



Sustainable Futures: Liminality and Hybridization in Octavia E. Butler's *Xenogenesis*

Sürdürülebilir Gelecekler:
Octavia E. Butler'ın *Xenogenesis* Eserinde
Eşiklik ve Melezleşme

Muhsin Yanar*

Abstract

Octavia E. Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy, consisting of *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989), later renamed *Lilith's Brood* (2000), tells the story of the Oankali, an alien species developed to save the remnants of humanity following a nuclear catastrophe. The Oankali species has three distinct genders: male, female, and the "ooloi," which manipulates the DNA of other species during mating. In *Dawn*, the main character, Lilith Iyapo, an African-American woman, willingly undertakes the hybridization process that the Oankali offer. This involves

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TÜBİTAK 2219 Yurtdışı Doktora Sonrası Araştırmacı Birkbeck, University of London. Londra-Birleşik Krallık/TÜBİTAK 2219 International Postdoctoral Researcher, Birkbeck, University of London the School of Creative Arts, Culture and Communications Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences London/UK.

* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu Yabancı Diller Bölümü Ağrı-Türkiye/ Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University School of Foreign Languages Department of Foreign Languages. myanar@agri.edu.tr ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2523-608X

an evolution of the human and the creation of a new hybrid species with the Oankali. *Adulthood Rites* narrates the story of Akin, the child of Lilith, and the first human-Oankali “construct.” In *Imago*, Butler reads the story of Jodahs, Lilith’s other child. The trilogy explores the shift from being essentially a human to human-alien hybridity. Considering the notions of liminality and hybridization, this paper examines the process of human metamorphosis and evolution physically and conceptually. It unravels how biotechnology complicates the interconnection of power, racism, gender, and nature. Reading Butler’s trilogy from a post-humanist lens might contribute to our understanding of how it challenges oppressive hierarchical systems, the subordination of women by nature, and the marginalization of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, this paper questions the notion of rigid categories and examines the conventional distinctions that humanism establishes between “humans” and “non-humans.” Instead, it proposes the notion of “trans/corporeal multiplicities” that transcend dichotomies and boundaries. It investigates how Butler’s trilogy revisits humans and nonhuman beings and proposes perspectives that embrace sustainable futures.

Keywords: *Octavia Butler, Xenogenesis, liminality, hybridization, post-humanism*

Öz

Octavia E. Butler’ın *Şafak* (1987), *Erginlenme Ritüelleri* (1988) ve *Imago* (1989) adlı eserlerinden oluşan ve *Lilith’in Dölü* (2000) olarak yeniden adlandırılan *Xenogenesis* üçlemesi, nükleer bir felaketin ardından geride kalan insanları kurtarmak için geliştirdiği uzaylı bir ırk olan Oankali hikayesini anlatır. Oankali ırkının üç farklı cinsiyeti vardır: erkek, dişi ve çiftleşme sırasında diğer türlerin DNA’larını manipüle eden “ooloi.” *Şafak* adlı eserinde Butler ana karakter, Oankali’nin önerdiği melezleşme sürecini kendi rızasıyla kabul eden Afrikalı Amerikalı bir kadın Lilith Iyapo’nun hikayesini anlatır. Söz konusu insan-Oankali melezleşme süreci bir evrimi ve/veya yeniden doğuşu ifade eder. *Erginlenme Ritüelleri*, ilk insan-Oankali “inşası” olarak, Lilith’in çocuklarından biri, Akin’in hikâyesini anlatır. *Imago* ise, Lilith’in çocuklarından diğeri, Jodahs’ın hikayesini ele alır. Octavia E. Butler bu üçlemede, esasen aşına olduğumuz insan kavramından insan-Oankali melezleşmesi ile inşa edilen yeni bir türe geçişi ele alır. Bu makalede, Butler’ın *Xenogenesis* (1987-1989) adlı eserinde fiziksel ve kavramsal olarak insanın dönüşüm ve evrim sürecini eşiklik ve melezleşme kavramları üzerinden inceliyorum. Makalede, biyoteknolojinin güç, ırk, toplumsal cinsiyet ve doğa arasındaki ilişkiyi nasıl muğlaklaştırdığına odaklanıyorum. Butler’ın üçlemesini post-hümanist bir mercekte okumak, üçlemenin baskıcı hiyerarşik sistemlere, kadının doğa tarafından ikincil konuma itilmesine ve yerli halkların marjinalleştirilmesine nasıl karşı çıktığını anlamamıza katkıda bulunabilir. Buradan yola çıkarak bu makale, rijit kategoriler kavramını yeniden sorgulamayı ve hümanizmin “insanlar” ve “insan olmayanlar” arasında kurduğu geleneksel ayrımları incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu ayrımlara karşı, ikili karşıtlıkları ve sınırları aşan “bedenler arası geçişken çokluklar” kavramı önerilmektedir. Makale, Butler’ın insan ve insan olmayan varlıkları nasıl yeniden ele aldığını ve sürdürülebilir geleceklere benimseyen ne gibi bakış açıları önerdiğini incelemektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Octavia Butler, Xenogenesis, eşiklik, melezleşme, post-hümanizm*

