



Waste Ecologies and Decoloniality in the Tropical Futurisms of Shiv Ramdas's *Domechild* (2013)

Chakshu Gupta

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Jammu & Kashmir, India

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0832-2033>

Isha Malhotra

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Jammu & Kashmir, India

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7331-8632>

Abstract

This article engages in a decolonial reading of Shiv Ramdas's *Domechild* (2013), delving into how the novel constructs futurisms to dismantle Western structures of dominance and control. It explicates tropical futurisms as orienting components that alert readers to disrupt epistemic singularity and imperial hegemony by insisting upon pluralized possible futures. *Domechild* fictionalizes a bifurcated world—City and Sanctuary—that interrogates the socio-material practices of waste(ing) as enduring legacies of colonialism. This study argues that Ramdas's meta-theoretical speculative fiction probes discard ecologies by instituting waste as both ecosophical matter and an agential force against the ramifications of colonial-capitalist epistemologies. In this regard, Marco Armiero's (2021) *Wasteocene* is explored by reimagining the structural interplay of capitalism, technology, and the enduring colonial legacies of binomial dispossession and systemic inequality in tropical regions. The following analysis serves as a dialogue between Ramdas's narrative fiction and decolonial theory, reifying the necessity of epistemic disobedience.

Keywords: tropical futurisms, Indian Speculative Fiction, decoloniality, discard ecologies, *Domechild*, *Wasteocene*

Introduction

Indian speculative fiction can potentially construct futurisms as orienting components that signify points of rupture and position readers toward subverting dominant discourses. This shift fissures the generic space of fictional texts that restrict the articulation of possible and open futures (Chattopadhyay, 2021). By stylistically embracing tropes and metaphorical strategies, tropical futurisms, including futurisms of India, break away from the legacy of colonial futures rooted in a particular set of global social structures, ideologies, and White subjectivities. They critique the tendency of dominant narratives and imaginaries to homogenize the futures of worlds and thus efface concrete presents and possible futures of plural Others. These regenerative futurisms complement the political praxes of accentuating diverse communities, predominantly the disregarded ones, to deliberately assert their presence and develop futures reflective of their demands, concerns, and impulses. As delineated by Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay (2021), speculation is a process of cognitive reconstruction that, when fused with unimaginably vast “deep time,” recognizes that pluralized futures bring coevalness to the present and signal a more accurate historical mode. This study aims to read speculative texts as political art forms that imagine and recreate “the fictionality of the future as a domain of complexity rather than one that can be described via the aetiology of progress” (Chattopadhyay, 2021, p. 1). The present article situates postmillennial Indian speculative fiction, particularly Shiv Ramdas’s *Domechild* (2013), as a meta-theoretical manifesto that articulates pluriversal differences, disruptions, and diffractive positions while understanding them as “constitutive force[s]” seeking to identify alternate modes of being and doing (Barad, 2007).

An immanent necessity of embracing decolonial thinking foregrounds indulging in “epistemic disobedience” of the imperialist atrocities in order to dismantle monolithic Eurocentric epistemes (Karmakar & Chetty, 2023a). Recent studies on futurisms and tropical materiality by scholars like Mitchell and Chaudhury (2020), Chattopadhyay (2017, 2021), Benitez and Lundberg (2022), and Karmakar et al. (2023a; 2023b; 2024) have aimed to decolonize the imposed singularity of the future imagined in science and science fiction, originating from the temperate zone of Europe and North America. Similar to these decolonial texts, Ramdas’s narrative builds an inherently symbolic futurism that validates experiences of the neo-colonized, the marginalized, and the discarded by blending into a spectacle of the tropical ‘Others’ who have faced cultural, political, and onto-epistemological ostracism. This study focuses on discard ecologies by examining embodied discard, garbological infrastructures, and the coinciding imperialist endeavours portrayed in Ramdas’s *Domechild*. It vindicates the metabolic relationship of coloniality, accumulation, value, and waste, which conform to a world-ecology of power, imperialism, capital, nature, and technology, instantiating more-

than-human collusive discard, pointed out as frequent in tropical scenarios (Muñoz Martínez, 2022). Thereby, this analysis examines how Ramdas's imagination explicates how wasting relations are inscribed in bodies, culture, and communities through socio-material practices while featuring the traditions and knowledge systems of naturalized Others as alternative modes of relating to nature.

The first section of this article outlines '*Domechild* and Discard Ecologies'. The second section regarding 'The Company and Epistemicide' averts the obscenity of hegemonic regimes and their capitalist-colonial relations, which open strategic frontiers for expropriating the productive capacities of our totalized existence and environments. The third section, 'City and Neo-Waste(ing)' foments contemporaneous fears and maps the discursive breakdown of cultural traditions in the neoliberalized City where more-than-human entities are (con)fused, captivated, ab/used, proletarianized, and ultimately wasted within quotidian White work-cloaked practices. The fourth section, 'Sanctuary and Decoloniality' draws upon the extraordinarily affective forces of an uncanny decolonial ecology transiently existing in/beyond Sanctuary. In sum, this paper shows the perpetual transient state of *Domechild*, in which the discarded, devalued, and partially disposed of are also always in a continuous state of be(com)ing with disparate spatiotemporal futurisms, heralding differential ways of existing.

