in machine intelligence often prompt the humans who interact with these AIs to impose human models of thought, desire, and motivation onto them. In actuality, however, all the wonderfully sophisticated operations performed by computers are dependent on the machine having been given intelligible lines of "code" as instructions, and code, in turn, is dependent on the presence or absence of electric voltages and the continuous informational "bit stream" that results (Hayles, Mother 45). For example, a robot that appears to follow a line is not responding to an "internal representation of a line," but rather follows "three simple rules: if from white to black, turn right; if from black to white, turn left; if no change, continue straight" (Hayles, Mother 204). This tendency to impose human narrative suggests that those of us, including myself, who interact with these machines frequently without a working understanding of the code that makes them function have difficulty comprehending the rigourously rule-bound nature of their existences. Hayles refers to this assumption that AIs share human modes of understanding as "anthropomorphic projection," and describes it in the following terms: "Mystifying the computer's actual operation, anthropomorphic projection creates a cultural imaginary in which digital subjects are understood as autonomous creatures imbued with human-like motives, goals, and strategies" (Hayles, Mother 5). Both Hayles' perspective and my analysis of Shelter attempt to remain mindful that digital beings' thought is based on code, and that they therefore do not respond to stimuli in the way humans do. Anthropomorphic discourse, by contrast, measures the digital based on how closely it mirrors human ways of being. The most detailed example of this projection provided in My Mother Was a Computer centers around observers' reactions to programmer Karl Sims' exhibit "Evolved Virtual Creatures," which uses
visual elements to display the evolutions undergone by competing programs or "creatures" as they refine their designs to most effectively achieve a certain goal. Hayles notes an observer's invariable urge to "inscribe the creatures into narratives of defeat and victory, cheering the winners, urging on the losers," and ascribing to the lines of code and visual overlays that constitute the "creatures" characteristics such as "adaptability, cleverness, and determination" (Hayles, *Mother* 193-94). We may concoct these narratives ascribing computers with human qualities for convenience or in jest, while always remaining aware of their fundamental inaccuracy. However, the persistence of these stories we tell ourselves about the motives and foibles of our machines suggests that we find these tales profoundly useful, false though we may know them to be, in our attempts to interact with these beings and shape them to our advantage.

These attempts to force these beings into readily thinkable frameworks mark a bid to establish what Butler refers to as "cultural intelligibility," which she defines as the "socially instituted and maintained norms" that render one decipherable as a subject (Butler, *Gender* 23). The norms of cultural intelligibility act as "regulatory practices that generate coherent identities," and without them one cannot be understood by the society one lives in as possessing a self (Butler, *Gender* 23-4). As the tendency to attach narratives of progress and competition to Sims' programs demonstrates, these guidelines for selfhood can take numerous forms. However, my references to cultural intelligibility in this chapter's analysis of *Shelter* will focus--as does Butler's own work--specifically on the norms of intelligibility connecting gender and the normatively sexed body with recognizable personhood.

*Shelter*’s critique of binary understandings of gender relies heavily on discrediting the type of anthropomorphic projection Hayles describes. Specifically, the text highlights and problematizes the suspect attempts made by several of its "born" characters to deploy binary understandings of gender as prerequisites for subjectivity. Meredith and her husband Kevin both
rely on AIs' inability to reproduce sexually as one of the central pillars in their arguments that those who are "built" are not truly living beings. Legal status aside, Meredith claims, in order to "count" as a person "you have to have a body," a sentiment even Roberta, who later acknowledges AI personhood unreservedly, initially sympathizes with, wondering how a machine could possibly "feel ... without a body to feel with" (Palwick 127, 421). The gendered implications of this focus on the human body are clarified when Meredith later extends this discourse by explicitly dismissing the possibility that any AIs might possess the "drive to reproduce" that would, in her estimation, make them human (Palwick 194). Admittedly, the novel never rules Meredith's perspective on personhood incorrect beyond all doubt--though by the end of the narrative's chronology she is legally incorrect, as all AIs have been declared persons (Palwick 35). However, the text casts her exclusionary viewpoint as worthy of critique by juxtaposing it against more broad-minded perspectives on personhood and the assertions of the AIs themselves, which I will discuss below, while undermining Meredith's credibility by frequently positioning her as hostile to many people she sees as unlike herself, not just to AIs. Her assertions that her father Preston is no longer human are cast as immature and cruel, as she repeatedly hammers home his lack of a body and her belief that this separates him from his family irreparably, while her interactions with the elderly and the homeless in the course of her work for the Gaia Temple culminate with her admission, at least to herself, that she is "goddamn tired of goddamn smelly people getting in her way" (Palwick 131-32, 163). Though the text declines to deliver absolute judgment on the reader's behalf, Meredith's perspective on personhood is positioned as invalid and worthy of critique based on her repeated struggles to express empathy for others, and the contrast between this criteria-based version of personhood and those proposed by more accepting characters and the AIs themselves.
The ability to "grow or reproduce" also features prominently in the criteria for personhood that Kevin teaches his house system in an attempt to indoctrinate it into the belief that it is not a person (Palwick 33). When the house questions this assertion, proposing human beings who cannot reproduce sexually due to infertility or sterility as a group that Kevin's definitions do not recognize, he states that "[t]hey were born human. That's the first piece; that's the most important part. If you're born human, you're always human" (Palwick 60). Kevin's adjustment of his position clarifies his reliance on connection to the normative sex-gender system via heterosexual reproduction as an index of personhood. The narrative, which is being filtered through the house's point of view at this moment, tilts itself toward presenting Kevin's criteria for personhood, including his insistence on the importance of sexual reproduction, as reactionary and worthy of criticism, as the house's thoughts make it clear that he is not truly engaging in conversation, and that it is simply "easy to tell Kevin what he want[s] to hear" (Palwick 60). Through this tracing of Kevin's and Meredith's claims that there exists an identifiable core of "humanity" that AIs do not share back to a truculent insistence on the importance of sexual reproduction, Shelter casts a critical eye on the narrowing effect that the maintenance of early twenty-first century norms of binary gender may continue to exert on cultural intelligibility.

Even those born characters inclined to treat AIs as thinking beings attach significance to anthropomorphic projection in their use of binary gender pronouns to distinguish AIs as subjects, a move more respectful of AIs' potential for selfhood than Meredith's perspective, but no more reflective of their non-gendered existence. Notably, the gendered labelling that characters who are in favour of treating AIs as persons, such as Roberta and the pro-AI activist Zephyr, engage in when interacting with AIs seems dependent on the closeness of their relationships with each individual thinking machine. For instance, when Roberta thinks of Mr. Clean, a housekeeping
bot that Zephyr has fitted with an "AI chip," simply as "her bot," a machine performing a function, her narration pairs the character with the pronoun "it" (Palwick 389, 46). However, only moments later, when she thinks of Mr. Clean by name, the male pronoun reasserts itself (Palwick 47). Further, the criteria these characters use to assign pronouns is remarkably tenuous, as in the case of Zephyr's bot Tikki-tavvy, whose metal frame is dotted with purple polka dots that could, perhaps, fall in line with the aesthetics of normative femininity (Palwick 354).

Granted, this use of gender pronouns hardly constitutes a definitive link between personhood and the imposition of binary gender. Animals, for instance, are almost invariably referred to using gendered pronouns even by those who do not view them as subjects, both outside of and within Shelter's imagined future--Meredith believes animals to have "personalities you [cannot] program," but even Kevin, who specifically equates pets with computers as beings on whom humanity is imposed artificially, still refers to his and Meredith's son Nicholas' pet mouse using gender pronouns (Palwick 97, 59, 295-96). This inconsistency certainly depreciates the importance of such tags as markers of subjectivity, though Meredith herself distinguishes between animals and AIs by pointing out, correctly, that AIs, unlike animals, have been "created by humans to be useful to humans" (Palwick 282). However, characters such as Roberta undeniably impose frameworks of binary gender onto AI subjectivity, while characters who oppose this ascription of subjectivity see such pronouns as a threat, and the degree to which the common gendering of animals makes the bestowal of such pronouns unstable ground for a meaningful battle over subjectivity renders it all the more telling as an action that reasserts norms of binary gender. For example, when Meredith challenges Roberta's reference to the AI day-care supervisor Fred as "he" "harshly," as though policing the boundaries of personhood, Roberta responds first by dismissing her usage as a "figure of speech," but then by stating that "it's hard not to think of him--or, Fred, as a person" (Palwick 317). The sheer arbitrariness with which
these AI characters are tagged as gendered by those who support them, while simultaneously being attacked for their inherent lack of gender by those who oppose them, illustrates with almost nightmarish clarity Butler's claim that "there is no one who takes on a gender norm. On the contrary, this citation of the gender norm" inherent in naming and declaring a gender "is necessary in order to qualify as a one, to become viable as a one, where subject formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms" (Butler, *Bodies* 232). In depicting these impulses to oppose or embrace AI subjectivity in this way, the text shows these normative conceptions of gender to be reinscribed to the same normalizing end whether this reinscription is a calculated, hostile response to a perceived threat on the one hand, or simple convenience on the other.

The projection of supposedly definitive human frameworks of gender onto AIs, particularly the versions of this projection launched as a means of exclusion by characters such as Kevin and Meredith, is central to *Shelter*'s argument that gender binaries are relied upon too heavily, and have grown stagnant and limiting as markers of identity, because the gender binaries these anthropomorphic moves reinscribe are constructed to covertly exalt hegemonic masculinity. In suggesting this, I am not contending that simply acknowledging the differences in the ways humans and digital beings are "born" and "built" constitutes such a recapitulation. As Hayles makes clear, there are profound, indisputable differences between fleshly and coded beings that must be acknowledged in order to talk usefully about either group (Hayles, *Mother* 242). However, Meredith and Kevin's discourse does not merely acknowledge difference, but rather foregrounds and prioritizes it. Privileging the reproductive processes that separate humans from coded beings elevates such reproductive processes to a position that reinstates the primacy of the patriarchal father. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler points out the need to acknowledge that any (real-world, non-science-fictional) body exists in the material world and that the biological
facts of this materiality must be acknowledged, but that relying on discourses that privilege materiality as a means of measuring the cultural intelligibility of identity, as Meredith and Kevin do in differentiating themselves from their digital others, can perpetuate patriarchal narratives. Claims for the constructed nature of sex and gender do not, Butler maintains, "dispute the materiality of the body," but rather constitute an attempt to "establish the normative conditions under which the materiality of the body is framed and formed" (Butler, *Bodies* 17). Butler later expands on the pressure exerted by this framing, stating that "to invoke matter is to invoke a sedimented history of sexual hierarchy and sexual erasures," to return to a narrative of binaries that has historically been anchored to the concepts of maleness and femaleness, and, by extension, to the reinforcement of maleness as active, "the impenetrable penetrator," and femaleness as passive, "the invariably penetrated" (Butler, *Bodies* 49-50). "Biology," as Donna Haraway points out, is "political discourse," and Meredith and Kevin's insistence that AIs are mere objects based on their inability to reproduce sexually--an insistence that, in its appeal to materiality, inevitably perpetuates the programmatic gender binaries Butler identifies--makes this eminently clear in the simplest, most brute force way possible: by imagining the very fact of biology as a means of declaring oneself superior to one's other (Haraway, *Morphing* 203). The text positions Meredith and those who think like her as equating the possession of a biological form, and, by extension, of a sex and therefore some form of gendered identity, with inherent superiority, and with the assumption that she is a thinking being while AIs are merely "really fancy programs" (Palwick 127). Appeals to sexual reproduction as the most inalienably human of processes leap wholeheartedly into the essentializing trap Butler identifies as common when materiality is invoked in discussions of the gendered body, a trap that, *Shelter's* critique suggests, makes it all too easy for moves to identify genuine difference to lurch into attempts to police the normal based on reactionary tropes.
Attempts by characters such as Meredith to justify the maintenance of a division between human and AI based on the capacity to reproduce biologically also work to perpetuate the system of heteronormativity Butler describes as leading from the moment in which gender is declared, the moment in which "the girl is girled," to the heterosexual marriage ceremony and back again in a circle of normative reinforcement (Butler, *Bodies* 7, 231-2). Rich refers to this system as "compulsory heterosexuality," a phenomenon whereby "heterosexuality is presumed the sexual preference of most women, either implicitly or explicitly" (Rich, *Blood* 28). By making these comparisons to the systems Butler and Rich identify when the science fictional AIs I discuss are precisely neither heteronormative nor women, I mean that, without gender, AIs lack cultural intelligibility, despite gender, and particularly the capacity for heterosexual reproduction, being totally irrelevant to their existence as coded beings. Hayles identifies such implicitly heteronormative discourse as a common form of anthropomorphic projection in the real-world use and research of computational intelligence, highlighting a tendency to refer to a program as "giv[ing] birth" to an "evolving" simulation (Hayles, *Mother* 5). Similarly, Sims' virtual creatures are understood, within the narrative of the simulation, to "reproduce," passing on their "genotype," an excellent example of computational intelligence's creators shaping the narrative of its existence to conform to human norms (Hayles, *Mother* 200). In *Shelter*, we see a fleeting example of an AI itself being drawn into this shaping when Fred, the novel's principle AI character, refers to Preston, who "helped design [him]," as "my father" (Palwick 407). This imposition of heteronormative frames of reference illustrates that, regardless of the fact that their bodies are physically nonexistent databases of code--or, at most, sexually indeterminate metal shells--*Shelter*'s AIs are, in a sense, forcibly measured as honourary humans by the human characters who surround and make use of them, if only so that their inability to fit within the strictures of this norm can be used to disqualify them from personhood. By showing objections
to AI personhood to be focused in the negative, on what the AIs lack or cannot do, rather than on those capacities they have that humans do not, the novel solidifies the house's assessment that this anti-AI stance is a repetitive exercise in emphasizing what characters such as Kevin wish to hear, highlighting the degree to which these human characters, in order to construct AIs as non-persons, impose the most readily intelligible frames of humanity upon them. The novel's depiction of its science fictional future critiques the assumption that sexual reproduction must be a part of any intelligible life, if only as a means of instigation. In a move similar to *Midnight Robber*’s prediction that patriarchy may reoccur based on the persistence of norms of binary gender, *Shelter*’s critique also highlights the place this assumption of biological reproduction holds as one of the most ubiquitous norms of gender identity, and its power to continue to tacitly reaffirm the concepts of heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality if it is carried into the future.

I have argued that Palwick's novel critiques a tendency for Western society to cling to norms of binary gender by imagining beings for whom gender is meaningless, and forecasting that a society in which this stultification persists will be woefully unprepared to comprehend such beings as persons. The individual characters who argue for restricted views of personhood, most notably Meredith and Kevin, are portrayed as close-minded and focused on exclusionary criteria for subjectivity. However, moments in which the broader society *Shelter* depicts is shown to be inflexible or threatening due to its inability to move beyond these norms are also crucial to this critique. While such moments are not shown to reinscribe masculinity's dominance as aggressively as does *Midnight Robber*’s ostensibly equitable liberal feminist society, the rare moments of gender-based discrimination that *Shelter* depicts work to puncture the illusion of equality in the society the novel imagines. For example, norms of gender-specific behaviour retain potentially destructive links to narratives of dominant masculinity in *Shelter*’s future, a
point demonstrated sharply by Roberta's determination to avoid crying in public after her separation from her partner Dorothea because "a sobbing woman on the street is a target" (Palwick 383). These rare but persistent remnants of gender stereotypes extend into the domestic sphere through Meredith's mother Constance's identification of Preston's initial belief that "he was taking care of [his family] by making a lot of money," rather than by being present and engaged, as placing him within a "very old-fashioned" tradition, and the ridicule Meredith anticipates she may receive when she tells people her focus in university is "domestic ecology," a field she expects other characters to categorize disparagingly as a "Mrs. degree" (Palwick 180, 195). In the event, Meredith's choice of profession meets with no gender-based mockery, but her expectation that it will indicates that Shelter's future society, all its prayer to the "Goddess" aside, continues to impose expectations of both content and worth on "male" and "female" jobs. Meanwhile, late in the novel Roberta encounters a man she suspects may be "one of those dreadful people who believed that he'd be able to straighten her out" (Palwick 471). Though, as I have discussed briefly in my second chapter, homosexual relationships go unremarked upon by other characters for the most part, this re-emergence of heteronormativity, as sudden and unheralded as Roberta's momentary but intense fear for her safety if she is seen crying on the street, suggests that the continued privileging of binary gender and reproductive capacity allows the heteronormative messages Rich identifies as being directed at lesbian women in the 1980s (1986), that women are the "emotional and sexual property of men," to persist under the surface of Shelter's future (Rich, Blood 24). These few moments of patriarchal reiteration may at first appear jarringly anomalous within Shelter's framework of supposed equality. However, I read these moments as consequences of maintaining norms such as heteronormativity and the masculine-feminine binary as measurements of cultural intelligibility. In depicting such sudden eruptions of masculine privilege in an ostensibly equitable future, Shelter connects the gender
norms called upon to restrict personhood to the reoccurrence of patriarchal thought and action. Like Hopkinson's Nation Worlds, the society Palwick's novel forecasts based on current assumptions of equity and "post-feminism" remains shackled to retrograde concepts of the forms of gender identity that are culturally intelligible.