Introduction

The *Xenogenesis* (1987-1989) trilogy by Octavia Butler, consisting of the novels *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989), is collectively referred to as Lilith's Brood. The trilogy follows the narrative of Lilith Iyapo, the protagonist, and explores alternatively sustainable futures through the inclusion of a diverse set of primary characters. The term *xenogenesis* is derived from the Greek words *xenos*, meaning stranger, and *genesis*, meaning beginning. It signifies the onset or formation of a distinct and unfamiliar entity, often referring to the emergence of an alien species. The title *Lilith's Brood* alludes to the significant role of Lilith, also known as Lilit, Lilitu, or Lilis, in the myths of Mesopotamia and Judaism, where she is regarded as a major feminine character. There exists a prevalent hypothesis suggesting that she may have served as the first companion to Adam, thereby establishing a connection to the concept of an ancient feminine demonic being. Lilith is often referenced as a nonsubmissive female figure expelled from the Garden of Eden due to her noncompliance and opposition to Adam's authority. The supposed connection between the origin and characterization of her name might be traced to the categorization of mythical entities in Mesopotamia known as *lilû*, *lilîtu*, who are often interpreted as night monsters. Lilith, displaying a determined attitude towards her partner, adamantly refuses to assume a subordinate role, resulting in her estrangement from Adam and the idyllic environment of the Garden of Eden. One could argue that Lilith is a figure who rejects authority and conceals her identity (Mendoza, 2020: 54-57). Lilith, in the painting *Lady Lilith* (1866 -1868) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, portrays a powerful female character who has a significant impact on male viewers. She is a paradoxical Victorian woman who entices her audience with her extreme sensuality and captivates them with her charm. The painting unveils a Victorian depiction of Lilith, presenting her as a distinctive figure with her elongated neck and hair. It displays destructive femininity, thereby highlighting the control she has over males (Dağoğlu, 2023: 346-7). Given this context, Butler examines speculative future scenarios in which beings anticipate a world without violence and discrimination based on race, color, gender, xenophobia, and species bias. These develop from the underlying human contradictions, including intelligence and hierarchical behavior, which is considered a genetic problem with the potential to end in human extinction (Japtok and Jenkins, 2020: 2). The notion of the human contradiction posits that the divergence between concrete biological determinism and corporeal comprehension mostly stems from humans' tendency to emphasize hierarchical tendencies above our cognitive faculties (Jenkins, 2020: 119). Butler underscores humans' tendencies to mistakenly equate biology with corporeal understanding, resulting in the formation of classifications that have been used to justify different forms of prejudice, power imbalances, marginalization, and subjugation, including racism, sexism, colonialism, and slavery.