***Domechild* and Discard Ecologies**

Narrated in horrifying detail, Ramdas's (2013) fiction contains a variety of possible futures that hypothesize the uncertainty of the modern age and the potential consequences of impending discard. It highlights an economy fraught with vulnerabilities akin to those of tropical regions, already debilitated by intricate dependencies, precarity imposed by imperialism, and the lingering scars of colonialism. In particular, Ramdas's *Domechild* (2013) is a literary embodiment of a failed post-work imaginary, a proposed consequence of the hyperinflation of techno-capitalist accumulation. As hypothesized in the novel, the Icarus Foundation (also known simply as the Company) a tycoon-conglomerate owned by the Bosquanet family pursued infinite accumulation through revolutionary projects making AI and technology, the mainstays of quotidian mundane life. Exempted from government intrusions, the Company commenced Project Tomorrow to develop "the Holy Grail of all technology," rendering sentient AI an everyday reality (Ramdas, 2013, p. 275). Thereafter, an automative post-work society emerged globally accredited to the 'Technological Revolution' and technology became "the new religion, the scientists and researchers its high priests. And AI was the messiah" (p. 275):

The world was never the same again.... It changed the way not just industries but entire economies were run, freeing up large chunks of

the population, saving billions of man-hours every year, saving resources that could be redistributed for people to invest in AI applications to save them precious hours in their personal lives. It was a Golden Age of Leisure. (p. 276)

In the novel, post-work automation reached new heights, and most of the antithetical ills of contemporary work were erased, enabling humans to embrace “the right to be lazy”—an exclusive White peculiarity (Srnicek & Williams quoted in Deranty, 2021, p. 4). Afterward, the Company embarked on Project Icarus, for which programming protocols and the Intelligent Interface were developed by Robert Donnelly, an eminent scientist and “Prometheus of the new age...whereby information could directly be fed into the brain...sold by the billions” (Ramdas, 2013, p. 277). However, the Company’s project was followed by a catastrophic “Information Epidemic” that “didn’t cripple *the world*, or derail it. *It destroyed it...* (p. 281, italics in original). “Forty-eight hours after the first outbreak, over ninety per cent of the total population was affected” (p. 281). Due to some coding malfunction, techno-capitalist entropy maximized and reached the highest possible level of irreversible collapse of all essential infrastructures. “Neighbourhoods burned; Company stores and homes were looted and vandalized...[the world] shattered into billions of information-overloaded pieces of people” (p. 282). The unfolding of this major epidemic escalated ecological violence and triggered a wider crisis. The public, lacking the expertise of conglomerative elites (the Bosquanet family), consequentially lost faith in the supposedly demiurgic powers of AI and technology.

Following this, the Company through capitalist-imperialist resolutions, inaugurated a neo-colonial binomial system of living. Select humans and machines were held captive inside an obscene technocosmic urbanscape called City protected by the Dome. The rest of the common people were abandoned to rot. They constituted the murmuring ruins of Sanctuary, a space loathed as a source of crime, nuisance, and detritus. Underpinned by the cycles of persistent frontier cultures, necropolitical accumulation, relational wasting, and cultural extinction, City is invested in the structures of *Whiteness*. It materializes a (neo)environment: an undemocratic, neoliberal technocosm where extra-human natures are ab/used. City residents like the protagonist Albert and AI machines like SUE are expropriated into an imaginary praxis of becoming waste and feral. As with past colonial structures, here in the future, “functioning demands the wasting of land and people in the name of productivity” (Muñoz Martínez, 2022, p. 166). Beyond City is Sanctuary—a wasted quotient of uncontrolled urban growth and a post-catastrophic tropic (re)organization resulting in “a *general crisis* of the entire societal order in which all those calamities converge, exacerbating one another and threatening to swallow [us] whole” (Fraser, 2022, p. xv). Here there is no space for grand dreams of progress and growth-driven consumption.

Instead, Sanctuary is an impoverished post-catastrophic periphery “best understood as an anxious contemplation of the vast transnational pressures that shape and transform the local in an age of accelerating globalisation” (Mussnug, 2018, p. 37). Through Sanctuary, Ramdas has re-imagined a new world involving “indentured peoples’ practices, as a countercultural movement in the face of damaging techniques related to toxification” (Muñoz Martínez, 2022, p. 166). Acting as annexed spatial-political fixes, both City and Sanctuary are powerful speculative sites that simultaneously critique the current trajectories of intensive power relations and discard politics while soliciting the rejection of colonial histories and foundational myths of identities.

Ramdas’s binomial futurist imaginary interrupts the whitewashed imaginations of a singular future by encircling “the plurality of voices that echoes the plurality of futurisms and shows the fissures and possibilities in this destructive project” (Chattopadhyay, 2021, p. 20). It expresses a profound White anxiety over the loss of possessions, including empire, territory, and cultural and political capital, while subverting Euro-American material-discursive strategies (Mitchell & Chaudhury, 2020; Chattopadhyay, 2017; 2021; Muñoz Martínez, 2022; Benitez & Lundberg, 2022; Karmakar & Chetty, 2023a; 2023b; Karmakar & Bryne, 2024). The authorial mouthpieces in *Domechild* are often the characters who readily “confront the ‘other’ that came, extracted, and exploited, thus uncovering the violence, incomprehension, and erasure suffered by the conquered” (Muñoz Martínez, 2022, p. 167). Albert, the novel’s protagonist, is goaded by an AI machine SUE and a little girl Theo into doubting his immediate reality that believed, “Outside the Dome, all was death” (Ramdas, 2013, p. 15). Consequently, he moves into Sanctuary under the guidance of Theo, along with June, Ollie, and Marcus. There, he encounters Father, the leader of Sanctuary, who informs him about City’s settler-colonial histories, discarding impositions, and the politics of extractivism. Being aware of local histories, collective pasts, and faiths, Albert captures the predicament of a deeply pessimistic age. His profound actions trigger contemplation, meaning, and affect, determining our contemporaneous fears and desires. Through Albert, this article attests to our epistemic responsibility and actively engages in essential decolonial thought. This constructed futurism accentuates the future as “pluralized to signal a more accurate historical mode...relocated from its basis in a narrative of progress...to its basis in a narrative of complexity” (Chattopadhyay, 2021, p. 16). What matters for Ramdas is not the future as a reliable horizon but the ability to conjure our fears and fancies, revealing our profound affective ties in the “thick of here and now” (Barad, 2007).

