
**HYBRIDISM AS POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITY: ALIENATING DIFFERENCE IN
OCTAVIA BUTLER'S *XENOGENESIS* AND NNEDI OKORAFOR'S *BINTI*
TRILOGIES**

Aishat Ize Yusuf

English Department, Federal College of Education, Katsina

Nasir Umar Muhammad (PhD)

Department of English and Linguistics, Federal University Dutse

Abstract

This paper examines the concepts of hybridism as posthuman subjectivity and the alienation it engenders for the posthuman characters in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* and Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti* trilogies who become different from the anthropocentric norm due to genetic, sexual and cultural interconnections with other-than-human others. The study situates its analysis within a posthumanist framework which questions and challenges the anthropocentric ordering of Western humanist tradition and demonstrates how the posthuman subject is always 'othered' and alienated due to conditions of posthuman/metahuman transformation. It demonstrates how hybrid connections between human and non-human components in fictional anthropocentric societies often result in posthuman conditions and subjectivities that transcend and decentre privileged human hierarchies and categories. The paper also explores the trials and constraints that being 'other', alien, hybrid and posthuman in each text has on the lives of characters who fall beyond the privileged categories of the portrayed fictional societies; and argues that biological and cultural hybridism results not only in the development of posthuman subjectivity but also translates into conditions of alienation and discrimination in anthropocentric societies.

Keywords: hybridism, posthuman, metahuman, subjectivity, anthropocentric, cyborg, oddkin, alienation

Introduction

Both Butler and Okorafor explore the limits of bodily changes which emanate from genetic, sexual and cultural intermingling with other-than-human others resulting in extraordinary mutations, hybridism, and obvious difference from the human groups and societies in their science fiction. In both *Xenogenesis* and *Binti*, the concept of 'hybridism' or 'hybridity' basically functions as a ubiquitous motif. The two trilogies also attempt to illustrate the effects of possible posthuman hybridisation due to forced genetic mutations and bio-technological connections on human subjectivities which subsequently lead to their alienation from their fictional anthropocentric human societies. The two stories also explore the possible effects of

alien technology on human essentialism and its potential for the creation of posthuman 'others'; thereby not only transforming anthropocentric societies and ideologies, but also posing an immediate challenge for the current humanist ordering of the world. Science fiction as a sub-genre of fantasy literature has always focused on speculations about possible future occurrences, events and changes as a result of scientific and technological developments in futuristic spatial and temporal modes. These possible changes which include the often frightening possibility of forced hybridisation and transformations also encourage explorations on how humans (individuals or groups) can or may respond to often cataclysmic changes in established human

systems and hierarchies due to the development of superior technologies and improved living conditions. Other issues it deals with are the possibilities of human existence in dangerous dystopian conditions as a result of technological fallouts or disasters and even the possible arrival of superior alien forces which may threaten life as we know it. These speculations are not just mere literary explorations into what can be but also serve as a means of challenging contemporary expectations and preparing contemporary minds to the contemporary and futuristic possibilities of organic or technological violations of our physical, cultural and virtual spaces which could subsequently lead to new forms of reality.

In discussions about forced hybridisations, alienation and violations which can and have been inflicted on marginalised persons, many writers from formerly colonised countries and their diaspora have often based their literary narratives on theoretical paradigms which juxtapose the writing produced by marginalised populations against a dominant western literary culture (Kim). The a priori focus of this paper however, is based on the 'Posthumanist' challenge of the idea that the established categories of humanity as outlined by Western 'Humanism' are adequate in effectively understanding and portraying the characters and subjectivities of marginalised others in both fictionalised and real spaces; and agrees with critics like (Callum & Herbrechter; Braidotti; Ferrando; and Hayles), that the inclusive study of these marginalised others and the intersections of their various often divergent identities leads to a better understanding of an emergent subjectivity which critics have attempted to term 'posthuman'.

Hybridism as posthuman subjectivity

Hybridism is generally understood to be the crossbreeding or cross-fertilisation of two

or more species; the blend of two/diverse cultures or traditions; the heterogeneous composition of disparate parts such as those found in genetic DNA and RNA strands; or the technological parts of different components performing the same function. Hybrids(ism/idity) is an ubiquitous term which is found in many ontologies and philosophies especially postmodern, multicultural and postcolonial ones. In posthumanist criticism, 'hybridism' often signifies the interconnected, relational and symbiotic relations of the human to the non-human (Haraway; Wolfe); without granting the human any ontoepistemological primacy in the relationship (Ferrando). Due to way hybridism suggests a wider recognition of life beyond the borders of essentialist humanism by incorporating and granting significance to non-human components as well as human components into a unified metamorphosed entity, posthumanist criticism recognises hybridism as an important variation of 'posthuman subjectivity'.

