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**TRANSHUMANISM AND AFROFUTURISM IN BUTLER'S *PARABLE OF THE SOWER AND WILD SEED*****Syeda Asra Nadeem,**MPhil English Literature [syedbukhari7622@gmail.com](mailto:syedbukhari7622@gmail.com)**Ms. Muqaddas Saif (corresponding/second author)**

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[Muqaddassaif.eng@tuf.edu.pk](mailto:Muqaddassaif.eng@tuf.edu.pk)**Abstract**

*This study discusses the relationship of Transhumanism and Afrofuturism and their interplay in the seminal works of Parable of the Sower or Wild Seed by Octavia E. Butler and how these theories integrate with human evolution, racial identity or potential morality in both of these novels. It is a qualitative study that deals with the complex issues of physiological enhancement, socio-political problems and the problem of human agency that is presented in the selected novels. This study examines the Butler challenges the Western patterns of thinking about technological advancement, body sovereignty or racial futures. It explains the ethical possibilities at the intersection of free desire and technology that emphasize collective emancipation as well as the critical connection between technological progress and social justice. The study contributes to the growing literature on the ethical implications of posthuman futures; mapping out the ways the seemingly undercome voices can help to reshape the dominant technology narratives. Overall, the results of the findings indicate that Butler's works provide a crucial intervention into the primarily white and/or Western transhumanist discourse by focusing on the black experiences and epistemologies in envisioning posthuman futures. Future work could focus on the implications and potential applications of Butler's holistic perspective on transhumanism and Afrofuturism for discussions on AI ethics, biotechnology governance, and inclusive innovation in the present day.*

**Keywords:** Afrofuturism, Transhumanism, Technological Advancement, Ethical Futures**1. Introduction**

In modern times, science and technology work at such a fast pace that it has extended the limits of what humans are. Interestingly, transhumanism, in various ways, constitutes an intellectual and cultural movement that embraces the potentiality in humans to go beyond what we can explicate using today's developed physical and cognitive capabilities.

**1.1 Background of the study**

The history of transhumanist thought can be traced back to the early twentieth century, when great visionaries began to imagine what it might mean for technology to transform the essence of a human being. The Russian philosopher and mathematician FM-2030 (formerly known as Fereidoun M. Esfandiary) was one of the first proponents of such ideas when he coined the term "transhumanism" in the 1960s to describe the evolutionary process whereby humans can use technology to overcome the biological limits of their present status (Bostrom, 2005).

Afrofuturism, grounded on the histories or prospects of the African immigrants, emerged concurrently with transhumanism as an alternative paradigm for conceptualizing transformation. Afrofuturism imagines free Black futures by mixing science fiction, mythology, or African cultural heritage. Transhumanism, on the other hand, is all about making technology better. Afrofuturism, which became popular in the late 20th century, was shaped by writers, musicians, and artists like Octavia Butler, Samuel Delany, or Sun Ra. Their texts provided speculative counter-histories that affirmed diasporic identity or creativity, contesting dominant narratives that marginalized Black experiences (Dery, 1994; Elia, 2020). Afrofuturism articulated prospects of survival, justice, or resilience for historically marginalized communities by reclaiming cultural wisdom and envisioning it within futuristic contexts. lauded the recognition of Africans' artistic and diasporic identities(Elia, 2020).

Octavia Estelle Butler (1947-2013), a major practitioner of Afrofuturism and science fiction. Butler changed the way speculative fiction is written by writing about racism, gender, power, as well as disparities as an African American woman in an industry that is mostly white men. Her works are also notable for their imaginative breadth and their examination of the everyday

situations of systemic bias and financial struggle. Butler's fiction employs speculative methods to investigate ethical dilemmas about survival and transformation, envision alternative societal frameworks, and analyze human nature (Canavan, 2016).