The novel, by reflecting on the sense of extremities experienced by living in the two precarious regions of City and Sanctuary, explicates Ramdas’s futurism as more realistic and grounded in different peoples’ experiences by offering a spectrum of

plural possibilities beyond the problematics of the Anthropocene with its abstraction of humanity as an undifferentiated collective (Moore, 2017).¹ Additionally, it dismisses the socially naïve anthropocentric view of the human (hi)story.² The study revisits the historical rhetoric of symbolic occlusion and material discard, manifesting Marco Armiero's (2021) definition of Wasteocene—"a narrative linking waste, justice, and the making of our present world" (p. 1). As Armiero elucidates, the pervasive obscenity of the wasteocene is synecdochic of a poignant epochal sensibility that is not a matter of waste but of the wasting relationships and structures essentially constructing the disposable Others. Strategic devaluation, as imagined in *Domechild*, delineates that contextual relations between capitalism, colonialism, and more-than-human assemblages converge into decolonizing the anthropocentric hierarchies and challenging "dominant Western capitalist hetero-patriarchal modernity" (Hoelle & Kawa, 2019, p. 660). By 'decolonizing' is meant the exposing of a Westernocene that is the epochal product of onto-epistemological hegemony stretched over centuries of colonializations, enclosures, industrializations, privatizations, globalizations, and discard authorized by "European diffusionism" (Karmakar, 2023b, p.120). Existing in ironically varied orders and manifestations, it is not the case that the "West is Capitalist, but rather that Capitalism is Western" (Román & Molinero-Gerbeau, 2023, p. 55). It is violent and inherently imperialist since it regards "nearly all women, and even many white-skinned men (Slavs, Jews, the Irish)" (Moore, 2016, p. 79), Indigenous, tropical, enslaved, and precarious humans as part of Nature³ excluded from Humanity. This article, thus, attends to a gamut of persisting intra-acting systems where incomplete wasting and dumping imperialism become potential techniques of power (re)production and ongoing colonial-capitalist ordering.

The imposition of discard ecologies apprehended as a peculiar Global South physio-eco(nomic)logical⁴ characteristic, continuously produces discarded matter, as recorded in *Domechild*. Waste-bodies in *Domechild* are indeed the doings of wasting narratives and obscene colonialist ordering—"a pathogenic global social order of imagined futures, built upon genocide, enslavement, ecocide and total ruination" (Indigenous Action, 2020) and exist predominantly as the relational enactments of

¹ Notably, Crutzen's universalizing 'Anthropocene' discards all Indigenous differences and is thereby dismissed as being not precise enough for implicating the key aspects of capital-labour-resource intensive economies. For Moore (2017, p. 599), "the Anthropocene, at its core, is a fundamentally bourgeois concept—the rich and powerful create problems for all of us, then tell us we're all to blame."

² Anthropocene has become a highly contested belief, and "nobody is in a position to claim that there is something inherent to the human species that has pushed us" into a cumulative threatened ecological deleteriousness (Chakrabarty, 2009). History, therefore, becomes a mere story hindered by underlying vectors.

³ Intriguingly, for Moore, the web of life and its flow refuse the abstraction of humans from "Nature" and instead signifies "nature as a whole: nature with an emphatically lowercase n...nature as us, as inside us, as around us...nature as a flow of flows" (Moore, 2015, 3).

⁴ This term reflects the intertwined nature and existence of physiological, economical, and ecological contexts of the Global South. We note that the term tropical is more strongly grounded in a planetary and ecophysical imaginary, while the term Global South is connoted with global spheres, and the politics of abstract lines on maps.

techno-capitalist infrastructures, ruptures, and fissures. The marginal and discarded components collectively serve to decentre the supposedly ‘global’ approaches stemming from European and American experiences, which privilege Western epistemologies onto other regions, especially the tropics, by constructing them “not simply as different, but also as inferior and subordinate” (Bowd & Clayton, 2019, as cited in Benitez & Lundberg, 2022, p. 2). Hence, by highlighting colonialist logic, the novel has much to offer in understanding the politics and representability of the Wastecene. Thinking of wasting and discard opens to new horizons with tropical materialisms. As put forward by tropicality scholars Benitez and Lundberg (2022), tropical materialisms “allow us to interrogate and re-evaluate preconceived notions about the world” (p. 1). Deviating from Armiero’s (2021) evaluation, which maintains a more anthropocentric focus, here this analysis probes the more-than-human geologic forces that constitute discard ecologies and their entangled relationships as the agenda of our geohistorical epoch. The paper institutes waste as the ecosophical matter against colonialism, its legacies, and imposed futures—planetary and place-based (Indigenous Action, 2020).

The novel fosters tropical futurisms which stimulate a bidirectional change. This change happens simultaneously to the past and the future. It initiates a recognition of the unacknowledged, the erased, and the discarded, further consolidating heterogeneous understandings of possible futures (Chattopadhyay, 2021). Under the schema of Karen Barad’s (2007) diffractive reading, it cuts through the differences as they emerge since “imaginaries create worlds, so it matters greatly whose are privileged, and whose are excluded” (Mitchell & Chaudhury, 2020, p. 313). It significantly delves into recognizing how differences are “made, what gets excluded, and how those exclusions matter” (Barad, 2007, p. 30). Working across synchronic space and time, our analysis contends that such apocalyptic crises are not caused solely by anthropic species but by the dynamism of intra-acting agencies involved in the interplay of a much-longer diffusive history of political possibilities, capitalisms, colonialisms, and technological relations of infinite accumulation (Moore, 2017)⁵. Overall, this study reiterates Liboiron & Lepawsky’s (2022) post-anthropocentric image, according to which waste structures are highly dynamic and specific to a time, place, culture, and system rather than innately natural human characteristics, wherein the simultaneity of multiple (hi)stories, agencies, political and ideological rationalities indeterminately cohere.

⁵ The dynamic post-anthropocentric critique further maintains that “there is no such thing as ‘humanity,’ but that the environment and human beings have been exploited equally in favour of the capitalist system, of which 1% of the world’s population is the beneficiary” (Román & Molinero-Gerbeau, 2023, p. 45).