Subjectivity which in humanist terms often refers to the impression of 'selfhood' which relates to the essential being or the perceived reality of peculiar individual experiences and knowledge has been fraught with difficulties in terms of definition. In the humanities, the term is usually limited to human states of consciousness with the implicit understanding that subjective states of mind are limited to rational beings only, which by implication, meant the human alone separate from non-human or inhuman others. This is because; the human being was understood by western philosophy for millennia to be the only possessor of reason and agency. The concept of 'subjectivity' is however often fraught with controversy due to the contemporary issues with identity politics and scientific discoveries of intelligence and agency outside the realms of human cognizance.

Posthuman subjectivity on the other hand, also refers to any self; which is not limited to the human, but can be non-human or inhuman and hybrids of all categories. The posthuman subjectivity very often exists in states that are 'beyond (hu)man' by virtue of being someone or something who can fluidly 'become' or embody different perspectives or identities, instead of being defined and limited by singular identifications like that of race, species, and biology (Hayles; Haraway(a); Ferrando). The posthuman subjectivity is often one which not only incorporates within itself and embodies multiple modes of being across species, technological and virtual lines, but, also experiences the world from multiple, heterogeneous perspectives which helps reveal a wealth of information about multiple realities and their intersections.

The hybrid as 'alien'

The term "Alien" in science fiction usually connotes an "other"; someone or something that does not belong; either to a homogenous group, a community or in SF, to our planet Earth where it is often an extra-terrestrial being which is usually depicted as having features and abilities which are different from that of humanity. In literature and the humanities, science fiction, also often simply designated as SF, is the genre that mediates the discourses of 'science' (or 'fact') and 'magic' (or, subsequently, 'imagination', 'fiction') (Roberts 42). Despite straddling the distinct modern dichotomy between the Sciences and the Humanities, SF retains within its premises a profound preoccupation with the idea of human exceptionality and the human as the centre of the cosmos. SF is also closely entwined with posthumanist epistemologies due to posthumanism's close relationship and shared origins with science and for posthumanist critics of the genre like Herbrechter, SF basically serves as a challenge to the basic ontology of the concept of the human and humanist values

and ultimately "tries to achieve a 'defamiliarization' of an already posthumanized world" (112).

In SF, aliens are often depicted as extra-terrestrial arrivals to planet Earth who pose a challenge (either benign or threatening), to established human superiority, systems, institutions and the monopolised control of planet Earth and its resources. They often represent difference; but in contrast to terrestrial animals, beings and forces, are often portrayed and described as having different or even superior reasoning faculties and abilities to that possessed by humanity which makes them a threat to humanity's hierarchical systems. Hence the often antagonistic approach to their threatening difference.

Interestingly, SF aliens also share many similarities to the other biological and cultural aliens who already share the planet with each other. These others are categorised and treated as alien by virtue of some of markers of difference they embody which separates them from normative anthropocentric characteristics such as race, skin colour, species, culture, physical abilities/disabilities and even technological and various socio-economic considerations. Humans who share aspects of themselves with categories already outside human normativity are considered hybrids and therefore contaminated by virtue of possessing unacceptable intimate connections with unprivileged 'others'. They become othered themselves, losing their former privileged status and then forced partake in similar alienating and discriminatory experiences already experienced by other non-human aliens. They also inadvertently generate and are forced to endure new forms of discriminatory practices from their presumed 'pure' human relatives.

One posthuman state which more specifically illustrates the alienating outcomes of hybridisation and mutation on humanity is 'metahumanism'. Metahumans

according to Gladden are originally human beings in the traditional sense who have experienced life changing mutations which has irrevocably changed their pre-existing states of being. The posthuman/metahuman by virtue of these changes and their resultant difference to established human traits are often automatically considered as different and therefore alien; consequently exposing them to a variety of discriminatory practices.

