"ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES": UNFIXED TECHNO-BODIES AND THE
HOLODECK EXPERIENCE IN NALO HOPKINSON, RITA INDIANA, AND TOBIAS S.
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This paper approaches the work of three Caribbean authors: Nalo Hopkinson, Tobias S. Buckell and Rita Indiana. Following both Best and Schalk’s arguments, and considering the central role the body plays in these writers’ texts, this paper focuses on how through the strategic space of speculative-fiction, Hopkinson, Indiana and Buckell go beyond imagining our futures—or alternative possibilities—by developing alternative reconfigurations of the body. Often times their futuristic characters inhabit hyperreal spaces similar to a holodeck, product of the surrounding technologies, where the body becomes a site of transit for overcoming oppression. Precisely, Hopkinson’s *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998), Indiana’s *La mucama de Omicunlé* (2015)¹, and Buckell’s *Ragamuffin* (2007) are third person narratives that, though sometimes accessing the thoughts of the characters, mainly focus on the protagonist’s body, instead of their psyche. For this reason, an analysis of the body as an instrument for beating oppression is necessary; as well as its site as a target of oppression/power. In a way, this reading requires understanding the mind and the body as inextricable: that which affects the body affects the psyche and vice versa. Additionally, a reading of the body and its relationship with technology in these Caribbean narratives—and consequently, with hyperreality and the holodeck—demonstrates how these writers conceptualize characters capable of striving against oppression. Hence, this essay argues that Hopkinson, Indiana, and Buckell imagine in their novels bodies with agency: bodies not fixed in history, bodies/recipients that can transmute, extend and, ultimately, become something different, in order to overcome trauma and break free from the historical cycle of victimization that frequently characterizes Caribbean narratives.

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¹ Recently translated to English as *Tentacles* (2018) by Achy Obejas.
² The unequal access to technology by less privileged groups.
³ “Something that fascinates me of the magical-religious Afro-Caribbean traditions is the manner in which the body is present. And it is not an evil one, nor a sinner, but a body that is sacred. It is
In his groundbreaking study *The Politics of Caribbean Cyberculture*, Barbadian professor Curwen Best asserts that in late twentieth century “the philosophy and practice of globalization and its technological imperatives encompassed the region in a way never before experienced” (2). As communications networks, technologies and the Internet became entrenched in the region, the more exposed the Caribbean became to U.S. popular culture. Therefore, the Caribbean has “beheld the power of future technology through popular media” (Best 4), for example, through iconic films and franchises like *Star Wars, Star Trek, Blade Runner, Terminator, Alien, The Matrix, Avatar* and, more recently, Marvel Studios’ *Black Panther*. Yet, these films have little or no representation whatsoever of Caribbean people. Accordingly, they implicitly suggest the future is only for societies with leading technologies, which ultimately means that there is no place in the future for Caribbean societies and their people.

While Best recognizes the Caribbean has been “further removed from leading-edge digital technology” when compared with more developed countries (7), he also proposes that the flip side of this digital divide provides a *strategic space* from which we can start the formulation of “real and virtual responses” about evolving technologies and the ways they affect the region (4). He even exhorts, “explorers of all professions [to] enter the emerging matrix in order to make sense of the future and of the now” (5). Among these explorers are Caribbean writers who have ventured themselves to give a voice to and imagine the future of the region and its people. As Best suggest in his essay “She Dances on the Holodeck”:

> For many decades it has been the Caribbean artists, particularly the creative writers of the region, who have *creatively engaged the future*. Caribbean authors have been at the forefront of the project of *imagining* the future while exploring

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2 The unequal access to technology by less privileged groups.
its relationship with the past and examining its relevance to the present. (121, my emphasis)

Indeed, Caribbean writers have found in the speculative-fiction genre a *strategic space* from which they can creatively engage the future and imagine alternative possibilities.

In fact, speculative fiction provides both a space for the work of imagination and for theorizing/thinking differently. In this sense, as a genre that relies on an act of imagining otherwise, speculative fiction is a transgressive genre, especially as it concerns marginalize groups. In her study *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)Ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women’s Speculative Fiction*, Sami Schalk argues that for marginalized people speculative fiction (that act of imagining otherwise) can mean “imagining a future or alternative space away from oppression or in which relations between currently empowered and disempowered groups are altered or improved” (2). Ultimately, speculative fiction offers Caribbean writers the space to write what Buckell calls stories about “going”, “stories of our possibilities, … for the Caribbean and from it, than just those of trauma” (Hernandez et al.).

However, before venturing directly into the discussion of these texts, it seems necessary to first establish both the relationship between the body and oppression (power) and, to what extent, these writers are mindful of the role the body plays in their narratives and, second, to briefly overview how key concepts like technology, hyperreality, and the holodeck are to be understood. When it comes to analyzing the body, we should keep in mind two things. First, Western discourses, especially of biology and medicine, have colonized the ways in which the body has been conceptualized and understood. Materialist feminist Elizabeth Grosz argues that through these discourses the body “has generally remained mired in presumptions regarding … its brute status as given, unchangeable, inert, and passive” (x). However, as Grosz proposes
“bodies cannot be adequately understood as ahistorical, pre-cultural, or natural objects in any simple way, they are not only inscribed, marked, engraved, by social pressures external to them but are the products, the direct effects, of the very social constitution of nature itself” (x). More importantly, “bodies are not inert, they function interactively and productively. They act and react. They generate what is new, surprising, [and] unpredictable” (xi). Second, the body has been perceived as the site where the plays of power are executed: the body can be controlled both by physical and psychological measures, laws, and actions. Yet, the body is also a site from which resistance can be performed.

Like in many other places, Western discourses have pervaded knowledge of the body in the Caribbean, its conceptualization and understanding. Even more, the Caribbean is “the product of other’s dreams, where systems of knowledge and signification are [and were] enforced in order to produce docility, constraint, and helplessness” in Caribbean subjects/bodies (Dash, “In Search of” 17). Indeed, as direct product of slavery and indentured labor in a constantly exploited region, the body has been treated as “numbed, impotent, inert, [and] ultimately someone else’s possession” (Dash, “Introduction” xxvii). Besides, the colonial historicity and the baggage of slavery together with the intimacy produced by the geographical limitations of living on an island make us feel the effects of power more closely and, sometimes, with more rapid and concrete effects. Hence, speculative fiction as a strategic space for imagination offers an opening for thinking the Caribbean oppressed body differently in a “world divested of fixed, determining matter” (Dash “In Search of” 25), a space where the body can be unfixed, non-static, full of possibilities, and capable of transcending the limitations of a physical realm. In the interaction with technology, bodies are capable of transiting multiple spaces or worlds in an in between way, which attest its incompleteness.
One-way or another, the three writers in question have remarked on the importance of the body in their narratives and seem involved in representing different types of bodies, be it by representing minorities or by showing the result of the technologized Caribbean body. Nalo Hopkinson, for instance, asserts that one of the things she tries to do in her narratives is to represent unconventional bodies:

There are a lot of things I try to do. One is to represent bodies that aren’t conventionally beautiful. … I try to represent how we black women deal in the world, how we often try to save the world with babies on our hips and family at home that we have to look after. I try to make sure that I don’t have to default to straight, white, middle-class values as the only good way to be. … We're trying so hard to get the rest of the world—not even so much the rest of the world, but the white world—to recognize that we are respectable, deserving human beings.

