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Exploring Afrofuturism and the Portrayal of Posthuman Companion Species in Octavia Butler's *Adulthood Rites*

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Abstract:

This paper examines Octavia E. Butler's significant role in constructing and challenging the literary canon of the mainstream science fiction genre, mainly through her impactful work within the realm of black science fiction known as Afrofuturism. The paper argues that Butler's novel Adulthood Rites depicts various hybrid multispecies characters, envisioning a posthuman idea of interconnectedness and coexistence with other non-human entities. Butler's vision of a new species of beings also aligns with Donna Haraway's concept of Companion Species. The paper will also try to illustrate that Butler's inclusion of non-human or other-than-human species in the text can be seen as providing a voice to the non-human Other, traditionally deemed as marginal, and paving the way for a unique science-fiction genre that distinguishes it from the mainstream Science Fiction narrative.

Keywords: Afrofuturism, Science fiction, Companion Species, Posthumanism, nonhuman, other-than-human.

Introduction

Afrofuturism first emerged in Mark Dery's thought-provoking essay, "Black to the Future." In this groundbreaking piece, Dery invites us to explore the rich intersection of African culture, technology, and imagination, painting a vibrant picture of a future deeply rooted in the black

experience. Dery defines Afrofuturism as "speculative fiction that treats African American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of 20th-century techno culture — and more generally, African American signification that appropriates images of technology and prosthetically enhanced future" (180). While Womack Ytasha defines Afrofuturism as:

> Afrofuturism is an intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation ... Whether through literature, visual arts, music, or grassroots organizing, Afrofuturists redefine culture and notions of blackness for today and the future. Both an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory, Afrofuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs. In some cases, it's a total re-envisioning of the past and speculation about the future rife with cultural critiques (12-13)

For several years, Octavia Estelle Butler (1947-2006) stood alone as the sole recognized black woman writer of science fiction. Her thirteen novels and numerous short stories demonstrate her commitment to a genre that has historically struggled against the established conventions of American literature. The challenges that Butler faced when entering the world of science fiction in the mid-1970s originated in the common-held views that discriminated "serious" American literature from what was classified as "fantasy," "escapism," "mere entertainment," or even "para-literature" (Maria Papadimitriou 1). For several decades preceding the emergence of Butler as a published author, science fiction enjoyed widespread readership but remained largely unrecognized within academic circles. Consequently, the genre was frequently dismissed as merely a product of low or popular culture. While it was acknowledged as a creative writing form, it was not regarded as possessing significant literary merit or practical social value. This marginalization contributed to a sentiment among many African American writers that they could not invest their efforts in creating science fiction nor pursue opportunities for publication within the genre. Additionally, throughout much of the early 20th century, speculative fiction was often misunderstood as a genre dominated by white European and American authors. After the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1970s, there was an influx of women who wrote and published pioneering science fiction (Ursula Le Guinn, Joanna Russ, Pamela Sargent, Suzy McKee Charnas, Marge Piercy, to mention a few), albeit all of them were white. While American science fiction novels evolved into a distinct genre replete with its authors, editors, and magazines in the first decade of the 20th century, the black authors of the

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period were still likely to publish in black-owned magazines and newspapers such as *Crisis* & *Pittsburg Courier*. Liza Yaszek notes that the landscape shifted significantly with the rise of Afrofuturist Studies in the 1990s. During this transformative period, a group of cultural critics—including Mark Dewey, Grey Tate, Tricia Rose, and Kodwo Eshun—began to highlight the influence of science fiction themes and techniques in the works of numerous Black authors, artists, and musicians (41). Their efforts illuminated how these creators incorporated speculative elements into their narratives, challenging conventional boundaries and expanding the dialogue around race, identity, and futurism within storytelling and artistic expression.

By the end of the twentieth century, Octavia Butler emerged as a groundbreaking figure in the literary world to contribute significantly to the speculative fiction genre. She played a pivotal role in pioneering the tradition of Afrofuturism (Susanna M. Morris 152). This cultural movement combines elements of science fiction, history, and fantasy to explore the African diaspora's future and its relationship with technology and society. Butler's work challenged prevailing norms and opened new avenues for storytelling, weaving narratives centered on Black experiences and identities in imaginative and often dystopian settings. Her influence helped to shape the discourse around race, gender, and genre in literature, solidifying her legacy as a key figure in both Afrofuturism and speculative fiction.