The treatment of difference and alienation has been a preoccupation of many cultural and subaltern studies and also of literary works especially those categorised as science fiction. Becoming “alien” often signifies a loss or a denial from belonging to a privileged category or identity. This process of “becoming alien” or “alienation” according to Williams is a rather negative conception/term which often implies a, “forced loss of proper possession and estrangement from who we really are, or who we should be” (28). This loss of identity or more specifically, the inability of humanity to include the posthuman within its recognised privileged categories renders the multifaceted cross-boundary, liminal and hybrid posthuman subject, alien in a predominantly human society due to a variety of reasons. Alienation results in an increase in “negative judgement” and treatment due to the posthuman subject being perceived to imply a move “away from the human”. Williams concludes that “To become posthuman, in alliances with plants, animals, societies, materials and machines, would also be to become alienated. The posthuman might then be a place of exploitation, exile and loss” (28). The archetype of the ‘alien’ in many contemporary literary and film representations is according to Linton “represented not as definitively other, but as an in-between creature – not entirely strange, not entirely human” (172). This liminality of being in literary portrayals and imagination establishes the posthuman

nature of supposedly alien creatures in many contemporary science fiction narratives. The alien like most posthuman identities, also serves as a progression from anthropocentric humanity and is usually defined by its closer connections with non-human or ahuman others. On the contrary, humanity justifies its superior position via a closed off hierarchy with emphasis on its perceived separateness from the non-human other (Derrida; Braidotti; Deckha; Ferrando).

Theoretical Perspective

This study employs the critical methods of ‘critical posthumanism’ which analyses the cultural politics that underlies the actual representation of the posthuman by inclusively examining subjectivities which are often ignored and excluded by Western humanism and why this exclusion occurs. In its ontological practices, it seeks to include a wide often bewildering range of persons within the accepted categories of the ‘Human’. As an iteration of philosophical posthumanism, critical posthumanism like all other forms of bio-conservative posthumanist critiques of Western humanism, does not necessarily position itself against the basic tenets of humanism but instead decries the often inflexible nature of humanist categorisations and concerns. It interrogates the hierarchical ordering of life by calling for a more inclusive definition and a greater moral/ethical response and responsibility to life in general by discouraging indiscriminate exploitation and the subsequent eradication of life forms. It strives to not only decentre the human subject as the most privileged member of a shared universe, but also emphasizes the importance of all life-forms as a prerequisite for the survival of humanity itself.

This inclusive critique of humanist and anthropocentric perceptions of superiority and human essentialism

encourages attempts to experience life from multiple points of view and thereby provides valuable critiques against the wanton destruction and exploitation of marginalised and underprivileged ‘others’ by uninformed humanity. This often engenders the emergence of hybridised subjectivities and viewpoints which like most posthuman states, thereby provides an “entangled networks of pluralities” (Rahn 83).

Selected authors

a. Octavia Estelle Butler

Octavia Estelle Butler is generally considered to be the first African-American woman to gain popularity and critical acclaim as a major science fiction writer. She was born on June 22, 1947 in Pasadena, California, to Laurice and Octavia M. Butler. As only child living in segregated and racist America, she overcame prejudice and dyslexia, and “began writing when at the age of ten in order to escape loneliness and boredom. At age twelve, her interest in science fiction began.

Butler received an Associate of Arts degree in 1968 from Pasadena City College. She then attended California State University, Los Angeles and the University of California, Los Angeles. At school, her work experiences and time spent researching developments in biology, the physical sciences, and genetics later inspired some characters in her novels. Butler won several awards for her writing before her death in 2006 and still continues to accrue a lot of recognition and popularity.

b. Nnedi Okorafor

Nnedimma Nkemdili "Nnedi" Okorafor (formerly Okorafor-Mbachu) was born in the United States on April 8, 1974 to Nigerian immigrants of Igbo descent. A Nigerian-American writer of fantasy and science fiction for both children and adults who prefers to be called a “Naijamerican;” she is best known for her speculative fiction *Binti*, *Who Fears Death*, *Zahrah the*

Windseeker, *Akata Witch*, and *Lagoon*. In 2015, Brittle Paper named her the African Literary Person of the Year. As a prolific writer, Okorafor has garnered quite an impressive array of awards and recognition especially among the international Science fiction community.