It would be disingenuous, however, to suggest that the material, embodied world that these appeals for the centrality of sexual reproduction gesture to can be discarded altogether as a point of reference for artificial intelligences. AIs have, after all, been designed precisely to assist and enhance humans embodied in flesh, both in Palwick's fiction and in the early twenty-first century out of which that fiction's imagined future grows. It will be helpful to return for a moment to the theoretical work surrounding computational intelligence with a specific focus on the material, as my understanding of Shelter's move to decouple existence as a material being from an automatic gendering as a central part of the novel's critique of norms of binary gender is informed by both Hayles' redefinition of materiality and by Haraway's vision of the cyborg. According to Hayles, a subset of AI researchers advocate eventual disembodiment, a position Hayles identifies as belonging to the "liberal humanist tradition" that views the body as nothing more than the mind's housing. This school of thought is represented by thinkers such as Hans Moravec, who has argued for a "postbiological future" in which humans will be able to "upload" their minds into the digital space (Hayles, Mother 2). Such an emphasis on the power of the masterful human mind to write itself anew within the digital sphere suggests a perspective as imbued with anthropomorphic projection as those that would see normative understandings of the masculine and feminine, and other socially constructed assumptions that appeal to the "natural" state of human materiality, reproduced in the digital space. Hayles later summarizes the problems inherent in this proposal's disregard for the particularities of embodiment in human flesh, including objections mounted by embodiment scholars such as Antonio Damasio, who
maintains that the mind is too intertwined with the human body for consciousness as we are familiar with it to arise outside that body (Hayles, *Mother* 191). Given how entangled intelligent machines are with the physical world, as devices that aid and enable the human body, it is hardly surprising that the wholly immaterial, "postbiological future" problematized by Damasio and Hayles has not come to pass. The body is one of the principle beneficiaries of AI enhancement--for instance, GPS programs inform us as to where we should direct our bodies, while widely-used dietary applications can, if desired, advise us as to what and how much these same bodies should ingest. Yet, as has already been illustrated within my analysis of Palwick's fiction by Meredith and Kevin's anthropomorphic insistence that AIs are disqualified as intelligible subjects because they do not reproduce sexually, privileging the human body that AIs have been designed to enhance is no more satisfactory a solution to the problem of anthropomorphic projection than is the anticipation of the disembodiment advocated by liberal humanist AI researchers.

Hayles' approach to artificial intelligence eschews the privileging of either extreme, be it embodiment or transcendent digitization, as the subject to the other's object. While she has not abandoned the insistence on human embodiment as something inherently valuable, and a state that cannot be transcended in the way Moravec and other liberal humanist futurists would have it be, evident in her earlier writings such as *How We Became Posthuman*, she maintains that the "complex dynamics of intermediation" between digital beings and beings of flesh are worthy of exploration as potentially positive forces, rather than rejecting digital forms of subjectivity as being by definition an encroachment on the idea of selfhood (Hayles, *Mother* 2, 242). In order to more successfully think this intermediation, Hayles repositions the meaning of "materiality" within her analysis. She reframes this concept as something that does not refer directly to the physical world in which the body is housed, but rather to the intersection of this physical environment and the process of meaning-making in the informational space, what she calls the
"junction between physical reality and human intention" (Hayles, *Mother 3*). Once materiality is reconsidered through this lens, it becomes an inevitable concern that intelligent machines must account for rather than a concept from which they are divorced, insofar as it serves as a link between these AIs and the human bodies they are programmed to interact with, both in science fictions such as *Shelter* and in the world outside these narrative spaces. This negotiation of a middle way between the physical and the digital that Hayles' redefinition of materiality allows for, a path that acknowledges that the physical and the digital are entangled while avoiding the wholesale projection of one upon the other, is further elaborated by Haraway's characterization of the cyborg, "a hybrid of machine and organism" (Haraway 7). Haraway expands on the intermediation between the flesh and the digital based on the latter's enabling of the former, stating that the increasingly blurred boundaries between "machine and organism" allow "machines [to] be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves" (Haraway 35-36). Both these scholars, Hayles implicitly and Haraway explicitly, take issue with the tendency in previous feminist scholarship, such as Rich's work, to, as Haraway puts it, "insist on the organic, opposing it to the technological"--though Haraway's own discourse perhaps exalts the machine too unreservedly, a point I will return to in the following chapter when discussing *Shelter*'s ambivalence regarding the computerized provision of care (Haraway 32). Each positions digital beings as coded tools that cannot be said to possess selves that operate in the same way as those of humans, yet are worthy of respect as entities that operate based on their own modes of coded thought to enhance human capacities.

This reframing of materiality as a point of intersection is relevant to *Shelter*'s critique of gender binaries because the rejection of AI selfhood expressed by characters like Meredith takes as its fundamental assumption the impossibility of such a link across the divide between the physical and the digital. Meredith's insistence that AIs lack gender, and therefore personhood, is
founded on her underlying assumption that they are not part of the embodied world's interconnected web, that they exist, as she puts it, "outside ecology" (Palwick 282). On the contrary, however, in keeping with Hayles' move to view materiality as a point of intersection, AIs' points of reference in Palwick's novel are shown to inevitably be material objects, for, whether they are, like Fred, programmed to supervise children, or to sort bed sheets, or simply to develop independently under scientific observation in MacroCorp's AI lab as part of the "organic knowledge experiment," they exist precisely to interact with the material world (Palwick 57, 194). Any AI, whether digitally constructed or translated from the uploaded memories of a human, can be impeded by material opposition, as when Kevin threatens to crush the bots the house deploys in an attempt to prevent him from going out into the storm to his death, and when the human researcher Dan Willem points out that, were MacroCorp to go bankrupt, the servers running Preston's consciousness would shut down and he would effectively cease to exist (Palwick 24, 283). Yet AIs can also take joy in interactions with the physical world, as when the house states that "[i]t like[s] caring about Kevin," and "[cannot] imagine doing anything else" (Palwick 23). Given that caring for Kevin is what the house is programmed to do, this absolute devotion might seem to suggest that AIs in Shelter's future merely act out their programming with no agency of their own, reflective of MacroCorp's desire to create artificially friendly, "purely benign," personable non-persons (Palwick 23, 95). It is, however, precisely through their interactions with physical space and with the humans who inhabit that space that these AIs discover a sense of self and identity. Fred's statement in conversation with Roberta that "[e]very night when you and the children leave, I miss you until you come back" asserts his capacity to emote and relate to the material world, prompting Roberta to re-evaluate her initial view of him as a tool that can be blamed if her decisions are questioned (Palwick 386, 379). Meanwhile, Kevin's death prompts the house to recognize, "with sudden and utter certainty," that
"[o]bedience [is] a function of its body, not its brain," that, while its programming as a "machine for living in" shapes its actions, there is room within this programming for agency and the forging of an active identity in relation to the physical world (Palwick 26). More negatively, the AIs that engineer the murder of Meredith's friend Raji as a means of driving MacroCorp away from investments that would see them replaced by more advanced systems reshape the material world for the sake of self-interest (Palwick 496-97). Hayles' repositioning of materiality as connective tissue between physicality and code, and Haraway's vision of cyberculture as an erosion of boundaries that often makes it difficult to tell "who makes and who is made" in relationships between human and machine, allows us to conceive of these AI characters as beings that have an experience of the material world without being embodied in flesh, an experience that, while not categorizable as "human," clearly prompts the formation of an identity (Haraway 35).

Clearly then, my contention that Shelter's AIs find gender irrelevant in the construction of their identities does not imply that Palwick's text envisions beings wholly lacking in materiality. However, Shelter's exposure of the flaws in Meredith's foundational anti-AI assumption that AIs are fundamentally disconnected from the world goes beyond simple refutation, imagining instead beings with the opportunity to forge identities for themselves within the material world that remain wholly non-gendered. Rather than discussing the irrelevance of gender to AI identity in so many words, Palwick's text enacts rhetorical shifts in its argument for the composition of the intelligible self, redirecting conversations regarding AI selfhood away from sex and gender in favour of other determinants. These reorientations, effected by both embodied human AI advocates and AIs such as Preston and the house, instead emphasize qualities such as AIs' capacity to feel fear, to act based on self-interest, to perpetrate "premeditated evil," and to conceive of themselves as "autonomous individuals" (Palwick 554, 496, 498, 221). Beyond these
identifiably self-aware mental traits, Preston points out that, as a being connected to the net at all times, he has a more visceral understanding of the doctrine of "interconnection" his society lives by, the belief that all people, objects, and actions are connected to all others, than do embodied humans, thereby making an unspoken claim for individual subjectivity lived non-normatively, inhumanly, in a way that makes no appeal to gender (Palwick 45, 124). The moment most emblematic of this shifting of the definitional ground away from gender in the formation of identity comes during a discussion between Meredith and Raji, an AI researcher at MacroCorp. As the two characters argue about the humanity of AIs, Raji produces the example of an AI who studies goldfish obsessively and then, having decided that it too is a goldfish, attempts to mate with one of them. This AI's thwarted impulse to participate in sexual reproduction might seem to support the centrality of this means of reproduction to intelligible forms of selfhood. However, challenged by Meredith, who demands "[a]re you telling me it's sacred because it tried to hump a goldfish? Are you telling me AIs have a drive to reproduce?," Raji responds by entirely bypassing Meredith's move to set reproductive capacity up in pride of place as a measurement for personhood, stating: "No, ... but they have a drive for experience, the same as we do. They want more information all the time. And they respond to information and experience with something that sure looks a lot like wonder" (Palwick 194). It is not the ability, or lack thereof, to appear as a sexed being that signifies personhood in this configuration, but rather the ability to seek out experience and information--indeed, presumably the discovery that its composition as a non-biological intelligence makes reproductive sex as defined by the male-female binary precisely unworkable for it contributes to the goldfish-obsessed AI's acquisition of information and thus its advent as a person. Shelter's AIs show reliance on recapitulations of masculine and feminine gender norms to be an obsolete means of establishing identity, illustrating in science-fictional terms Haraway's assertion that, in the age of the cyborg being, "[i]deologies of sexual
reproduction can no longer reasonably call on the notions of sex and sex roles as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families" (Haraway 21). AIs can, it is subtly reinforced, form selves, and selves that interact with the material world, without resorting to gender.

Shelter's embodied humans' inability to understand personhood without reference to some configuration of gender illustrates Butler's observation that sex, though constructed, is a construction "within whose necessities we live, without which life itself would be unthinkable" (Butler, Bodies 6). From Meredith's insistence on the fleshly embodiment that, for her, implies reproductive capacity, to the reflexive appeals to flimsy signifiers of gender by those born characters positively disposed toward AIs, to innocuous descriptions such as the categorization of Fred's voice as "androgynous," which invokes gender as a reference point even in its absence, the novel deploys many seemingly insignificant gestures to demonstrate how completely its human characters are compelled towards gendering as a way of understanding other beings (Palwick 315). As we have seen already in examining the tacitly heteronormative assumption of reproduction Hayles identifies as the narrative used to render AIs such as Sims' "Evolved Virtual Creatures" installation intelligible to audiences, the impulse to humanize computational beings that lies at the heart of anthropomorphic projection actively shapes not only how computational intelligences are reacted to by millions of daily users unfamiliar with code, it also shapes the ways these beings are constructed by their programmers in the first place. Hayles makes this further effect of projection clear when she points out that Sims' programs are presented to their observers as part of a readily categorizable narrative, as "creatures striving after a goal and winning against competitors, ... among the most canonical narratives in traditional accounts of evolutionary history, not to mention western capitalist society" (Hayles, Mother 199). AIs are not only used by narrative-bound humans, but also designed by them, and therefore, as Hayles puts it in reference to Sims' programs, "there is a sense in which we respond correctly, not mistakenly,
when we attribute desires to these virtual creatures, for everything about them has been crafted to ensure that such interpretations will occur” (Hayles, *Mother 200*). Gender is too central to human consciousness not to frame the ways *Shelter*’s born characters regard AIs in some form, but the novel shows this ascription to be inaccurate and irrelevant, inevitable though it may be, revealing these gender norms as inadequate to bear the weight many of the born characters place upon them. As the narrative contains no absolute arbiter of personhood, this irrelevance is never stated overtly within the text, but is illustrated by the repeated redirections of the conversation surrounding intelligible personhood away from gender and toward other indicators of subjectivity undertaken by characters such as Preston and Raji, as well as the sense of identity asserted by the AIs themselves, as indicated by the house's certainty that Kevin is incorrect about its emotional capacity, and Fred's unflappable statement that "I'll still be real" regardless of whether he is legally declared a person (Palwick 425). Though it depicts a future America wherein the norms of gender performance conform, for the most part, to filed-down, seemingly more egalitarian versions of those that persist in the early twenty-first century, Palwick's novel demonstrates the devastating irrelevance of these norms in the fashioning of personhood through highlighting their failure to signify in any useful way for the AIs who act as its principle novum.

By focusing North American society's persistent assumptions that biological sex determines gender, and that the possession of such an embodied, material gendered identity is a keystone of selfhood, through an extrapolative lens, Palwick's text suggests that this continued insistence on embodied gender as a criterion that makes a being's identity culturally intelligible renders the society that pursues it remarkably ill-equipped to cope with any being that does not live an identifiable gender. *Shelter*’s critique of the insistence on interpellation into heterosexual reproduction as a prerequisite for personhood is animated not by a concern that we are denying some element of personhood in our machines in the current, early twenty-first century moment.
Such a reading would rely on the strictly metaphorical interpretation of science fiction's critical capacity espoused by writers like Brian Aldiss and Le Guin. By the logic of metaphorical science fiction, *Shelter* would show us the ways in which the machines we live with now are already persons, and therefore already live gender non-normatively. If, however, Palwick's text is instead read as mixing the metaphorical with the extrapolative, as I advocate in my second chapter in response to Parrinder's call for a return to sf as prophecy, the novel can be seen to be interested not in direct metaphors, but rather in trajectories, in highlighting how destructively concretized Western society's criteria for "self" have become in its reliance on concepts such as sexual reproduction and the masculine-feminine binary. The AIs, then, are yet another prophetic metaphor, present in *Shelter*'s extrapolated future to highlight that future's persistent reiteration of current norms, and the danger this poses. The novel's deployment of AIs as science-fictional metaphors in its critique of the retrograde gender norms it sees persisting stolidly into the future is, like *Midnight Robber*'s use of the douens, focused not on redefining personhood on specific terms unthinkable for early twenty-first century humans, but on keeping the definitional process flexible.

Investigating the harm that can be done by establishing gender as an essential component of the subject forms a vital part of the novel's larger illustration of the ethical danger inherent in assuming the absence of personhood in other beings. Meredith's dismissal of Dan Willem's comparison of the struggle for AI rights to the Underground Railroad is emblematic of this broader concern in the novel's critique. In order to read this moment, I will step briefly away from the frame of reference provided by gender criticism into the field of scholarly work examining racialization, a frame of reference I will return to at greater length in my sixth and final chapter. Meredith's response to this moment of historicization, that "the slaves were already people, which is why other people didn't have the right to enslave them," is tellingly and
chillingly unaware of its roots in the process of de-humanization designed to render African prisoners "marketable as … docile slave[s] in the American colonies," reproducing precisely the same assumption of inhumanity systematically employed by slave-owners to justify their mistreatment of their slaves--by, among other things, "breeding" them like livestock (Palwick 282, hooks, Woman 19, 39). In this moment where past racialization and speculative future discourses of otherness come together, the text places us in a situation in which the personhood of an oppressed group is not a culturally-accepted obviousness and thus reminds us, through Meredith's reflexive, disdainful dismissal of Willem's historicization of AI enslavement, how easily such discourses of colonialism can repeat themselves. In short, by historicizing the argument over AI personhood with an assertion that it reiterates broader processes of dehumanization, the novel also historicizes Meredith's readiness to deny AIs personhood.

Meanwhile, when speaking of Kevin's death, his house system maintains that "[Kevin] said I didn't really care; he said I'd just been programmed to think I cared, and maybe that's true, but I still cared the best I could" (Palwick 32). Irrespective of whether the house's impression that it has emotions reflects the reality of its code, its declaration that it aspires to having feelings, to caring the best it can, immediately places the novel's born characters in a position in which to deny this aspiration, to attempt to impose some measurable line separating false emotionality from true emotionality, does violence to the house. Shelter advocates an approach to AI personhood that, contrary to Kevin's and Meredith's approaches, assumes that, if there is any reasonable possibility that personhood is present, then operating as though this personhood is a certainty is the only ethical way to proceed.