This paper examines Octavia E Butler's significant role in constructing and challenging the literary canon, mainly through her impactful work within the realm of black science fiction known as Afrofuturism. Using Butler's novel *Adulthood Rites* as a representative text, the paper argues that by depicting myriad hybrid multispecies characters, the novel envisions a posthuman ideal of interconnectedness and coexistence with other species. Butler's vision of a new species in the novel aligns with Donna Haraway's concept of Companion Species, emphasizing the complexities of relationships between humans and non-humans. This perspective suggests that Afrofuturism intersects with the fundamental aspect of posthumanism, promoting an inclusive vision of existence that transcends human boundaries and embraces a multispecies reality. The paper will also try to illustrate that Butler's inclusion of non-human or other-than-human species in the text can be seen as providing a voice to the non-human Other, traditionally deemed as marginal, and paving the way for a unique science-fiction genre that distinguishes it from the mainstream SF narrative.

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Afrofuturism refers to speculative fiction created by authors from the African diaspora and those from Africa. It comprises cultural production and scholarly thought— literature, visual art, photography, film, and performance art that imagines greater justice and a more unrestrained expression of black subjectivity in the future or in alternative places, times, or realities. The first phase of the movement was from about 1850 to 1960. It also offers speculation about a world wherein black people are normative. The questions that Afrofuturist authors explore focus on whether the future will include a society that includes black individuals and what actions they must take to ensure their future security. The authors compellingly recount the thrilling journeys of colored individuals who utilize science and technology in their struggles against aliens, survive catastrophic events that nearly wipe out humanity, and strive to rebuild a daring new world. Their narratives highlight resilience and innovation in the face of extraordinary challenges.

The second major phase of Afrofuturism extends from 1960 to the present and marks the period in which Afrofuturism integrates with mainstream science fiction. The 1960s and 1970s saw critically acclaimed authors, including Samuel Delany, Octavia Butler, Charles Saunders, and Steve Barnes, begin publishing stories about science, society, and race with mainstream science fiction magazines and presses. Afrofuturists of this period are interested in science, society, race, and futurity questions. Due to the relative success of the civil rights movement, most people at the time were optimistic about the future of black individuals. However, this leads to a new question: what will that future look like? To answer that question, Afrofuturists of this era boldly envisioned vibrant futures inspired by the rich tapestry of the Afrodiasporic past. Afrofuturism affirms a hopeful future for Black individuals, celebrating resilience instead of the prejudiced narratives of chaos and collapse that believe in "recovering the histories of counter-futures" (Morris 153). Afrofuturism asserts that Black individuals are fundamentally the future and that Afrodiasporic cultural practices are essential for envisioning the continuation of human society. Octavia Butler is undoubtedly among the authors whose works exemplify Afrofuturism. In her compelling essay "Positive Obsession," author Octavia Butler emphasizes the remarkable capacity of speculative fiction to catalyze progressive political change, particularly for Black communities. She ardently challenges the prevailing notion that the science fiction (SF) genre is an exclusive domain for white voices, as suggested by Morris (154). Instead, Butler advocates for recognizing speculative fiction as a profoundly transformative political medium that

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embraces and amplifies diverse experiences and perspectives. Her work illustrates how the genre can empower marginalized voices and facilitate social justice and equity conversations.

Adulthood Rites follows the adventures of a small group of human survivors who were discovered while slowly dying in the aftermath of a nuclear war that has rendered the Earth uninhabitable. The Humans of the story are rescued and kept in suspended animation by an alien species known as the Oankali. Oankalis were gene collectors and traders who continually augmented themselves with the genetic and cultural diversity of the species they encountered in their perennial intergalactic journeys. While keeping human beings in a state of unconsciousness, the Oankali use their organic ability to alter the bodies of other creatures genetically: they improve human memory, strength, and longevity. Above all, the Oankali intervene in the human bodies to curb Human Contradiction (intelligence at the service of hierarchical behaviour). According to the Oankali, it is a genetic human defect that has brought humanity to destruction. In a move that is less generous to humans, the Oankalis also enforce involuntary sterilization among humans to ensure that all future human children will result from Human-Oankali matings. Two hundred and fifty years later, following the Oankali's restoration of Earth, human beings are transported back to a tropical jungle and are expected to begin a new society, learning to fend for themselves by living off the land. There, Lilith Iyapo, the black matriarch figure, attempts to convince her fellow survivors to accept the inter-species breeding with the Oankalis, even if such genetic mixing with the aliens means human subservience to another species. Most human characters finally submit to the aliens' way of life and accept the hybridity, symbiosis, and interdependence they promote; others, called resisters, refuse to get biologically enslaved by the Oankalis or serve as breeding stock for a new subspecies of Human-Oankali children. They desperately hope to overcome the alien-imposed sterility and strive to conceive and bear human children. While the Oankali conceives the fusion of biologies and cultures as a utopian evolution, most Humans experience it traumatically, as a form of extra-terrestrial colonization. For them, the involuntary partnership with an alien species represents a devastating loss of identity. Butler depicts aliens as a symbolic representation of difference, which humans must embrace or face extinction. The interbreeding between humans and Oankali results in xenogenesis, giving rise to the first hybrids that possess human and Oankali genetic material. These hybrids challenge traditional human boundaries on multiple levels. More importantly, they challenge how humans have always defined and understood themselves. In the dawn of a new, posthuman future, the