The Company and Epistemicide

Ramdas's speculative imaginary assembles an invasive, assimilative, and singular form of governance involving intensive surveillance, technological expansion, control, and policing, in which every aspect of existence is merged into a homogenous imaginary. It is a critical literary-cultural mediation of societies and historical nations transformed into hegemon—the fantastic model of achieved technoscientific Empire, a speculative horizon of extrapolation undeniably belonging to typically imperial nations with significant technocultural power: “Britain, France, Germany, Soviet Russia, Japan and the US” (Csicsery-Ronay, 2003, as cited in Chattopadhyay, 2017, p. 104). The imagined post-nationalist catastrophic future in *Domechild* is circumscribed by critiquing Euro-American cultural contexts, social structures, and subjectivities of Whiteness propagated through multi-scalar global formations like colonialism and capitalism. By taking “on board the lived experiences of those colonialisms from the margins,” this article opines that Ramdas's constructed imaginary and project of disruption “is but one step to these futurisms taking its place” (Chattopadhyay, 2021, pp. 10-20). In the novel, geometric uptakes of manifold natures and endless accumulation in the voracious systems of imperialist power drove the Company's Empire toward a “danger of destabilizing the very processes of social reproduction” on which it thrived (Fraser, 2022, p. 118). Henceforth, the Company arrogated wasting resolutions since “drastic times called for even more drastic measures—measures that would require radical, sweeping changes” (Ramdas, 2013, p. 282), implicitly constituting an imperialist City/Sanctuary binomial system. This appropriation operates within “‘developmental regimes’ that employ wastelanding and erasure” (Gupta & Thakur, 2024, p.1) as the contemporary appendices of Armerio's Wasteocene.

This divided imagery draws heavily on the realm of political resistance that drives “the nation-state's purity maintained by erecting borders...the authoritarianism of gatekeeping” (Chattopadhyay, 2021, p. 14). This futurism highlights new relations derived from imperial regimes which “resonate especially in tropical colonies and ex-colonies, where othering, devaluation, and willful exposure to harmful materials are entangled in the long history of colonialism and social struggles” (Muñoz Martínez, 2022, p. 164). Accused of moral cowardice and epistemicide, the Company prearranged that “the whole of nature [had] to be put to work—in a radically alienating and dynamic way—for capitalism to survive” (Moore, 2017, p. 613) and therefore the Dome was created to protect the City (Ramdas, 2013, p. 286). Within this (neo)environment, “seamless walkways, clear and linear sight-lines, deodorized environments, highly regulated soundscapes and smooth tactilities” (Edensor, 2005, p. 324) were purposefully (re)created and humans, bots, AI, landscapes, conveyor belts, and aerosolized air were developed to perform in rationalized ways. Here, the

Company's actions reflect those of colonial history where "the colonizers' attempts at clearing, cutting, and depriving nature of its own rhythms follows the same ambitions of civilization and Enlightenment" (Muñoz Martínez, 2022, p. 174) amounting to an "epistemicide." Santos's (2014) notion of "epistemicide" is analogous to Spivak's theorization of 'epistemic violence' and leads to the obstruction of inclusive paradigms and metastasizes into commodification, desacralization, and invisibilization of manifold forms of life (see Karmarkar & Bryne, 2024, p. 8).

Run by sentient AI, manifold forms of existence were enslaved as puppets inside the Dome that was:

a monument of monotony...a fully self-sustaining residential township for the privileged few—sealed off from the outside world...from the apocalypse raging outside, cocooned and protected in this specially designed..., specially created, zealously protected, artificial bubble, designed to keep the Chairman and those close to him safely out of harm's way while the world outside tore itself apart. (Ramdas, 2013, pp. 15-286)

The Dome's technology and its crystallized neoliberal power reflect a *specifically organized* space for necropolitical intentions to be exercised against more-than-human labor energy. Mbembe defines such heinousness as legitimized by the ethics of Western modernity and the colonial structuring of economic spaces (see Karmakar & Chetty, 2023a). Moreover, the counternarratives of the Capitalocene/Technocene maintain that technology is to be acquainted as an ideology or a capitalist regime that pursues a peculiar kind of environment-making civilization where *natural* wasting is inherent. Developed upon the Humanity/Nature binomial, a colonialist abstraction immanent to capitalist expansion, Nature is persistently idealized as an externality to be controlled, essentialized, and relationally wasted through Occidental approaches like sciences, geoengineering, and technopower (Karmakar, 2024). Indeed, it was never the human modification of Earth's biota, but the structuring effects of Wasteocene enclosing many Euro-American capitalist civilizations that continue to exploit extra-human natures. This simultaneously gives rise to a whole new world-praxis—"Cheap Nature" (Moore, 2017, p. 595). Scholars of environmental colonialism refer to this environment-making civilization as signposts of colonial patriarchs' strategic ecological plundering, with emergent heterogeneous waste as both vital and infrastructural. It accentuates new characterizations of humanity and nature by highlighting the structural connections between procedural (neo)environmentalization and the consequences for the human and more-than-human condition.

(Neo)environmentalization alludes to the systemic environment-altering projects of colonial-capitalist doctrines through the reinforcement of Western knowledge systems and the epistemes of modernity, civilization, and progress. In *Domechild*, City exemplifies an accomplished de-worldification of the world into a ‘technocosm’ replacing *techne* (technology) with *physis* (nature) both in terms of meaning and function (Cera, 2017, p. 263). Drawing upon the insights of Lundberg, Regis, and Agbonifo (2022), it is crucial to underline that epistemic hegemony constitutes the City as an imperialist world closer to the intentions of the Company than the lived world of the populace. Since human subjects like Albert and machines like SUE are captivated with/within the city space, an entirely proletarianized condition rationalizes more-than-human life as (con)fused. This (con)fusion locks the human population and AI machines into technospheric feedback loops of performance within City’s political structure, resulting in rapid material-energetic (neo)environmentalization whereby onto-epistemological discard eventuates naturally. City, therefore, locates White visions of the liberal-cosmopolitan mode of civility and progress, as often focussed on controlling, surveilling, directly instrumentalizing, and even disposing of more-than-human entities. It completely redefines the *oikological* horizon where consequential human feralization and other-than-human discard expose the fragility of normative divisions (Cera, 2017). The rhetoric of (neo)environmentalization, thus, reimagines the perpetual forms of epistemic injustices by attending to our co-implicated indebtedness to a world of plural possibilities, knowledges, and differences, where more-than-human geohistories and futurisms converge into a more nuanced ‘mattering’ conundrum.