(Interviewed by Watson, 169)

Hopkinson is also aware of the manner in which Caribbean cultures are infused with external forces and points out that, in order for that to change, “something fundamental about the nature of humans or human understanding has to change” (Glave 153), with speculative/science fiction offering one of the places where that understanding can change.

Rita Indiana, in a conference during the 28th Feria Internacional del Libro de Bogotá stated that her body is something that has always been present in her consciousness, especially considering how her height has made her stand out (“Caribbean Power” 38:48-39:14). For that reason, according to Indiana, it is almost impossible for her corporeality not to be present in her work (“Caribbean Power” 39:16-39:26). Furthermore, she also comments on the body vis-a-vis
Afro-Caribbean religious traditions—an element that is prominent in her novel *Tentacles*

(translation of *La mucama de Omicunlé*):

Algo que a mí me fascina de las tradiciones mágico-religiosas del Caribe es que el cuerpo está presente. Y no es un cuerpo maligno, no es un cuerpo pecador, es un cuerpo santo. Es un cuerpo al que se le hace santo. Es un cuerpo que se inicia, es un cuerpo que tiene poderes. Y esas deidades residen en el cuerpo. Los Orishas, cada uno, domina una parte del cuerpo. Entonces el cuerpo no es un lugar del miedo, sino que es un lugar sagrado. Y pues yo trabajo un poco eso también, esa amplitud espiritual de lo que somos. Tampoco hace mucha distinción entre el espíritu y el cuerpo. Tampoco hace mucha distinción entre el espíritu y el cuerpo.” (“Caribbean Power” 39:30-40:19)

As for Tobias S. Buckell, his Xenowealth series presents technologized bodies (cyborgs) that surpass flesh-bound conceptualizations of the body. About the important role futuristic technology and body modifications play in the plot and character development, he reveals,

I think identity is more complex than body modification. … But, I am fascinated by the nature of what the implications are for our futures. We clothe ourselves, both for utility and to signal who we are and as a result of cultural pressures. We use glasses to modify our image. We replace our joints, our bones, with better ones. We use paper to hold our thoughts, making it an external brain as well as a form of communication. We do the same to audio. We use devices to look up the breadth of

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3 “Something that fascinates me of the magical-religious Afro-Caribbean traditions is the manner in which the body is present. And it is not an evil one, nor a sinner, but a body that is sacred. It is a body made sacred. It is a body that can be initiated, a body with powers. And those deities possess the body. The orishas, each one of them, take control of one part of the body. Then the body is not a place of fear, but a sacred place. And I work with that a little too, with that spiritual breadth of what we are. Nor does it make much distinction between the spirit and the body.” (My translation)
human knowledge and talk to others on the other side of the planet. (Hernández et. al.)

As shown so far, all three authors have pondered the role of the body in their narrative. They are conscious of the body as a place of oppression and, curiously enough, represent it in their narratives as unfixed and full of possibilities. In the case of the three selected novels they accomplish it through the body’s relationship with technology and the metaphor of the holodeck, one peculiarity of hyperreality.

In science fiction novels technology tends to be thought as highly developed scientific advancements, spaceships, or weapons. Out of the three novels, *Ragamuffin* with its cyborgs, lamina viewers, and spaceships fits best under such conceptualization of technology. However, this is not the case with the other two novels, rather, sometimes technology appears in more subtle ways, like in *Brown Girl in the Ring* in which technology (understood as scientific advancements) in a dystopian Toronto is barely perceptible. For this reason, to determine what is considered technology in these imagined-near-futures, one has to consider the social, economic and political context the authors recreate in their novels. As Best explains, “Technology is always infected with the raw data of cultural experience, location and power” (“The politics…” 17). Therefore, when referring to the presence of technology, we should understand it as Héctor Huyke-Souffront conceptualizes it: “any kind of object, knowledge or activity that, in a given political, economic and cultural context, shows a marked effort in achieving optimization” (18, my translation and emphasis). Subsequently, the predominant practices used for optimization in a given historical context determine a *technological culture*. For this reason, technology,

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4 “Cualquier tipo de cosa, conocimiento o actividad que, en un contexto político, económico y cultural particular, muestra un marcado esfuerzo en el logro de la optimización.” (18)
throughout this paper, will be used for referring to all those practices of optimization that allows techno-bodies to exceed their limitations and offers them alternate possibilities.

Two concepts of uppermost importance remain to be explained: the first is hyperreality; the second, the holodeck. Both concepts are associated with simulation. Postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard suggests hyperreality as the universe of simulation: “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality” (1). In turn, simulation “threatens the difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false,’ the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’” (3). As products of the interaction with technology and the ways in which it influences the representation of the real world, the subjects in post/modern societies find themselves constantly “crossing into a space whose curvature is no longer that of the real, nor that of truth” (2). Similarly, the holodeck is a place of simulation and, consequently, a hyperrealist space. Taking Baudrillard and science fiction lore (specifically Star Trek) as a starting point, Best defines the holodeck as “a virtual-reality room where people can vicariously experience other worlds, conditions and situations” (“She Dances on…” 121). Best explains,

Upon entering the holodeck, participants can command the computer to recreate any time period and location, along with their accompanying objects, symbols and characters. The computer then recreates that reality through beams and force fields within the room, where the individual can interact face-to-face with holographic characters or merely observe the actions of others in that space (127).