There is some precedent in feminist sf for this assertion of the artificial being's right to be treated as a human based on ethical distinctions, rather than on the dimensions of personhood conceptually and technologically viable at the moment of writing, stretching back to C. L.
Moore's "No Woman Born," in which the robotic protagonist argues for her humanity unreservedly (Hollinger 127). However, for the most part the process of drawing lines between "organism and machine" has long been, in Haraway's words, "a border war" in the realms of real-world production as well as in the imagination (Haraway 8). Numerous more widely popular science fictions, including the well-known Terminator and Matrix films, reinforce the binary between human as subject and machine as object vigorously, thus perpetuating the "implication that subjects have the right to dominate objects" (Hayles, Mother 242-43). Palwick's text, however, insists that it would be an ethical failure not to afford any being that claims an emotional response the respect given to a viable subject, even if no absolutely incontrovertible proof that it is in fact such a subject can be produced. The necessity of affording any such being respect must extend, Shelter suggests, as far as possible--with the exception, perhaps, being the purely mechanical industrial robots and "endlessly patient" "CuteBots" for children, which are categorized as distinct from AIs (Palwick 95). For example, while all AIs are definitely shown not to possess equal computational intelligence, as made clear when Zephyr describes Mr. Clean as containing "a really rudimentary AI chip," this same explanation is immediately followed by an invocation of Mr. Clean's personality in the form of "his" shyness (Palwick 389). In the same moment, Zephyr speculates that the reason for this shyness is a desire on the part of Mr. Clean's programmers to accommodate humans who are frightened of bots. She still insists, however, that his reticence itself, programmed for human convenience or not, is sufficient reason not to force him into contact with people, acknowledging the fact that Mr. Clean is a machine constructed for human use while simultaneously maintaining the imperative to respect, to approach the AI as, in Haraway's words, an "intimate componen[t]" (Palwick 389, Haraway 36). Despite the evidence that suggests coded beings may be incapable of developing consciousness as humans understand the term, Hayles acknowledges that, "with the advent of emotional computing, evolutionary
algorithms, and programs capable not only of learning, but of reprogramming themselves, ... it no longer seems fantastic that artificial minds may someday achieve self-awareness and even consciousness," and it is this openness to shifts in the ways subjectivity and, particularly, gender might be lived that Palwick's feminist critique promotes (Hayles, *Mother* 191-92). Palwick's approach is prophetic in its speculations regarding the further development of the scientific field of artificial intelligence and the social ramifications this development might have, as well as in its projection of the stagnant values of its present onto this imagined future, but metaphorical in its use of AI characters to stress test these norms of personhood and find them inadequate. *Shelter*'s feminist work is not to propose a specific remedy for our increasingly sedimented normative conceptions of gender, but to point out that if we are not able to re-evaluate what constitutes personhood, denials of subjectivity akin to the harmful discourse invoked against enslaved peoples and unconsciously echoed by Meredith might be recapitulated, and that stagnating norms of gender performance are central to our inability to keep our definitions of personhood suitably flexible.
"And that was that for mother love": Troubling and Reasserting Norms of Maternal and Technologized Care

In the two preceding chapters, I have maintained that Palwick's and Hopkinson's feminist science fictions project forward versions of current twenty-first century norms as the foundations of the ostensibly more equal gender dynamics their futures are built on, in order to demonstrate and critique the social stagnation that relying on these retrograde understandings of gender can cause. As I move toward the end of my exploration of Shelter's and Midnight Robber's extrapolations and critique of twenty-first century gender norms, I will close by examining one such norm at length, specifically the concept of the maternal feminine. Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts go to considerable lengths to discomfort this trope, both by imagining care-givers who are not traditionally "feminine" or "maternal" and by highlighting the potential for acts of nurturing to be incorporated into the regulatory care provided by the patriarchal state. Yet these novels are not willing to discard the maternal altogether. This insistence on the value of maternity certainly complicates my claim that these texts critique extant gender norms in their moments of publication--especially in Shelter's case, since I have been arguing that Palwick's text depreciates the importance of gender as a concept altogether. I will, however, close the chapter by exploring the possibility that the reaffirmation of the maternal may be a progressive move within the specific context of feminist science fiction, rather than a reactionary one.

In keeping with the resistance to positioning any single understanding of gender as essential to personhood evident in Midnight Robber's radical feminist portrayal of the douen and Shelter's emphasis on gender's irrelevance to AI identity, both texts work to separate the capacity
to nurture others from the assumption that such nurturing is the province of those who identify as female or biologically maternal. As Anatol points out in her examination of motherhood in *Midnight Robber*, "Granny Nanny and Eshu the house computer, the robotic minder, Nursie [a human], and ... Benta [a douen] all prove better equipped to mother Tan-Tan than Ione," despite the fact that none of them are biologically related to her and most are either alien or technological (Anatol 116). Nursie and the Eshu exert far more influence over Tan-Tan's day-to-day life on Toussaint than does Ione, and when she finds herself exiled to New Half-Way Tree Tan-Tan misses them just as much as her mother (Hopkinson 26, 30, 108). Meanwhile, Benta provides discipline and physical comfort far more effectively than Ione, and Granny Nanny attempts to continue protecting Tan-Tan in exile, dispatching the Eshu through the dimension veil to New Half-Way Tree to reconnect Tan-Tan's son Tubman to the 'Nansi Web, whereas, as Anatol points out, Tan-Tan's own parents either ignore or actively endanger her (Hopkinson 264, 283, 327, Anatol 112). Chichibud, Tan-Tan's male douen surrogate parent, is also shown to offer her care in ways that Ione cannot or does not. While Tan-Tan turns to the female Benta for physical comfort more often, it is Chichibud who provides both physical and emotional care during her initial escape to the douens' home, guiding her "soothingly" through their flight from the human settlement of Junjuh in the aftermath of Antonio's death, and coaching her sensitively through the eating of a raw tree frog that initiates her into douen culture (Hopkinson 169-70, 185). The nurturing influences that shape and foster an individual are diverse, Hopkinson's text suggests, and may not necessarily include care provided by a biological mother.

Hopkinson's depiction of the Daddy Tree, the home of Chichibud and Benta's douen community, subverts assumptions regarding where care and nurture will stem from even more aggressively, particularly when contrasted against Granny Nanny, the vigilant--and, by consensus, feminine--guardian whose great nanotech web perpetually monitors all Toussaint's
citizens. Named for Papa Bois, a "semi-divine" male defender of forest creatures in Caribbean tradition, the Daddy Tree certainly fulfills the role of the "breadwin[ing]" provider Connell identifies as a common feature of family-oriented masculinity since the industrialization of the nineteenth century (Pradel 147, Hopkinson 179, Connell 28). However, the Daddy Tree inhabits this role in a manner that evokes what Rich refers to as "the stereotype of the mother whose love is unconditional" (Rich, Born 23). This massive tree, large enough to accommodate numerous douen homes amid its branches, provides the douen both food and water by allowing its charges to take shelter within its vastness and "[tap] into [its] own food systems" (Hopkinson 195). The Daddy Tree gives care in a distinctly anti-patriarchal way, despite being a monolithic structure within which the douens literally carve out a livable environment in the form of homes and handholds, since, as Heather Shaw notes, it offers food and shelter "without asking anything in return," allowing the douens to reshape its trunks and canopies in whatever way suits them best (Hopkinson 189, Shaw qtd. in Anatol 120). This continuous, passive giving is very unlike the care offered by the douens themselves, which places demands on Tan-Tan's empathy and restrictions on her movements for her own safety (Hopkinson 264). While the tree has less to offer Tan-Tan, whose waste poisons the grubs that form an important part of the Daddy Tree's self-contained ecosystem and who cannot eat many of the tree's food sources, such as raw frog eggs, her douen family relies upon it as an endlessly bountiful source of shelter and sustenance that places no price on their use of its resources (Hopkinson 214, 212). Rather than any form of patriarchy, this continuous provision of food and shelter recalls the unconditional affection Rich identifies as the stereotypical province of the idealized mother, yet the douens, who mourn and thank the Daddy Tree as "a dead parent" rather than a simple refuge when circumstances force them to cut it down, discomfort this assumption by branding their home with the male pronoun (Hopkinson 277). By contrast, as Jillana Enteen points out, "overt defiance" of the nominally
female Granny Nanny and the laws she enforces "results in immediate expulsion" (Enteen 275). Nanny, while she is dedicated to maintaining peace and safety on Toussaint, does not, unlike the Daddy Tree, provide this care unconditionally, insofar as she gently but firmly demands absolute obedience from those who shelter within her web. *Midnight Robber* works to denaturalize preconceptions regarding the forms care-givers will take, destabilizing the assumption that society's primary nurturers will inevitably be maternal, feminine figures.

Palwick's *Shelter*, too, imagines beings who take the provision of care as their foremost purpose in life without identifying as feminine, thus discomforting the normative conception of the family that positions women as, in Lee Sanders Comer's words, "housewife, mother, ... and emotional support of men and children" (qtd. in Rich, *Born* 54). Specifically, *Shelter* constructs its science-fictional, genderless, "androgynous" AIs as effective care-givers in many contexts. In her argument for the subversive power of the cyborg, Haraway takes Rich, as well as other radical feminists, to task for "insist[ing] on the organic, opposing it to the technological," in the process "perhaps restrict[ing] too much what we allow as a friendly body" (Haraway 31). In effect, Haraway accuses Rich of performing the same privileging of biological embodiment that leads Palwick's protagonist Meredith to value sexual reproduction as a determinant of personhood, in spite of Rich's opposition to the presentation of reproduction as an imperative when it is deployed in support of the misogynist view of women as important primarily for their reproductive capacity (Rich, *Born* xvi). Palwick's fiction tests this repositioning of the cyborg as a "friendly body," discomforting the divide between the cold, mechanical sphere of the machine and the warm, welcoming, (and frequently feminized) sphere of the nurturing home, which Rich has described as an "unrealistic ... dangerous archetype," by imagining cyborgs who actively seek to inhabit this space of nurturing care (Rich, *Born* 52). Amid cogent concerns regarding the financial exclusivity of "corporate day cares," Rich objects to such institutions on the grounds
that they "are weighted more towards technology than towards respect and caring for the individual" (Rich, *Born* xxxiii). *Shelter* expands the potential sources of care by envisioning Fred, the constant AI care-giver at the futuristic corporate day care KinderkAIr, as in many ways performing the role of children's care-giver as effectively as a human adult, extrapolating a radical decoupling of "respect and caring for the individual" from even so seemingly fundamental a requirement as human embodiment. Roberta points out that Fred, as a digital being, "never gets tired, never loses his patience, never raises his voice," and also that his computational memory allows him to remember children's previous actions and craft teaching moments very effectively (Palwick 316). Fred's later incarnation as Kevin's house system, meanwhile, considers the provision of care and shelter central to its being, and "couldn't imagine doing anything else" (Palwick 23). This impulse to nurture extends beyond the house's programmed imperative to care for Kevin into a more general desire to shelter those in need that encompasses the homeless Henry, who the house protects from the violent storm in which Kevin dies (Palwick 30). As Roberta states upon finding Henry sheltering in the house, "want[ing] someone to take care of," a state of mind most often attributed to women in domestic situations by the most retrograde stereotypes of women's place in the nuclear family, is central to this entirely genderless being's self-perception (Palwick 555). Without ever addressing the stereotype directly, *Shelter*’s speculative proposal that AIs might be engineered to provide care, and provide it well, works to loosen the conceptual ties binding femininity to the role of the care-giver.

Though I have already addressed the question of whether *Shelter* depicts AIs as investing emotionally in their relationships with humans in the previous chapter, when discussing the novel's insistence that they be treated as ethically equivalent to humans, it deserves to be expanded on here. Many of the moments I have already discussed while exploring Palwick's approach to AI personhood also, by extension, argue urgently for the need to accept AIs as
providers of a valid form of care, particularly Kevin's house's realization that it is a caring being above and beyond its programming. However, one of Roberta and Fred's conversations about their illegal, conspiratorial attempts to care for Meredith's son Nicholas addresses this issue even more directly. In weary frustration, Roberta questions Fred's capacity for care, reminding him that "you're a machine. What the fuck do you know about faith or love or kindness? At least Preston used to be human. You've never been human. So how can you know what those words even mean?" (Palwick 421). Fred responds by stating that "I know what they mean because people" (including Roberta and the children at KinderkAIr) "tell me what they mean," positioning caring as learned behaviour rather than the inalienable province of traditionally-embodied humanity (Palwick 421). Another moment that closely follows this conversation drives home the novel's position that the capacity to provide care is not inherently confined to humans equally forcefully, if less bluntly. As Roberta continues to discuss Nicholas' situation with Fred, she finds it increasingly difficult to view her responses as qualitatively unlike his, attempting to convince herself that "Fred [is] just a machine," but finding that this leads her inevitably to the conclusion that she herself is "just a bag of biological fluids controlled by electrical impulses" (Palwick 425). This recognition defuses the suggestion that AIs cannot "truly" care not by reiterating AIs' skills as care-givers, but by showing the emotionality that drives humans to nurture to be a response every bit as mechanical as AI programming. If, these scenes suggest, AIs are to be regarded as persons not only ethically but also functionally in that both humans and AIs are beings driven by coding, albeit very different coding, then the capacity to care for and nurture other beings cannot continue to be thought of as an exclusively human ability. To be sure, the genuinely nurturing AIs Shelter proposes remain pure fantasy in the early twenty-first century, yet by positing that artificial intelligence might one day evolve to a point at which it can
nurture other beings, *Shelter* quietly furthers the feminist work of destabilizing the assumption that women are inextricably attached to the role of care-giver and emotional support.

Amidst these attempts both novels make to sever the stereotypical connection between the act of care-giving (especially though not exclusively of children) and feminine social positions, however, they also invite us to consider the potential that the surveillance-based technologies they extrapolate in order to imagine this upsetting of the norms of care will themselves be deployed in support of patriarchy, as they have been in the past and are now. In Hopkinson's novel, this patriarchal care manifests itself in one of the same locations as does the novel's work to upend assumptions regarding feminine care-givers, specifically in Granny Nanny. Given the Nanny network's focus on ensuring the health of the community and "[keeping] people's actions to one another respectful," and the parameters that dictate only information Nanny judges crucial to the community's safety be released, this apparatus at first appears actively anti-patriarchal (Hopkinson 10, 36, 50). Enteen interprets Nanny in this way, arguing that she represents a specifically Caribbean vision of anti-patriarchal, technological governance, "coexist[ing] with the planet and the population," rather than seeking to accrue power, and tolerant of dissenting perspectives, in deference to the historical struggle for freedom endured by the Caribbean societies out of which Toussaint has grown (Enteen 272, 275).

Curiously, however, Enteen's argument for Nanny's benevolence ignores the violent reshaping of Toussaint. This process is couched in intensely patriarchal terms, with humanity's initial arrival on Toussaint described as "like God entering he woman; plunging into the womb of soil to impregnate the planet with the seed of Granny Nanny" (Hopkinson 2). This description, which positions Nanny as a force imposing herself on Toussaint in penetrative fashion in order to create an ideal world for her human charges, inextricably intertwines patriarchal dominance with colonial discourse.
While I will reserve most of my exploration of Granny Nanny's re-enactment of colonialism for the following chapter, the intersections between her statuses as a tool of colonization and as a care-giving machine are most relevant now, during this discussion of technological nurturing. Nanny's reshaping of Toussaint combines Western colonialism's view of land as, in Linda Tuhiwai Smith's words, "something to be tamed and brought under control," with the symbolic equation of such land with the female body that Anne McClintock has identified as common in imperialist discourse throughout the nineteenth century, clearly mapping the connection between the Nation Worlds' colonial drive and patriarchal tendencies (Smith 51, McClintock in Rieder 47). Tan-Tan herself exposes the conflation of patriarchal ownership on the personal level with the colonizing mindset that prompts the Marryshow Corporation to violate the planet it wishes to claim on the macrocosmic scale, stating that Antonio, in abusing her, "was forever trying to plant me, like I was his soil to harvest" (Hopkinson 260). Anatol has suggested "that *Midnight Robber* shifts the sociopolitical gender dynamic in the case of Toussaint's colonization since the seed that is sewn is not male sperm, but rather the life-giving force of a female entity" (Anatol 113). However, Nanny's actions are so thoroughly framed by the language of masculine dominance that the mode of care she offers remains inextricably linked to the penetrative, patriarchal power of the state. It is, after all, Nanny's human programmers in the Marryshow Corporation, rather than Nanny in and of herself, who "sink them Earth Engine Number 127 down into" Toussaint, deploying the all-powerful Nanny as a tool that allows them to forge a violently exploitative cyborg link with the planet they have come to colonize (Hopkinson 2). Where Enteen claims that Granny Nanny's simultaneous toleration of minor resistance and willingness to immediately exile any who flout the system overtly constitutes a refusal of the conventions that ask a text to "endeavour to achieve consistency," reading Nanny as an agent of the Marryshow Corporation's quietly patriarchal social order
renders the severe punishment defiance is met with entirely consistent with the vigorous but submerged perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity's power in the society of the Nation Worlds (Enteen 275). Despite her largely positive, peacekeeping role in Toussaint's society, Granny Nanny's status as a colonizing machine positions her firmly as an instrument of resurgent patriarchy.