*Parable of the Sower* (1993) or *Wild Seed* (1980) are two of Butler's most important books. They show how she combines transhumanist and Afrofuturist ideas in a powerful way. *Parable for the Sower* shows a dystopian America in the near future where the environment is falling apart, society is breaking down, and corporations are in charge. The protagonist, Lauren Olamina, suffers from hyper-empathy, that is, she almost experiences the suffering of others. This can appear to be a weakness initially, but it also becomes a great asset when it comes to empathy and leadership. Her community is destroyed, so Lauren takes a few other survivors northern where she establishes her new spiritual system, Earthseed. This system is based on the notion that "God is Change" (Butler, 1993, p. 17). This is what Butler calls resilience—in the case of Earthseed, the people who were evolving as he grew up were people of color. Demonstrates flexibility, group responsibility or new ways to change beliefs in difficult situations.

*Wild Seed*, on the other hand, is a commentary on power, coercion, and resistance over the span of many centuries, featuring two undying protagonists, Doro and Anyanwu. Surviving by possessing those who die and become themselves, Doro creates a breeding program to develop people with special talents, whom she treats as property not family. As an Igbo-inspired healer and shape-shifter, Anyanwu rebels against his oppression, trying to maintain some sense of self-determination and community. Their intimacy is played out in the context of the Atlantic slave trade and colonial expansion, placing the speculations in narratives of racial survival and violence. Butler (1980) paints here the Babalola Anyanwu's defiant story of enhancement that cannot be separated from the question of freedom and self-determination.

### 1.3 Research Objective

This research aims to

- To examine the concept of transhumanism that shapes societal hierarchies and individual identity portrayed in the *Parable of the Sower* and the *Wild Seed*.
- To analyze Octavia Butler's Afrofuturism fundamentally redefines conceptions of race, identity, and futurity in contrast to dominant Western narratives.
- To investigate the intersections of Afrofuturism, transhumanism, and Butler's narratives in reconfiguring ethical frameworks related to free will, identity, and technology.

### 1.2 Research Question

1. What are the implications of transhumanism on the social-cultural organization in Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and the *Wild Seed*?
2. How does Afrofuturism conceptualized by Butler reimagine the notions of race, identity, futurity in points of contrast with the dominant depictions of the west?
3. What does transhumanism have in common with Afrofuturism and how do they merge to suggest the development of a new morality along the lines of free will, identity, and technology?

### 1.4 Significance of the study

The study has importance with respect to (1) the re-creation of transhumanist and Afrofuturist concepts in one literary object, Octavia E. Butler's novels, and (2) their challenge and reconstruction of prevailing discourses about the future of humankind. The study demonstrates how Butler's interrogation of issues of race, gender, power, and technological change works as a way to narrate critiques of the established social order as well as visions of alternative modes of survival and justice. The transhumanist and Afrofuturist way of thinking creates a more complex understanding of the metaphorical considerations of Butler's perspective and can be used to enhance the continuing scholarly literary discourses and provide unique ways of comprehending aspects of her cultural, ethical and philosophical discussions.

## 1.5 Delimitation

This study analyzes two significant texts that illustrate the intersection of transhumanism and Afrofuturism in Octavia E. Butler's science fiction: *Parable of the Sower* and *Wild Seed*. It analyses the work of Butler in relation to themes of speculative resistance, changeable identities and human potentialities using Afrofuturist theories (Womack, 2013) or transhumanist theories (Bostrom, 2005). Butler amalgamates posthuman and Afrofuturist concepts to imagine other worlds. This is demonstrated in the study through juxtaposing the sociopolitical settings of the novels with real world impacts.

## 2. Literature Review

In an extension of this Afrofuturist reading, Pierre (2021) considers her *Parable* novels to be a sustainability/ climate change discourse. Pierre emphasises Butler's linkages between environmental destruction and structural inequality and the "teachable moments" of speculative fiction for readers to develop environmental and social change. *Earthseed* community is a speculative resilience, one that is marked by cooperation, adaptability, and ethical engagement with change, all through the lens of sustainability. Pierre therefore locates Butler in the Afrofuturists project of seizing the future for the people who were otherwise living on the margins and telling visionary stories with current concerns.