The holodeck, then, is associated with the hyperreal, with “the fluid nature of the relationship between reality and hyperreality” (Best “She Dances on” 121). However, the holodeck experience is not necessarily dependent on the presence of computerized technology; it can also be an experience of the mind where the limits of the real and the imaginary are not clearly
identifiable. As Best emphasizes, “sometimes, when we don’t have the hardware, we fall back on the realization that holodecks might also be less solid constructs than we think, and that the mind is also a holographic space” (“She Dances on” 136). While the mind in *Brown Girl in the Ring* and *Tentacles* is the holographic space where the holodeck experience takes place, in *Raggamuffin* it happens in the interaction with hardware. Hence, for the purpose of this paper, the holodeck will be used as an umbrella concept for referring to all that breaks with reality, any kind of simulation/other worldly experience of two temporalities/realities: the visions and possession in *Brown Girl in the Ring*, the transit between time/place in *Tentacles* and the lamina viewer/Nashara’s versionings⁵ in *Raggamuffin*.

In *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998), Hopkinson recreates a near-future dystopian downtown Toronto. Toronto (called ‘The Burn’) is left to decay after an economic debacle forces investors, commerce, and government to withdraw to the suburbs. Hopkinson describes a Toronto where displacement politics and austerity measures have been executed against a geographical zone and a particular population. The narrator says,

Those who stayed were the ones who couldn’t or wouldn’t leave. The street people. The poor people. The ones who didn’t see the writing on the wall, or were too stubborn to give up their homes. Or who saw the decline of authority as an opportunity. As the police force left, it sparked large-scale chaos in the city core: the Riots. The satellite cities quickly raised roadblocks on their borders to keep Toronto out. The only unguarded exit from the city was now over water, by boat or prop

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⁵ In the novel, Nashara’s replicas have their own peculiarities. This idea of having different versions alludes to the tradition in reggae music of recording/releasing different or slightly modified versions of the same song. Dick Hebdige calls this: “versioning.”
plane from the Toronto Island mini-airport to the American side of the Niagara Falls.

(4)

In multiple ways, that which seems dystopic in Toronto resembles Caribbean realities today. As described in the passage, the Toronto that Hopkinson imagines mirrors the geographical status of an island, for it is secluded and excluded from the suburbs with roadblocks and its only way out is either “over water, by boat or prop plane” (4). Simultaneously, the peripheral economy portrayed in the novel is similar to the economy of the making-do present in many locales throughout the Caribbean. Even the power structure organization of two governments: a local structure managed by Rudy, a local kingpin, and the external government in the suburbs—Premier Uttley, who tries to reclaim the area for profiting—metaphorically represents the colonial and political realities of the Caribbean, where external governments and private interests captured local government policies.

At first glance, the presence of technology in this abandoned Toronto is minimal, which gives the story a sense of being technological-less, like the Caribbean. In fact, the feeling of dystopia that pervades the setting stems from this presumed lack of technology in a futuristic Toronto. Nonetheless, there is a subtle mention of “tech” understood as scientific advancement. For instance, when Ti-Jeanne and Tony while escaping from Rudy and his gang reach the Paramount Eaton Centre, the narrator describes a “block-long ‘elite’ megamall complete with [a] coded security fence [that] if your biocode wasn’t in the mall’s data banks, you got an electric jolt rather than admittance” (178, my emphasis). This is perhaps the only time in the novel where the narrator recognizes the presence of “advanced” tech and employs a tone that resonates with hard science fiction. Tech is also shown when the tribe of lost children use a “deeplight projector” to help both Ti-Jeanne and Tony escape from Rudy, his gang and the duppy (186).
This particular scene is of foremost importance since it is the one example in the novel that illustrates the holodeck experience as a direct product of high technology. In that sense, it sets an early mark for the analysis of the holodeck experience in the rest of the novel. In this particular scene, Rudy and Crack are submerged in a hyperreal space, a result of the holographic replicas the *deeplight projector* creates of the screaming children. Here, like in other parts of the novel, the holodeck is associated with illusion and, most of the time it causes confusion like the one Rudy feels:

…And the illusion of a battalion of feral children winked out, leaving only a small, grimy band of eight or ten surrounding Rudy and Crack. Rudy *gaped*, then *narrowed his eyes* in fury at Ti-Jeanne. His stare washed over her like cold ice. He gestured toward her, opened his mouth to speak, but the duppy fled, taking him and Crack.

(183, my emphasis)

The children’s projection—which helps them pretend they are a lot more than what they really are—trick their attackers and positions them in a doubtful space where the limits of what is real and what is not are not clearly demarcated, for there is no clear distinction between the holographic replicas and the real-flesh children. For that reason, Rudy gapes and narrows his eyes upon the realization that his mind has been tricked, denoting both his confusion and anger.

However, our reading of technology cannot be limited to the presence of high-tech. If technology is “any kind of object, knowledge or activity that, … shows a marked effort in achieving optimization” (Huyke-Souffront 18), then considering the social panorama Hopkinson describes in *Brown Girl in the Ring*, Vodou, Santería or Afro-Caribbean religious traditions are technology. Inside the text technology and spirituality are intimately connected. Through spirituality, particularly Vodou practices, characters are capable of extending or optimizing their
corporeal capacities. There is even a technological divide, for Vodou is a knowledge limited to a few. In the novel, those who know and are able to control the power the spirits grant have the upper hand. Such is the case with Rudy, Gros-Jeanne, and Ti-Jeanne, since they are the characters that have access to technology related to Vodou—the duppy, the zombie, the calabash, and the spirits’ possession.

Rudy, in his position of power as a “buff” dealer, obeah, and shadow-catcher, is the character with the most access to these alter-Vodou-technologies. He is the one that manages to use Vodou for his own selfish purposes, after forcing the loa Eshu to teach him how to create a duppy that serves him and to tell him what to feed it in order to keep it by his side (132). The duppy, “a creature of another reality” (138), according to Tony (or, if possible, a flying AI drone), is Rudy’s extension because he is the one who can control it, and also a weapon capable of tracking and killing whomever Rudy decides, and even of teletransporting others. The duppy possesses the capacity of healing and keeping Rudy rejuvenated: “No scar, no scratch, that me duppy don’t fix it for me. And it take away the craving for buff too” (131). In this sense, Rudy uses the duppy for optimizing his body, which makes him a type of cyborg with life-extending technology whose life depends on the preservation of a calabash. Metaphorically speaking, the calabash is a motherboard, a recipient that instead of hardware holds the “mind” or “astral/spiritual body” of the duppy and powers it (156). For Rudy the destruction of the calabash means the freedom of the duppy’s soul and consequently the loss of his ability to rejuvenate, just as it happens when Ti-Jeanne manages to crack the calabash:

Rudy screamed, fell to his knees. A network of wrinkles was stitching itself over his face. Swollen veins wormed their way over the backs of his hands, while the

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6 Loas and/or Orishas
knuckles bunched like the knobs of ancient roots; he put his arthritic hands to his mouth, spat his teeth into them. His lips sank in on themselves; a ray of fine lines etched themselves around his pursed, trembling mouth; his hair blanched to grey; his shoulders rounded as his spine curled. Ti-Jeanne gasped. Old: he was old! (205)

After realizing he is old, Rudy’s immediate reaction is to order Crack, one of his posse members, to hold Ti-Jeanne, so he can make another duppy. Rudy himself confesses: “Me can’t stay old so. Me need a new duppy” (205). Rudy recognizes that without the calabash he can’t control the duppy technology, which limits him from optimizing his body.