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human beings of the story must revise their definitions of subjectivity and organic body and become more than human, that is, posthuman.

In the world of *Adulthood Rites,* what it means to be human undergoes profound transformations. Butler delves into the concept of humanity's evolution toward a posthuman condition. Posthumanism challenges the seemingly self-evident notion of 'human nature.' It seeks to undermine the foundational beliefs surrounding human exceptionalism—the idea that humans occupy a superior position among all species on Earth. This critical perspective suggests that the human ways of understanding and experiencing the world do not inherently possess greater significance than the diverse methods through which various non-human entities—organic and inorganic—engage with and perceive their surroundings. Adopting this viewpoint highlights that the identity of the human species is neither singular nor self-contained; rather, it is intricately intertwined with the experiences and existence of other nonhuman entities. These interconnections reveal that what it means to be human cannot be fully understood in isolation but is continuously shaped by interactions with the broader web of life encompassing human and non-human forms of being.

Octavia Butler portrays a posthuman character who connects with other beings and allows for personal transformation by them and their natural environments. She envisions a subject open to mutation, variation, and becoming. Butler denaturalizes the humanist subject as a static, unified, unchanging self and paves the way for a flexible, diverse posthuman subjectivity. She uses the motifs of hybridity, shape-shifting, and nomadism as promising enriching forces that enable an intersection of conflicting identities. The genetic and cultural diversity evident among the trading partners in the narrative, specifically humans and Oankali, facilitates the development of various posthuman hybrid identities. This conception of identity differs from the liberal humanist model, as it embraces a wide range of subjects in its definition of what it means to be 'human' rather than excluding them. While envisioning a posthuman future, Butler also predicts that after repeated inter-breeding of beings (from a different race, gender, and species), the return to a timeless self, based on a human essence shared by all, will be futile. By being open to change and transformative encounters with the Other, Butler's posthuman subject experiences a permanent state of becoming.

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Posthuman Theory advocates for a new definition of the human subject. It considers the possibility that technology is integral to human identity, transforming a human into a "dynamic hybrid," an "assemblage," a "messy congeries" (Pramod K Nayar *7-10).* This new vision of posthuman—humanoid androids, cyborgs, AI— influenced by the progress in informational technology, cybernetics, and biomedicine has destabilized human and non-human categorical and biological distinctions. Posthuman figures or other life forms/bodies that do not fall into the 'normal' human category are usually considered monsters or boundary figures (83). Posthumanism delves into the human history of the excluded—the inhuman, the non-human, the less-than-human, the animal, the alien, and the monster. To quote Nayar:

> Life forms and bodies too distant from 'normal' humans such as beast—too uncomfortably close—such as humanoid robots or creatures that exhibit human emotions and/or intelligence —are both equally monstrous in cultural representations of otherness. (83)

In the narrative of *Adulthood Rites*, Octavia Butler skillfully illustrates a profound tension between humans and the Oankalis, an alien species. In the text, human beings often hesitate to fully recognize the profound uniqueness of the Oankalis and their extraordinary innovations. Conversely, the Oankalis, characterized by their openness, find themselves genuinely intrigued by the diverse attributes that humans embody. These differences, anchored in biological distinctiveness, captivate the Oankalis, who is deeply fascinated by the possibilities of these variations for their genetic trading practices. Through the perspective of the Oankalis, Butler challenges the traditional Humanist notion of a unified and singular human identity. Instead, she advocates for a more nuanced understanding of existence that recognizes and celebrates the inherent diversity and intersubjectivity of being, suggesting that identity is not monolithic but richly layered and deeply interconnected. In her portrayal of the Oankalis, Butler moves away from the Humanist notion of a singular, uniform subject, advocating instead for an intersubjective understanding of existence that recognizes and celebrates inherent variation.