Other scholars take the concept further that Butler attacks mainstream transhumanism by focusing on its current fail-like points of embodiment, vulnerability, and trauma. In her book, Vado (2020), the term "body-knowledge" was coined to refer to Butler's characters challenging normatively constructed notions of enhancement or evolution. Vado emphasizes that change in Butler's world is always manifested, often in excruciating fashion, and it manifests as being profoundly relational, something echoed in *Parable of the Sower* or in Butler's earlier novels such as *Wild Seed*. This isn't in the same spirit as other transhumanist conceptions that wish to circumvent bodily constraints through the use of "gadgets." Much of *Parable* is a literal and figurative experience of embodied empathy; Lauren suffers from a condition that makes her sensitive to others' pain, and it also helps her increasingly to insure her understanding of communities and connections.

Womack (2013) examines *Parable* seen in the light of Butler's other works of her series and labels them as representative of "transhumanist Afrofuturism." Butler does not negate technology per se, however, she discusses possibilities for human development that do not rely on these technologies, such as using emotional intelligence and social responsibility as well as spiritual development. To Womack, he believes that *Earthseed* is an "ethical rewriting of progress." Instead of selfish or commercial ideas of technical transcendence, it is about change via empathy, adaptability, and a shared vision.

Kim (2017) corroborates this argument by calling attention to the Afrofuturist and author's narrative or artistic strategies used to re-imagine identity and the future, including Butler's. Kim argues that, in Butler's rewriting history to align with a liberated future, through speculative setting, she does not simply run away from history, but reasserts control over black bodies or histories. Lauren's physical and intellectuality's journey proves the need for Afrofuturists to build new social structures possibilities for memory, hope or survival.

Not everyone, however, is on board with this hopeful mix of transhumanism, Afrofuturism, or Butler. Iuga (2016) adopts a more critical stance, interrogating the ideological assumptions and limitations inherent in transhumanist thought. Iuga explicitly counters the transhumanists' hope of transcending structural inequities by imagining a starting point in which the subject is neutral, has comparable access to enhancing technologies. It is worth noting that Iuga criticizes Butler's language, and this provides support for an interpretation of *Earthseed* or Lauren's empathy as not being overly transhumanist. But rather it raises questions of who does benefit from shift, who pays for it and how influence affects delivery of shift.

AJ and Nalini (2014) warns against over-optimising the advancement of technology or physical transcendence, instead emphasising an ecological as well as feminist aspect of Parable of the Sower. For Manju, Butler's story is largely one of the adaptable nature of people in a collapsing environment. It is not the kind of hyper-empathy and community building talked up as a solution here by Butler that are romanticized, but the importance given to them as fragile ways of coping with institutional failure. The idea of this interpretation is that Parable is a story of resilience: that trauma and loss are crucial to change, not transcendence. In her work, Mann (2018) further develops this critique, exploring the pessimistic type of futurism in Butler's Xenogenesis trilogy. Though her primary focus is not on the Parable novels, Mann's compulsion/reproduction/existence in speculative futures offers insight into Butler's larger literary project. She believes that Butler never doubts the notion of "redemption through change," but rather the moral/social consequences of "living. This lens complicates transhumanist narratives as well as an over-enthusiastic view of enhancement, which may not consider how it can reinforce hierarchy and control.

At the center of transhumanist ideas is Bostrom (2005). Though Bostrom seems to refrain from direct criticism of de Butler, his analysis of the history of transhumanism reveals the conceptual dilemmas that de Butler's literature addresses. Bostrom discusses how the ideas of human replacement have developed from early humanism to present day biotechnology, and argues that transhumanism utilizes science, technology, and rationality to overcome biological constraints. Butler's Parable novels defies this custom and poses moral questions on whose(body) should be enhanced and who gets to determine what enhancement is.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

#### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

##### **3.1.1 Afrofuturism**

Ytasha Womack is one of the most well-known academics, writers, or filmmakers who has led the discussion on Afrofuturism. "Her seminal work, 2013's 'Afrofuturism: The world of Black sci-fi and fantasy culture' is a must-read comprehensive exploration of this innovative cultural and artistic movement."