Summary of Selected Texts

a. *Xenogenesis* trilogy

The trilogy by Octavia Butler examines the theme of hybridisation by creating situations in which humans are forced to coexist with other species to survive and extends Butler's recurring exploration of genetically-altered, hybrid individuals and communities. In *Dawn*, the first novel in the trilogy, protagonist Lilith Iyapo wakes up from animated sleep to find herself in a spaceship five hundred years after surviving a nuclear apocalypse that destroys Earth. Lilith along with the other human survivors who have been saved by the Oankali aliens, are forced to combine their DNA with the alien Oankali race in order to create a new race that is will according to the Oankali geneticists, ultimately eliminate the aggressive hierarchical tendencies what they perceive as a self-destructive flaw in humans. *Adulthood Rites* (1988) and *Imago* (1989), the second and the third books in the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, focus on the illogical, purist and self-destructive tendencies that affect human survival in a hostile new environment, as humans now revolt against the new hybrid Oankali engineered progeny known as ‘constructs’.

Set thirty years after humanity's return to Earth, *Adulthood Rites* centres on the kidnapping of Lilith's part-human, part alien child, Akin, by a human-only group who are against the Oankali. Akin learns about both aspects of his identity through his life with the humans as well as the Akjai. The Oankali-only group becomes their mediator, and ultimately creates a human-only colony in Mars. In *Imago*, the Oankali create a third species more powerful than

themselves: the shape-shifting healer Jodahs, a hybrid human-Oankali *ooloi* who must find suitable human male and female mates to survive its metamorphosis and finds them in the most unexpected of places, in a village of renegade humans.

b. *Binti* trilogy

Binti is a science fiction trilogy written by Nnedi Okorafor. The first novella in the series *Binti* was published in 2015 by Tor.com. The second *Binti: Home* in 2017 and the final book *Binti: Night Masquerade* was published in 2018. The eponymous protagonist is a young woman is the first member of her fictional Himba ethnic group on Earth (closely modelled on the desert dwelling Himba people of Namibia) to be accepted into the prestigious intergalactic university, Oomza Uni due to her outstanding intellectual achievements in mathematical harmonics. Upon being notified of her acceptance and facing possible societal and familial backlash for breaking with custom, Binti runs away from home and boards a transport ship to Oomza Uni. While in transit, the ship is hijacked by the Meduse, a jellyfish-like alien species, starting off an extraordinary series of events that cause profound physical, psychological, technological and cultural transformation in the protagonist and in the entire galaxy. At the end of the trilogy, Binti attempts bravely to negotiate lasting peace between the many warring races in the story.

Forms of posthuman hybridism in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* and Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti*

One of the most important iterations of the hybrid posthuman self, critics of both texts often employ in their analyses is the concept of the 'cyborg' (Peppers; Jacobs; Bogue; Hampton; Burger; Moore; Rico). The cyborg is conceived as a hybrid posthuman subjectivity which blends the biologically and notably feminine human aspects with the machine to become a whole new 'other'

(Haraway; Wolfe; Ferrando; Braidotti). The hybridisation of genetic, technological and cultural modes of being produce resultant posthuman creatures which like most hybrids, possess a posthuman sensibility and subjectivity which distinguishes it in many ways from their parent sources. For Haraway, the cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a *hybrid* of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.... The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion (a 5-6).

Another attempt to explain the resultant creature in the hybridisation of multiple modes is the concept of 'Oddkin' another of Haraway's conceptualisations which she conceives as a "colloquial term for other-than-conventional biogenetic relatives" (b 221). Such relatives appropriate altered and permanently partial identities; organically acquired or artificially imposed; a *symbiogenesis* which leaves little individualistic agency in the hands of the emergent entity. Here the interconnections made between humanity and other inhabitants of our shared earth space transcends the restrictions of the anthropocentric tendencies that have assured a final destruction of the planet and its inhabitants along with the humans who at present don't have another home other than Earth.

While characters like Lilith Iyapo in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* and Binti in Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti* trilogy may not depict the standard recognisable characteristics of a cyborg by being combinations of human and machine, the parallels between their genetically enhanced biology by the alien Oankali and Meduse respectively to the superior performance of a machine. A bio-cognitive state which as Clark explains, could be

endlessly upgraded and modified is eerily similar to that of machine bound cyborgs. While Clark is of the opinion that the cognitive ability of humans to endlessly upgrade their neuro-circuitry due to changes in external conditions is inherent and natural, Haraway's model fits more with the externally imposed, multispecies connections which have helped biologically upgrade posthuman characters in Butler's and Okorafor's stories beyond their supposedly natural and inherent states. They do not only achieve cognitive upgrades in this model, but are also physically and culturally enhanced to enact and achieve feats and connections hitherto impossible or even unthinkable by contemporary human standards.