> Human beings fear difference,' Lilith had told him once. 'Oankali crave difference. Humans persecute their different ones, yet they need them to give themselves definition and status. Oankali seeks the difference and collects it. They need it to keep themselves from stagnation and overspecialization. If you don't understand this, you will. You'll

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> probably find both tendencies surfacing in your own behaviors.' And she had put her hand on his hair. 'When you feel a conflict, try to go the Oankali way. Embrace difference. (*Adulthood Rites* 329)

Critical posthumanism considers humans as symbiotic beings co-evolving with other species, non-human other. As Promod K Nayar writes, "Interconnections, intersections, mergers, and acquisition with other genes, life forms, and species mark the human's existence on Earth. We are what/who we are because we are also others. We are companion species with numerous species, most of which we are unaware of" (126). Butler's work resonates deeply in discussions about companion species and the recognition of multispecies relationships. She consistently emphasizes the theme of co-evolution, offering an alternative narrative highlighting the collaborative evolution between humans and nonhuman beings in creating a new hybrid species. In *Adulthood Rites*, the only possibility of survival by the last few humans on Earth is by forming a symbiotic relationship with the alien species called Onkali. As Jhadya, one of the Onkali, explains to Lilith:

> "We trade the essence of ourselves. Our genetic material for yours…We are not Hierarchical, you see… We acquire new life—seek it, investigate it, manipulate it, sort it, use it…One of the meanings of Oankali is gene Trader. Another is that organelle— the essence of ourselves, the origin of ourselves" (39)

The novel's protagonist, Lilith, the dark-skinned matriarch of the survivor village, and her son Akin, the construct born with the help of the Onkali-Nikanj, reject any race or species-based demarcation. Akin, a half-human/half-alien hope, with his dark skin approximating African American origin, is not only post-racial but also post-species. Butler prepares us for the posthuman world through the novel *Adulthood Rites* by putting forward a new ethic of difference, co-evolution, and hybridity. She challenges the notion of a distinct species identity throughout the text. Instead, she imagines a posthuman world where the lines are blurred—whether between species, human and animal, or human and other non-human entities. Lilith explains how the Onkalis and the artificial humans called the Constructs have breached the boundaries that distinguished the human from the non-human other:

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> They have changed us and we change them" Lilith said, "The whole generation is made up of genetically engineered people Tino— Constructs, whether they are born to Oankali or human mothers … Look at the construct Adults. You can't tell who was born to whom. But you can see Human features on all of them (282)

Cary Wolfe, advocating for the politics of the human-animal divide, comments that rejecting speciesism is the politics and ethics of posthumansism. Wolfe, a highly influential figure in posthumanist theory and the burgeoning field of interdisciplinary Animal Studies presents a compelling vision that advocates for an ethical framework that transcends species boundaries, encouraging a profound transformation in our perceptions of discrimination and moral accountability. In his pivotal work, *What is Posthumanism?* Wolfe sets out to challenge and redefine the limits of what constitutes human attributes. He critiques the notion of an "ontologically closed domain''—a concept that confines certain traits exclusively to humans (Wolfe in Florence Chiew 4). Wolfe passionately argues for developing a "trans-species empathy" that acknowledges the interconnectedness of humans and animals, highlighting that our defining traits are not uniquely exceptional but rather part of a broader ''generalized animal sensorium'' (4). This viewpoint resonates with Donna Haraway's notion of companion species, which serves as a compelling metaphor for challenging rigid boundaries and categories. Haraway's idea prompts us to re-examine the relationships between the human and nonhuman realms, urging us to acknowledge the inherent fluidity and complexity of these connections. By embracing this idea of 'trans-species affinity,' both Wolfe and Haraway encourage us to rethink our ethical responsibilities and the nature of our interactions across different species.

Haraway presents a fascinating perspective that challenges us to rethink our understanding of humanity about other species and the environment. She argues that we cannot view ourselves as separate from the rich tapestry of life around us, as the concept of a purely innate human identity is simply unrealistic, "there are all kinds of nonhumans with whom we are woven together," (74) Instead, she invites us to see humans as part of a complex assemblage intertwined with various life forms, technology, and our surroundings. Her idea of companion species highlights our profound connections with animals. As she states in *Companion Species Manifesto*, these interactions remind us that "encountering an animal is not about facing the wild, the non-human, the stranger. It is about relating to the unknown, about 'becoming with' and remembering that, in any case, 'we have never been human'" (77). This perspective encourages

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us to shift away from anthropocentrism and adopt a more inclusive approach that values our connections with other beings. Haraway highlights our deep interconnections with various species, inviting us to broaden our outlook by recognizing the significance of our relationships with all living entities. By focusing on companion species, she demonstrates that our bonds with other species are complex and vital, reminding us that we are intricately woven into the rich tapestry of life in an interconnected world.