Womack offers Afrofuturism in her book as "a way of looking at the future that accounts for experiences of people of color, then creates imaginative fiction, music, art, etc." (Womack, 2013, p. 9). Womack gives the first definition that the basic premise of Afrofuturism is "a 'Black and brown revolutionary vision of the future' (p. 9). This is a direct challenge to the Eurocentric, almost always exclusionary perspective that has permeated the genres of science fiction and speculative fiction for so long.

Ytasha Womack states the concepts in her book 'Afrofuturism: The World of black sci fi and Fantasy Culture:

**3.1.2 Evolution of a Space Cadet & the Rise of Afrofuturism Childhood Inspiration** As a child, the author idolized Princess Leia, dressing as the rebel princess for Halloween and yearning for greater Black representation in sci-fi, imagining roles for figures like Lando Calrissian or James Earl Jones. This desire connects to Afrofuturism, a movement blending imagination, technology, liberation, Afrocentricity, and magic realism to redefine Black identity and culture, seen in works like William Hayashi's Discovery and the Black Kirby art exhibit. As with Black geek culture, comics, tech, cosplay and conference have served as outlets for self-expression, resistance practices, and building community. Afrofuturism, which was coined by Mark Dery in the 1990s, sparks the imagination and lets young people re-imagine Blackness in the world that is futuristic or alternative, fusing critical thought with creativity. In the late 1990s, Afrofuturism became a potent force for social change when Alondra Nelson's AOL Listserv connected artists, scholars, and fans together, moving Afrofuturism beyond art critique.

##### **3.1.3 The origins of the Afrofuturism movement**

Especially in the case of Afrofuturism, the author calls to mind a moment in college when she was instructed that slavery did not give rise to racism, but that racism was invented later to justify slavery, where Cauleen Smith sees the “Blackness is a technology.” Afrofuturists take this a step further by connecting historical de-humanization (pseudoscience, propaganda, laws), with “afronauts”, or alien abduction in sci-fi, and thereby reclaim humanity and resistance for marginalized groups. They also challenge the double weight of technology: using gunpowder, genetics and pseudoscience to have slavery and genocide, and also the modern abuses of, such as Henrietta Lacks cells and the Tuskegee experiments. Afrofuturism emphasizes how one needs to be flexible, inventive, and imaginative to resist oppression and envision more beneficent structures. It thus challenges the argument that racial disparities are either being continued or being eroded by the new technologies.

### **3.1.4 Afrofuturism & Reimagining Society: A World beyond Race**

Afrofuturism seeks to sideline racial notions in the law, culture, and/or identity by examining race as an ideology or theorizing more liberated futurities. It engages in hope and imaginative imagination as a resource for social transformation. It brings to mind a sense of hope and imagination as in Obama or MLK Jr., bright forces that resist the toxic force of pessimism that seek to effect change by criticism and invention. Afrofuturists emphasize on black technical creativeness and also negate story of exploitation in the technological gap. Digital media is unlocking the future and providing a greater voice to more people. Scientists such as Dr. Jarita Holbrook may recover the past and accomplishments of African astrophysicists, but they also retrieve Africa's treasure trove of astronomical traditions throughout Africa, except for Egypt and Dogon. This indicates their understanding of Igbo, Bamana and Yoruba civilizations.