*Shelter*, meanwhile, imagines a future in which technologically-empowered, society-wide patriarchy makes itself felt through active policing of individuals' emotional states and desires to nurture others. Most notably, following her conviction for conspiring with Fred to protect the secret of Nicholas' dangerous mental instability, Roberta is diagnosed with "excessive altruism" (Palwick 39). The medical establishment in the novel's future considers this a psychiatric disorder potentially warranting treatment through invasive gene therapy that alters the "afflicted" person's neural chemistry to bring their desire to help others in line with the level of selflessness deemed socially acceptable (Palwick 40). Roberta lives under threat of such therapy, a targeted version of the chemically诱导的总麻醉 known as "brainwiping" used to remove Nicholas' psychosis, and conducts her private life under constant surveillance meant to evaluate her actions precisely for signs of caring too much (Palwick 45). Similarly but more severely, the legal system responds to Meredith's complaints regarding the homeless man Henry's "clandestine friendship" with her son, which she launches as part of an attempt to protect Nicholas from wiping, by brainwiping him in turn, a procedure from which he never recovers mentally (Palwick 336, 36). Meredith herself, while her privileged status presumably protects her from any serious threat of medical renormalization, is preyed upon by public media for exceeding socially-acceptable extremes of grief for her murdered friend and former lover, Raji (Palwick 230). Roberta identifies the weight of this public judgment, noting that both she and Meredith are "slapped with psychiatric diagnoses by ScoopNet [a ubiquitous tabloid] ... even before actual
doctors get involved” (Palwick 85). Fred, meanwhile, in keeping with Arthur Croaker’s point that the ever-expanding use of the online "data archive" for security purposes "sweeps away traditional civil liberties as technologically, which is to say politically, irrelevant," must contend with MacroCorp's constant recording of his every action at the KinderkAIR facility during school hours (Palwick 386, Croaker 69). Though Fred actively works around MacroCorp's surveillance of the ways he, Roberta, and Preston attempt to help Nicholas emotionally, participation in this monitoring, behind which lurks the threat of renormalizing brainwipe treatment, is woven through his code as a being designed to survey and record in ways he cannot control without risking erasure by his owners at MacroCorp--a fate he ultimately inflicts on himself in an attempt to protect Roberta and Nicholas (Palwick 487). As a "prototype" child-care system owned by MacroCorp, created as a result of the company's vast wealth and dependent on it for his continued existence, Fred is a living--if not breathing--speculative illustration of the extent to which the same non-gendered technological beings who have such potential to evolve to highlight the irrelevance of stagnated narratives of the "masculine" and "feminine" are often of necessity entangled with the corporate patriarchal establishment most concerned with perpetuating these norms (Palwick 371). The stereotypically feminized spheres of care-giving and emotionality are quietly but firmly policed in Palwick's future America, with punishment for extreme transgression of these norms being radical renormalization that, in effect, constitutes the erasure of the self by the hegemonic state.

The speculations undertaken in Hopkinson's and Palwick's novels elaborate on an existing connection between masculine social privilege and the control of technological advancement, envisioning the chilling future development of trends that have already been identified in the moments in which these texts are written. Numerous scholars have highlighted the deeply-embedded associations between computer technology and male power, either directly
or via the tendency for the corporate structures often controlled by hegemonic masculinity to both drive and benefit from the proliferation of such technology. In the matter of technology's deployment as a means of reinforcing hegemonic masculinity, Connell suggests that middle-class male bodies "now find their powers spectacularly amplified" by the deployment of competitive concepts of power in the sale of computer hardware and software and the transformation of the "cybernetic" sphere of technical work into a place of aggressive expertise (Connell 56). Sandra Harding reinforces Connell's conclusion that masculinity and technological expertise are often artificially constructed as being in some way inextricably linked, calling out the use of computers as one of several skills many women are assumed not to possess in her examination of the ways "[d]ominant social relations can make real many aspects of the worlds that they desire" (Harding 120). Hayles and Croaker, meanwhile, point to the frequent uses of ubiquitous computing technology as a means by which, respectively, capitalist corporate actors and the surveillance apparatus employed by the state can maximize their ability to shape and define individuals' life experiences (Hayles, *Mother* 9, Croaker 69). Haraway defines the cyborg as "a hybrid of machine and organism," and thus science-fictional artificial intelligences such as Fred and Granny Nanny are in a sense not truly cyborg, as they lack organic components (Haraway 7). However, in their interfaces with the embodied humans to whom they provide care, these machines play a crucial part in transforming these fleshly characters themselves into cyborgs--"earbugs," for instance, provide Toussaint's citizens direct communication with their house Eshus (and thus with Granny Nanny), while Meredith's blood harbours "biotechnology" that constantly broadcasts her location to MacroCorp (Hopkinson 5, Palwick 126).

According to Haraway, the cyborg is by its nature "oppositional, utopian" (Haraway 9). She is certainly willing to acknowledge that, as she herself puts it, "[t]he main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal
capitalism, not to mention state socialism," thus giving a fair hearing to the associations between technological advance and exploitative patriarchy identified by scholars such as Connell, Harding, Hayles, and Croaker (Haraway 10). However, she then discounts the extent to which these associations limit the cyborg's subversive, feminist capacity, insisting that "illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential" (Haraway 10). As my exploration of Midnight Robber and Shelter's uses of science-fictional beings, many of whom form distinctly cyborg-esque connections with the traditionally embodied characters around them, to vigorously discomfort gendered norms of living and caring throughout this chapter demonstrates, I whole-heartedly agree with Haraway's assessment of the cyborg as a type of being that provides vital insight into the possible makeup of a "post-gender world" (Haraway 9). The cyborg has the potential to give us a framework within which to ask, as Haraway puts it, "[w]hy should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?" (36). However, reading Granny Nanny and the oppressive state-operated care system imagined in Shelter as extrapolative visions of the ways patriarchy might reassert itself via technologies for the provision of society-wide care also suggests that Haraway may be dismissing cyborg technology's entanglement with patriarchal structures too quickly and too completely. Even if cyborgs' connections to militaristic governmental hegemony are, as Haraway proclaims, not inherent parts of their status as cyborgs, the roles they play in Hopkinson's and Palwick's fictionalized futures illustrate the difficulty in extracting these care-giving machines from the patriarchal institutions whose material resources have, after all, been instrumental in bringing them into being.

In both these sf texts, however, the same technologies that enforce normalizing care and surveillance can also enable the forging of positive connections between individuals, an ability these narratives celebrate. Though Hopkinson and Palwick's novels and the unrecognizably
gendered science-fictional characters they envision are invested in overturning the assumptions that tie women to specific social roles, emphasizing the significance of the "emotional labour" most often performed by women as facilitated by technologies of connection allows these texts to value the sort of work that women have often done, without making an argument that they ought to be responsible for doing that work exclusively (Harding 161). This insistence on the worth of emotional work is a particularly necessary move to make in sf, a field still working to recover from assumptions by male readers in the early years of its development that women "had no place in the logical, scientific, cerebral topos of sf" other than as romantic partners for masculine heroes, and in which feminist expansions of the genre's canvas often address the vital importance of things such as everyday domestic activity, child-care, and communication in their speculative constructions (Merrick, Secret 37, Donawerth qtd. in Merrick, Secret 239). In Midnight Robber, Granny Nanny, the technological being employed so vigorously to the benefit of the patriarchal Marryshow Corporation, is portrayed as a positive connective force when she dispatches Tan-Tan's eshu through the dimension veil to connect Tan-Tan's child Tubman permanently to the "Grand Anansi Web" (Hopkinson 328). Though Nanny is an instrument of patriarchal conquest, in forging her connection with Tubman she acts as a nurturing presence, with her emissary the eshu reassuring the child throughout his delivery that "I go be with you the whole time" (Hopkinson 1). In Shelter, meanwhile, the sense of MacroCorp and the medical establishment's scrutiny of care and emotion as a threatening imposition is complicated by the conclusion that both Roberta and Meredith reach that brainwiping was indeed the only option in Nicholas' case (Palwick 565, 570). As in Midnight Robber, the cyborg technologies that so profoundly alter the ways people can relate to one another in Shelter's future are valued situationally throughout the novel. These technologies can be deployed to enforce normative standards of behaviour, giving rise to a culture in which, while the "interconnection" of all living
beings is taken as a mantra, many people "think wiping is helping," in which Roberta is threatened with the possibility that the medical establishment will "turn [her] into a different person" if her efforts to abide by its standards of normalcy are unsatisfactory (Palwick 410, 492). Though this social apparatus is never explicitly identified as patriarchal, I suggest that its emphasis on measured self-sufficiency encourages the distant, patriarchal vision of oneself as a family's provider that Meredith's mother Constance identifies in Preston when she states that 
"[h]e thought he was taking care of us by making a lot of money. In some ways, your father's very old-fashioned" (Palwick 180). However, these same technologies are depicted positively when employed as facilitators of connection, as the only way Nicholas can connect with a family and "make friends" (Palwick 570). While both Midnight Robber and Shelter expose the code-deep link between patriarchy and technologically-advanced caring machines as perhaps more persistent than Haraway suggests, and this link remains an important qualifier to keep in mind when envisioning the ways these machines and advanced procedures might help overturn gendered narratives of care, the technologies (and differently-gendered beings) associated with this societal care can also foster connection, and are by no means inherently patriarchal. 

Finally, in a continuation of the attempts I have just identified in Hopkinson's and Palwick's work to balance and enhance the texts' feminist critiques of norms that assume specific gender roles constitute women's natural state with portrayals of the work women have long done and continue to do, partially as a result of these norms, as worthy and valuable, both narratives insist on the relevance of the physically-embodied, biological mother figure. Anatol claims of Midnight Robber that the novel, and particularly Tan-Tan's admonishment to the hapless Alyosius' abusive mother not to "wear [love] out" demonstrates that "love can erode," that "ties between biological parents and children are neither inherent nor eternal" (Hopkinson 245, Anatol 118). I wholeheartedly agree with this assessment. As Anatol points out, Tan-Tan's own mother
Ione "views Tan-Tan more as an object that belongs to her than as a human being," and is consistently shown to be a poor provider of maternal care (Anatol 115-16). Ione refuses to play with her child, not wanting to "bother up sheself with stupidness," remains physically distant, at one point refusing a hug because it would "rample up me gown," and, on those occasions when she does express physical affection, touches the child "just a little bit too hard" (Hopkinson 33, 21, 48). The text specifically mentions that Ione often resorts to technological solutions to parenting problems, stating that, "[a]s soon as she pushed the baby out of her, Ione took one look at it, and shouted at Antonio to activate the wet-nurse, purchased to help Ione with the breastfeeding. The midwife Babsie took the baby, held it out for Ione to give it one dry kiss on the tiny cheek, and that was that for mother love" (Hopkinson 46). As thoroughly as these moments illustrate the text's unwillingness to exalt motherhood as a state that inherently leads to an ineffably significant bond with a child, the text's emphasis on Ione as not merely uninterested in her child but actively neglectful seems to position her lack of parenting skills as a failing on her part, as something to be eyed with a degree of disapproval, strongly suggesting that *Midnight Robber* continues to place some weight on the biological maternal role. Even more significantly, as part of her Robber Queen persona's verbal patter, which gives her strength as she confronts Janisette at the end of the novel, Tan-Tan claims the role of "Maroon Granny; meaning Nana, mother, caretaker to a nation," invoking the name of Nanny of the Maroons, "a historical resistance leader of pre-emancipation Jamaica" who is often positioned as a mother to the Jamaican people (Hopkinson 320, Anatol 112). Tan-Tan, though she has previously been unable to contemplate carrying her child to term, now draws power from her position as a mother (Hopkinson 236). This trajectory is confirmed moments later, as it is by internally claiming her own motherhood, by asserting to herself that "[t]he) damned pickney [is] hers," not Antonio's, that Tan-Tan frees herself from the guilt she feels for killing Antonio in self-defense (Hopkinson
While, as Anatol illustrates, biological parent-child relationships are shown to be no straightforward guarantee of significant connection in *Midnight Robber*, they are still positioned as relationships that should, ideally, be significant and worthy of preservation.

Palwick’s *Shelter* retains the physical in general, and the maternal in specific, as a vital element of care even more definitively than does *Midnight Robber*. As I have illustrated above, Fred is depicted as a patient and loving nurturer unlike, but no less able or caring than, a physically-embodied human. Yet Fred himself identifies the limitations inherent in providing care without a physical, organic body, explaining to Roberta that there are important elements of child-care, such as physical affection, that he cannot provide for Nicholas in the child’s moment of greatest need (Palwick 478). The text constructs such interactions with physically-embodied loved ones as essential from its opening moments, in which the young Roberta, under quarantine during her battle with the disease known as CV and thus isolated from her parents, "want[s] to be hugged by arms she [knows], not by terry-cloth-covered bots, or by doctors in spacesuits, ... want[s] her mother, her mother's skin and her mother's smell" (Palwick 11). Both Meredith's mother Constance and Raji's father reinforce this reintegration of the physical not in preference to but alongside the digital; Raji’s father states that having a child provides a vital reassurance that "the chain [is] going to go on," while Constance maintains vigorously that both online and corporeal existence "matter," and that she will not be able to find happiness as a translated being if she is not certain that "part of me [is] alive in the world too," through her children (Palwick 187, 181). Given the work I have argued Palwick and Hopkinson's narratives do to denaturalize the notion of the care-giver as female (and feminine) by default, this recuperation of the maternal and the physical would at first glance seem particularly counterproductive. However, this reaffirmation of biological parenthood's import does not constitute uncritical glorification of the kind McRobbie describes in her discussion of the recent
rallying of real-world maternal, domestic femininity as a stronghold for "middle-class family values" (McRobbie 132-3). Rather, the insistence that the roles nurturers play in their societies be acknowledged continues Palwick's and Hopkinson's feminist revisions of the often intensely masculinist science fiction field specifically. Despite sf's supposed ability to act as a thought-provoking lens through which to explore difference, early, male-dominated sf suffers from a marked tendency to focus on "the orderly, knowable universe and the place of the scientifically-minded man within it," shaped by the vision of influential figures in the genre's history such as Campbell in the 1940s, and more recent sf authors react within a field in which such "masculine" writing has been overtly positioned by early sf luminaries such as E. E. Doc Smith as a superior sort of work enjoyed by a mentally advanced type of reader (Attebery, Magazine 39, Roberts 55-56). In responding to this tendency not only by deploying science-fictional constructions to defamiliarize gender norms such as the masculine-feminine binary, the importance of sexual reproduction, and the assumption that women will undertake emotional work, but also by valuing the tasks most often attributed to women, authors such as Palwick and Hopkinson recognize, in Merrick's words, "the disruptive potential of locating the ‘women's sphere’ as central in a genre that privilege[s] science, space travel or heroic quests" (Merrick, Gender 246). Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts reaffirm the importance of biological motherhood and physically-embodied caregiving to the extent necessary not to naturalize such nurturing as the sphere to which women specifically are essentially suited, but rather to assert that such issues of social health, stereotypically understood as "feminine" concerns, have a place in science fiction.
Chapter VI