In posthumanist analyses of Butler's and Okorafor's science fiction texts, the hybrid posthuman subjectivity of the cyborg and the oddkins is conceived as a 'logos'; a "powerful discourse" that as illustrated by Peppers in her analysis of Butler's *Xenogenesis*, reminds us that what we know of the "natural body" is the product of the culturally powerful discourse of biology. For posthumanist critics therefore, biology is a "logos," a discursive technology in its own right, and that such "technologies [are] instruments for enforcing meanings" about the individual (6).

The DNA of the posthuman characters in *Xenogenesis* and *Binti* therefore represent a biological discourse, where subjectivities are narrated in codes; defined and re-defined in constantly modifiable posthumanisation process of transmutation and hybridisation. For Hayles therefore, the DNA conveys not just information, but also serves as a coded narrative which explains the modalities found in a given specimen or biological identity. Thus the biotechnological hybrids such as 'cyborgs' and even the purely biological hybrids, the 'oddkin', are not exempt from this discourse as their hybrid natures offer even

more material for explorations on the possibilities and potentials of disparate states in close combinations.

Lilith Iyapo the protagonist of the first book in Butler's trilogy *Dawn* along with her progeny in the subsequent books; including the humans who acquiesce with the new status quo and those who do not; are forever transformed in varying degrees by their encounter with the many tentacled aliens, the Oankali who fuse their own genes with that of the surviving humans and their descendants. Binti, the protagonist in Okorafor's eponymous trilogy undergoes a similar if somewhat lesser transformation when she is bestowed with Meduse *okuoko*; large tentacle like attachments to her head who in some ways function like the Oankali *ooloi* sensory arms in Butler's *Xenogenesis*. Both are coincidentally tentacled protrusions with which the Meduse and the Oankali gather, transmit information and also experience and influence the world in ways that are far superior to anything the humans in the story could ever achieve without similar improvements. Like Haraway's "Oddkin," both Butler's and Okorafor's posthumans also incorporate within their genetic makeup, the DNA of myriad other species. These hybridising transformations which forces humans to experience interspecies and multiple modes of living are not always favourable or welcome but they bring to question the continued importance of hitherto accepted human ways of being human along with its challenges and contradictions.

Becoming "oddkin" in Butler's *Xenogenesis* results in a state of merging with not only the alien Oankali, but also the various other species the Oankali have merged with before which results in forms of multiple biochemical and genetic combinations and subjectivities which are continuously subsumed within a larger ever expanding churning whole. Likewise, the identity of Binti in Okorafor's *Binti* finds herself gradually incorporating the genetic

codes and cultural tendencies of many dissimilar species such as that of the alien *Meduse*, the alien *Zinariya* and later on the cetacean organic spaceship called *Little fish*. In essence, both the Oankali and the many alien and exotic species in *Binti* become *oddkin* to the humans in the respective stories and this kinship is not only biogenetic but also social as it continuously transforms the relationship the resultant posthumans have with their environment and every living thing they are genetically symbiotic with.

Alienating posthuman difference in Butler's *Xenogenesis* and in Okorafor's *Binti*

The posthuman as a progression from anthropocentric humanity is usually defined by its closer connections with non-human or ahuman others. On the contrary, humanity justifies its superior position in a closed off hierarchy, on its separateness from the non-human 'other' (Braidotti; Deckha; Ferrando). By envisioning superior races of aliens, metahuman hybrids and cyborgs, both Butler and Okorafor challenge the anthropocentric assumptions of human superiority and exceptionalism. Humanity is depicted as terribly flawed and constrained by its own rigid hierarchical tendencies which do not permit free transformations towards more desirable and more beneficial states of being. These narratives force the re-examinations of hybrid states which are already present in our everyday realities and how these genetic and socio-cultural mixtures are often treated with revulsion and discrimination due to perceived corruption of otherwise pristine and prestigious states of being by less prestigious ones. Examples of these discriminations abound; from inter-racial to inter-species to socio-cultural hybridity, persons who are perceived to have affiliations with different or lesser 'others' suffer discriminations, marginalisation and alienation from the more privileged

populations. The perceived corruption of humanity's pristine attributes in the posthuman becomes a dilemma whose usual solution is to 'alienate' the corrupted and corrupting 'other'. For example in Butler's *Dawn*, Lilitih finds herself always having to defend her humanity in the face of her difference to the other humans who constantly suspect her of treason to the human race and therefore alienate her. As one of the survivors Gabe tells her in a painfully alienating confrontation;

"You shouldn't have to take the brunt of our feelings, but... but you're the different one. Nobody knows how different" (Butler, *Dawn* 223).