Butler's trilogy explores the intricate relationship between race and biotechnology, along with how the contemporary bioeconomy promotes the continuation of scientific racism, which African and African American women have faced throughout periods of slavery and colonialism (Dowdall, 2017). She employs the catastrophic event of a nuclear holocaust resulting in the annihilation of the Earth as a catalyst for propelling humanity into a phase of profound metamorphosis, which eliminates the experience of liminality and fosters hybridization. Throughout her work, Butler tackles the concerns and potential outcomes that develop from a

society that is obsessed with the rapid acquisition of biological prospects. She delves into the circumstances of turmoil that trigger the development of interspecies metamorphosis. Butler elaborates on views that both colonial slavery and biotechnology have the potential to reduce human bodies to economic commodities (Dowdall, 2017: 506). In her discussion, Lisa Dowdall contends that Butler proposes a paradigm-shifting viewpoint of the discipline of human biology and evolution and proposes a conceptual framework that depicts human evolution as a constant dialectical progression within the dynamic systems of interspecies becoming achieved via the juxtaposition of genetic determinism and colonial activity. It imagines a highly dynamic real world, one that involves the ongoing process of defining our physical boundaries in relation to other bodies and the surrounding environment and hybridity of bodies. It suggests that the categories that define our existence are not solid, but rather enacted and that engaging with “anotherness” is an integral aspect of this dynamic existence (Morton, 2016: 13). Butler proposes the concept of symbiogenesis, defined as “the process of becoming through living together” (Mereschkovsky, 1990), in which the progress of human development is contingent upon the mutual interactions that occur between humans, other species, and the environments they share.

The narrative of *Xenogenesis* (1987–1989) occurs under a dystopian backdrop, marked by the catastrophic collapse of the planet Earth, which is an initial stage within an evolutionary paradigm, bolstered by the intrinsic capacity of living entities to generate, hybridize, and sustain themselves. The trilogy demonstrates an unwavering faith in the regenerative capacity of life, even as it adjusts to the direst circumstances. In effect, the disruption of the biosphere and the relocation of human ecologies provide circumstances that are optimal for the development of novel life forms and organizational structures. Butler proposes post-human possibilities, including one in which human development is not dependent on genetic determinism but rather upon constructive disruptions that reconfigure all interactions between species, humans, and non-humans. In this context, one could argue that post-humanism does not impose constraints on the potentialities of human evolution. Instead, through using modern technology or even in their absence, it proposes that engaging in interspecies interactions and hybridization may serve to disassemble hierarchical structures including the experience of mimicry and liminality and facilitate the transformation of the human condition.

Mimicry, liminality, and hybridization

Butler’s *Xenogenesis* (1987–1989) trilogy narrates the story of Lilith Iyapo and her offspring, Akin and Jodahs, who are the result of genetic exchange between humans and the Oankali, referred to as “constructs, whether they’re born to Oankali or to Human mothers” (Butler, 1988: 126). Lilith, a person of African American descent, has undergone a process of resurrection enabled by the Oankali, an alien race often referred to as “gene traders” (Butler, 1988: 24). Lilith is designated as the leader of the first cohort of individuals living on a post-apocalyptic Earth, ravaged by a nuclear conflict that the Oankali see as a “humanicide” (Jenkins, 2020: 121) resulting from the actions of a handful of people. One could argue that the catastrophic event could manifest an inherent genetic problem within the human species, hence exemplifying a contradictory facet of the human condition. One might suggest that the inherent contradiction stemming from human intelligence and hierarchical tendencies might indicate a