### **3.1.5 The Divine Feminine in Afrofuturism: Reimagining Space & Identity: Trailblazers in Space & Representation**

The first black woman in space, Dr. Mae Jemison, was inspired by Nichelle Nichols' role as Lieutenant Uhura in Star Trek. It was a precedent setting assignment that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. encouraged Nichols to further highlight its significance as a means of transforming the image of the black woman on television. Afrofuturism expands upon these traditions and affords artists the opportunity to create their own mythology. For instance, in Alisha Wormsley's post-apocalyptic tales and in author Krista Franklin's *The Untold Legend of Naima Brown*, black women can explore their identities outside the norm. This vision's use of divine feminine principles—creativity, intuition, mysticism, and healing—along with science and technology, as shown by characters like the Oracle in *The Matrix*, show how Afrofuturism's appeal for wholeness and change through reconnecting with nature and the cosmos.

### **3.1.6 Nick Bostrom and the Evolution of Transhumanist Thought**

The work of Nick Bostrom, founder of Oxford's Future of Humanity Institute, is central to modern transhumanist philosophy, advancing the movement's goal of using technology to “fundamentally improve the human condition” (Bostrom, 2005). Yet transhumanist aspirations reach back to humanity's oldest myths, such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and Greek stories of Prometheus and Daedalus, which reflect the desire to transcend natural limits. Humanists and rationalists of the Renaissance and Enlightenment such as Pico della Mirandola, Francis Bacon and Immanuel Kant pointed to the potential of humankind and also the possibility of human improvement; later Renaissance thinkers Condorcet and Benjamin Franklin spoke of extending life, and improving oneself. The difference is that in the 20th century, writers like H. G. Wells and Arthur C. Clarke thought of futures of change while scientists like J. B. S. Haldane saw the genetics as a means to evolve human beings. These ideas were, however, accompanied by fearsome literature like *The Brave New World*, by Aldous Huxley (1932), warning against the advent of morality itself.

The concepts have expanded into well-organized transhumanist models that integrate the ethical thought with technology advancements today. Both the theory of the singularity by Vernor Vinge and Alan Turing and his work on thinking machines predicted artificial intelligence. The concepts of nano-technology by Eric Drexler also broadened the thoughts of enhancing the things on a molecular scale. In addition to these technical advances, philosophical discussions on identity and ethical conduct have been made hotter. The ethics of genetic enhancement or cognitive enhancement have been investigated by Julian Savulescu or Derek Parfit. Bostrom (2014) has repurposed transhumanism as the maintenance of man in the face of advanced technologies and the intentional enhancement of human beings in his groundbreaking work concerning the idea of existential risk.

Transhumanist ideas are controversial and are influenced by the conflict between pessimism and optimism. The bioconservatives object to the idea of altering the human nature and they tend to believe that such projects are ethically objectionable or exploit the society. Constitutional activists such as James Hughes (2004) on the other hand believe that fair use of augmentation technology should be enjoyed by all. Biotechnology also has various feminist perspectives. There are proponents of feminism who believe that it will provide women with greater control over their bodies and critics who believe it may make patriarchal systems more powerful. The existence of these opposing views demonstrates that transhumanism is a vital yet controversial subject since it is at the intersection of politics, science, or ethics.

### 3.2.1. Research Design

The study is the analysis of Parable of the Sower or Wild Seed by Butler makes use of a qualitative cross-disciplinary studies design that combines different analytical methodologies devoted to transhumanism or Afrofuturism. With this structure, the narratives by Butler have been researched and interrogated systematically to understand how they support and propagate the ideas of transhumanism and improve the encoding of the interactions between identity, power, and technologies.

### 3.2.2 Research Methods

The thesis employs the method of comparative analysis of the mentioned two stories, namely "Wild Seed" and "Parable of the Sower", and shows the transhumanism or Afrofuturism issues of the two stories through in-depth examination of the text. This methodology entails the identification of key passages in relation to central concepts and ideas (human enhancement, post-human ethics, temporal disruption and cultural reclamation) as well as detailed linguistic analysis of the language, metaphors, and techniques of narration used by Butler in these passages. Character analysis focuses on how posthuman themes may be expressed in development and interpersonal relations, whereas narrative structure analysis delves into the aspects of the narrative structure that deviate from linear western constructions. The comparative component specifically analyzes parallels and divergences between the two novels, focusing on: 1) Temporal comparison of Butler's thematic evolution across the publication gap (1980 vs. 1993); 2). Contextual comparison of how differing settings (historical/fantastical vs. near-future dystopia) shape the exploration of posthuman themes; and 3). Character-based comparison of protagonists (Anyanwu and Lauren) and their distinct approaches to transformation and agency.