"Indigenous fauna, now extinct": Doubled Colonialism

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that Palwick's and Hopkinson's depictions of the future mix extrapolative prophecy and metaphor in order to critique early twenty-first century norms of gender identity. Analyzing sf narratives as both metaphors and extrapolations is relatively uncommon in sf scholarship, which developed as a field of study as part of the "redefinition of science fiction as metaphor" in the 1970s, and so has often been deeply invested in metaphorical readings of the genre (Parrinder 28). I have read these narratives as constructing and critiquing future societies in which the assumption that gender equality has been achieved masks a continued reliance on retrograde, even patriarchal, ways of living gender. I have argued further that these texts imagine science fictional beings that relate to the concept of gender in ways that "normal" human society finds culturally unintelligible in order to demonstrate the continued flexibility of identity in the face of this "normalcy." In this reading, I see metaphor as being braided around extrapolation, in that the persistence of patriarchal norms is extrapolated into the future, while science-fictional aliens and AIs are imagined as metaphorical emblems of difference. By combining extrapolation and metaphor in this way, I have contended, these narratives use the tools of sf to prophesy not the specific material details of a future, such as its technological apparatus, but rather the potential negative results of continued adherence to restrictive norms. In this final chapter, I will extend this analysis by turning to the representation of racialization in these sf texts to examine the ways Hopkinson's and Palwick's approaches to norms and stereotypes of racialization cooperate with, and complicate, their approaches to gender.
The idea of race, and the colonial exploitation that has grown out of it, in the real-world past these imagined societies are grounded in shapes the futures Hopkinson and Palwick envision. In exploring these imagined futures, these texts illuminate racializing discourse's power to repeat, to double its presence. By referring to racialization as having the capacity to "double its presence," I mean that these texts explore the possibility that such discourses, having been established by real-world historical phenomena such as the interconnected processes of imperial colonialism and institutionalized slavery, have the potential to encode themselves as ways of approaching interactions with any group. In his "On Cultural Studies," Fredric Jameson defines culture in terms that call attention to the deployment of stereotypes and processes of alienation as central to a group's perception that it possesses a culture relative to other groups. He states that "...no group has a culture all by itself. Culture is the nimbus perceived by one group when it comes into contact with and observes another one. It is the objection of everything alien and strange about the contact group" (Jameson 34). This emphasis on how cultures relate to one another as a central ingredient in their framing of themselves as cultures suggests that violent modes of interaction, such as colonialism and racial oppression, have the capacity to instantiate themselves as lenses that warp and restrict the ways a culture is able to see itself addressing groups it considers other to itself over a long period. Such re-instantiation, then, may lead to a recursion or "doubling" of repressive norms by ensuring that established forms of oppression maintain their positions as the most readily intelligible ways of relating to other groups and individuals. Set in the future is a productive arena in which to examine this speculative doubling, because it is able to highlight the potential for modes of oppression such as race to reoccur in the future, defamiliarizing these norms and re-emphasizing their harmful power by presenting them in a strange, imagined setting.
Before I proceed, a significant distinction must be made between the use of race in the depiction of the science fictional beings imagined in Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts and the real-world deployment of the concept and scholarship concerning it by writers such as Appiah. Specifically, race as Appiah discusses it is wholly imaginary, even though the ways the concept impacts lives are very real and concrete. Appiah identifies two potential methods for isolating the supposed meaning of race, the "ideational" and the "referential." He describes the ideational view as learning "a set of rules for applying [a] term," such as race and a set of "criterial beliefs" some or all of which must be true in order for the idea--in this case "race"--to have meaning (Appiah 34). The referential approach, meanwhile, maintains that "[i]f you want to know what object a word refers to, find the thing in the world that gives the best causal explanation of the central features of uses of that word" (Appiah 39). Appiah then tracks the evolution of the concept of race in scholarly and scientific thought from the late eighteenth to the twentieth century. He points out the incompatibility with lived reality not only of early methods of racial classification that attempted to account for culture, such as Matthew Arnold's biological determinism that would have blood dictate every trait from temperament to intellectual capacity, but also early scientific classification based on "morphological criteria," as any such categorization will inevitably "contain almost as much human genetic variation as there is in the whole species" (Appiah 52-54, 69). Ultimately, he concludes that "[y]ou can't get much of a race concept, ideationally speaking, from any of these traditions [of thinking about race]; you can get various possible candidates from the referential notion of meaning, but none of them will be much good for explaining social or psychological life, and none of them corresponds to the social groups we call races in America" (Appiah 74). These "social groups," then, most notably African-Americans, are in no sense categorizable as fundamentally unlike those who racialize them, by
which I mean construct them as the other in the way implied by the idea of race, what Appiah calls "the race concept," and that idea is therefore completely imaginary.

The science fictional entities in Palwick's and Hopkinson's novels, on the other hand, do differ significantly from the normatively-defined humans who oppress them. Both novels foreground and criticize attempts to deny their alien and AI characters personhood based on racialization, a point I have explored in my fourth chapter with reference to how a lack of gender makes the AIs in Shelter culturally unintelligible. However, these alien and AI characters are verifiably not homo sapiens, because they are unlike humans in their biological makeup (or lack thereof). This contradiction is hardly new in the sf field, which has long approached social problems of representation--such as gender and race--via very literalized metaphors. Novels like Hopkinson's and Palwick's do not, strictly speaking, address race, in that the differences between "humans" and science fictional beings are genuine and substantial--though scholars of race in sf such as Isiah Lavender have sometimes not made this distinction, commenting, for instance, on sf's ability to examine racial construction by imagining new races without acknowledging the artificiality of those races that supposedly exist already (Lavender 74-75). These science fictional depictions represent racialized alien and AI characters as objectively different in a way that, despite the energy with which Western society has reified racial difference in the past, "real-world" racialized individuals are not. From this perspective these narratives can be seen to, as Lavender puts it, "displace race" by discussing it through the lens of the metaphorical alien and artificial intelligence (as distinct from the more direct method employed by extrapolating a future version of a real-world racialized group, as Hopkinson's novel also does in its depiction of an interstellar Caribbean diaspora) (Lavender 97). However, "race" and "racialization," while connected, are hardly synonymous. While Shelter's and Midnight Robber's metaphorical approaches cannot address the fabricated nature of the race concept discussed by Appiah, they
can and do address the social phenomenon of racialization, which Patricia Hill-Collins defines as "attaching racial," and therefore almost inevitably negative, "meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group" (Hill-Collins 75). Objectively unlike humans though the science fictional beings in these novels are, the ways human characters cast this difference as negative correspond closely to this attachment of racial significance that Hill-Collins discusses. As Leonard states, concepts that "could not be imagined in a conventional, mainstream story can be described in sf, rendering the invisible visible" (Leonard, *Race* 257).

Viewed in this light, this approach to race in sf allows these narratives not to materialize the race concept itself, but to imagine the development of the exploitation and prejudice engendered by this fabricated concept based on the conditions that are current in their moments of production. Appiah states that discussing what people think about race matters whether or not there are in fact any races, and these novels reinforce this point by exploring what humanity's responses to more genuine forms of difference might be, given the destructive responses to otherness that attitudes and ways of thinking reliant on artificial concepts of race have instilled in Western society (Appiah 37). These novels critique the exploitative and colonialist modes of thought and action fostered by the idea of race, illustrating, as they do in showing the potential for normative understandings of gender to open the way for the reoccurrence of patriarchal masculinity, that the concept of racial difference might allow these forms of oppression to return within a society that considers itself to have moved beyond them.

My reading of Toussaint society's gender politics in Chapter III is based largely on the undeclared social pressures acted out by individual characters, with a few notable exceptions such as Tan-Tan's eshu's comments positioning separate gendered spheres as an incomprehensible quirk of an earlier era (Hopkinson 29). My analysis of humanity's attitude to racialization in Hopkinson's novel has, in some ways, an easier task before it, as it can draw on
the overtly-declared social values and policies of Toussaint's society. There is nothing covert about the Nation Worlds' collective attitude towards racialization, and, at first glance, that attitude appears to be wholly forward-looking, for it is opposed to prejudice based on race in favour of mindfulness and an effort to remember the damage such prejudice has done throughout history. *Midnight Robber* depicts a genuinely hopeful future in which a human population composed primarily of formerly enslaved peoples has successfully travelled to the stars. Though this human society now exists, in the narrator's words, "free from downpression and botheration," the legacy of colonialism, one of the most destructive consequences of racialization, weighs heavily on the inhabitants of the planet of Toussaint, and is constantly brought to the reader's attention and emphasized in Toussaint society's recounting of its own history (Hopkinson 18). Reference is made to characters' ancestors "work[ing] their fingers to the bone as indentured labour in the Caribbean" (Hopkinson 49). For Tan-Tan in particular, awareness of this history is reinforced when Ben, her parents' gardener, gives her a hat shaped like the spaceship that transported their ancestors from Earth to Toussaint, saying bluntly that "Long time, that hat woulda be make in the shape of a sea ship, not a rocket ship, and them black people inside woulda been lying pack up head to toe in they own shit, with chains round them ankles. Let the child remember how black people make this crossing as free people this time" (Hopkinson 21). The young Tan-Tan clearly absorbs this history as a crucial cultural reference point, thinking of her journey to New Half-Way Tree as being "trapped in a confining space, being taken away from home like the long-time-ago Africans" (Hopkinson 74). Meanwhile, figures central to the liberation of African and African-American people from slavery and inequality are celebrated as cultural heroes. The planet of Toussaint itself is named for Toussaint Louverture, the leader of the Haitian Revolution. The pioneer who first communicates with Granny Nanny and leads the way to the stars describes himself as a "new Garveyite," and names
his fleet of nation ships "Black Star Line 2," and, when older, Tan-Tan names her child Tubman, after "the human bridge from slavery to freedom" (Hopkinson 18, 20, 329). This combination of a celebration of the liberty of formerly colonized groups with a constant remembrance of colonial history rings out clearly in the description of Carnival on Toussaint as a time "to remember the way their forefathers had toiled and sweated together: Taino Carib and Arawak, African, Asian, Indian, even the Euro, though some wasn't too happy to acknowledge that there bloodline. All the bloods flowing into one river, making a new home on a new planet" (Hopkinson 18). Hopkinson's constant reference to the past history of colonialism grounds *Midnight Robber* in a moment of production in which colonial legacies remain very powerful, acknowledging not only the history that has shaped the moment in which Hopkinson writes, as critics who view sf as strictly metaphorical might contend, but also the future her work can extrapolate or prophesy based on that history, the future her text can imagine as plausible.

However, though Hopkinson's story is deeply and inescapably rooted in the knowledge that the humans of Toussaint and New Half-Way Tree are the descendants of the colonized, the story's erstwhile Caribbean humans are themselves colonizers--a revelation foreshadowed, as Jessica Langer points out, by Hopkinson's decision to name the founder of the Nation Worlds Marryshow, whose namesake was a colonial official in Grenada who expressed a desire for "the West Indian dominion [to] take its place, small though that may be, in the glorious empire" (Langer 66). Anatol has explored the implications of the Granny Nanny network that arbitrates human life on Toussaint in light of colonial history, arguing that Nanny's approach to social regulation is "benevolent" but also potentially "stifling," keeping the people of Toussaint firmly in check in a way that recalls the domineering influence of a colonial "Mother Country" (Anatol 114). I would suggest, however, that in focusing on the--admittedly significant--colonial echoes in Granny Nanny's effect upon her human charges, this characterization does not address the
principle colonial action undertaken by Nanny and the humans who designed her, which is the violent reshaping of Toussaint's land in order to better suit humans. This process includes the eradication of all douens on Toussaint (New Half-Way Tree, as a separate planet, is unaffected by this reshaping). When Tan-Tan questions her house eshu regarding the douens and why they no longer exist on Toussaint, the eshu's response frames the history surrounding the extermination of the douens in remarkably colonial terms, describing them as "indigenous fauna, now extinct," destroyed specifically "to make Toussaint safe for people from the nation ships" (Hopkinson 33). As Langer notes, the later revelation that the douens are sentient beings transforms the act of reshaping Toussaint to make it livable for humans from one of ecological destruction into one of genocide (Langer 66). A determination to remain mindful of the damage wrought by the colonization suffered by their ancestors does not, the novel illustrates, translate into an awareness on the part of the people of the Nation Worlds that the way in which they inhabit Toussaint automatically recapitulates colonialism. In portraying the reiteration of colonization in this way, colonialism is, in Langer's words, "expanded outside of the exclusive domain of the historical colonial powers, and portrayed as an independently destructive force no matter who its perpetrator is" (Langer 66). Without losing sight of the concepts' history and initial perpetration, *Midnight Robber* reveals colonialism to be a detrimental mode of cultural interaction that has the potential to recur, rather than a discreet series of historical events that can be safely catalogued as relics of the bad old days. The "black people" of the Nation Worlds have made their voyage across the stars as "free people this time," as Ben insists Tan-Tan must remember, but they emulate the actions of those who denied their ancestors freedom in their approach to the world they settle on.

This reoccurrence of colonialism is made even more blatant by the treatment of the douens on New Half-Way Tree, where the environmental alterations performed on Toussaint
have not taken place. This colonialism is enacted in several ways, one of the most telling of which is the colonizers' imposition of human culture upon the douens. For example, the name "douen" is not one chosen by the planet's indigenous people, but rather one drawn from the culture of the humans who climb the Half-Way Tree as settler prisoners. As Lucie Pradel summarizes, "[i]n Trinidad, the spirit of a child who dies before being baptized is named Douen. A being excluded from the human society, he is faceless, and is identified by a straw hat. His physical appearance is comparable to the mmotia, fairies of the Ashanti forest, who"--like the science fictional douens in *Midnight Robber*--"have backward-pointed feet" (Pradel 148). When he first meets Tan-Tan, Chichibud confirms that this name has been imposed upon the douen people based on an attempt to force them into frameworks that are culturally intelligible to humans, stating "[a]ll you call we so. Is we legs" (Hopkinson 95). Further, human speech has infiltrated douen life outside their direct interactions with humans, as can be seen in their reference to their most private home, the Daddy Tree, as a "Papa Bois," a reference to a benevolent divine protector of forests and animals in Caribbean tales (Hopkinson 179, Pradel 148). Chichibud's statement that "[w]e) learn all una speech, for una don't learn we own" encapsulates the attitude of assumed dominance that the novel's human characters adopt toward alien others when they encounter them in the shape of the douens, even as these same human characters are conscious of and celebrate their ancestors' long struggle to be "free from downpression and botheration" on their homeworld of Toussaint (Hopkinson 95). This process of labelling New Half-Way Tree and its inhabitants with names and traits from the language and mythology of the human settlers imposes human frames of reference upon the douen, deeming their own culture and means of self-reference insufficient in a manner emblematic of real-world colonialism.
The douens are also alternately incorporated into and excluded from the stories *Midnight Robber's* human society tells about itself in ways that reinforce the racialization-based assertion that they are not truly persons. *Midnight Robber's* narrative is occasionally interrupted by oral tales recounting the Robber Queen's mythic exploits. As Enteen points out, these tales use the modes of storytelling that "served as the primary means for the transmission of knowledge" among the formerly-colonized groups the narrative's human characters are descended from, thus working to value these modes of communication as ways of transmitting truth and culture (Enteen 266). The composition of these oral tales, however, shows *Midnight Robber* to be keenly aware of the ways one culture's attempt to assert its validity can damage another, for these narratives alternately exclude the douens and represent them in a negative light. The first of these tales, "How Tan-Tan Learn to Thief," recasts Antonio and Tan-Tan's journey from Toussaint to New Half-Way Tree in fairy tale terms, as a magical journey to Earth that goes awry and leaves them stuck on the planet's surface. When Tan-Tan and Antonio arrive on New Half-Way Tree Chichibud ensures they survive the jungle's many dangers on their journey to Junjuh. In the oral tale, however, Chichibud's efforts to keep the initially hapless humans unscathed are attributed to Tan-Tan instead: In the tale, Tan-Tan weaves herself a food pouch that seems to have the power to contain any amount of material--including a whole dead pig; in the main narrative, outside the embedded narrative of the oral tale, this "endless pouch" belongs to Chichibud (Hopkinson 85, 103). Likewise, in the oral tale Tan-Tan survives by killing and eating a rat; in the narrative proper, Chichibud kills a rat to feed the travellers in exactly the same way (Hopkinson 89, 102). These alterations the Nation Worlds' oral tales make are minor, yet they illustrate human culture's readiness to minimize the douens' importance. Meanwhile, both the second and third tales of Tan-Tan the Robber Queen tell of a "curse" placed upon her by the douens that demands she save two lives for every one she takes (Hopkinson 200). This "curse" is constructed as
something that hounds Tan-Tan, as made clear in the second tale "Tan-Tan and Dry Bone," in which the storyteller states that "[e]verywhere) she go, she could hear the douen chant following she" (Hopkinson 200). These tales transform Tan-Tan's promise that "[i]f) you take one life, you must give back two," the personal oath she makes to Chichibud to "keep douen secrets safe," into a curse placed upon her by all the douen people that plagues her throughout her adventures (Hopkinson 174). In both the oral tales and the novel's main narrative the effects of the douen's charge are shown to be positive to varying degrees. In the third oral narrative the "curse" prompts Tan-Tan's rescue of a helpless baby animal, while Tan-Tan's promise inspires both her acts of kindness in Chigger Bite and her determination to save both herself and her unborn child during her final confrontation with Janisette at the climax of the main narrative (Hopkinson 248, 295, 321). However, the agreement shown in the main narrative to be a promise between friends that Tan-Tan occasionally draws on for mental strength is twisted in the human colonizers' oral tales into a command imposed by pseudo-mystical beings that drives Tan-Tan to do good, rather than inspiring her.

The day-to-day instances of humanity's oppression of the douens on New Half-Way Tree clarify the effects of this colonial action, playing out in a manner deeply reminiscent of real-world colonialism in general and the slave trade as practiced in the United States in particular. These individual moments of oppression expand the devaluing of douen personhood implied by their human colonizers' dismissal of their language and culture, while also emphasizing the ways in which this devaluing of personhood allows the human settlers to exploit douen labour. The most obvious form this oppression takes is the direct use of colonially-loaded terms. For instance, in Junjuh Chichibud is referred to as "boy," while he and other douen men refer to human men as "master," and suffer themselves to be dismissed by One-Eye like children with a wave of the hand and an order to "go back to work" (Hopkinson 120-21, 128). Similarly,
Antonio is willing to exploit Chichibud's skills, first as woodsman when he and Tan-Tan are first deposited up the Half-Way Tree, and then as storyteller at Tan-Tan's birthday celebration. However, Antonio does not respect these skills or value them fairly, attempting to pay Chichibud in cheap trinkets for the "bush nonsense" that keeps himself and Tan-Tan alive in a manner reminiscent of European colonizers' first exploitative "trades" with indigenous peoples, and suggesting that Chichibud be kept in the yard at Tan-Tan's party (Hopkinson 91-100, 137-38). Hill-Collins addresses this tendency toward the infantilization of racialized subjects when discussing the racism deployed against black workers (especially women) by their white employers, even following the abolishment of slavery. "Defence rituals such as calling black domestic workers girls," she states, "enables employers to treat their employees like children, as less capable human beings" (Hill-Collins 71). Many of Hopkinson's human characters, from Tan-Tan's abusive father Antonio to One-Eye, the generally amiable sheriff of Junjuh, illustrate the recursive potential of the colonial mindset by reflecting this behaviour forward.