sign of a genetic predicament that necessitates reconsideration. The Oankali use a process of human-Oankali hybridization, characterized by genetic exchange, to mitigate the risk of future human extinctions. Advanced technologies, specifically biotechnology, might presumably tackle the problem of human extinction that originates from human intelligence and hierarchical inclinations. These technologies might have the potential for the hybridization of humans and the Oankali, bringing in the creation of a novel species that surpasses humans in terms of capabilities, thus developing a (more-than-human) species that transcends humanity. Developing and becoming a new species entails challenging the prevailing perception of the human as defined by modern, secular, Eurocentric, and Anthropocentric perspectives, which categorize humans as distinct from less-human entities and non-human beings based on biological characteristics. The categorization of anything inside such classification may exhibit variations in its dimensions. However, Humanism is fundamentally grounded in the notion of elevating mankind and affirming its inherent worth, autonomy, reason, and capacities. These attributes serve to substantiate human status as the supreme being within the hierarchical framework posited by Descartes, exceeding both animals and machines, as well as the notion of the Other (Dunkley, 2020: 97). However, reaching a consensus on the concept of human is a challenging task that remains difficult to define and categorize. As Tony Davies argues, it is the very nature of its adaptable and ambiguous characteristics that grants the concept its persuasive influence and extensive scope (1997: 24). It elucidates a structured criterion of identifiability, namely the concept of uniformity, which serves as a basis for evaluating, controlling, and assigning individuals to certain social positions.

In the first volume *Dawn* (1987) of the trilogy, Butler portrays the endeavors that the Oankali undertake to facilitate and promote the emergence of a new species that challenges and dismantles predetermined social positions and roles. The purpose of human-Oankali hybridity is not to surpass or transcend human nature, but rather to enhance the human species and save it from extinction, together with the ecosystems it occupies. Octavia Butler's alien species, known as the Oankali, are deliberately designed to challenge the egocentric tendencies of Humanism. In contrast to humans, the Oankali do not see difference as a cause of dread. Their mindset is specifically programmed to embrace and accommodate diversity. In this approach, Butler imagines a posthuman future in which human contradiction, a belief that human intelligence and hierarchical behavior cannot exist together, may be eliminated via the Oankali formation (Dunkley, 2020: 96). During Lilith's dubious talk with him, the Oankali says, "Your people will change. Your young will be more like us and ours like you. Your hierarchical tendencies will be modified and if we learn to regenerate limbs and reshape our bodies, we'll share those abilities with you. That's part of the trade. We're overdue for it" (Butler, 1987: 42). In this passage, the Oankali contend that their genetic material has the potential to enhance and elevate humans' intellectual and physical capacities. Through the process of human-Oankali reproduction, wherein the physical characteristics of both humans and the Oankali are merged, it potentially creates an environment that lacks the conflicts and hierarchies inherent in human society. This, in turn, serves as a deterrent against prospective actions aimed at the extermination of the human species.