Rudy also has access to another Vodou technology: the zombie. In the novel, Hopkinson plays with the zombie figure against stereotypes, instead of recurring to the demonizing representation that popular media, such as horror films and stories, portray when it comes to zombies and Vodou’s traditions. Although rarely mentioned in the novel, the zombie figure offers multiple readings, among them that of the zombie as a robot. In her article “Zombies Go To Toronto: Zombifying Shame in Nalo Hopkinson’s Brown Girl in the Ring,” Rebecca Romdhani argues that the zombie figure in the novel “symbolize[s] the long history of oppression and exploitation of people from the African diaspora” (73). Much of her analysis focuses on the zombie as a metaphor for the characters’ alienation from African-derived cultures. Nonetheless, Romdhani recognizes that zombies “lack autonomy[,] the ability to think clearly[,] feel complex emotions” (74), and, in the case of Brown Girl, are associated with “powerlessness—be it the powerlessness of the oppressed or the mindlessness of the privileged” (77). This characteristic powerlessness or lack of autonomy precisely parallels Melba, Rudy’s zombie creation, with the figure of a robot. At some point, Rudy confesses, “A zombie can’t do
nothing complicated … but if you tell it to wash the dishes, it go wash every dish in the place” (212). Melba’s automaton-zombie-like behavior is more perceptible in the prologue:

‘Melba,’ Rudy said softly to the haggard, blank-eyed woman who had been dusting around the office, ‘wipe out the ashtray.’

Moving slowly, eyes irising in and out of focus, Melba took the ashtray from under Baine’s hands, wiped it clean with her dustcloth, and stood holding it, staring into its empty bowl.

‘Thank you,’ Baines said, smiling nervously at her. She didn’t respond.

‘Put it back on the table now,’ Rudy instructed her. She obeyed. She was getting too thin. He’d had to tell the boys to remind her to eat more often.

‘Keep on dusting, Melba.’

Melba walked woodenly over to a marble coffee table she’d already cleaned three times and resumed meticulously wiping her dustcloth over and over its surface in slow circles. … (5)

Melba’s behavior resembles a robot: her blank unfocused stare, automatic movements, and lack of complex expressions or emotions just highlights her robotic-like nature. Specifically, Melba’s existence, as Rudy emphasizes, consists of following his orders and performing housekeeping chores. In this sense, the zombie state in the book becomes technology, a type of domestic robot7 programed to follow its creator’s will.

7 Similarly, in Sly Mongoose, the third installment of the Xenowlealth series, Tobias Buckell associates the zombie with the figure of the robot. In the novel, the Aeolians, humans that “came from worlds where humans had lots of contact with aliens and their advanced technologies” (30), are called ‘zombies’ because of their technological enhancements and robotic-like behavior like “awkward pauses and blank looks” (31). Buckell also uses zombies in the more “groaning, stumbling, dumb-as-fuck, old-school” way, although also with a technological touch (46).
The spirit’s possession of the body is perhaps the most important Vodou-technology in the text, because it allows surpassing bodily limitations while, at the same time, immerses characters in a holodeck experience. In the first place, spirits, as power givers, grant enhancing abilities that enable characters’ bodies to transcend their physical limitations. To that effect, Ti-Jeanne’s example is the most remarkable. When Tony goes to Ti-Jeanne looking for help to escape from Rudy, she in turn asks Gros-Jeanne, her grandmother, to help him. The grandmother’s suggestion is to call upon the spirits to consult the situation and ask for their help. Thus, when they perform the ritual, Prince of Cemetery—the loa Eshu or Legbara—responds to their petition by granting Ti-Jeanne the ability of becoming invisible if she carries the rose Tony gifted her: “Tell she when she go out tonight, she must carry something she man give she. She must conceal it somewhere on she body. I go hide she halfway in Guinea Land, where flesh people can’t see she. So long as she carrying Tony gift on she, nobody go see he, either” (95). In this way, possession or the spirits’ powers become an optimization that enables characters to transcend bodily-flesh limitations. In fact, the loa’s optimization of Ti-Jeanne’s body grants her the ability of invisibility, which simultaneously gives her the capacity of extending it to Tony and of transiting in between two worlds: the spiritual Guinea Land and the physical immediate Toronto.

In the novel, the transit in-between world is described as hyperreal. The narrator stresses that during their time as invisible, Ti-Jeanne and Tony feel “afraid to trust in the spell that kept them only partially in the real world” (106 my emphasis). Hence, the time they spend inside this in-between state generates confusion both in them, who are not fully immersed in the “real” world, and in Rudy’s posse. For instance, when they encounter Rudy’s posse on their attempt to reach the city’s outskirts, Ti-Jeanne tells Tony, “Them still can’t see or hear we … And them
can’t hold the thought of we in them heads for long,” while Jay asks doubtfully, “You think them in here for real?” (115). When Ti-Jeanne accidentally drops the rose, they immediately lose their invisibility, an act that the narrator describes as being “fully back in reality,” just like subjects fully return to reality once the holodeck experience is over.

However, the optimization of the body by means of the loas’ powers is not the only space through which Ti-Jeanne gains access to the holodeck; she also directly accesses it through visions and possession. In the novel, Ti-Jeanne experiences visions similar to the holodeck. Every time she sees a vision, there is no clear distinction between reality and fantasy—or what is the same, reality/hyperreality or real/imaginary. As a matter of fact, whenever Ti-Jeanne has a vision the narrator underlines the manner in which she can no longer distinguish where reality starts or ends. The narrator describes one of Ti-Jeanne’s visions, as follows: “ Abruptly, the visions were there again. Ti-Jeanne froze, not trusting her eyes any longer to pick reality from fantasy” (16, my emphasis). For that matter, Gros-Jeanne urges Ti-Jeanne to learn how to use her gift, before it uses her and turns her mad like her mother; she warns her:

If you don’t learn to use the gift, things going to go hard with you. You want to come like the crazy people it have wandering the streets? Eh? Not knowing if you have clothes on your back or what day it is, just walking, walking and seeing all kinda thing that ain’t there, not knowing what real and what is vision? (47, my emphasis)

If Gros-Jeanne words are not a mere attempt of convincing her grand-daughter to learn about obeah traditions, then we can assume that the consequences of not learning to control her visions would mean to eternally live in a hyperreal limbo without ever being able to distinguish the limits of reality. On occasions, Ti-Jeanne’s visions are so vivid, they flash “around her, through her, invading, sight, smell, sound, touch” (219), which contributes to the feeling of confusion and
disorientation she and other characters feel when they find themselves immersed in a holodeck-like experience. Not surprisingly, more than once, Ti-Jeanne ends up wondering what happened or where she is, after recovering awareness. Precisely, because visions have both a mental and a physical effect on the characters, it is possible to read them as a holodeck experience, especially since through them, Ti-Jeanne transits two indistinguishable spaces.