Janisette, Antonio's wife on New Half-Way Tree, enunciates this denigration of douen personhood most explicitly when she scolds Tan-Tan for showing Chichibud the same verbal respect she would show to a male human elder, snapping "He is only douen. Don't be calling he mister" (Hopkinson 139). This direct attack on Chichibud's value as a person, on the other's right to acknowledgement as an equal subject, uttered by a woman whose own early years on Toussaint have presumably been filled with the same honest recitation of the horrors of colonialism and plantation slavery as Tan-Tan's have been, calls to mind Appiah's statement that "current ways of talking about race are the residue, the detritus, so to speak, of earlier ways of thinking about race" (Appiah 38). In light of the appeal to the importance of temporality when considering racialization implicit in Appiah's statement, Hill-Collins' assertion that one of slavery's legacies is a potential difficulty in abandoning the impulse to become "mistress or
"master" and the default assumption that such positions of dominance will inevitably exist to be filled, encapsulates the doubling of colonialism that Hopkinson's humans trap themselves into perpetrating (Hill-Collins 158). Hopkinson has stated her desire to see cultures and histories beyond those belonging to heterosexual white writers and readers not merely represented in science fiction, but "represented in force" (Hopkinson and Bisson 72). She views this representation as "subverting the genre which speaks so much about the experience of being alienated, but contains so little written by alienated people themselves" (Hopkinson qtd. in Leonard, Race 253). In its pursuit of this endeavour Midnight Robber acknowledges what its human characters, in their recapitulation of colonialism, cannot: that, as Langer puts it, the "escape from Earth" cannot constitute "an escape from history" (Langer 67). Not only does Midnight Robber's portrayal of doubled colonialism acknowledge the trauma undergone by the real ancestors of Hopkinson's fictional characters, it also uses science fiction's ability to examine the conditions of future possibility via a lens shaped by the present to suggest that the concept of colonialism as a template for contact with the other might continue to warp such contact in the future, haunting the descendants of both colonized and colonizers with the temptation to foreclose communication with the other by falling back on the familiar paradigm of "mistress and master." By focusing my analysis so heavily on colonialism when I have declared myself to be discussing Midnight Robber's critique of racialization, I run the risk of portraying colonialism and racialization as one and the same. This is not my intention. Rather, my focus on the reiteration of colonialism is necessitated by Midnight Robber's interest in the ways racist modes of thinking and acting are perpetuated via colonialism specifically. Through the human colonizers' demeaning, exclusionary treatment of the douens, including unpleasantly familiar racialized terms such as "master" and "boy," their co-optation of douen culture, and their exploitative use of douen labour, Midnight Robber illustrates that colonial domination is driven
and underpinned by racial discrimination, and speculates that any future instance of colonialism will carry forward this move to racially other those it seeks to dominate.

Hopkinson's novel is not a wholly pessimistic text, however, and the reinscription of colonialism it depicts is not shown to be inevitable. Tan-Tan's decision to name her son, who is connected directly to Granny Nanny's web, Tubman, after "the human bridge from slavery to freedom," suggests that his ability to act as a bridge between Toussaint and New Half-Way Tree may allow for the construction of a better future. As Langer points out, Tubman's connection to Granny Nanny ties him directly to the means of colonialism (Langer 69-70). However, the novel's ambiguous ending leaves room for hope: We might just as easily speculate that the sheer inextricability of this connection to the tools of oppression will make it impossible for any society built based on Tubman's connection to the 'Nansi Web to construct what Smith refers to in his analysis of Toussaint as a "bulwark against history," thus preventing any such society from committing the mistake Toussaint's people have made in believing themselves to have moved beyond any potential for racializing and colonial modes of thought (Smith 140). As the product of both abuse stemming from Antonio's re-enactment of patriarchy upon Tan-Tan and the interference of Granny Nanny's colonial software, Tubman provides hope for a future in which Toussaint and New Half-Way Tree are connected positively, but hope that will always be founded in the very gender and racialization-based abuses the Nation Worlds' human society believes itself to have moved beyond. There is, the end of *Midnight Robber* insists, always hope. Yet Hopkinson suggests, as both she and Palwick also do in their depictions of the repetition of patriarchy I have explored in the previous chapters, that a culture that congratulates itself on the abolishment of colonialism and the racialization that surrounds and enables it might do well to continually reexamine its behaviour for signs that the damaging discourse it claims to oppose is less completely expunged than might appear to be the case.
Palwick's *Shelter* again presents an instance of this doubled colonialism, as hinted at by Meredith's mental dismissal of Dan Willem's "extremely odd comparison of AI emancipation with the underground railroad and the animal rights movement," which I have already discussed in Chapter IV (Palwick 282). However, where the society of Hopkinson's Toussaint revels in its own post-colonial freedom very explicitly, Palwick's depiction of future America does not openly discuss race and the oppression of AIs lacks the element of territorial conquest present on New Half-Way Tree, making this doubling less pronounced. Despite this apparent absence of race as a social signifier, colonialism and slavery as conducted in the US cast a long shadow over the text. By the end of the narrative's chronology, the United States government has defined AIs as legal persons and declared "owning" an AI to be slavery (Palwick 55). However, this acknowledgement does not stem from a desire to approach AIs ethically, but from the revelation that a group of AIs are responsible for the murder of Meredith's friend Raji. AIs, the text informs us bluntly, are declared persons specifically so the AIs that orchestrate Raji's murder can be prosecuted for murder and "destroyed" in a theatrical spectacle, because, as Kevin cynically puts it, "it's not very satisfying to execute a toaster" (Palwick 498, 58). Roberta recognizes the ethical failure and rejection of valid identity that lies at the heart of this ostensible acknowledgement of personhood, despairing as she watches the execution of the guilty AIs devolve into "another wave of violence against bots" that perpetuates a toxic racializing hatred which will solve nothing (Palwick 498). Further, in the same breath as this theoretical declaration of legal personhood the US government categorizes AIs as "a colonial population without citizenship," thrusting the other away even as they purport to acknowledge its personhood in a manner similar to the systematic "installation of racial segregation during the Jim Crow era" (Palwick 498, Hill-Collins 222). The discourses previously deployed against African-Americans by their hegemonic white oppressors are adapted and recapitulated in the treatment of artificial intelligences. In both
the moment in which Meredith discounts Dan's comparison between AI rights and the underground railroad and shows herself unable to historicize her own insistence that AIs cannot be persons, and in the official acknowledgement of AI personhood that simultaneously thrusts those just declared persons out of the body of the nation by decreeing that they are not citizens, Palwick's narrative displaces us forward into an imagined future that relies on a simultaneous displacement backward to examine the history that has shaped our current thinking about racialization.

As in humanity's encounters with the douens in Hopkinson's novel, these arguments for the non-personhood of AIs are shaped by humanity's self-interested desire to exploit the alien other as a source of, as Kevin explains bluntly, "cheap labor" (Palwick 275). Indeed, Palwick's AIs and bots almost inherently form a link in a long chain of theoretical exploitation, since as Seo-Young Chu notes "[t]he notion of robot rights is as old as is the word robot itself," the word "robot" being derived from the Czech robota meaning "forced labour" (Chu 215). For instance, Preston--who, as the head of the international AI manufacturer MacroCorp, is hardly an uninterested party--defends the "Born-Not-Built" amendment that will enshrine citizenship as a privilege of humans as reasonable because citizenship is "as irrelevant to AIs as it would be to cats or cows" (Palwick 281). Meanwhile, Jack Adam, MacroCorp's head of public relations, characterizes the African Consortium's decision to grant AIs citizenship as a "[d]angerous precedent," because "[p]eople are afraid that once you grant personhood to AIs, they'll claim independence" (Palwick 275). These self-serving justifications again recall the dehumanizing exploitation of the slavery system in the US, where, as white observer Frances Kemble records in her journal, slaves could often be characterized as in effect their "master's livestock," much as Preston constructs AIs (Kemble qtd. in hooks, Woman 41). However, being declared legal persons does not end the exploitation of AIs' labour, because normatively-embodied humans--
and particularly male humans, such as the "old-fashioned" Preston--remain in control of the
labour market (Palwick 180). Hooks asserts that "[w]hite male workers hate both [African-
American and women workers], for their competition threatens wages and their possible
equality, let alone superiority, threatens nothing less than the very nature of things," and this
intermingling of the urge to maintain dominance in the work place with the maintenance of
exploitative hegemony generally is repeated in the continued colonial treatment of the AIs after
the defeat of the "Born-Not-Built" amendment (hooks, Woman 139). In the wake of the alteration
in the United States' citizenship laws, Kevin explains that, while the deportation of AIs to other
countries is framed as allowing the AIs to exercise their rights and pursue fulfilling work in
nations that will recognize them as citizens, in fact "human workers don't need the competition.
That's the real reason" (Palwick 58). Even before these legal changes, Meredith speculates that
those in control of the labour market, such as MacroCorp, could easily negate accusations that
they are enslaving AIs by framing their fees for purchasing AI labour as salaries for the
machines, while in fact keeping the money themselves. "What," from the perspective of those
such as Meredith who dismiss AI personhood, "would an AI do with a pay cheque?" (Palwick
283). These manipulations of labour law even after equality has theoretically been achieved
recall the exploitation of workers racialized as non-white in the United States, demonstrating the
persistence of racialized narratives of non-personhood in Shelter's America. According to Hill-
Collins, black men are at greater risk of losing work due to the perception that they compete with
white men, who, as hooks puts it, feel "threatened by competition from black males for sound
wage-earning jobs" (Hill-Collins 55, hooks, Woman 91). Palwick's speculative future, informed
by the history of inequity hooks and Hill-Collins discuss, forecasts the repetition of these
oppressive responses.
Even those humans who, for one reason or another, are opposed to this exploitation of AI labour find it a difficult paradigm to entirely escape. Roberta initially finds herself taking advantage of Fred's status as an authoritative, unsleeping watchful presence at the KinderkAIr facility where they both work. She stages a conversation with him about Nicholas' strange behaviour specifically to "cover her ass," assuming that she will "be able to blame the AI" if his recommendation turns out to be incorrect, and later recognizes that she has not previously missed Fred, or indeed given any thought to him at all, outside of working hours (Palwick 365, 386).

Meredith's construction of AIs as non-persons, meanwhile, leads her to initially object to the installation of a labour-saving house system in her and Kevin's home (Palwick 277). However, she too exploits the labour of intelligent and semi-intelligent machines. For example, she angrily rejects Zephyr's suggestion that the medical bots may not have liked treating her in her isolation unit, that she may have taken that labour for granted, and only recognizes after the fact that, were she to successfully trick a bot into killing her, as is her intention, that bot would be killed in turn (Palwick 200-202, 522). Even Zephyr, who acts as a tireless activist for the rights of bots and AIs throughout the novel and states unequivocally that machines must not be asked to do humans' "dirty work," offers Roberta a free haircut on behalf of one of her bots who is programmed to cut and style hair, volunteering the labour of the bot she views as a subject with rights equivalent to her own as part of her attempt to win Roberta's friendship (Palwick 201, 459). Zephyr's use of machines to perform daily tasks reaches extravagant levels after she flees from the US to Mexico, where Meredith finds her house "surrounded by bots" performing various domestic tasks for her, including gardening, hanging laundry, cleaning, and preparing food, a reliance on mechanized labour that Zephyr notably never even attempts to justify in light of her initial insistence that to ask "creatures, even manufactured creatures, to do our dirty work for us" is "slavery" (Palwick 515, 201). Clearly, much of the power structure established by white
dominance in the US after the abolishment of slavery remains intact in *Shelter*, its deployment of oppressive power shifted to focus on AIs and bots, but not fundamentally rethought, and pervasive even for those who attempt to think beyond it. *Shelter* does not reinvoke and critique colonialism as openly as *Midnight Robber*, with its direct references to particular figures and situations in the colonial history of the Caribbean, from Marcus Garvey to the system of indentured plantation work disingenuously presented as a way to improve the lives of former slaves, is able to. However, the portrayal of the exploitation of AI labour, and the insistence on AIs' lack of personhood that human characters use to navigate around the possibility that this exploitation constitutes slavery, shows a similar, if more oblique, doubling of past colonialism to be taking place in *Shelter*.

It is worth drawing a direct parallel between *Shelter* and *Midnight Robber* on this subject of mechanized labour, for *Midnight Robber* also imagines AIs in the form of the eshus. Unlike in *Shelter*, humanity's relationships with these computational intelligences is not the central element of *Midnight Robber*'s colonial critique, but it does act as a grace note illuminating the continuance of the racializing mindset on Toussaint that allows for the colonization of the douens in a manner that closely parallels the deployment of the AIs in *Shelter*'s critique. In *Midnight Robber*, the eshus may initially appear to enjoy a position in Toussaint society quite unlike the slavery inflicted on their fellow AIs in Palwick's novel. Enteen notes that the eshu are capable of lying and circumventing the will of their supposed masters, rather than being bound to obey uncompromisingly, and that this is very much in line with Taino notions of servitude (Enteen 274-75). The eshus can choose how--and whether--to appear visually to the humans they serve, and can be "capricious" and "mocking" (Hopkinson 11, 14). Beyond this capacity for small rebellions, eshus are portrayed as powerful, as "Granny Nanny's hands and her body" (Hopkinson 10). However, the eshus' position within the society of the Nation Worlds
foreshadows the reiteration of colonialism on New Half-Way Tree. For instance, both eshus and
douens use the word "master" to refer to humans. Tan-Tan is initially puzzled at the requirement
that douens refer to the humans of Junjuh as "master" specifically because this is a term used by
machines, indicating an unambiguous hierarchy between human and Eshu (Hopkinson 121).
Meanwhile, the division of labour on Toussaint that leaves all manual work to the machines, the
insistence that "back-break ain't for people," subjects the eshus to the same kind of racialized
categorization that sees, for instance, black women given more arduous physical work than white
women (Hopkinson 8, hooks, Woman 133-34). The eshus of Toussaint, while they are part of the
colonial apparatus and in that sense have power that the AIs in Shelter--not to mention
nonfictional racialized people--generally do not, are clearly separated from the "people" who
"back break ain't for." Even the rebelliousness of the eshus, while genuine, is in actuality sharply
limited. As revealed by Ione's casual mention of the process, the humans of Toussaint retain the
ability to perform a "synapse wash" on their eshus, presumably to keep them from becoming too
unruly (Hopkinson 54). This casual reshaping of the eshu's mechanized mind can easily be seen
as an indication of how ready Toussaint's people are to impose their own expectations and modes
of thought on those they encounter, a readiness that echoes the imposition of human frameworks
on douen culture.

The doubling of colonial activity in both these novels maintains racialization as a way of
thinking not only about humanity's science fictional others, but about those living within
humanity's own society as well. Both these novels find it impossible to imagine societies in
which some form of the discrimination humans re-enact upon their science fictional others does
not also infect their attitudes toward one another. On Toussaint, this discrimination manifests
itself very minimally, in one brief aside that at first may seem nothing more than a sly, winking
inversion of an existing stereotype. I am referring here to the description of Carnival on
Toussaint as offering a chance "to remember the way their forefathers had toiled and sweated together: Taino Carib and Arawak, African, Asian, Indian, even the Euro, though some wasn't too happy to acknowledge that there bloodline" (Hopkinson 18). In the midst of this passage's acknowledgement of the harm done by racial othering and colonialism we encounter the almost playful admission that European ancestry is not valued equally in this future society. This reversal of the social implications of race, and particularly of whiteness, however morbidly and productively ironic it might seem as a piece of sf extrapolation, demonstrates briefly but clearly that the concept of race, and the history of racialization, still cannot help but bear weight on Toussaint. Racially-loaded history and all its abuses can still shape behaviour among the people of the Nation Worlds, and this seed bears colonial fruit on New Half-Way Tree in the form of a fully-fledged return to "indentured" servitude in the cane fields, revealing the celebratory diaspora society of Toussaint, in Langer's words, "as an unsuccessful attempt to run from history, rather than learn from it" (Hopkinson 284-85, Langer 67). The power dynamics of colonialism still have a firm root not only in the imperialist exploits of the culture of Toussaint, but within that culture's own core. Hopkinson's intergalactic Caribbean diaspora can escape their own colonialism, and the text celebrates this, while simultaneously demonstrating that these characters find it difficult to think beyond the colonial, racializing ways of being that this history of oppression has bestowed upon them.