Before the Oankali awake Lilith from her long hibernation, she has been upgraded and improved both physically and cognitively. Lilith demonstrates her unique skills by either opening existing barriers or inducing the growth of new walls (Butler, 1988: 59) establishing her possession of capabilities distinct from those of others. The Oankali provide her with knowledge, heightens physical prowess, improves cognitive abilities, and the capacity to manipulate the structural integrity of walls and induce suspended animation in plants (Butler, 1987: 120). Lilith's genetically enhanced skills and capacities pertain to the evolution of the notion of humans, including the understanding of what it entails to be or become human, both in terms of corporeality and concept. Lilith displays skepticism and aversion towards the physical transformation of her children, while portraying her daughter as a monster or an object. Conversely, she exhibits affectionate behavior when someone describes her son Akin as "beautiful" and "completely Human," but only as long as he retains his perpetual state of childhood (Butler, 1988: 254). One could relate Lilith's in-betweenness towards human-Oankali hybridization to the notion of mimicry, defined by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha as the act of imitating language, culture, and manners characterized by an exaggerated imitation. In postcolonial studies, the concept of mimicry emerges as a mechanism for both mimicking and assuming a position of superiority over the subordinate. The individuals who engage in imitation (the imitator) do not occupy an identical position as the original. It pertains to the transformative process of "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, 1984: 86). Bhabha argues that the act of mimicry might develop when a colonized group is forced by the dominant culture to engage in performative assimilation within the established cultural standards. Bhabha's concept of mimicry is distinctly deemed in the novel *Adulthood Rites* (1988) particularly in the way some Oankali-human hybrids are both respected and mistrusted for their capabilities to imitate human behavior. The colonial mimicry is perpetuated because of the colonizer's conviction in its undeniable ability to enhance the culture of the colonized, while simultaneously seeking to preserve a sense of differentiation from the Other. It has a connection to the depiction of human engagement with the Oankali-human hybrids in the text. In *Adulthood Rites* (1988), humans, although not possessing equivalent levels of authority as colonizers, still have a pronounced inclination towards asserting anthropocentric superiority. This desire is particularly evident in the Oankali's pronounced preference for humans who have a resemblance to them, both in terms of physical characteristics and behavioral traits. Lilith's in-betweenness might potentially deepen when Akin reaches adulthood and old age due to his increasing physical resemblance to the Oankali. Lilith has a conservative stance towards the change of the human body. However, she acknowledges the positive aspects that come with the process of human-Oankali hybridization. For Lilith, humans fear of difference, particularly, when humans participate in the persecution of others who possess dissimilar characteristics, while depending on the very same humans to develop their sense of identity and social standing. Nevertheless, the Oankali actively seek out and collect diversity, a quality that humans should possess to avoid stagnation and excessive specialization. When confronted with a conflict, humans should follow the attitude of the Oankali, which prioritizes the acceptance and appreciation of diversity (Butler, 1988: 329). When Akin encounters the resisters-humans who choose to live in Phoenix, their own isolated and perilous community without the Oankali and human-Oankali constructs-he is exposed to humans' persecution of others, namely, the Oankali, non-humans. The Oankali's broad perspective aligns

with Braidotti's concept of "not-Oneness" (2013: 100), which addresses unity through diversity rather than despite it. Humanism, as an ontological perspective, has consistently promoted a restrictive and authoritative standard for determining who and what may be considered human. Such a standard often sustains itself by manipulating individuals who experience a liminal feeling, and by resisting the inclusion of multiplicities through rigid standards.

For Victor Turner, liminal entities are in a condition that ignores their solid position and occupy a space that stands between the established positions defined by legal frameworks, cultural norms, and ceremonial traditions (1969: 95). The anthropological notion of "liminality" as proposed by Turner places significant emphasis on the dynamic and disorderly aspects of society rather than its unchanging state. Building upon Arnold Van-Gennep's concept of "Rite of Passage" (1977), Turner argues that culture is a dynamic interplay between structure and anti-structure, and it encompasses distinct phases, namely disengagement, liminality, and reunion or post-liminality. Disengagement entails a symbolic detachment of an individual from both society and their own established identity; the liminal stage involves a period of increased surveillance and isolation from the broader community; and the reunion or post-liminal stage denotes the process by which an individual is reintegrated into society, assuming their new social position (Turner, 1969). Both the liminal condition and humans may challenge or transcend established categorization systems employed to define states and positions within cultural contexts. Butler, who occupies a marginalized position as a colored individual, recognizes the broad scope of Turner's liminality. Due to their absence of human behaviors, skills, and qualities, as well as their lack of human corporeality, the Oankali are considered non-humans. They do not perceive and interact with the world the way that humans do (Butler, 1988: 375). For instance, Akin is driven out of Phoenix because of his browner color. Akin acquaints himself with the inhabitants and linguistic diversity of many villages, including a Chinese resistance hamlet, an Igbo village, three Spanish-speaking villages including humans from other nations, a Hindu village, as well as two villages inhabited by Swahili-speaking populations originating from distinct countries (Butler, 1988: 434). A community, mostly composed of English-speaking individuals, expels Akin due to his darker complexion, contrasting with the lighter skin tones of the inhabitants. From the evident resistance by the inhabitants of Phoenix, one could argue that Akin's Oankaliness most certainly serves as the main factor contributing to his expulsion from the region (Butler, 1988: 151). Unexpectedly, Akin's termination was due to his race as a black person. Thus, through the act of excluding Akin from their social group, the inhabitants of Phoenix exhibit a prioritization of maintaining their racial identity over participating in reproduction or cultivating a cohesive community that could potentially question the Oankali's perception of humanity and the power dynamics that exist between humans and the Oankali. Despite their hostility, Akin suggests that Mars might serve as a means for Phoenix to develop and avoid destruction. Butler contends that the sole potential for human progress lies in the process of evolving into posthuman, which entails the merging of humans with the Oankali. The concepts of "trans-corporeality" (Alaimo, 1990), "companion species" (Haraway, 2003), and "intra-action" (Barad, 2007) contribute to progress and evolution by proposing that both humans and non-humans are constantly in a state of becoming, due to the inherent interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and non-human entities (Rossini, 2016: 156). In this