Spirits’ possession of the body is another Vodou-technology with a holodeck-like effect similar to Ti-Jeanne’s experience with her visions. Much of this effect is related with the theatrical nature of possession. In his study *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean*, Richard D. E. Burton recognizes the theater-like structure of possession and explains that it “always involves play in the sense of simulation and acting” (222). The association Burton makes with possession and simulation is appropriate for our analysis, because, as argued, hyperreality is inside the universe of simulation. Burton sees possession not as “some uncontrolled frenzy or trance but [as] a conventionally codified and crafted performance in which the ‘horse’ (the possessed) impersonates or mimes the character, appearance, and gestures of the loas (Vodou) or orisha (Shango) that ‘rides’ her or him” (225). As Burton denotes, possession is

intrinsically theatrical because it ‘consist objectively in the figuration of a mythical or legendary character by a human actor’ and as such raises the question, … of how far the state of possession is consciously willed and artfully crafted by the adept-performer and how far it happens ‘spontaneously’ without the active collaboration of the cultist concerned. (223)

Similarly, in the novel possession generates the same theatrical feeling Burton speaks about. Tony, for example, doubts of the whole ritual, and claims to not believe any of the Vodou is real,
mainly because of its theater-like aspects. After witnessing the possession of Ti-Jeanne, Gros-Jeanne and Baby, he reacts dubiously by saying “it was just a bunch of playacting, wasn’t it? All of that couldn’t really have happened, your leg disappearing, Ti-Jeanne growing seven feet tall” (102). Both the spectators and the possessed distrust the concreteness of their experience, they find it difficult to distinguish if the possession is “consciously willed and artfully crafted” or spontaneous, which amounts to distinguishing between the real and the hyperreal.

Beyond generating holodeck-like—or hyperreal—experiences for the characters, the relationship between this Vodou-technology and the body produces techno-bodies, optimized bodies capable of surpassing physical-corporeal boundaries, and simultaneously, gives them the abilities for confronting and overcoming oppression. In the case of possession, a technology that takes place in the head, spirits enter the head to possess it and optimize the body. Specifically, this Vodou-technology helps Ti-Jeanne confront Rudy, her drug lord grandfather and oppressor. When Ti-Jeanne is held down to a table while Rudy tries to make a duppy out of her, she asks the spirits and all of the children Rudy fed to his duppy to help her fight him. During this process she slowly starts slipping into a spiritual-holodeck-like space: “She wanted to wait in her duppy body to see what would happen, but her flesh body was reeling her in again. Its pain was descending upon her. Like tumbling headfirst into mud, she rejoined her flesh body, which had worked itself partway out of the bag” (222). The narrator distinguishes two types of bodies: a “duppy body” and a “flesh body.” This highlights the hyperreal aspects of this spiritual-technological experience and the alterability of the body. Once the spirits start possessing Ti-Jeanne, her body begins optimizing: it heals and surpasses the physical realm. The narrator describes it as follows:
Then Ti-Jeanne felt the beneficence of Osain, the healer, leaching the poison from her body. Her burns and cuts healed. She could move again. She was holding Osain in her head, but it was as though he were cradling her consciousness in his hands, allowing her to remain aware simultaneously with him. … She felt both light and heavy, part spirit, part flesh (223-224).

Ti-Jeanne’s body is presented as non-static and unfixed to a history/reality; it transits two worlds as the head, specifically, becomes the recipient for the spirits. If it were not for this body with agency, capable of being altered and possessed, Ti-Jeanne would not be able to integrate the spirits’ technology to fight Rudy, nor would the power of the spirits be able to manifest. It is only by holding “eight of the Oldest Ones” in her head, to the point of almost burning her brain out, that Ti-Jeanne defeats Rudy (229). Thence, in resorting to possession technology, Ti-Jeanne’s body becomes the tool for beating her oppressor and changing her position as a victim, also notable considering the gendered dimensions of this struggle.

The analysis of *Brown Girl in the Ring* paves the way for the next two novels in this study, especially because Hopkinson’s novel provides examples of the holodeck experience both as a product of “advanced” technology and of alternate understandings of ‘spiritual’ technologies, like the Vodou. As we will see, in *Tentacles* Afro-Caribbean religious traditions also have a technological function fundamental to the plotline and for the character’s capacities for duplication, while in *Ragamuffin* “advanced” technology takes a leading role. Of the two, Rita Indiana’s *Tentacles* shares more commonalities with Hopkinson’s *Brown Girl in the Ring*, particularly because they are both set in “dystopian” near futures.

Indiana’s first speculative-fiction novel, *Tentacles*, is a complex text in which three temporalities coexist. All three are set in Santo Domingo: the first one in 2027, the second in
2001, and the third in the seventeenth century. The futuristic temporal line of the novel takes place in a Santo Domingo of beaches contaminated by “unsalvageable corpses and sunken junk,” the consequence of a tidal wave that caused the spillage of a biological weapon in 2024 (15). Indiana describes a Santo Domingo where “the 21 Divisions, with its blend of African deities and Catholic saints” is the official religion, while those who still believe in a biblical God are called The Servants of the Apocalypse, a group of terrorists that seems to enjoy placing explosives and killing people “almost as much as speaking in tongues” (44). In this 2027 Santo Domingo, characters seem to have a more direct relationship with “advanced” technology, in contrast with the characters from Hopkinson’s *Brown Girl in the Ring*.