### Data Collection

#### Primary Sources

Textual Analysis: Close reading of *Parable of the Sower* and *Wild Seed* to extract themes, symbols, and narrative structures.

#### Focus on passages that engage with

Transhumanist motifs: The philosophical debates and controversies concerning genetic modification, posthuman ethics, technological utopianism/dystopianism. Afrofuturist motifs:

African cosmologies, speculative resistance, reclamation of identity. Intersectional processes: Hierarchy of power, structural violence and agency.

### **Secondary Sources**

- Scholarly Literature:
- Transhumanism: Works by Bostrom (2005).
- Afrofuturism: Works by Womack (2013)

### **3.2.3 Connecting the Theories**

#### **1. Shared Concern with Human Futures**

Afrofuturism or even transhumanism both attempt to take a guess as to what is going to happen to people in the future. Afrofuturism sees the possibilities of Black groups that had always been peripheral in the history of development, and transhumanism sees futures of technological enhancement, which transcends biological constraints (Bostrom, 2005; Womack, 2013). Reading them simultaneously one can see that the future is always political: who is approved to be a human and who is not.

#### **2. Technology and Power**

Transhumanism praises technologies like mind uploading, AI, as well as gene editing as ways to make people better. Afrofuturism accepts technology, but it also questions the racialized structures of power that decide who can use it. Butler's writings highlight how technology of change may simultaneously free and enslave people. For example, the eugenics programs in *Wild Seed* or the survival strategies in *Earthseed*. This duality becomes clearer when the two ideas are read together.

#### **3. Identity Beyond the Human**

Transhumanism envisions post humanity as an exploration of where humanity can be pushed to. Afrofuturism challenges the conventional notions of race, gender and humanity through the non-Western cosmologies and inventive reinterpretation. In the discussion, they establish a framework in which they can view the characters of Butler as transhuman or Afrofuturist-characters that tear down the more classic identity lines and yet demonstrate power and creativity.

#### **4. Critiquing Utopianism**

Transhumanism has also been mocked due to its techno-utopian, and Eurocentric suppositions, which prefer accounts of progress that disregard structural injustices. Afrofuturism responds by emphasizing the perspectives of minorities and that any conceivable future has to deal with oppressive pasts. On a combination, they offer a structure that consider the impacts of technology on the society and also envisages its potentials.

#### **5. Ethical Reorientation**

While promoting advancement, transhumanism typically ignores ethical issues including social equality, accessibility, and consent. Afrofuturism addresses these topics. According to Butler's study, morals & culture are equally important to technology for survival and growth. This synthesis allows for justice and inclusivity to be realized in future discussions. Several perspectives are examined to show how Butler's writings challenge old ideas and suggest new progressive debates.

## 4. Discussion and Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction to the Analysis

Octavia E. Butler reinvents humanity at the intersection of technology, culture, & identity in futuristic fiction. This essay examines Butler's transhumanist and Afrofuturism-focused envisioning of evolution through biological or cultural transformation in *Wild Seed* (1980) or *Parable of the Sower* (1993). Both volumes show the contradiction between Afrofuturist goals to restore Black identities and transhumanist goals to transcend biological limits.

### 4.2 Research Context and Significance

Even though they were released more than 10 years apart, *Wild Seed* or *Parable of the Sower* addresses survival, power, and transformation. In *Wild Seed*, set in Africa and America, Anyanwu can heal or change shape, and Doro is an eternal who gives birth to superhumans. They represent two views on planned expansion and sovereignty.