framework, the notion of “becoming” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1982) pertains to the process of acknowledging previously unrecognized territories, both in physical and conceptual terms, that are relevant to both humans and non-human entities. Namely, the amalgamation of human and non-human bodies occurs via material action, fluxes, and processes, which interconnect human bodies, animal bodies, technology, and the broader environment. It explains that there is a blending or intermingling that happens between human and non-human bodies, and highlights the interconnectedness and interdependence of these bodies, as well as their role in shaping the “more-than-human world” (Alaimo, 1990: 12). It encompasses the theoretical frameworks of “trans-corporeal assemblages” (DeLanda, 2016) and “trans-corporeality” (Alaimo, 1990), which advocate for the interconnectedness and interdependence of human and non-human entities in the processes of world-building and meaning-making. This underscores the need to acknowledge the intricate interconnections between humans, animals, plants, artifacts, and other environmental components while considering the notion of human.

In Butler’s context of a dystopian scenario depicting the downfall of Earth, a result of the inherent contradictions of human existence, the self-generating capacity of life would bring an intricate and evolving interconnection. Butler explores the consequences of environmental disturbances and the subsequent reconfiguration of human ecosystems, which provide ultimate conditions for the emergence of innovative life forms and systems. In her work, Butler suggests a diverse array of posthuman prospects that fundamentally question the prevailing belief that human advancement is only dictated by genetic factors. However, these potentialities indicate that the process of human development is influenced by transformative upheavals that reconfigure the dynamics among various species. This approach to generation and transformation is characterized by a symbiotic connection, whereby there is a reciprocal process of becoming or “becoming with” (Dowdall, 2017: 507) “strange strangers” (Morton, 2010: 15). For Dowdall, these transformative upheavals have a strong relation with the present bioeconomy that is characterized by racial distinctions. Butler places significant emphasis on the way race has become intricately intertwined with human physiology. She demonstrates that racial factors consistently influence the concept of biopolitics, which refers to the raced nature of this assemblage. In the trilogy, she indicates this through the Oankali’s strategy to engage in interbreeding with humans, aiming to produce offspring known as “construct children” (Butler, 1988: 155). These children are genetically engineered by the ooloi, incorporating both Oankali and human genetic material with the goal of rescuing humanity from its inherent contradictions. The Oankali anticipate that engaging in this trade may potentially enhance the longevity and well-being of the human population, eliminate inherent inconsistencies, and promote species diversity. This exchange of genetic material seeks to enable the Oankali to regenerate limbs and cultivate more adaptable physical forms (Butler, 1988: 24). The construction of children, in this sense, will serve to meet the ongoing process of evolution. With this, the Oankali demonstrate a proactive approach towards the investigation of alien habitats, with the primary objective of identifying and incorporating genetic material from other organisms. The deliberate assimilation process serves to further their own evolutionary trajectory. Dowdall considers it an expression of either enslavement or biocolonialism (2017: 508). Lilith expresses skepticism regarding the trade between humans and Oankali, as well as the implications of producing offspring that are either non-human or possess enhanced human