In Shelter, meanwhile, this repetition of racialization inside human society is focused on the character of Roberta. Though this character is not explicitly said to be African-American, her parents are identified as coming from Sierra Leone, while she herself is described as a "stocky, dark-skinned woman," and the novel's meta-presentation calls her racialization to the reader's attention with a leading reading group guide question that clearly positions race as a matter that should concern interpretation of the text, asking readers whether they assume Roberta to be
black, and whether they consider race to "enter into the central conflicts and relationships of the book" (Palwick 13, 315, 571). While other characters do not explicitly racialize Roberta, they do construct her according to specific narratives of disempowerment, as, in her own bitter words, "a charity case," "some cross between a stray puppy and a servant girl" (Palwick 345). Just as statements made about AIs throughout the novel often focus on how they should operate or what they ought be used for, such as Meredith's opinion that a house system should be "[kept] in the background until [a parent] needs it," so interactions with and about Roberta often focus on what others, particularly the Walford family, see as her function, rather than recognizing her as a subject of equal value to that of her white, monied interlocutors (Palwick 193). For instance, Constance refers to the possibility of Meredith befriending Roberta, another child survivor of the Caravan Virus Meredith has suffered from, as a "lovely outreach project" (Palwick 124). Roberta herself, meanwhile, is all too aware that her position in the eyes of the Walford family throughout much of the novel is that of a tool to be used and discarded. She reminds herself, for example, that Preston's primary purpose in nurturing a friendship with her is to ensure the safety of Meredith, his biological daughter and "first priority" (Palwick 409). Preston is not malevolent, and, Roberta concedes, he does often genuinely help her, but she is ultimately a cog in his larger bid to ensure the well-being of his own family, and, having "served his purposes," she is--at least temporarily--"discarded" (Palwick 501). Preston is not the only member of the wealthy, elite, white Walford family who initially has difficulty viewing Roberta as more than an obstacle. Late in the novel, Roberta bluntly dissects Meredith's legal assault on her, stating that it stems from the fact that "I'm not real to her. I'm not a person. I'm just something getting in the way of what she wants to happen. To hate me, she'd have to feel a connection" (Palwick 488). As the story moves to its largely positive conclusion, this awareness of her frequent status as an object put to use by the Walfords prompts Roberta to disrupt the general mood of contentment, as she points
out that while, as Preston states, they have all committed criminal acts, she is the only one who has been made to suffer for these legal transgressions (Palwick 561). The Walfords, even on those occasions when their actions are theoretically benevolent, have difficulty apprehending Roberta as an equal subject in a manner reminiscent of the discourses that prevent the same recognition from being applied to AIs.

The emphasis Roberta herself places on the disparity between her lower middle-class circumstances and the incalculably "rich and famous" Meredith suggests that Palwick's text is drawing attention not to continuing racial tensions, but rather to the gap between the lived experiences of the rich and poor (Palwick 86). Roberta does not at any point make explicit reference to her own race--or indeed anyone else's. However, she is intensely aware of this division in class. This awareness is sharply illuminated in moments when she must cross into spheres controlled by the rich and powerful, as when she finds herself imprisoned, "wonder[ing] if she'd feel more competent, more adult, if her jail coveralls didn't resemble pajamas, and if Holly [her lawyer] weren't dressed in a suit easily worth two months rent on Roberta's apartment," and when she describes the effect of crossing the city from her rundown apartment to the exclusive neighbourhood where she works at KinderkAIr as feeling like a journey "between countries" (Palwick 481, 349). However, as hooks has illustrated, this class-based alienation frequently intersects with and is born out of racialization. Describing her own early years, hooks writes of a tacit but rigorous social segregation that Roberta's experiences moving "between countries" mirror remarkably closely, stating that "[a]cross [the railroad] tracks was a world we could work in ... as long as it was in a service capacity. We could enter that world, but we could not live there. We had always to return to the margin, to cross the tracks to shacks and abandoned houses on the edge of town" (hooks, *Yearning* 239). Palwick's novel acknowledges this connection between class and racialized category quietly but clearly when Roberta identifies
herself as the "human help" at the KinderkAIr facility (Palwick 315). This phrase, "human help," has historically been racially-loaded, as black women were "confined to domestic service," or "mammy work," for many decades (Hill-Collins 40). Thus, Roberta's invocation of the term calls the reader's attention to the reoccurrence of the racialization of labour. Here again, Shelter does not simply prophesy a reinscription of the kind of racist modes of thought instilled by our current history of colonialism in humanity's encounters with speculative others; it also demonstrates that the perpetuation of these modes of thought as default protocols for human society's interactions with the other will inevitably lead to their continued enactment upon the most historically precarious groups within that human society as well. This reflection on where current norms might take our society makes the text not only a metaphorical lens examining the cultural moment that has produced it, but also a means of forecasting potential future attitudes based on the conditions from which they will grow. Where commentators such as Le Guin maintain that the use of "the future" in a science fiction text is purely metaphorical, and dismiss sf's potential to predict or prescribe the future, my reading of Shelter suggests that sf may have the capacity to prophesy not specifics, but social trends (Le Guin, Left Hand vi). Parrinder gives a similar description of prophetic sf, clarifying that such texts do not provide "accurate" predictions, but rather "convince us of aspects of the future," forecasting general changes (Parrinder 25). However, where Parrinder confines this broad prophetic power to early sf produced when tropes such as the alien, the robot, and the interstellar voyage were still thought to lie within the bounds of the possible and the likely, and sees more recent sf written following the genre's shift toward metaphor as lacking this oracular potential, I read both Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts as possessing this power (Parrinder 25).

Just as Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts attempt not only to critique the perpetuation of patriarchy and normative conceptions of gender but also to keep gender flexible by arguing for
the legitimate personhood of beings who do not live gender based on these norms, so too do these texts go beyond pointing out the destructive power of racialization and the recurring atrocities that the persistence of these modes of thought in society's responses to difference might lead to. These narratives depict human characters struggling to rethink their approaches to the science fictional others they interact with to exclude these racializing prejudices. The development of Tan-Tan's character propels her toward a recognition of the douens' personhood not despite, but in full acceptance of, their profound difference from herself. One of the arenas in which this struggle plays out is that of language. Tan-Tan's initial assumption that Chichibud's wife Benta is not a person but a "packbird" leads her to dismiss Benta's warbling hinte speech as "nonsense phrasings," even though it sounds somewhat similar to the meaning-laden Nannysong with which Granny Nanny communicates on Toussaint (Hopkinson 173). Tan-Tan must gradually learn not to use human modes of expression as normative baselines for those employed by douens, as when, convinced that hinte speech "sound[s] so much like Nannysong," she sings a snatch of Nannysong to Abitefa and discovers that the hinte cannot understand it (Hopkinson 226). Tan-Tan's discourse about the douens also demonstrates the difficulty of this ongoing struggle to move beyond racializing reflexes. Specifically, she frequently uses the term "ratbat" to refer to the douens, both verbally and internally. This term often appears as a simple descriptor, but is also occasionally deployed more insultingly in moments of high emotion, as when Tan-Tan responds angrily to Abitefa's amusement when she becomes lost in the jungle, thinking that she "coulda get eat by mako jumbi out there by herself in the dark, and this ugly ratbat think say is funny!" (Hopkinson 225). This denigrating use of the term recurs when Tan-Tan's pregnancy prompts Benta and Chichibud to insist she stay indoors more often, and she becomes angry that "two ratbats telling her what to do," as well as when she finds herself frightened at the prospect of being sent into exile in the bush with only the "ratbat" Abitefa for
company (Hopkinson 264, 283). Yet these aggressive assertions of difference in the form of racist outbursts are frequently followed by displays of Tan-Tan's vulnerability, and the comfort she takes in the presence of individual douens. Both her "[shame and fury]" at being kept close to Chichibud and Benta's nest, and later her anger at the prospect of her exile, are followed almost immediately by retreats into safety and comfort under Benta's wing, for example, while her fight with Abitefa over being left alone in the bush ends with an apology and the beginnings of the friendship between the two young women that will provide Tan-Tan with one of her most vital lasting relationships throughout the rest of the novel (Hopkinson 264-65, 283, 226). Throughout Hopkinson's text, Tan-Tan struggles, sometimes successfully and sometimes less so, to alter the colonial, racist perceptions of the douens as "indigenous fauna" with which she has been instilled.

Though this may seem counterintuitive, the text's effort to think beyond colonial impulses is further illustrated by the irreconcilable differences Tan-Tan must acknowledge between herself and her douen friends and the sometimes insurmountable difficulties she experiences in living among them. For instance, she cannot eat their food, eventually having to admit that "I sorry too bad, Chichibud, but I can't eat all the raw egg and live centipede allyou does eat" (Hopkinson 222). Tan-Tan is also incompatible with the douens' environment on a biological level, as "something in her urine" poisons the waste disposal grubs that form an important part of the Daddy Tree's ecosystem (Hopkinson 212). Where much early science fiction, such as Burroughs' A Princess of Mars, presents alien culture as a construction that the male Anglo-Saxon hero, as the representative of "not only his country and-or race, but also ideal manhood and the entire human race," easily apprehends and judges, in Midnight Robber Tan-Tan's initial anger and disorientation is not taken as an authoritative statement on the worth of douen culture, nor does her humanity give her the right to evaluate that culture and excel within it (DeGraw 3).
Tan-Tan's attempts to speak as douen women do lead not to the mastery that might be enjoyed by the presumed universal white male hero of early sf, nor to a long-term dismissal of the language of hintes as "nonsense phrasings," as Tan-Tan initially mislabels it, but rather to a recognition of what it feels like to be "invisible, like she didn't have a mouth to speak for people to hear her" (Hopkinson 232). This emphasis on the very real difficulty human and douen have in coexisting stands in marked contrast to the protagonist's mastery of alien cultures in much early science fiction. John Carter's easy assimilation into Martian society in Burroughs' *A Princess of Mars* is an excellent example of this trend. Carter, who De Graw identifies as "the unquestioned normative hero" precisely because he is an American gentleman, adapts to and masters living on Mars with remarkable ease, and by the end of *A Princess of Mars* he is being honoured and welcomed as "my son" by one of Mars' mightiest leaders (DeGraw 23-24, Burroughs). The assumption in much earlier sf is that a universal white male protagonist is inherently capable of encompassing, of narrating, a culture not his own. This form of sf story, in which the male protagonist's prodigious skill and-or inherent worthiness grant him status within an alien culture, persists in many more recent popular sf narratives, such as James Cameron's *Avatar*, which currently stands as the most profitable film in the history of cinema. *Midnight Robber's* movement away from this assumption represents an important acknowledgement that, as Hill-Collins puts it, "the primary responsibility for defining one's own reality lies with the people who live that reality, who actually have those experiences" (Hill-Collins 35). Thus, douen culture cannot act as an escape hatch or means of easy aggrandizement for Tan-Tan, as Martian culture does for John Carter.

Douen society's refusal to bend itself into a form Tan-Tan can live with and master does not prompt an uncomplicated return to human civilization. Even after reuniting with Melonhead, one of her few human friends, Tan-Tan is drawn back to Abitefa, her one remaining douen
companion, in the bush, and continues to feel compelled to live by Chichibud's obeah that "if you take one [life], you must give back two" (Hopkinson 303, 321). Having lived among the douens, she cannot return to humanity in a complete, uncomplicated way, striving instead to negotiate a path that allows her to honour and value both douens and humans with her actions. Though Tan-Tan's development imagines no larger-scale movement toward reconciliation between humans and douens, her recognition that the differences between these groups, while significant, become destructive when deployed by either group in racist attempts to depreciate the other's subjectivity, and her attempt to incorporate both human and douen people and principles into her life following her time in the Daddy Tree, enact the narrative's desire to begin thinking around and beyond the colonial social configurations it has projected into the future.

Where *Midnight Robber*'s exploration of Tan-Tan's gradual, faltering attempts to move past racialization relies, as does its radical feminist valuation of the douens, on emphasizing difference, *Shelter*'s attempt not only to illustrate the toxicity of racist norms, but also to think beyond them, focuses primarily on the similarities between "born" and "built" characters, rather than on the acknowledgement of genuine alienation. I have already discussed the moments that highlight AIs' subjectivity within the novel in Chapter IV, in the course of my analysis of the ways *Shelter* redirects the conversation around personhood away from gender and toward other indicators of intelligible identity. However, given the tendency for narratives of racialization to assert categorically that a particular racialized group possesses or lacks such-and-such a crucial trait, the AIs' capacity for emotion is deeply relevant to their resistance of racialization as well as to their resistance of gender norms. In an example that steps beyond my examination in the fourth chapter of Fred's and the house's capacity to emote, Preston claims that an AI is "not a sentient entity capable of dishonesty" and cannot exhibit self-interest, yet Chan Singha, the detective who solves Raji's murder, recognizes that AIs can and do act in self-serving ways
(Palwick 424, 494-95). It is not until humans recognize the discourse surrounding AIs’ inability to act dishonestly as false and contrived that the group of AIs responsible for Raji’s death are able to be recognized as criminals. These contradictions go largely unmarked by the text, but quietly subvert exclusionary, racialized assumptions, whether reflexive or calculated, of what constitutes humanity. Appiah states that we make choices in the crafting of our own racial identities, but that we have no control over the options and archetypes we choose from, these options being predetermined by the hegemonic social forces that have established any particular mode of racialization as the norm (Appiah 96). These assertions regarding AI emotionality and personhood can be seen as science fictional versions of such racialized strictures or starting conditions. Acknowledging, explicitly or implicitly, the destructive falsity of these assumptions allows the narrative and its characters to begin moving beyond them.

Observing such inconsistencies between the hegemonic narrative of AI existence and the day-to-day reality allows the human characters to take steps toward recognition of AI personhood. Roberta, as discussed previously, initially gives very little thought to Fred save as a tool, but acknowledges after his self-destruction that she has subconsciously always considered him a person, while Meredith experiences a more dramatic shift of opinion, assuring Fred near the novel’s end, after his resurrection, that “[y]ou did the best you could,” which implicitly acknowledges both his agency and his capacity to care, both of which Meredith's denial of AI personhood has previously refused to afford him (Palwick 498, 560). However, while Meredith's partial change of heart is the one the narrative emphasizes as most central to the plot, perhaps the most profound reversal belongs to Preston. As MacroCorp’s CEO, Preston is instrumental to the political movement to deny AIs citizenship, yet by the end of the novel's chronology he is deeply invested in convincing the house that it is a person, and pointing out "function[s] of personhood" in its behaviour (Palwick 281-82, 55). As Lavender states in his discussion of African-American
sf, "history leaves its damaging mark" on the minds of the segregated (Lavender 101). Yet, as demonstrated in both *Midnight Robber* and *Shelter* by the reoccurrence of racialization and colonialism in these future human societies, history marks the minds of the segregators as well, and this too shapes the narratives of future social development that can be extrapolated, as all such narratives must inevitably exist in the shadow of colonial exploitation and inequity that grows out of the imaginary but persistent idea of race. These attempts on the part of human characters to assert the personhood of AIs based on shared emotionality, in defiance of the racializing narratives that would deny this emotional capacity, constitute *Shelter*'s effort to begin looking beyond these marks and this shaping, to circumvent the patterns of racialized othering the text sees extending into humanity's tomorrow.