Binti also faces similar instances of differentiation and alienation from her people when she returns with *Mesduse okuoko* tentacles and a very dangerous alien *Meduse* in tow; her former best friend *Dele* treats her with the same suspicion as the others and initiates a very uncomfortable interrogation;

So it's true," he said. "You've become the wife of a *Meduse*."

I frowned. "I'm no one's wife."

"You came home and you came with it," he said. "It stayed at the home of your family. It's been intimate with you enough that your body has changed."

"Okwu didn't do this," I said. "I don't even know which of—"

"The *Meduse* are a hive-minded people," he said. "What one does, they all do. If you use those to communicate with Okwu, you're communicating with the others, too."

In both trilogies, the supposedly uncorrupted human populations maintain and uphold the idea of biological purity and superiority to hybrids and other species. For them, any form of hybridisation which generates strange new forms of being equates to monstrosity. *Lilith* and the oankali/human constructs and even *Binti* represent the fear of difference and the

'other' to their anthropocentric human societies. They are viewed as corrupted and corrupting beings and contact is therefore highly restricted. Yet the very idea that humanity in itself has any stable basis for its pretensions of an uncorrupted pristine state is a fallacy according to many contemporary scholars. Both Butler and Okorafor write bodies that directly bring to the reader's notice, humanity's inability to actually survive independently of other species. Their stories especially in the case of *Xenogenesis* and *Binti* trilogies try to foreground the idea that our idea of wholeness and individuality is actually based on false premises and insufficient understanding of the human body and cultures. They emphasize the idea that we and many other species inhabiting our terrestrial world are actually constituted in what Haraway (*b*) describes as an eco-cultural 'compost' where multiple species and cultural signs come to play in constantly shifting combinations. In support of the multi-species hybrid mode theory of the human body, Asberg explains here that "The human body may well today be regarded as a microbiotic multi-species ecology in and of itself. Only 10 per cent of the trillion cells that constitute it are of the human-animal variety, while a motley majority of other microscopic organisms dominate our bodies" (157).

Tsing also reiterates the precariousness of human essentialism as one which is not only very vulnerable but that our very survival is actually based on bio-cultural diversity and collaborations within and across species. These collaborations already transform humans irrevocably and work across difference to produce hybridised and increasingly diverse identities. For Tsing, ...the very evolution of our "selves" is polluted by histories of encounter; we are mixed up with others before we even begin any new collaboration. ...The diversity that allows us to enter collaborations emerges from histories of extermination,

imperialism, and all the rest. Contamination makes diversity (29).

This motley hybrid nature of humanity and to a larger extent of the posthuman self is brought very succinctly into focus in the second book in the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, Lilith's progeny Akin (human/Oankali hybrid known as a construct) is the protagonist. At the beginning of his story, he is presented as a unique specimen of Oankali construction. The first male construct child the Oankali have dared to let be born after decades of only allowing the birth of female constructs due to the fear of the intensity of the human contradiction in human males. Akin was subjected to terrible experiences of the horrors that humans could inflict on one another and on the environment.

His ambiguous nature meant he could empathize with the humans on a level the Oankali who were not human /Oankali hybrids never could. His journey of self-discovery as the only male construct child to have ever being born lead him to becoming an unlikely saviour whom the humans could never have imagined. The journey of self-discovery to that of saviour was a complicated and difficult one which saw Akin discovering things about his hybrid nature that even the Oankali with all their superior access to the genetic information about his body could never have imagined. In both *Dawn* and *Adulthood rites*, Butler places the survival of humanity on the malleability and ambiguous adaptability of interspecies hybrids like Akin and to an extent even his cyborg human mother Lilith. They are able to move alternately between different states of being by embodying what Soyinka in Hampton, calls "a double consciousness" but in a more posthuman state of constant becoming. Without fixed identities, constructs like Akin offer hope of survival in a world where rapid and overwhelming changes only offers extinction for those unable to keep up. However, the very

qualities which makes them models for the survival of human futures in the story is also what separates them from the general human population. They are perceived by the humans as alien and corrupted and are alienated from human dominated societies. Butler demonstrates how the very embodiment of posthuman characteristics and qualities, no matter how progressive and beneficial, is often the very bases for alienation and marginalisation.