qualities. She indicates herself as a subject of experimentation, subjected to artificial insemination, surrogate motherhood, the administration of fertility drugs, the implantation of unrelated fertilized eggs, and the subsequent separation of children from their biological mothers immediately after birth (Butler, 1987: 60). One could posit that Lilith's claim suggests a concern for a eugenics program that exploits the biological labor of individuals from black and brown communities, a practice that has persisted for centuries due to scientific racism rooted in genetic disparities between black and white populations, frequently used to justify the institution of slavery. This viewpoint reveals the exercise of white scientific control over the black body because of the perception of biological inferiority (Dowdall, 2017: 509). Nevertheless, one could argue that the Oankali may see this human-Oankali trade as a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship, as the reciprocal exchange conditions promote the collective development of both species. The symbiotic connection, characterized by reciprocal dependence, is a means to subvert the white population's authority over those of black and brown racial backgrounds, without their explicit agreement. This perspective eliminates the concept of human inconsistency stemming from their inclination towards hierarchies and reliance on rationality. For Patricia Melzer, Lilith emerges as a female figure who collaborates with the Oankali to establish a sustainable future for humanity, as opposed to human resisters who engage in traditional resistance against the Oankali, ultimately facing either death or a solitary existence devoid of reproduction (2006: 215-58). Lilith's collaboration with the Oankali will bestow upon her enhanced physical abilities and power, although her enduring uncertainty over the exchange and her involvement in reproductive duties, which include her being treated as a reproductive commodity. The manifestation of Lilith's uncertainty becomes evident when the ooloi subject her cancer cells to examination, aiming to investigate the potential for limb regeneration, lifespan extension, and the ability to assume appearances like those of their alien counterparts. When the ooloi facilitate the process of Lilith's body reabsorbing her cancer by means of a chemical component, so effecting a cure, it concurrently acquires knowledge pertaining to her medical background (Butler, 1988: 21). Dowdall's discussion explains the instances of violation and exploitation encountered by several African American women. Lilith's capacity to demonstrate forgiveness to the ooloi is hindered by their unpermitted scrutiny of her. Nevertheless, she is unable to prevent these invasions since the Oankali firmly upholds the notion that, as her trade partners, they own the right to acquire whatever genetic material they consider essential (Dowdall, 2017: 513). However, Butler underscores the need for a thorough reorganization of human interaction with other species. The implementation of this reorganization is vital to ensure the enduring viability of humanity within the finite boundaries of our planet. Here, Butler offers two distinct visions of alternatively sustainable futures. The first envisions a scenario in which the hybridization of humans and Oankali leads to a mutually advantageous co-evolutionary partnership. The second posits a future in which humans establish a settlement on Mars and pursue a more independent trajectory.

In the *Imago* (1989), the human characters make a deliberate decision to refrain from occupying certain areas of Earth, opting instead to reside inside their self-contained communities and limit their exposure to external influences from the Oankali. The Oankali maintain a firm belief in the inevitable downfall of humans due to their inherent contradiction. However, Akin and the "aged, hostile, infertile resisters who had nothing to offer it except bullets and arrow"