For example, Acilde Figueroa, the main character, lives with a data plan integrated into her body that gives her access to special features. This is evident from the opening scene, where Acilde witnesses, through optical enhancements, the killing of an infected Haitian:

> Bringing her thumb and index together, Acilde positions her eye and activates the security camera that faces the street, where she sees one of the many Haitian who’ve crossed the border …

> Recognizing the virus in the black man, the security mechanism in the tower releases a lethal gas and simultaneously informs the neighbors, who will now avoid the building’s entrance until the automatic collectors patrolling the streets and avenues pick up the body and disintegrate it. (9)

With the data plan Acilde is capable of accessing the security camera facing the street, and of checking the price of the yellow robot/machines with the PriceSpy, an app that tells the brand and price of anything in her field of vision (10). In this timeline, the integration of technology into the body seems to be so common that Acilde considers it essential. The narrator confesses
that the mere fact of seeing “people [who] lived without an integrated data plan or anything” surprises Acilde (15). Acilde’s interaction with this advanced technology gives her a virtual holodeck-like experience. This is evident when data blocks flood Acilde’s vision and complicate her house cleaning chores every time she accesses the PriceSpy (10). The narrator also avidly describes the specific movements Acilde makes with her hands and fingers to interact with this virtual web: “She brought her right thumb to the center of her left palm to activate the camera and, flexing her index finger, she photographed… then she flexed her middle finger to send the photo” (20). However, the holodeck-like experience and the optimization of the body that this analysis is concerned with result from the body’s relationship with alternate technologies associated with Cuban Santeria. Correspondingly, characters such as Acilde and Argenis acquire the capacity to unfold in time through their contact with a sea anemone. The mythology around the existence of this anemone underscores the manner in which it becomes technology.

In the novel, the *Condylactis Gigantea*, the sea anemone Acilde finds in Esther Escudero’s apartment and with which Argenis gets stung in Playa Bo⁸ is a manifestation of Olokun⁹ the Orisha of the deep sea. Although at first the immanent value Acilde gives the anemone is the trade price she can get for it for buying the Rainbow Bright, as the story progresses, she finds out—and the reader along with her—that the anemone forms part of a cult

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⁸ Although an important event, Argenis connection with the anemone is described as accidental. For this reason, this paper will not go into details about his connection with the anemone, as it will with Acilde’s. Yet in her recent sequel to the novel—*Hecho en Saturno*—Indiana explores Argenis’ relationship with Santeria; she explains his grandmother serves San Miguel Archangel (156), a saint syncretized with Oggun, which could justify, to some extent, Argenis’ sensibility to the anemone’s powers.

⁹ In Cuban Santería, Olokun, owner of the ocean, is commonly described as androgynous. On some occasions the orisha is represented as half-man, half-fish, other times as a hermaphrodite (Bolivar 238). This gender-neutral aspect is analyzed in comparison with Acilde’s sex change in my article: “(Re)pensando el cuerpo: La santería y el género fluido en *La mucama de Omicunlé*” de Rita Indiana.”
to Olokun and that the marine creature, as manifestation of “the most mysterious of the orishas,”
is capable of granting the powers of time traveling (75, 105). In effect, as the one chosen to
fulfill the prophecy delivered to Omicunlé, Acilde acquires, through a santeria-like initiation
involving the anemone, the ability of unfolding herself in the other two temporalities. The
narrator describes this as follows:

Acting as a priest now, Eric began to pray in a sharp and nasal voice … As he
prayed, he joined the tentacles to the moles on Acilde’s head. A weak Acilde
whimpered and cursed, unable to move. The tentacles stayed put, as though with
Velcro, and the marine creature’s smell supplanted the neighborhood’s garbage stink
… He let go of the creature and brought his face next to Acilde’s … He got even
closer to the ear of this newborn man and used his last breath to let him know:
“Esther knew what was going to happen I’m done for. We gave you the body you
wanted and now you’ve given us the body we needed” (51)

Since possession is characterized by temporary and often violent physical changes where the
head is a sacred place through which the Orishas are able to settle or possess the body (Clark 75,
89), the joining of the anemone with Acilde’s head can be interpreted as such. The interaction of
the anemone with the body (or the head in Acilde’s case) is a metaphorical act of possession that
facilitates the acquisition of Olokun’s power and the body’s subsequent optimization—i.e. its
capacity of unfolding in time—, which ultimately places the anemone as an alternate
technological instrument.
The manner in which Indiana describes Acilde and Argenis’ time/space transit or replication alludes to a holodeck-like hyperreal experience. In the case of Acilde, his experience seems to be more under control and less confusing than that of Argenis’. Yet much of it relates to how Acilde accesses these other timelines knowing it is part of his mission. After the initiation, a hologram of the old santera woman tells Acilde, the new Omo Olokun, to use his recently acquired powers to save the sea from the biological weapon spillage. To achieve this mission, Acilde mentally accesses the other two timelines in the narration where he can control Giorgio and Roque’s body while being physically present in a prison in the year 2027. Initially, Acilde shows some confusion regarding the images he experiences in his head, and asks: “Do I have two bodies or is my mind capable of broadcasting two different channels simultaneously?” (80). Nonetheless, this feeling of confusion is more characteristic of Argenis’ experience than that of Acilde’s, mainly because the latter has the time to learn how this mental portal to other times works. When describing Alcide’s interaction with this holodeck-like space, the narrator presents it akin to a virtual reality video game or a holodeck accessible by just closing the eyes: “pulling the strings on Giorgio and Roque from his cell in La Victoria as though he were playing a video game, accumulating goods, trophies, experience, enjoying the view, inexistent in that future of acid rains and epidemics in which prison was preferable to the outside” (128). In 2027 Acilde is accustomed to transiting these kinds of hyperreal spaces, as she has already experienced it with the PriceSpy. This signals both Acilde’s understanding of how the “window to the past” functions (83) and the narrator’s association of Acilde’s holodeck experience with a more technological language. In the novel, characters can access other selves, control a clone

\[10\] In this part I use the masculine pronouns (he, his, him) for referring to Acilde, because in this moment of the narration he has already undergone the sex change procedure with the Rainbow Bright.
double, or connect and disconnect from the holodeck-like time portal, which is how Acilde determines when to access this mental hyperreal room.