In Okorafor's *Binti* trilogy, the protagonist is also alienated from her human society by virtue of her posthumanisation which is perceived as corrupting. Her physical and cultural connections to the alien Meduse, a violent and extremely physically different alien race are regarded by the human races in the story as a form of betrayal. Like Lilith in Butler's *Dawn*, Binti discovers that her tenuous links and position in her human society is severed and fragmented when she is forced in a process that is very similar to rape to incorporate genetic material that is alien to her people. However like Lilith and her progeny, Binti not only physically but also metaphorically embody transformative changes, but also employs their newfound abilities in realising positive changes in their respective societies. Yet, no matter what benefits these posthuman connections brings to the individual character and the human society at large, the perceived corrupted posthuman self still loses any privileged position in the humanist anthropocentric hierarchal thought and systems. They are not only alienated but also forced to suffer formerly unknown forms of discrimination and maltreatment often justified by their newfound status of posthumanity.

Conclusion

Discourses on the negative effects of race gender and species divisions; with its attendant issues such as slavery, genocides and colonialism in human societies and the often negative, destructive and exploitative

relationships and interconnections between human and non-human categories in established humanist hierarchies are often woven deeply into the generic texture of mainstream SF and fantasy. The rise of critical approaches like posthumanism which question the role of humanist orderings of the world in the misery, exploitation and destruction of countless numbers of life-forms, re-positions and refocuses critical analyses on atypical characters and subjectivities such as the ones presented by hybrid posthumans in science fiction narratives. Posthumanist critics therefore epitomize the renewal or evolution of SF as a rendering of the experiences of ostracized groups which serve to defy and reconfigure the ideological structure of the genre, leading to explorations of the 'other' in more in-depth ways than ever before.

This paper examined the concept of hybridism in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* and Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti* SF trilogies and demonstrated how the condition of hybridism often translates into posthuman subjectivity while concurrently serving as a challenge to humanist assumptions about the purity of human selves. It discovers that humanity itself is unable to fully establish its own essential purity because it constantly exists in states that are biologically, technologically and culturally polluted and interconnected with the other life-forms that it shares its temporal and spatial spaces with; and whose existence, it relies on for its own survival. This fulfils posthumanist questioning of purported humanist ideas of an essentially pure human self which is distinct from all 'other's which it constantly alienates from its privileged spaces and makes a case for the idea that the posthuman condition could possibly be the primary state of humanity itself when it divests itself of problematic notions of essentialism and exclusivism.

The paper also shows how posthuman states often result in alienation from

anthropocentric societies regardless of how beneficial some conspicuously posthuman states might be to the generality of humans in each story. By placing the hybrid posthuman characters in each story within a critical posthumanist framework, this paper demonstrates how the posthuman subject suffers from alienation and discrimination from anthropocentric populations due to its exhibition of certain traits of metahuman transformation and hybridism. It concludes that the state of hybridism and general posthuman conditions, especially those that occur across species and technological lines; with visible or at least obvious markers of difference; often result in alienation from the majority of anthropocentric societies. This resultant condition of alienation and its attendant discriminatory experiences, as illustrated in each narrative, is understood to be due to humanity's widespread inability to value life which does not fall within its preconceived hierarchies and categories of privilege.

WORKS CITED

- Asberg, Cecilia. "Feminist posthumanities." *Posthuman Glossary*. Ed. Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova. London/New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018, pp. 157-160.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The empire writes back: Theory and practice in postcolonial literatures*, vol. 2. New York: Taylor and Francis, 2002.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *The posthuman*. Cambridge UK, Malden USA: Polity Press, 2013.
- Butler, Octavia E. *Lilith's Brood 'Xenogenesis' series*. New York: Grand Central, 2007. —. "Telling My Stories." Program and Exhibit". San Marino: The Huntington Library, April 8 – August 7, 2017.
- Callum, Ivan and Stefan Herbrechter. "Introduction: Posthumanist subjectivities, or, coming after the subject." *Subjectivity*, vol. 5 no. 3, 2012, pp 241-264.
- Clark, Andy. *Natural-born cyborgs: Minds, technologies, and the future of human intelligence*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Deckha, Maneesha. "Animal bodies, technobodies: New directions in cultural studies, feminism, and posthumanism." *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism* vol. 20, no.2, 2009, pp. 504-506.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Eshun, Kodwo. "Further considerations on Afrofuturism." *The New Centennial Review* vol 3, no 2, 2003: pp. 287-302.
- Ferrando, Francesca. "Is the post-human a post-woman? Cyborgs, robots, artificial intelligence and the future of gender: a case study," 31 August 2014.
- . *Philosophical Posthumanism*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019.
- Foucault, Michel. *The order of things: The archeology of the human sciences*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Random House, 1974.
- Gladden, Matthew E. "A Typology of Posthumanism." Gladden, Matthew E. *Sapient circuits and digitalized flesh: The organization as locus of technological posthumanization*. 2nd. Indianapolis: Defragmenter Media, 2018, pp. 31-91.
- Gomel, Elana. "Science (fiction) and posthuman ethics: Redefining the human." *The European legacy*, vol.16. no. 3, 2011, pp. 339-354.
- Hampton, Gregory Jerome. *Changing bodies in the fiction of Octavia Butler: Slaves, aliens, and vampires*. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010.