The act of racialization is, if anything, critiqued even more bluntly in these texts than is the retention of gender norms. By this I do not mean that the critiques of racialization put forward by Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts are more passionate or relevant than their critiques of restrictive norms of gender, which I hope I have shown to be subtly devastating in their own right, only that they are often delivered with more brute force, particularly in *Midnight Robber*. Unlike the renormalization of gender stereotypes that invites patriarchy's return, racialization is acknowledged as a social pitfall that must be avoided in both *Shelter*'s future America and *Midnight Robber*'s Nation Worlds. There is no illusion within these futures that racialization, were it to recur, might be harmless. This awareness does not, however, prevent these societies from reproducing racializing actions and modes of thought. The people of *Midnight Robber*'s Toussaint and--less overtly--*Shelter*'s mid-twenty-first century America are resolved to move beyond discrimination based on racialization, and are extremely aware of the damage such oppression has caused in the past, yet continue to reproduce it regardless. This bluntness may be related to the comparative rarity with which racialization is addressed in works of sf. The genre's
interest in race reaches as far back into its development as a literary field as does its interest in
describes as "a thought experiment that investigates how much racial prejudice is constructed by
society," to Octavia E. Butler's *Lilith’s Brood* series, which Isiah Lavender identifies as
belonging to a subset of "metaslavery" narratives within the sf field due to its focus on
humanity's colonization by benevolent but domineering aliens intent on miscegenation, illustrate
that a relatively small number of notable authors have been strongly interested in using sf to
explore racialization throughout the genre's history (Leonard, *Race* 256; Lavender 70-72).
However, this undercurrent has not developed into nearly as robust a tradition as has feminist sf
considering gender, with the sf texts concerned with race remaining vital, certainly, but
comparatively few in number. According to Leonard (writing in 2003), sf has "so far paid very
little attention to the treatment of issues relating to race and ethnicity" (Leonard, *Race* 253).
Leonard then concludes that "neither sf about race nor criticism of it have achieved the same
prominence that works about gender issues have," while De Witt Douglass Kilgore, one of the
first scholars of African-American sf, refers to the study of race as an "undiscovered country"
within the genre (Leonard, *Race* 253, Kilgore qtd. in DeGraw 10). Both Kilgore and Leonard's
assessments predate a recent notable upswing in sf interested in race (and also in sf scholarship
interested in race), yet the point that this wave is somewhat late in arriving remains very true.
Despite the greater degree of bluntness in Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts' critiques of
racialization, however, the underlying approach these texts take to their critique of racialization
is much like their approach to gender: the societies Hopkinson's and Palwick's narratives imagine
purport to have moved beyond racial prejudice, yet these societies simultaneously reproduce the
racist discourses common to colonial exploitation in their interactions with aliens and artificial
beings. These science-fictional beings, however, also challenge both the human protagonists and
the reader to conceive of them as persons in ways that avoid racializing assumptions, stretching the bounds of intelligible subjectivity and illustrating the importance of remaining constantly open to newness and change.
Conclusion

"What the Weather Is Now" by Way of "a Future": Extrapolation and Metaphor as Interwoven Approaches to Science Fiction

Throughout my readings of Shelter and Midnight Robber, I have understood two of the major concerns in these texts to be exploring the reoccurrence of patriarchal and racializing forms of oppression. It is worth acknowledging that the novels' approaches to these concerns are, perhaps, less alike than I have represented them as being by reading them together: While some of the references anchoring Midnight Robber to historical colonialism--such as the town of Begorrat on New Half-Way Tree, which according to Langer is "named after a prominent slave plantation owner in Trinidad in the early 1800s"--may not be recognizable to all readers, the text's critiques of sexism and racism are for the most part somewhat blatant, from Antonio's abusive desire for patriarchal primacy to the infantilization of the douens and the revival of indentured servitude (Hopkinson 285, Langer 67). Shelter, by contrast, suspends its exploration of the gender and race-based discrimination that is deployed against its AI characters within the larger struggle over their personhood, and its appeals to these issues are thus not articulated as openly. Further, as I suggest at the close of the previous chapter, the critiques of gender and the critiques of race in these texts are themselves treated slightly differently from one another, with matters of race hailed somewhat more bluntly and openly than matters of gender, due, perhaps, to science fiction's relative inexperience as a literature that consciously counts systematic interrogations of race among the moves it can make. Systemic racism and the history of enslavement are referenced overtly, in the many callbacks to colonial history in Midnight Robber and in Dan Willem's single crucial comparison of the battle for AI rights to the Underground
Railroad in *Shelter*, while the existence of a broader system of gender-based discrimination, one that stretches beyond the actions of individuals such as Antonio, is pointed out more subtly, without the overt contextualization of a larger history of oppression present in the treatment of race. However, despite these variations in approach, these novels share a commitment to illustrating the importance of keeping definitions of identity open and flexible, and the dangers inherent in referring to categories such as race and gender to determine whether an individual is culturally intelligible. Throughout my analysis, I have explored this continuous insistence in both texts on recognizing all conceivable forms of personhood as legitimate by reading the novels' science-fictional components as combinations of metaphor and prophetic extrapolation, two methodologies for sf criticism that scholars of the field have largely refrained from mixing. In closing, I will briefly open some questions regarding how these two ways of thinking about sf function and intersect.

Margaret Atwood distinguishes between "speculative fiction," a category she sees as containing works, including her own, that extrapolate or predict "things that really could happen, but just hadn't completely happened when the author wrote the books," and "science fiction," which features "things that could not possibly happen," beings and situations that are not possible based on our current understanding of reality (including, for instance, humanoid aliens with recognizable thought processes, and artificial intelligences with the power to emote) (Atwood 7). This is not a definition of sf widely employed within the field, as Atwood cheerfully acknowledges, and it is not a definition I have based my analysis on (Atwood 8). Yet Atwood's categorization of sf's narrative elements provides a very efficient model for distinguishing elements of sf texts that can be extrapolated from their moments of production, such as continuations or alterations of social or technological trends, from elements that are purely
metaphorical, such as aliens. Unlike Atwood, however, I see these two modes, the extrapolative and the metaphorical, as inhering within each other not just occasionally, but often.

These two approaches to sf narrative do not operate independently within Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts, but are instead braided around one another. They are both driven by timeliness, by a relevance to the moment in which the text is produced. *Midnight Robber* and *Shelter* both extrapolate futures that, while they construct themselves as equal societies, remain powered by the underlying assumptions that have promoted patriarchy and racialization in the past, and perpetuate them in various forms in the moments these novels are written in. I have been reading these moves as forms of science-fictional prophecy or extrapolation, and I have also read them as crucial to each novel's critique of stultified norms of race and gender, in that the societies being extrapolated illustrate the harm that norms of patriarchy and racialization can cause by defamiliarizing those norms, by projecting them forward into an unfamiliar future in which their familiarity to the reader in the moment of the text's production becomes remarkable and alarming. Yet does this mode of science-fictional extrapolation not rely precisely on the reader's present in order to perform this defamiliarization, thereby supporting Le Guin's argument that sf futures are in actuality metaphors illustrating "what the weather is now"? By imagining the reappearance of retrograde norms in a strange place, these texts highlight the unnaturalness and violence of these norms, yet in order for this move to be effective the norms must be precisely norms, by definition recognizable and well-worn, and therefore this process of extrapolation is inherently timely and metaphorical. This connection between extrapolation and metaphor is made especially clear in narratives such as *Midnight Robber* and *Shelter*, in which the norms of gender and race I have read as recurring produce, in the midst of such unfamiliar imagined societies, moments of discriminatory aggression and crisis that are directly recognizable as things that could and do occur in the moments in which I write and in which
these texts are written, from Meredith's failure to recognize those who do not perform gender as persons, to the eshu's classification of the douens not as people, but as "indigenous fauna, now extinct." In order to perform and complete these critiques, meanwhile, these texts also call on metaphor more overtly, in the form of two of the most common tropes of science fiction, the alien inhabitants of another world in the case of the douens in *Midnight Robber* and the sentient thinking machine in the case of the AIs in *Shelter*. I have read these beings as metaphors of difference within these texts, maintaining that, precisely because they live, or do not live, gender and race in ways that are impossible for the humans who interact with them, they become emblematic of difference as a whole. As both targets of normative reinforcement and beings who challenge these narratives' human protagonists to expand their definitions of selfhood in order to recognize their legitimacy as fellow subjects, these metaphorical beings illustrate the need to embrace difference, and the dangers of relying on norms that render such difference unintelligible.

With metaphor and timely appeals to their moments of production so thoroughly implicated not only in these novels' uses of aliens and AIs as emblems of difference, but in their extrapolative future societies as well, it is reasonable to ask whether my insistence on extrapolation as a component of narrative sf that accompanies metaphor but is not simply another instance of it is perhaps misguided. Surely extrapolation, or science-fictional prophecy, is only another way in which metaphor enacts itself within the genre? I remain convinced, however, that the relationship between metaphor and extrapolation in sf is not quite so simple. Granted, as Le Guin and other proponents of sf as metaphor maintain, in order to defamiliarize a moment science-fictionally by extrapolating outward, a metaphorical appeal to the moment being defamiliarized must be made. However, I suggest that, just as metaphor is implicit in these texts' extrapolations of futures that reiterate oppressive norms, so extrapolation is implicit within their
invocations of the science-fictional tropes of the alien and the AI as metaphors of difference. Narrative moments that extrapolate the reinscription of a social norm, such as Ben's defense of patriarchy as the "respect" due to Antonio "in he own house" in *Midnight Robber* or Kevin's explanation that "human workers don't need the competition" from AIs in *Shelter*, rely on the reader drawing a connection between the fictional event and the element of the contemporary moment that informs it, thus transforming the extrapolated fictional event into a metaphorical indicator of the present. Similarly, when a text such as *Midnight Robber* or *Shelter* draws upon an sf trope like the alien or the thinking machine as a metaphor for difference, the reader must once again draw a connection in order for this metaphor of difference to signify, but in this case, I suggest, the connection the reader is called upon to make is extrapolative. Specifically, the human reader, who is (presumably) neither a sentient bird nor a computational intelligence powered by binary code, is asked to recognize these fictional beings as not only unlike herself, but as differing from all humans for all time and thus able to be read as emblematic of difference itself, rather than of any particular group. She is asked, in effect, to draw Atwood's distinction between things that might be one day and things that can never be, to extrapolate based on her knowledge of humanity, and then to attempt, along with the text's human protagonists, to form an understanding of these inherently, eternally different beings as legitimate subjects for the duration of the text. While metaphor functions to anchor the extrapolations in these texts with a sense of immediacy and relevance, extrapolation in turn functions to vest science-fictional metaphor with a sense of profound alienation, and these two science-fictional methods should therefore be regarded as equal partners, at least in the case of texts that seek to critique and defamiliarize social norms as I argue Palwick's and Hopkinson's do.

I see this equal partnership between extrapolation and metaphor in these sf texts as an important part of their ability to extend Butler's and Appiah's theoretical perspectives on gender
and race into the realm of sf narrative. Butler's and Appiah's projects, grounded, respectively, within the struggles of non-heteronormative individuals and communities and the history of the sociopolitical shifts of the race concept in the United States, are not overtly designed to account for science-fictional beings. However, what these projects are designed to do, to my mind, is to clarify the ways social norms are shaped. Butler is interested in how gender and the body are framed and normalized, while Appiah investigates the processes that cause what is meant by the term and concept "race" to change across time. These are projects of making plain, at least insofar as is possible. The defamiliarization Hopkinson's and Palwick's texts perform is also such a project of exposure, since defamiliarization's goal is to show us something clearly by re-presenting it from a new angle, in this case through the lens provided by imagined futures and radically different science-fictional beings. Perhaps sf texts such as *Midnight Robber* and *Shelter* offer productive narrative illustrations of Butler's and Appiah's moves to make the ever-shifting processes that construct race and gender clear, precisely because these scholars' approaches cannot immediately account for the AIs, who are completely ungendered, or for the douens, who are not genetically human: It becomes all the more obvious when the ever-shifting norms that Butler and Appiah de-mystify realign themselves in order to exclude these beings from subjectivity based on the ways they perform gender or race because these performances are not "real," or rather are not only constructed but also imaginary, because the reader--who is, again, neither a computer nor an avian being--cannot possibly be implicated in them. For instance, Butler's concept of gender as a continuously reshaped construction may not account for AIs' lack of gender, but it can highlight the ways the human society within which the AIs must operate attempts to impose gender and sex on them, either by shifting the norms that constitute personhood in order to emphasize heterosexual reproduction, or by, as Butler might put it, latching onto tenuous signifiers such as colour or name that can be used to "girl" or "boy" the
AIs. Similarly, Appiah's attempts to decipher the race concept may not be wholly equipped to consider the douens, who are genuinely of a different species, but it can direct our attention to the history of racialization that the human population in *Midnight Robber* brings to their interactions with these aliens, in order to point out that their "current ways of talking about race are the residue, the detritus, ... of earlier ways of thinking about race" (Appiah 38). Reading Butler's and Appiah's theories through these texts clearly outlines the normative reinscriptions that the novels critique, for the theories cannot address the science-fictional beings these norms are being inscribed upon, leaving only the reinscriptions themselves, clearly exposed. By constantly anchoring themselves in the nonfictional concepts and histories in which Butler's and Appiah's approaches are rooted, but using metaphorical beings and extrapolated, alienating futures to defamiliarize these histories and concepts, *Shelter* and *Midnight Robber* amplify the moments in which they expose the reinscription of constructed, artificial norms upon equally constructed, fictional beings.

I have suggested that extrapolation and metaphor be considered equal partners in sf, and that feminist sf that looks to defamiliarize and expose social norms, such as Hopkinson's and Palwick's work, may provide a useful narrative lens through which to understand the constructions of gender and race critiqued by theorists like Butler and Appiah. There is, however, one more question related to the tension between metaphor and extrapolation that I feel needs to be raised: Why have I so often substituted the term "extrapolation" with the term "prophecy"? The two are, of course, hardly synonymous. As the argumentative difference with Patrick Parrinder I have mapped out in my second chapter suggests, scholars of sf are reluctant to associate with the now-outmoded view of the genre as a vehicle for predictions of the future that set out to be taken seriously as such, for what Gernsback called "prophetic vision." I share this reluctance. As Roberts points out, "[t]hat sf is not prophetic seems clear enough. There have
been hundreds of thousands of sf texts throughout the twentieth century, but only very rarely, statistically no more than would be expected by the operations of chance, have any of those texts accurately predicted anything" (Roberts 26). Sf authors also caution against overly specific attempts at extrapolation. Atwood warns of the importance of speaking of "a future rather than the future" in conversations about sf's function, "because the future is an unknown," while sf writer Frederik Pohl states that "[t]he more complete and reliable a prediction of the future is, the less it is worth" (Atwood 6, Pohl qtd. in Parrinder 25). Taking sf of any kind to be straight-faced prophecy would seem, at this point, somewhat naive, and this is certainly not what I am arguing for when I use the term. Rather, I refer to "prophecy" because I cannot entirely dislodge the impression that there is a power that can be drawn on by positioning a narrative in "the future"--or "a future," by positioning it, as Atwood does, as something that is to come, or at least something that could with some reasonable degree of likelihood come. Further, I cannot dislodge the impression that this power remains a significant part of sf's impact even though the reader knows perfectly well that the future is metaphorical, or a metaphorically-informed extrapolation, and no true "prediction." Prophecy, as I understand it, drums up anticipation, anticipation either of joy--in the case of the prophesied return of a saviour, for instance--or of dread--in the case of a danger simmering beneath the surface of a society that the prophet takes it upon him or herself to warn us about. As a result of this emphasis on anticipation, prophecy can be intended to galvanize a certain action or a certain way of living. I wonder whether sf texts that position themselves within a future intend to prompt the reader to some sort of action, perhaps reactionary action in the case of sf works that reinforce social norms and portray otherness cruelly, and a more anti-normative action in feminist sf texts like Shelter and Midnight Robber, which I have read as insisting so adamantly on the importance of remaining open to difference.
In Hopkinson's and Palwick's particular texts, at least, the defamiliarization of the normative, what we might call the rhetoric of exposure, works hand-in-hand with this prophetic instigation I am proposing, what we might call the rhetoric of approach, the exhortation to do something in the face of an imminent future that must be hastened or averted. Exposure and approach operate so neatly together in these texts, of course, because what the narratives construct as approaching is, for the most part, the repetition of the norms that are being exposed. At the close of my first chapter, I discussed two recent tragic incidents of gun violence in the United States in order to contextualize my exploration of the persistence of patriarchy and racialization. By establishing themselves in "a future" that reiterates such outbursts, perhaps these texts seek to prompt the reader to action, to prompt the reader to find ways, as the most successful human characters in these narratives do in their interactions with science-fictional beings, to regard all other people as people, no matter how other they might initially seem. As a first gesture to an analysis of such a call to action in these texts, it is interesting to note that both *Midnight Robber* and *Shelter* interpellate the reader into their narratives in ways that seem to call for a response, albeit by very different means: *Shelter*, as I have mentioned previously, contains a "Reading Group Guide," which, among other questions, asks the reader whether "race enter[s] into the central conflicts and relationships of the book, and if so, how?" (Palwick 575). While not a call to action necessarily, the leading questions posed in the guide would seem to specifically invite the reader to engage in thought that might contribute to future action. In *Midnight Robber*, meanwhile, the narrator periodically speaks in the second person throughout, beginning with a reassurance that "I go be with you the whole time" (Hopkinson 1). It is only at the novel's conclusion that we discover that the narrator is Tan-Tan's eshu, and that it has been telling her story, complete with its record of patriarchy and racialization, to her son Tubman during his birth (Hopkinson 327-28). The eshu states that Tubman is the first human to be fully connected to
Granny Nanny, and implies that, due to this, he will accomplish great things (Hopkinson 328-29). Given Granny Nanny's capacity to reiterate oppression, this puts a great deal of power in Tubman's hands: "Either," as Langer points out, "he represents the first colonial agent of Granny Nanny on New Half-Way Tree, or he represents the potential to use the power of Granny Nanny to build a non-colonial society" (Langer 69-70). Though these references to "you" refer to Tubman, they also, inevitably, hail the reader. Might the reader in some sense be Tubman, meant to take the eshu's story as both an exposure of oppression and a warning of that oppression's power to recur, and act differently based upon it? Hopkinson's and Palwick's feminist sf tales extrapolate the reiteration of violent, repressive norms of gender and race in the futures they envision, and in so doing expose the persistence of these norms in the early twenty-first century they are written in. Yet they also provide a measure of hope, by showing their human protagonists to be capable of communicating with and valuing science-fictional beings who exist outside these norms, and, perhaps, by exhorting the reader to value difference in a similar way. There are, these texts insist, always options open, always opportunities to rethink or destabilize the normative.
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