In the case of Argenis, he is disadvantaged in terms of knowing how to control the access to the seventeenth century timeline. His holodeck experience is described as involuntary projections in his head or visions of a mystical/psychological nature rather than a technological nature. In fact, in the sequel, which takes place three years after the events in Playa Bo, Argenis refers to his visions and hallucinations as a psychotic crisis similar to a drugged state of mind (37, 112). In Tentacles, the two temporalities or space planes Argenis transmigrates are at times indistinguishable. The narrator describes Argenis holo-mystical experience as follows:

[F]or Argenis two suns dropped below the horizon. Experiencing these two realities at once was like putting together a jigsaw puzzle on the table while watching the news on the TV. The news was his present, predictable and harmless; the world of the buccaneers was the jigsaw puzzle he had to focus on lifting his head now and again without dropping any pieces. The two suns didn’t compete for his attention, instead appearing one on top of the other, like stacked negatives. When they vanished, and with them his strange internal movie, Argenis felt relief and fear in equal parts. (60)

At the same time, Argenis shows desperation at the impossibility of determining when to access this other time, like when he wonders how to turn off the images playing in his mind (60). As a consequence, he feels confusion toward the events taking place around him. For example, the narrator explains, “there was no way for Argenis to disconnect himself. Unlike the previous night, this time the visions had left him full of questions. Was this a past incarnation? Was it schizophrenia? Witchcraft?” (65). Even more so, Argenis struggles with trying to focus on what
he sees, feels and tastes, “He brought Giorgio’s fillet to his mouth—it was exquisite—but the taste of the hard and salty jerky he was chewing in his other mouth killed his appetite and he ended up leaving both plates untouched” (58). Overall, in Argenis’ holodeck experience temporalities and visions fuse and superimpose onto one another, making it difficult for Argenis to distinguish which is his immediate reality, just as it is difficult for readers to determine which timeline is being presented.

As mentioned earlier, techno-bodies are optimized bodies capable of surmounting physical-corporeal boundaries. To that effect, the interaction with technology, its integration within the body, and its use for optimization provides characters with capabilities for confronting oppression. In Tentacles this is evident with Acilde and Argenis, whose contact with the anemone optimizes their mind for transiting multiple times and spaces. At first, it seems these two characters are more concerned with achieving their own personal goals than in overcoming oppression. Indeed, Argenis takes advantage of his window to the seventeenth century for painting an artwork to present at The Sosúa Project: “With his vision clouded with the hot smell of blood … he reached for the Cadmium Red, squeezing the tube of Winstor & Newton straight onto the brush like toothpaste” (6). As for Acilde, he initially accesses the 2001 timeline with the intention of finding a way of stopping a tidal wave, but when he is presented with the opportunity to warn the twenty-two-year-old president Said Bona, he starts considering the butterfly effect his actions could cause and, concerned with the possible disappearance of his incarnation as Giorgio, opts not to tell him. At the end, guided by the desire of keeping the life he has created as Giorgio, Acilde closes the windows that grant access to the 2037\(^{11}\) and the seventeenth century, keeping only Giorgio’s body/temporality. Nonetheless, the novel’s ending

\(^{11}\) Acilde spends a total of 10 years en La Victoria prison, hence the change in year.
allows for multiple interpretations, among them the possibility of an ending where the decisions Argenis makes as Giorgio to found a project to protect the coral reefs and other marine ecosystems results in an alternate future where the tidal wave is prevented. Simultaneously, by deciding to keep Giorgio’s body in the 2001 timeline, Acilde symbolically overcomes oppression, for she goes from the life of a marginalized sex worker and maid to one where he can not only enjoy the lifestyle but the biological sex she always wanted.

Until now, the representation of technology in these novels has being progressively advancing: from the seemingly technological-less dystopian Toronto to a slightly more dystopian tech future in Santo Domingo. As for Tobias S. Buckell’s Xenowealth series, it offers a fully immersed high-tech future far from Earth. The series takes place in a universe of interconnected wormholes known as The Benevolent Satrapy. Here, Buckell sets characters, descendants of all sorts of people from the Caribbean—Afrikan, Indian, Carib, Chinee—in a universe ruled by the alien Satraps (“Crystal” 47). What Buckell begins in the first installment in a planet disconnected from the wormhole system and steampunk technology eventually expands within the subsequent three novels, into a whole universe where humans overthrow the oppressive Satraps and form the League Territories along with a technodemocracy. In the series, technology is ever present in multiple forms and the representation of cyborgs and other characters that surpass the limitations of the body through the integration with technology. Buckell even explores ethical questions around the human/robot dichotomy. A whole book-length study could be written about the role technology plays in Buckell’s alternative future. Nonetheless, in this particular case, our analysis is limited to Ragamuffin, mainly because it is the first novel in the series that fully represents the relationship between body and technology and that better exemplifies the holodeck experience.
Similar to Tentacles, in Ragamuffin humans actively interact with advanced technology that modifies their perception of reality and their interactions with others\textsuperscript{12}. Among the technology used by humans is the lamina viewer, lenses or data contacts implanted behind the eyeball that allows access to “information-rich data streams… such as directions to get to the docks, or what elevators to take” (12). This device is of great importance. As the narrator explains, “to be unable to view lamina meant being illiterate among those who read to survive” (12). The lamina exposes its user to a reality —“a universe of simulation”— that is “neither real nor unreal,” yet holodeck-like. This is suggested early on in the novel. The narrator clarifies, “People up here in orbit had the technology implanted behind their eyeballs from late childhood on. Only four-year-olds or the impaired couldn’t wrap their minds around constantly seeing things that weren’t really there” (13). In this way, Buckell presents us with characters whose bodily images are not limited or fixed by nature or confined to the skin; rather, bodies are capable of integrating a wide range of technology. Furthermore, the lamina viewer, beyond inserting characters into a holodeck-like reality and enhancing their visual capacities, changes the characters’ experience and interaction with the external world or objects. This is the case with Kara, the girl who, along with her brother, is rescued by Nashara and a group of Ragamuffins, and for whom the world perceived through lamina is “more mysterious, more layered, deeper, than it would have been without [it]” (78). In their integration with technology, characters can no longer distinguish where the real begins or ends, nor the limits of their bodies, which results in disorientation or confusion whenever they disconnect from the lamina viewer.

\textsuperscript{12} The following analysis was presented at the 11\textsuperscript{th} Workshop on Caribbean Theory and Criticism: Caribbean Science/Speculative Fiction (SF) at the University of West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, November 2019, under the title: “Beyond a Flesh-Bound Body: Cyborgs and Hyper-Reality in Tobias S. Buckell’s Ragamuffin.”
Specifically, Nashara’s relationship with the lamina viewer and other technologies is what makes her a character that transgresses bodily boundaries. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator makes a particular effort in signaling the parts of Nashara that are technologically integrated within her body. The narrator explains that Nashara’s body is not entirely organic: she cuts slits in the skin of her thighs to hide slivers of gold (6), she is the product of anti-aging technologies (24), her skin has been modified to be strong (44), and she has “[given] up” her womb to carry a “quantum computer” machinery that allows her to interface with advanced lamina (34, 107). Her body causes an impression on other characters, such as Etsudo, who holds his breath the first time they meet, and points out how underneath her skin Nashara “is more machine than man” (66). As the plot progresses, Nashara’s fusion with these technologies allows her to become a hybrid in a fluid in-between way: not “a monster, or a robot, just a very oddly configured human” (290), a hybrid that escapes static classification.