Producer discusses body control, gene editing, and survival in the hard times. The *Parable of the Sower* is about a fall of America. Lauren Olamina, the main character, possesses hyper-empathy and creates Earthseed, a society & way of thought that believes "God is Change." Butler sees human potential as collective resilience amid disasters, as shown by Lauren's syndrome with her shared vision.

### 4.3 Transhumanist Manifestations in Butler's Works

Butler doubts the transhumanist concepts and assumptions. Butler does not agree with Nick Bostrom's view of technological growth and transcendence. She evolves by means consent, embodiment & community. *Wild Seed* describes the breeding program that Doro engages in, and this is akin to proto-genetic engineering, as it is exerted on the animals' feelings with the aim of having them under his control: "He had never considered the feelings of his animals beyond their effect on their usefulness to him" (Butler, 1980, p. 101). His attitude in the realm of evolution is one of a forced hierarchy or transhumanism based on power and not one of moral responsibility. In contrast Anyanwu's shapeshifting is an alternative way of enhancing, more organic through embodied memory and healing. The transhumanism of her is more self-directed and holistic, she transforms at will, "She changed them, controlled them... certain cells of her body remembered the shapes and functions of other creatures she had learned" (p. 76). It is this contrast that points to Butler's critique of technological determinism: if enhancement is not done in, and for, a community then it is dehumanizing.

Butler takes this questioning one step further with cognitive and ethical enhancements in *Parable of the Sower*. Olamina, Lauren's affect is over-empathy, and is cited as a handicap, but it is both a weakness and ability – "I'm supposed to share pleasure and pain, but there isn't much pleasure around these days" (Butler, 1993, p. 12). Its exposure to suffering is paired with her radical philosophy of Earthseed and a way of being in this dying world which is ethic of care and adaptability. Reflecting the authors' theme, Lauren notes: "If hyper-empathy syndrome were a more typical complaint, people couldn't do so terrible things to each other this is enhancement as a collective benefit rather than an enhancement of an individual" (p. 115). In both texts, Butler is high lightening the figuration of ethics of transformational function: through Anyanwu's resistance to being a tool and Doro's power of coercion, or through Lauren's awareness of inequalities. Finally, Butler's reconfigured transhumanism moves away from a purely individualistic and technological lens to one that envisions human transformation in the context of histories of oppression, cultural memory, and the collective struggle for survival.

### 4.4 Afrofuturism and Cultural Reimagining

In addition to transhumanist motifs, Butler's novels also perform Afrofuturist strategies to "recover" African cosmologies, disrupt temporal chronologies and "envision" emancipated Black futures. Anyanwu's healing and shapeshifting are based in Igbo traditions – 'People said

she could see spirits and tell the future and much more.’ (Butler, 1980, pp. 5–6). Her powers validate African epistemologies that make healing, spirit and biology inseparable and challenge the western scientific rationality. In the same way, in *Parable of the Sower*, Lauren's *Earthseed* is a diasporic spirituality re-imagined for a collapsing society: “With forethought and work, we shape God. In the end, we yield to God. We adapt and endure; for we are *Earthseed* and *God is Change*” (Butler, 1993, p. 17). In both stories, Afrofuturism is seen reclaiming cultural knowledge as forming the basis of an imagination of transformative futures in which the survival and flourishing of blacks are foregrounded.

Racial identity and temporality are also concerns of Afrofuturism as explored by Butler. *Anyanwu* is also capable of shifting her appearance back and forth from her natural color to something else: “She never told anyone the extent of her abilities *Protective coloration*” (Butler, 1980, p. 6). This is a speculative mobility which inhabits essentialist notions of race and yet recognizes racism. Butler depicts in *Parable* how racial stratification is not totally abolished (but rather transformed) in the aftermath of a collapse of society, and how Lauren's multiracial community of *Earthseed* is a paradigm of speculative resistance through inclusivity. Similarly, *Parable* sets its dystopia near-future as a continuation of current crises, while serving as both a criticism of corporate power and an impetus to thinking in other ways.