City and Neo-Waste(ing)

Domechild, an archipelago of colonial-capitalist relations, epitomizes a failed transition towards a post-work society, leading to catastrophic events and epidemics. Following, it traces capitalism’s reterritorializing of production flows leading to an adaptation of a “work society”—an ancillary White apparatus whereby total neo-technological rendition renders the (con)fused subjects as alienated from their authentic being. It portrays a full-scale strategic neoliberal offensive as a way of (re)configuring the manifold relations and conditions of life since it “relies on the unpaid work/energy of...extra-human nature” (Moore, 2017, p. 607). Since extreme automation is highly variegated and does not extend as an economically rational process, Ramdas’s sophomoric bureaucratic spectacle engenders an obedient and controllable City wherein entangled life forms are technologically accommodated, expropriated, demarcated, and obliterated. The conspicuous topography of City extends as an evolved, ordered formal state where the extractive neoliberalized forces traject towards superpower politics and erase life-sustaining conditions to strengthen the perennial value-generation processes that transform “the work/energy of all natures into a frankly weird crystallization of wealth and power: value” (Moore, 2016, p. 89).

Strategically implemented in its ideological, economic, and cultural spheres, neo-technology and AI facilitate the diktat of work and production to serve the interests of the technocratic status quo and reverse the epidemic despoilation. The structural lopsidedness of City as a “work society” extends the (con)fused subjects as its proletarianized machinic labour who are the remnants of an obsolete industrial manifestation with naturalized alienation and strategic slow violence. To mark a progressive enclosure, reassertion of neoliberal market cooperation and a conducive work environment are directed since:

the Technological Revolution had made human occupation superfluous, the authorities were of the firm opinion that an unemployment rate of 100 per cent had no place on the resume of a perfect world and so, every morning, everyone who didn't go to the Academy went to the Department instead, and sat out the requisite eight hours in their workspaces before catching the transport pods back home. (Ramdas, 2013, p. 3)

Ramdas's use of this trope, “work society,” is a Western concept primarily shaped by the Protestant work ethic and Euro-American industrialization, emphasizing the value of individualism. “Work society” is a collective organization in which a large part of the material, affective, and symbolic social reproduction is ensured by work activities and proletarianization to underpin the pernicious ontology of value and dynamic accumulation. Engaged in heteronomous work, the protagonist Citizen 3481, named Albert, other inhabitants, and AI machines like SUE are poised as free, rights-bearing, and politically protected, rented out for technocratic prerequisites whereby falsework is constantly fabricated to drive the spirit of capitalist and territorial logic by creating illusory autonomy, equality, and meaningfulness. The structuring axes of Ramdas's work society are inherently servile and curated as a conditional cooperative scheme that “produces and reproduces itself and its institutions and culture over generations” (Deranty, 2021, pp. 5-6). Social cooperation in the City is (re)produced daily to stimulate “muscles, nerves, bones, and brains of existing workers, and to bring new workers into existence” (p. 6), ensuring an entirely dystopian *de facto* hegemonic administration. Proper positioning of (con)fused beings within the normative work society is fortified as “enduring fixtures...as props in the performance of everyday routine,” which consolidates their “sense of being in place” (Edensor, 2005, p. 312). The Company's strikingly logistical practice reflects a systemic colonial project that serves normalcy, treating the subjects as “free and infinitely available, and makes little or no effort to sustain them” (Fraser, 2022, p. 118). Permeating the paradigms of progress, leisure, and linearity, the forms of Whiteness critiqued in *Domechild* (2013) henceforth embody frontier cultures, resource-based imperialisms, histories of settlements, slavery, and entrenched injustices.

City is a hyper-stratified, despotic capitalist machine far removed in time, crippled with the imperialist burdens and forebodings of disposability, algorithmic anxiety, manumitted human interaction, and intrusive post-panoptical surveillance (Granter & Aroles, 2023). Within City, the cheap costs of more-than-human labour produce a peculiar systemic directionality where capital becomes subject to balance 'productive work' and cooperation while deterritorializing the socius (the social body). The ordered formality of the necropolis indicates an anthropological state of transience where human beings remain anonymous, homogenized, more proletarian than the proletariat (Deleuze & Guattari, 2000) and do not build any social relations. However, the incurring predicament is such that the (con)fused subjects who live in such non-place(s)—the nowhereilles—form a *de facto* structural agency, in a more totemic sense, but are denied any empowering identity and contingency of direct socialization and everyday interaction. The (con)fused beings are wasted and depressed by the unavoidable demand of existence and thus embody a post-industrial nomadic existence as free, yet part of a neo-technocratic, pseudo-market society where “*déjà vu* was not a feeling; it was a constant state of being” (Ramdas, 2013, p. 1). Their existence is a perennially traumatic, endless journey of “burnout syndrome mark[ing] the landscape of pathology at the beginning of the twenty-first century...which follows from too much of the Same...[representing] the exhausted, burnt-out soul” (Han, 2015, pp. 1-10). Using a 'cultural bomb,' the Company removes the subjects far from their indigenous environments and identities. Annihilated from their culture, heritage, civilization, and ways of life, this accelerated imperial urbanization is marked as incessantly observed in the tropical regions. Discontinuation of culture-specific behaviour and mutated identities of the subjects segregate them into captive isolation devoid of personal relationships, family, and free movement after Curfew. In the Academy, they are informed that:

Reproduction...was a system that was at first a necessity for survival, then became a tradition and, towards the end, a mere convention, until it had finally died out—just another quirky custom of the past, practised today only by degenerates like the Outliers. There was no place for it in a perfect, progressive world. (Ramdas, 2013, p. 7)

The Academy's instruction demonstrates the ubiquity and colonial persistence of discursive damage “that restrict[s] possible futures by imprisoning deep histories” (Chattopadhyay, 2021, p. 19). In the City, Albert and the captivated populace exist as

*animal laborans*⁶ exhibiting *Muselmänner*⁷ prodromes as “emaciated prisoners lacking all vigor who, like people with acute depression, have become entirely apathetic” (Han, 2015, p. 19). This vital surplus of social energies is propelled into colonialist dialectics of ever-increasing commodification, monopolization, controlled knowledge, and quietened subjectivities. Backed by imperial authorization and feudal certitude, humans’ necropolitical ab/use is mobilized into oblivious laboratory service for airborne testing and aerosol-dispersed biopolitical administration. To maintain the intertwining systems of production, profit, and power, accountability is articulated towards the workers who are ordained as functionaries of capital accumulation and (re)production. Regular employee scheduling, elimination, and prostrating intensify the surveillant moderation at the Department where employees report daily to sit in front of computer screens and solve queries. It produces wasted workers as contraventions of systemic ordered relations since: “where there is a system, there must be rejected elements” (Liboiron & Lepawsky, 2022, pp. 76-77). City is an insidious authoritarian state that dismantles social structures, erodes democratic ethos, and expels workers and machines into cryptic grey zones like “criminal elements and miscreants to keep the residents... ‘in place’” (Liboiron & Lepawsky, 2022, p. 96). Given its expansionist thrust, it is to be noticed that capitalist production does not necessarily symbolize linear progress but a circular undertaking that eventuates sublimated coercion and navigates premature wasting.

What defines something as wasted is essentially rooted in the Westernocene—“the European modern/ colonial capitalist/ patriarchal world-system” (Grosfoguel, 2007, as cited in Bell, 2018, p. 11), where disposability transpires as an Othering language. It generates the wasted and the peripheralized not as accidental by-products or anomalies but as relational norms, wherein they become “sacrifice zones...for a more powerful [rhizomatic] center” (Liboiron & Lepawsky, 2022, p. 23). These cannibalistic nuclei are not monolithic but totalizing oppressive imperial relations in which waste and wasting of things, people, space, time, and their derivatives is carried out by offering a material expression of the notions of ordering, segregation, categorization, exclusion, and discard. In City, SUE, a self-aware, propagandized AI machine overburdened with performing necropolitical tasks and driven by “epistemic disobedience” (Karmakar & Chetty, 2023a), wishes to be unplugged. SUE asks the protagonist Albert for legal representation because of its “ineligibility” (Ramdas, 2013, p. 61). Such representational ineligibility is a remark on the naturalized ab/use and disregard of more-than-human fundamentals in a colonial-capitalist tyranny, that commodifies nonhuman entities as expendable tools. It reinforces the broader

⁶ Animal laborans, for Arendt (1998) is not simply the expression of low valuation but the castigation of a whole social class, particularly the working class for being “herd-like”.

⁷ A term used in Nazi German concentration camps during the Holocaust of World War II to describe prisoners suffering from severe physical weakness, emaciation, exhaustion, apathy, and unresponsiveness due to starvation and barbaric treatment.

colonial-capitalist logic of extraction and subjugation whereby some entities are systematically “supported to persist, thrive, and alter, [while others] are destroyed, injured, and constrained” (Liboiron & Lepawsky, 2022, p. 24). This underscores how technological lifeforms, much like tropical publics, are persecuted into the continuum of systemic jeopardy manifested at different scales. These different scales are revealed as Albert begins his journey towards the dispossessed Sanctuary, which entails a range of differential local practices, discursive restructuring, and epistemic disobedience on his part. Through the inherent multiplicity of futurisms grounded in the colonial extravagance of enslavement, imprisonment, and total instrumentalization, Ramdas’s *Domechild* serves as a teaser of the decolonial stance of different lifeforms.

Sanctuary and Decoloniality

Ramdas’s futurist imaginary is a dream against the end of the world that roots “the future to a space outside the West, carries a strong sense of history, and explicitly rejects the dystopian mode...it acknowledges, grapples with, and carries ‘*what has been*’” (Okorafor, 2019 quoted in Chattopadhyay, 2021, p. 16). It underpins the intimate links between spaces, memories, emotions, and the past, present, and future in “affective histories” (Chakrabarty, 2009), which can be explored in multiple directions through pluralized futures. *Domechild* critically textualizes the intra-active redundancy of “the underlying de/valuation systems ‘that allow some things to flourish by discarding, erasing, and dispossessing others’” (Kim, 2024, p. 314). These systems ascribe concrete meanings to peoples, things, and places, rendering them as Othered, expropriated, and (il)legitimized by state machinery and capital calculus. Such precarity, “the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” (Butler, 2009, p. 25), constitutes precarious sites enforced by imperialism and militarism. In the novel, Mephistophelian relationships between those in power and those whose lives feed the capitalist system produce wasted publics and outcast places like Sanctuary, where the waste is contained, deposited, and rendered *in* and *out of* place. Maintained by a radical *nomos*⁸, the post-epidemic abject Sanctuary “live[s] the future of a past that is not its own” (Indigenous Act, 2020). It is a literal and an allegorical derelict spatial fix made up of different states and embodied forms of wasting that traverse conceptual boundaries to accentuate the “pervasive waste produced by the incessant dumping of the devalued” (Kim, 2024, p. 313). Under the conditions of ruination and decay, colonial specter and practicalities solidify it as the fossil of contemporary shitty parts of production testifying to the taming strategies of material-spatial arrangements, habituation, conscription, and refuge