A great part of Ragamuffin revolves around the possibility of Nashara using the weapon she carries in her womb, a device that “can overpower lamina and make it extensions of [her] mind” (107). The risk of this technology, which is the main reason why Nashara refuses to use it until the very end of the first part, is that at the moment she interfaces with Satrapic lamina, her physical body will die while her mind “replicates, copying itself endlessly until [having] control of all it is in contact with” (107). However, in the novel, mind and body are still seen as one; they are inseparable, as Etsudo points out when he says:

All the experiments we’ve seen, all the patents I’ve helped purchase and freeze with all these experiments in taking the human mind and digitizing fail spectacularly. We are more than just brains locked away in mechanical bodies. We are influenced by our environment, our reaction, our physicalities. (256)
However, technology like lamina makes it possible for the mind to exist without the body because it provides the necessary coupling mechanism. Nashara explains:

Uploads go insane because your physical body is as much a part of your being as your mind. You can’t divorce the mind from the organism and the environment. But lamina is computer power and a layer matching the environment. If you accept physical tags, your mind will cope. (144)

Yet, when Nashara releases the virus inside her in the Toucan Too’s Ragalamina, something quite different happens: she replicates her mind without ceasing to exist in physical body.

Body, mind and simulation find a way to coexist. Cascabel, Nashara’s perfect cyber replica, explains that there is enough “processing power in the ship’s lamina for the both of [them]” (145). Using bandwidth, Nashara manages to control her body as if it were a “drone” (145). Furthermore, according to one of Nashara’s projections, if the user finds a way to “emulate a human body within the lamina, it can pretend it is still a physical organism in the physical environment the lamina sits overtop” (256). The hologram could even remain human “the more [it] pretends to be a body and interact[s] with the physical” (146). As a consequence, in the third part of the novel, multiple Nashara holograms contribute further to the holodeck experience in other characters—such as in Kara’s difficulty with “getting her head around the Cascabel/Nashara divide” (279, 281), a feeling that is even more remarkable when each version of Nashara takes particular body images by wearing different clothes and hairstyles (268).

In their independence and multiple physicalities, Nashara’s versions become hyperreal. Characters at times cannot distinguish the “original” or confuse the replica with the “embodied” Nashara, which suggests incompleteness, a body that aims toward multiplicity and affinity, rather than toward unity. Similarly, there is already something in the constitution of the hologram
itself that refers back to a feeling of hyperreal-ness. As Baudrillard explains, “holographic reproduction, like all fantasies of the exact synthesis or resurrection of the real, is already no longer real, is already hyperreal” (108) or holodeck-like. The encounter with the hologram “gives us the feeling, the vertigo of passing to the other side of our own body, to the side of the double, luminous clone, or dead twin that is never born in our place” (Baudrillard 106), and hence puts characters in a position where they cannot distinguish between the copy and the original. In this way, Nashara becomes a self of multiple “others.”

Nasahra’s cyborg-ness and fusion with the lamina viewer allows her to resist and challenge the domination of the multiverse rulers, the Satrapy, and their henchmen, the Hongguo. Thanks to the anti-aging technology that Nashara integrated to her body, she lives hundreds of years. Nashara comes from Chimson, a planet run by humans where she fought against the Satrapy when they attacked her planet and closed its wormhole as in Nanagada. For this reason, she has seen and knows from first-hand experience what it means to be free, emancipated from the Satrapy’s mind control. Her experience, decisiveness, courage, and the technology she carries explain why other characters see her as a leader and heroine, as well as sometimes as a threat. As for Nashara’s recoupling with the lamina viewer, she uses its illegitimacy to surprising the Hongguo and defeat them in the final face-off.

Caribbean literature has been characterized by traumatic narratives, stories where characters often are victims of a system they can hardly change. However, speculative-fiction, as a genre, offers creative writers a strategic space for imagining and engaging in stories about going, about possibilities, stories, such as those discussed, where characters either create possibilities or find the alternatives to break away from oppression. In the case of Brown Girl in the Ring and Ragamuffin, the main characters, Ti-Jeanne and Nashara, directly confront their
respective oppressive forces and simultaneously create the space for alternative possibilities both for their and other characters’ future. Meanwhile, in *Tentacles*, Acilde, rather than directly confronting a specific oppressive force, escapes from her/his dystopic-oppressive reality by choosing the alternative/timeline that better suits her/him. In all three cases, technology or, more specifically, its integration within the body, is the tool through which characters create material and/or spiritual solutions to their immediate problems. In this way, these writers give us stories where characters are heroes rather than victims. Simultaneously, in their act of purposefully imagining the future of the Caribbean and its people, speculative-fiction writers create a counter-discourse to the predominant mainstream representations of the future, where leading societies always have a place, while regions victims of a digital divide are excluded. Furthermore, these writers venture to imagine and formulate alternate conceptualizations of technology, suggesting the possibility of the geographical zone for creating their own technologies.

Ultimately, in a society that is moving more and more toward advanced technological dependency, it becomes imperative to rethink the human body as more than just flesh and bones. The human of the future, or the human we have been aspiring for in the last decades, is a body modified by technology. As medicine develops new and more sophisticated procedures for changing the body (e.g. plastic surgeries, hormone treatments, prosthesis, gender reassignments surgeries and treatments, etc.) and scientists improve other technologies that could be incorporated into the body to enhance corporeal experiences (e.g. optical, auditory and neural implants, virtual reality simulators, mobile devices, etc.), the lines or frontiers between physicality and technology become blurred. Movies and literature, specifically those in the speculative/science fiction genre, have been for some time exploring all these possibilities. In fact, to the extent that their narratives explore characters interaction with technology and the
body’s possibilities for optimization, speculative fiction writers such as Nalo Hopkinson, Rita Indiana and Tobias S. Buckell, introduce readers to techno-bodies, bodies that exceed their boundaries and limitations.

Indeed, imagination has been put to work and questions regarding the body of the future need to be put in play in order to produce new ways of thinking and understanding the Caribbean subject of the future. If my body can be changed and altered, what, then, makes me “man” or “woman”, or even “human”? Is there something inherent in our body that makes us human or is it just a discursive construction? If the body is not immutable anymore, why do we keep insisting on creating a division between what is supposedly natural, according to a biological discourse, and that which is social? And, lastly can our bodies be more than only just flesh?
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