- Haraway, Donna. *A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century*. University of Minnesota Press, 2016.
- Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How we became posthuman: Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature and informatics*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Herbrechter, Stefan. *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.—“Posthumanist Literature?” 07 July 2015. [archgate](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/279847627_Posthumanist_Literature). <www.researchgate.net/publication/279847627_Posthumanist_Literature>
- Jacobs, Naomi. “Posthuman bodies and agency in Octavia Butler's Xenogenesis.” *Dark horizons: Science fiction and the dystopian imagination*. Ed. Rafaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan. New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 91-112.
- Jones, Cassandra L. “Futurebodies: Octavia Butler as post-colonial cyborg theorist,” 2013.
- Jue, Melody. “Intimate Objectivity: On Nnedi Okorafor's Oceanic Afrofuturism.” *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*. vol. 45, no. 1 & 1/2, 2017.
- Koln, Julia Hoydis. “Fantastically hybrid: Race, gender, in black female speculative fiction.” *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies*, vol.26, no. 2, 2015, pp. 71-88.
- Linton, Patricia. “Aliens, (M)Others, Cyborgs: The emerging ideology of hybridity.” Cartmell, Deborah, et al. *Alien identities*. London: Pluto press, 1999, pp. 172-186.
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The inhuman: Reflections on time*. Trans. Geoffrey Benninton and Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.
- Magedanz, Stacy. “The captivity narrative in Octavia E. Butler's Adulthood rites.” *Library Faculty Publications*, vol. 23, 2012, pp. 1-21.
- Nanda, Aparajita. “Power, politics and domestic desire in Octavia Butler's Lilith Brood.” *Callaloo*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2013, pp. 773-788.
- Okorafor, Nnedi. “Resident evil.” *SOAS, University of London*. Prod. Keynote Speech. London: Annual Igbo Conference, 2015.
- Peppers, Cathy. “Dialogic Origins and Alien Identities in Butler's Xenogenesis.” *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1995.
- Rahn, Judith. “(Re-)Negotiating Black Posthumanism –The Precarity of Race in Nnedi Okorafor's Lagoon.” *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2019, pp. 83-97.
- Roberts, Adam. *The history of science fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Russell, Natalie . “The Octavia E. Butler Collection.” Summer 2017. The Hutington Library. 2022 <www.artpapers.org/the-octavia-e-butler-collection/>.
- Shnapper, Andrew. *Eugenics, Genetic Determinism and the Desire for Racial Utopia in the Science Fiction of Octavia E. Butler*. Melbourne: PhD Thesis Submitted to the University of Melbourne, 2014.
- Silva, Alexander Meireles da. “War of the Worlds: Postcolonial identities in Afro-American speculative fiction.” *R. Let & Let*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2010, pp. 369-388.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*.

- New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Weheliye, Alexander G. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing assemblages, biopolitics and black feminist theories of the human*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Whitted, Qiana. "'To be African is to merge technology and magic': An interview with Nnedo Okorafor." *Afrofuturism 2.0*. Maryland/London: Lexinton Books, 2016, pp. 207-214.
- Williams, James. "Alienation." Braidotti, Rosi and Maria Hlavajova. *Posthuman Glossary*. London/New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018, pp. 28-29.
- Womack, Ytasha. *Afrofuturism: The world of black sci-fi and fantasy culture*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2013.
- Yaszek, Lisa. "Afrofuturism, science fiction and the history of the future." *Socialism and Democracy*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2006, pp. 41-60.
- Zaki, M. Hoda. "'Utopia, Dystopia, and Ideology in the Science Fiction of Octavia Butler'," *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1990, pp. 239–51 .