(Butler, 1988: 285) have an optimistic stance, suggesting that humans' hierarchical inclinations may potentially be alleviated by behavioral adaptations or genetic mutations in reaction to their changing surroundings (Butler, 1988: 215). This, in turn, could lead to the establishment of a more enduring societal structure. Akin plays a significant role in enabling the formation of the Mars colony by acknowledging the influence of bio-evolutionary chance. This reveals the occurrences of catastrophic events and subsequent adaptations that contribute to the Oankali's ability to maintain their biological variety, which is crucial for their survival. The decision that humans are confronted with, namely, whether to embrace a future alongside the Oankali or to pursue a future on Mars, reveals an uncertainty that mirrors Butler's belief in the racialized composition and inherent transformational drive of human nature (Butler, 1988: 207-9). The presence of such ambivalence serves to underscore the need of emancipating oneself from the racializing constructs rooted in biology. One can argue that Butler's trilogy gains its transformational momentum from the ambiguity around the potential and sustainable futures with the Oankali or on Mars, both of which would need significant transformation. The Oankali exhibit the ability to continuously alter their genetic composition, as well as that of the entities they engage in trade with, so challenging the distinction between the individual and the unfamiliar, the human and the extraterrestrial. The reciprocal influence of trade activities between the two species fosters interdependence and develops several new species, suggesting the presence of interconnected perspectives in comprehending identity. Butler introduces the notion that human identity is defined by its malleability and diversity, rather than being exclusively shaped by the dichotomy between the individual and the external. This dichotomy generates a hierarchical structure that significantly impacts the markets for biological labor, with race and gender being crucial factors. Rosi Braidotti argues that the posthuman idea has significant potential as a framework for critically reassessing the foundational notion of the human within the bio-genetic age (2013: 5-6). Furthermore, Braidotti posits that adopting a posthuman framework enables a critical reassessment of the underlying principles that dictate our engagements with both human and non-human creatures at a global scale (ibid.). Braidotti places significant emphasis on the concept of hybridization, whereby the boundaries between human and non-human creatures, including animals, plants, and microorganisms, become more indistinct.

Conclusion

Butler's narrative showcases two distinct sustainable futures: one centered on the human-Oankali hybridization, and the other is the future located on Mars. In both scenarios, adaptation to change is a fundamental need, which serves as the impetus for the characters' survival. That is, the body will experience a transformation, both genetically and structurally. These considered, I argue that while Butler's series portrays a bleak environment, it also highlights a utopian prospect via its endorsement of the malleability of human identity. Butler promotes alternative modes of life that shift away from the primacy of human speech and instead recognize the natural world as a powerful entity with its own unique means of communication. It reveals the intrinsic capacity of life to autonomously arrange and sustain its own being, which is observable across all living entities and not confined just to the human species, males, or those of white racial background.

In her work, Butler delves into the concepts of life's malleability and its inherent discomfort, as well as the boundaries and potentialities associated with human DNA and the prospects of biological advancements. She looks at the concept of biocolonialism, specifically focusing on its promissory and speculative aspects, as shown by the relationship between the Oankali, an extraterrestrial species, and human beings. Butler establishes a connection between the historical emergence of this concept and the exploitation of black bodies that are gendered. In her analysis, she explores the intersection of reproductive technologies, and their impact on the physical well-being of black women. She uses the catastrophic occurrence of a nuclear holocaust, leading to the complete destruction of the planet, as a catalyst for driving mankind into a transformative phase that is extensive and deep in nature. Furthermore, Butler tackles with the underlying factors of unrest that contribute to the hybridization, an emergence of morphological variations across different species.

In *Xenogenesis* (1987-1989) trilogy, Butler explores the need for the human species to engage in a process of biological metamorphosis to ensure its ongoing survival. The change process may be facilitated by either the genetic determinism imposed by the Oankali, an extraterrestrial species or through the autonomous efforts of human resistors residing on Mars. The narrative offers an analysis of the dominant Western narratives pertaining to the concept of post-apocalyptic salvation. Butler's discussion is on the connection between Oankali and human beings, delving into the potential of this convergence to act as a catalyst for a process of self-creation that is transformational and collaborative in nature. She contends that the vilification of Lilith serves as a prime example of how Humanism's inclination towards prescribing norms seeks to suppress variety and deviation that surpass easily classifiable boundaries. This approach presents a critique of the established hierarchical boundaries that are inherent in normative identities, including aspects such as human life, gender, and the position of being an alien or outsider. It poses a challenge to the solid perception of human identity through the concept of hybridity that will blur boundaries between the self and the other, leading to an inevitable and inseparable link between the two entities.

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