This inclusive attitude toward diversity and interdependence with other nonhuman animals prioritizes connections, embracing differences over xenophobia, and favours plurality over binary thinking. We can assume that Octavia Butler's text, such a tendency towards interconnections and linkage from multiple sources, overrides the differences between human and nonhuman life forms upholding a posthuman vision. In other words, posthumanism proposes multispecies acknowledgment that includes all forms of life and openness to the other, also "an opening up to uncertainty and possibilities of the not-yet" (Nayar 155). In *Adulthood Rites*, Butler's vision of a posthuman subject involves the subversion of androcentric, anthropocentric, and ethnocentric values and concepts of liberal humanism. Octavia Butler rewrites the humanist subject as "the rational independent 'I' in defense of his supposedly irrational, dependent others—women, animals, human beings of non-Western cultures, etc." (Manuela Rossini 25). Her work undermines the model of a unitary and universal self and refuses the limits imposed by binary definitions of the human: self and Other (in terms of race, gender, and species) are united in one common struggle for survival. Obviously, for Butler, the tendency of the human subject to create 'Others' and distinguish her/himself from them has always constituted an enactment of power. As she seems to argue, projecting 'otherness' to determine oneself has legitimized oppression of all forms and accelerated the devastation of life on Earth. Alternatively, Butler envisions a posthuman world where difference can be embraced rather than used to objectify and suppress the Other. In *Adulthood Rites,* Butler portrays a posthuman subject interconnected with other beings and the environment. The narrative incorporates an inspiring evolutionary theory emphasizing symbiosis and cooperation principles. This theory suggests that all living beings, from the tiniest mitochondria to the largest mammals, including humans, are interconnected within a vast homeostatic system. Such a "posthuman symbiogenesis" (Nayar 127) is explained by Nikanj the Onkali when he talks about the pure human character Tino:

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> Examine Tino, inside him, so many different are working together to keep him alive. Inside his cells, mitochondria, a previously independent form of life, have found a haven and traded their ability to synthesize proteins and metabolize fats for room to live and reproduce. We are in his cells, too, and the cells have accepted us … They cannot exist without symbiotic relationships with other creatures. Yet such relationships frighten them. I think we're as much symbionts as their mitochondria were originally. (282)

They interact with each other and the environment on mutually beneficial terms and follow a common evolutionary course. Taking this for granted, Butler assumes that our next iteration will be similar. The posthuman subject cannot—and should not—exist in separation from her/his different ones. Butler portrays a posthuman subject who forges connections with other beings and embraces transformation through these relationships and their natural environments. By being open to change and transformative encounters with the Other, Butler's posthuman subject experiences a permanent state of *becoming*. Butler's representation of posthuman subjectivity is grounded on hybridity, diversity, flexibility, relatedness, and interdependence.

In the selected text, posthuman hybridity is embodied by the human characters, who have received genetic and biological intervention from the alien Oankali, and by the construct children of the Human-Oankali inter-breeding. These characters (Lilith, Joseph, Tino, Akin, Jodahs, and Aaor) develop a posthuman subjectivity, which offers utopian possibilities. It evades fixity, definition, and boundaries; it challenges difference. The Oankalis' commitment to the genetic mixture, organically determined like 'breathing' in the text, reforms human subjectivity. The Oankali characters demonstrate to human beings that their insistence on fixity and inbreeding has brought humanity to a dead end. Through the Oankalis, Butler invites her readers to embrace a more adaptable understanding of identity, encouraging the exploration of genetic boundaries as essential for thriving in a post-apocalyptic world. This imaginative posthuman future offers a beautiful opportunity to redefine what it means to be human through enriching exchanges with a different species, highlighting the potential for collaboration and growth in our journey forward. Her hybrid creatures are far from the liberal humanist model that defines human beings as mainly white in race, as distinct from other species due to their intelligence, and as kings of the universe. Butler promotes a multicultural posthuman subjectivity through the hybrid character Akin, the first male human-Oankali construct children. He is born to a Nigerian-American