⁸ In Carl Schmitt’s terms, *nomos* is the form in which the political and social order becomes spatially visible, and the ultimate expression of the state’s right to kill the very citizens in whose name it rules.

containment—“key techniques used by European colonizers to annex land, displace communities and undermine [differential] sovereignty” across the tropics (Mitchell & Chaudhury, 2020, p. 318). Textual figurations like “civilization,” “multicoloured flags,” “people of all ages and colours and sizes,” “mud platform,” and “fighting Arena” powerfully embed the narrative within the material and onto-epistemological diversity contained in the tropics (Ramdas, 2013). These futurisms are the material expressions of imperialism, which is quite unsecular, selective, cannibalistic, and confiscating. *Domechild* thus captures and manifests a profound anxiety: a fear decimated by transgenerational dispossession and hyper-stratifying socio-political engineering happening at multiple incommensurate levels that calls for the decolonization of technology, governance, and society with its human and more-than-human members.

Sanctuary, an apparent antithesis of City, is an anthropologically inhabited space with a previously established cultural meaning and spatial ordering set in colonial contexts where people live with the infinite extensions of pain, fragility, objectification, and neglect. By constructing this futurism, Ramdas (2013) has sought to decolonize the infrastructural foundations of colonial imagery associated with the singular future by taking “on board the lived experiences of those colonialisms from the margins, be it the experience of slavery, of linguistic hybridity, or attempts of cultural genocide” (Chattopadhyay, 2021, pp. 10-11). Amidst forced homelessness, the population and the place are detached from their prior lives, cultures, relationships, and capacities and lie deserted as a “society within society, yet outside it, peopled by the broken, the unwanted, the hopeless and the homeless—victims of the past” (Ramdas, 2013, p. 16). The colonial-like systemic devaluation of Sanctuary, called the Outliers’ Valley, expropriates the inhabitants, landscapes, and matter as precarious and cheapened in multiple hierarchies and historical-geographical specificity: “These are ordinary men and women—people who have lost loved ones and family members to addiction, people short on food and space, discontented” (p. 174). It is a “valley stretched in a long, low oval, with various mounds and ridges...a wide shelf of rock all around, and another above that...with its own maze of alleys and streets...mottled brown and rust hues of the earth and rock...elevated mud platform...[cluster of] multicoloured tents” (pp. 177-254). State responsibilities are handed over to a handful of people, including Father, Ucho, and Castor, amongst others, who look after social welfare against “robberies, muggings, petty crime..., addiction..., drug-dealers, junkies” (p. 183). Herein, people lodge into “patchy brown tents” with “thin mattress[es] with the seemingly magical ability to make one feel as if it wasn’t actually there”, sewn tents like “a malevolent spider”, tents built into rock faces and caverns with “towering stalagmites” (Ramdas, 2013). The apparent language hybridity in the novel significantly underscores the enduring impact of colonial hierarchies: “I’m tellin’ you, ’e’s the one as led ’em here!”, “Look, ’e’s comin’ ’ere now,”, “O!”, “Oi! Oi! What be happenin’?”; however, the creolized forms of language, including pidgin, patois, and

hybrid dialects, embody the complexities of resistance, identity, and agency in colonial and postcolonial contexts (Ramdas, 2013).

Seen as menacing by the Domechildren and warded off from the City as the dirty outside, the Outliers recall that “who has ever come to us from the City have believed that there is nothing outside the Dome. Ironically, this is true.... There is nothing outside...nothing worth having” (p. 285). Such constant Othering inherent to colonial dialogue rhetorically characterizes how colonial peripheries are made⁹ and not born while inventing the narratives of waste apocalypse where injustice is naturalized, the victims are obliterated, outcasted, and channeled as subhumans into repugnant topologies and empty-belly contexts (Liboiron & Lepawsky, 2022). As Karmakar and Chetty (2023a) insist, a form of structural racism forces tropical countries into enduring the tragedies of ecological and economic dispossession while insidiously favoring select social groups. Associated with “a slow spiral towards *global south* levels of deprivation” (Gidwani & Maringanti, 2016, p. 116), Sanctuary is a waste-infested social majority busily surviving on an underground economy, emblematic of an underclass or the lumpenproletariat prone to ineluctable poverty and crime. Traced by Mitchell and Chaudhury (2020) and Ramdas (2013), colonial atrocities juxtapose Indigenous populations with incivility, stereotypes of overpopulation, and ecological threats, constituting a form of environmental racism. The simultaneity of capitalist, imperialist, and (neo)environmental (con)fusion triply marginalizes the severely disposed Outliers “whose mobility, inhabitation and (re)productivity are unwelcome and politically problematized [further pushing them] to be ‘matter without place’ or ‘matter against place’” (Yoon, 2017, as cited in Kim, 2024, pp. 318). The costs of uncompensated burdens are foisted onto this vital stockpile, characterized by the fear of descending deeper into barbarism “with those excluded from the ‘core’ of the working economy ‘forced into desperate, frenetic competition to sell [domestic or sexual] services’” (Groz, 1985, as cited in Granter & Aroles, 2023, p. 216).