#### **4.5 Intersectional Analysis: Race, Technology, and Power**

Butler shows how technologies of enhancement are not independent of gender, race and class and how these technologies frame oppression and resistance in their use. In *Wild Seed*, Doro disables *Anyanwu*'s capability of bearing children—his only concern is that *Anyanwu* be procured for use in his breeding scheme: “Come on, I want children out of you by several men I've selected” (Butler, 1980/2000, p. 42). She responds defiantly “No one owns me, Doro. No one owns my children” (p. 43), putting physical autonomy in contrast to the male oppression she is fighting. Likewise, consequentially, in *Parable of the Sower*, Lauren's hyper-empathy is related to her mother's prenatal drug habits (Butler, 1993, p. 11), which are also gendered medical in nature. In both stories, the issues of transhumanism are just as intertwined with histories of exploitation, in part those that make women's bodies targets of experimentation and control. This is also true in regards to race and class. Doro has the attitude that they follow him or he'll kill them, thus indicating how enhancement can be a means of domination (Butler, 1980, p. 74). In *Parable*, corporate monopolies control access to resources, with those in the company obtaining it, and those outside of the company doing the best they can: “Company people get all they want. The rest of us have to make do”. (Butler, 1993, p. 18) Privilege here is enhanced through class: further perpetuating inequality. Butler highlights community as a place where we can survive against that. She could stay and help his people. She could teach them. *Anyanwu* offers healing and knowledge, and Lauren teaches *Earthseed* principles. So not only is Butler implying intersectionality as a lens through which to critique, but it is a form of envisioning resistance to systemic violence through collaboration and care.

#### **4.6 Ethical Possibilities at the Intersection of Free Will and Technology: Butler, Womack, and Bostrom**

The root of Butler's work is the question of ethics in transformation, and the consent. Butler (1980) presents a contrast with the independence of Doro and the resistance of *Anyanwu* as the latter asserts, “I am not your breeding animal” (p. 78). Her demand for self-determination is an early statement of transhumanism's – “morphological freedom,” the ability to “have command of one's own body and augmentations.” In *Parable*, Butler exposes the notion of technological determinism by painting a picture of societal collapse because of the company's exploitation of the people: “Companies buy athletes and musicians... politicians and preachers” (Butler, 1993, p. 19). *Earthseed* is an opposite vision to Lauren's philosophy of “*God is Change*,” which is an ethic of adaptability and responsibility. The idea of progress is therefore re-articulated as survival via the collective transformation. Afrofuturist ethics

contribute to this new way of looking at things. Anyanwu's powers are acquired from African spiritual knowledge rather than western science. Transhumanism advocates often ignore these traditions. Lauren's Earthseed combines diaspora with future: "We are Earthseed." We are flesh—conscious, eternal skin that expands. (Butler, 1993, 193) These ideas say that survival is not just something that one person wants, but something that everyone needs. Butler envisions an ethical framework based on society, family, or self, as opposed to mainstream humanity, which often prioritizes the isolated improved individual.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has shown that Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower or Wild Seed deeply examine transhumanist as well as Afrofuturist themes that challenge, expand, and reevaluate established notions of human potential and the future. Her work creates complex worlds, characters with many sides, and subtle moral questions that support different ideas about how people can change based on the values of justice, interdependence, or adaptability. These ideas are not in line with popular transhumanism as well as cultural nationalism. Butler's fiction always reminds us that whatever questions we have about the future of humanity must be based on the oppressive and resistant institutions of the past and present. My work shows that credible human improvement must address not only biological and technical limits but also societal systems that hinder human well-being. Butler does this by focusing on Black experiences and ways of knowing in her visions of the future and by coming up with big ideas about posthuman possibilities that would include Black experiences in her thoughts about how people may change. These examples could help us go across the unclear area between the human and the nonhuman, between past trauma and potential futures, and between the present and the future.

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