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mother named Lilith and a Chinese-American father named Joseph. Through a process of gene-swapping with three Onkalis—Dichan, Ahajas, and Olai Nikang—he emerges as a posthuman hybrid endowed with extraordinary cognitive abilities. Taking into consideration the already nomadic Oankali subjectivities, the combination of Akin's progenitors creates not only a genetic but also a cultural mosaic for the offspring. Akin flourishes with the supportive embrace of all his five parents, seamlessly integrating the values and teachings of both the Oankali and Human communities. This diverse and enriching upbringing cultivates a vibrant plural personality, referred to as "intersubjectivity," (Bollinger 340). Consequently, Akin possesses a profound and genuine appreciation for the complexities of both species, allowing him to deeply understand and empathize with the unique perspectives and experiences of Humans and Oankali throughout the narrative.

The posthuman future she imagines gives Butler a chance to revise the human subject's identity based on more benevolent exchanges with a different species. Her hybrid creatures are far from the liberal humanist model that defines human beings as mainly white in race, as distinct from other species due to their intelligence, and as kings of the universe.

Conclusion

In the past, speculative works created by black authors often went unrecognized. There was a prevailing myth that black individuals were not readers of the science fiction genre and were excluded from scientific discussions and advancements. As Afrofuturist author Womack Ytasha writes: "The absence of Africa's contribution to global knowledge in history, science and beyond is a gaping hole so expansive it almost feels like a missing organ in the planets' cultural anatomy" (61). Afrofuturist writers thus tried to uncover the missing history of African descent and their contribution to science, technology, and science fiction. Their purpose was to reintegrate people of colour into the discussion of cyberculture, modern science, technology, and sci-fi pop culture (19).

In her essay "Positive Obsession," Octavia Butler explores her experience as an African American woman writing science fiction. What good, she asks, is such a genre for Black people?

> What good is any form of literature to Black people? What good is science fiction's thinking about the present, the future, and the past? What good is its tendency to warn or to consider alternative ways of thinking and doing? What good is its examination of the

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> possible effects of science and technology or social organization and political direction? At its best, science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity. It gets reader and writer off the beaten track, off the narrow, narrow footpath of what 'everyone' is saying, doing, thinking -- whoever 'everyone' happens to be this year. And what good is all this to Black people? (Butler in Morris 154)

The passage vividly highlights Butler's commitment to embracing expansion and growth that transcends traditional classifications, stereotypes, and prevailing narratives. This dedication reflects a deep understanding of the complexities of identity and experience, pushing boundaries to foster a more inclusive and nuanced perspective. Having experienced the confines of strict categories herself, she thoughtfully challenges the power structures that limit the imagination of marginalized voices and silence their stories. As we consider the science fiction icons—such as Dick, Bradbury, and Asimov—and reflect on the frequently limited viewpoints within the literary canon, one crucial question emerges: Does it truly serve everyone? Butler's work invites us to examine who this 'everyone' truly encompasses and to consider the diverse voices that may be overlooked in pursuit of a more inclusive narrative. Butler highlights the need to embrace the potential for broader representation and imaginative exploration. Theoretically, universality is an ambitious and kind ideation of inclusivity; in reality, it is a discursive fantasy that routinely neglects to recognize the subjectivity of sexualized, racialized, and naturalized Others. For Butler, prevailing notions of 'universality' are transparently fraudulent, as she perceives the hegemonic ideologies that work to quash true diversity. This is evident in her Adulthood Rites, which my paper focuses on exploring. Her narratives, as follows, are committed to accommodating the Other. Indeed, from the familiar Human Lilith to the foreign Oankali Akin to the wholly alien Ooloi Jodahs, it is undeniable that Butler has organized her novel to facilitate a journey of familiarization and gradual acceptance of the nonhuman other.

Octavia Butler thus has inspired many writers, especially women writers, to explore the world of science fiction. In a white male-dominant sci-fi space where science and technology played a significant role, Butler not only carved a niche for herself as a writer of color but also created a unique, even more inclusive speculative genre. Her emphasis on hybridity and symbiosis ultimately encourages us to espouse alien ways of thinking and acting. In this way, Butler constructs a posthuman future, which revises the racial past of Western culture. It is a future in which cultural and genetic diversity mobilizes the desire of all beings to survive and

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evolve in partnership rather than clash and lead each other to extinction. Butler's African American heritage enriches her fiction, transforming science fiction's traditionally 'white' realm into an exciting new frontier for African American literature.

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