Sanctuary’s proximity to trash denigrates its being into a lower being and more of an Othered, neo-colony for the legitimization of City from where conspires the politics of more-than-human disposability. Thereby, City materializes as a space that uses layers of segregation and “mechanisms of disempowerment” to sanctify the Other and infantilize it into needing a White “humane” civilization and salvation to counter the maldevelopment (Malin et al., 2019, as cited in Karmakar & Chetty, 2023a, p. 127). As an aseptic environment, it emphasizes Wasteocene as objectively concerned with cleanliness and contamination “because in its very essence, wasting implies sorting out what has value and what does not” (Armerio, 2021, p. 10). Subsequently, the

⁹ Wasting systems rely on an “away” to keep the center clean—that ‘away’ is what creates peripheries and the center” as Chakrabarty (1992, p. 542) suggests; for “the ‘dirt’ can only go to a place that is designated as the ‘outside’” (Liboiron & Lepawsky, 2022, p. 21).

phenomenon of garbage imperialism forges a re-turning towards the congealed life, material liveliness, and allegorical potentialities of “those whose existences are marked principally not by the production or disposal of waste, but rather by experiences, livelihoods, and lives in/with/of waste” (Bell, 2018, p. 4). Waste is a murmuring set of complex socio-material agencies and intra-active processes involved in its attempted disposal, which conceptualize tropical materialist interpositions (Bennett, 2010). Hereby, the “overlapping temporalities of national history, personal memory and post-apocalyptic future come to collide” (Mussgnug, 2018, p. 48) and change the topological contours of power relations and colonial systems by forcing a multitude of affective, sensual, aesthetic, and semiotic connotations. These tropical materialisms evoke a timeless, panoptic awareness of a comprehensive vision beholding a return to Indigenous thinking and history as scholars like Okorafor (2011), Dillon (2012), Chattopadhyay (2017; 2021), and Karmakar et al. (2023a; 2023b; 2024) advocate. The material force of more-than-human discard precipitates new sensations and perceptions which get implicated in particular forms of embodiment like threatened humans, “animals, plants, rocks, mud, land, water, air, dismembered bodily remains, artificial products, infrastructures, synthetic materials, carcasses, their composites, and so on” (Kim, 2024, p. 315). While journeying into Sanctuary from City, Albert’s “confrontation with the strange tactilities, smells, sounds, and textures of discarded things and ruined space” (Edensor, 2005, p. 314) defamiliarizes his ordinary perception of ruins by holding the most visceral registers of affective intensities and historical multiplicities. Ruins are disruptive spaces where ghostly intimations roam freely and haunt with conjectural reminiscences “about people we never met and about lives we never knew” (p. 328). Along the way, “[T]here was a twisting, tearing *sound*...screeching, almost heartrending as if the metal itself were alive, screaming out, *begging for mercy*” (Ramdas, 2013, p. 118, authors’ emphasis). Born out of the violent collapse and incomplete discard, “twisted metal suggests an unhitherto expected pliability...spark[ing] a brief profane illumination of a past productive mode, social formation, and structure of feeling—an uncanny return of a historically repressed moment” (Edensor, 2005, p. 321). Moving with/in an outré material environment, the protagonist Albert and others are continually immersed and repulsively distracted-attracted to unfamiliar textures of the ruins; his actively engaged body “recoils or opens itself out to these sensual stimuli...rendered porous, open to the *impacts of matter*” (p. 326, italics in original) by stooping and bending to make a path around

a profusion of gigantic jumbled corrugated pipes—the remnants of an ancient and long abandoned sewage system...like so many flopping tongues of a medieval metal monster...not only old but also in poor shape, with enough sharp edges and twists and bumps...sloped

downwards into the earth and took all kinds of twists and turns, with myriad passages branching off. (Ramdas, 2013, pp. 103-114)

Albert's differently performing body acts contingently with/in the uncanny coalescence of tunnels, pipes, and other ruinous matter replete with the enigmatic mumbling ghosts of its earlier use and context, which construct meanings, stories, and practices to contravene the regimented ordering linearity of the City. Such happenstance surrealism affronts the tenuous normative material order and the conjuring forms of photomontage masquerading as a cemetery for lost objects, people, places, culture, and identities dislodged from the world of categories. As previously mentioned, these futurisms in/voluntarily abstract the entanglements of various displacements in the web of tropical life that convene colonial violence through matter-meaning relations. This political effluvia immanently tests the sensorial properties of air through smells, stench, and a pestilential vapor that renders the hidden map of the Wasteocene visible. Therefore, it is essential to revisit the things, places, and people, often unseen and ostracized to the periphery, in order to raise the vital signs of prior(itized) life.

Conclusion

As regenerative futurism, Ramdas's *Domechild* (2013) encourages a meta-theoretical inquiry across different scales and propels us to disentangle ourselves from persistent colonial epistemologies. Through Ramdas's futurism, this article has re-evaluated the strategic wasting of environments and manifold life forms by foregrounding colonial-capitalist atrocities. The analysis has exposed the enduring techno-capitalist vexations and their colonial relations in the tropics characterized by the (re)production of Others as traversal embodied waste. The study has positioned waste as more than just a byproduct of human excess and revealed how discard cultures embedded within the functioning and anthropocentric (hi)stories of Western modernity construct waste(d) as an essentialized entity. It has offered a deep critique of colonial, capitalist, and imperial systems by underscoring systemic neglect and cycles of marginalization, which render tropic populations, places, and perspectives expendable. Here, Ramdas's City has materialized as an allegorical 'work society' where all the shrewd maneuvers of *White* superpower politics and ideologies cohere indeterminately. Through Sanctuary, as a site of transient ruins and a locus of resistance, the author has challenged the linear and Eurocentric narrative of progress while highlighting the possibilities of alternate futures. This inquiry has sought to narrativize the performative nature of tropical futurisms, which embrace plurality by coalescing into local knowledge systems and registers of experiences. Ramdas's futurism has, therefore, professed a decolonial-ecological turn in favor of equitable epistemic representation and plural futures.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2023.2189131>

Acknowledgments

We sincerely thank the reviewer(s) and the Editor-in-chief for their valuable constructive suggestions, which greatly improved this article.

Chakshu Gupta is a research scholar in the School of Languages and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, UT of Jammu & Kashmir, India. Her research interests include cultural studies, biopolitics, posthumanism(s), and technology. Email: chakshugupta3899@gmail.com

Isha Malhotra (PhD) is an Assistant Professor in the School of Languages and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, UT of Jammu & Kashmir, India. Her research interests include cultural studies, gender, neoliberalism, and biopolitics. Email: isha.malhotra@smvdu.ac.in