*Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos, vol. 29, 2025. Seville, Spain, ISSN1133-309-X, 27-53.*
*http://dx.doi.org/10.12795/REN.2025.i29.7*

# THE RISE OF A NEW LILITH: THE POSTHUMAN MONSTROUS MOTHER OF DEMONS IN OCTAVIA E. BUTLER'S *XENOGENESIS* (*LILITH'S BROOD*)

NAIARA BERGANZO-BESGA
*University of the Basque Country (EHU)*
*naiara.berganzo@ehu.eus*

Received 23 June 2025
Accepted 11 December 2025

**KEYWORDS:** posthumanism; ecofeminism; female gothic; afrofuturism; myth-criticism; motherhood.
**PALABRAS CLAVE:** posthumanismo; ecofeminismo; gótico femenino; afrofuturismo; mitocrítica; maternidad.

**ABSTRACT:** Oftentimes, women writers turn to science fiction—and other forms of speculative fiction—as a means to retrieve and reclaim old female figures from patriarchal foundational myths and reproduce them in a different fashion. That is to say, they choose to question old sexist and stereotypical female images by introducing a more human and feminist approach to the characters, far from the already familiar and stale gender roles. This is exactly what Butler provides with her trilogy. *Xenogenesis*, also known as *Lilith's Brood*, is an Afrofuturistic and postapocalyptic science fiction trilogy that was written by Octavia E. Butler in the late 1980s. As we will attempt to demonstrate, in the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust, focusing on the continuity of the human race, by means of the creation of a new Human-Oankali hybrid species mothered by the Afro-American protagonist Lilith Iyapo, *Xenogenesis* partakes in the posthuman retelling and challenging of the patriarchal birth myth of the Genesis. In order to do that, drawing from Gothic, ecofeminist, and posthuman theories, we will be exploring how a monstrous posthuman ecofeminist agent can be created.

**RESUMEN:** A menudo, las mujeres escritoras recurren a la ciencia ficción —y otras formas de lo fantástico— como medio para recuperar y reivindicar antiguas figuras femeninas de los mitos fundacionales patriarcales y reproducirlas de una manera diferente. Es decir, optan por cuestionar las antiguas imágenes sexistas y estereotipadas de la mujer introduciendo un enfoque más humano y feminista en los

personajes, lejos de los ya conocidos y trillados roles de género. Esto es precisamente lo que Butler ofrece con su trilogía. *Xenogenesis*, también conocida como *Lilith's Brood*, es una trilogía de ciencia ficción afrofuturista y postapocalíptica escrita por Octavia E. Butler a finales de la década de 1980. Como intentaremos demostrar, tras un holocausto nuclear, centrándose en la continuidad de la raza humana, mediante la creación de una nueva especie híbrida humano-oankali engendrada por la protagonista afroamericana Lilith Iyapo, *Xenogenesis* participa en la reinterpretación posthumana y el cuestionamiento del mito de nacimiento patriarcal del Génesis. Para ello, basándonos en las teorías góticas, ecofeministas y posthumanas, exploraremos cómo se puede crear un agente ecofeminista posthumano monstruoso.

## INTRODUCTION

In "What Can a Heroine Do? or Why Women Can't Write" (1972), Joanna Russ brings the issue of Western European culture being male to the fore. As she offers, "the society we live in is a patriarchy. And patriarchies imagine or picture themselves from the male point of view." Therefore, "both men and women in our culture conceive the culture from a single point of view—the male" (80-1).

For that reason, oftentimes, women writers turn to science fiction—and other forms of speculative fiction—as a means to retrieve and reclaim old female figures from patriarchal foundational myths and reproduce them in a different fashion (Osherow 68). That is to say, they choose to question old, sexist, and stereotypical female images by introducing a more human and feminist approach to the characters, one that is far from the already familiar and stale gender roles.

Since C. L. Moore's "Fruit of Knowledge" (1940), which reimagines Eve with agency, women writers have used feminist science fiction to reclaim and revise mythic female figures. Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975), Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), and Octavia Butler's *Dawn* (1987) expanded this project by exploring Eve, Lilith, and other archetypes through matriarchal, posthuman, and hybrid lenses. More recent works such as Madeline Miller's *Circe* (2018), Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* (2010), and Jessie Burton's *Medusa* (2021) continue to centre female agency, voice, and resilience. Together, these texts demonstrate how feminist science fiction transforms myth to create complex, empowered heroines who challenge patriarchal narratives.

This is exactly what Octavia E. Butler provides with her trilogy. *Xenogenesis*, also known as *Lilith's Brood*, is an Afrofuturistic and postapocalyptic science fiction trilogy, comprised of *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989), written by Octavia E. Butler in the late 1980s. As we will attempt to demonstrate, focusing on the continuity of the human race, by means of the creation of a new Human-Oankali hybrid species mothered by the Afro-American protagonist Lilith Iyapo, *Xenogenesis* partakes in the posthuman retelling and challenging of the patriarchal origin myth of Genesis.[1]

By taking a(n) (eco)feminist, myth-critical, postcolonial, Gothic, and posthumanist stand, this paper aims to explore how the trilogy deals with the construction of an ecofeminist, postcolonial, posthuman, Gothic subjectivity as a way of questioning and transcending the hierarchical logic of domination of Western sexist, colonial, and speciesist patriarchal thought. To do that, drawing on the critical theories of posthumanists Cary Wolfe and Rosi Braidotti, ecofeminists Mary Mellor, Karen J. Warren, and Greta Gaard, and Gothic theorists Fred Botting and Jerrold E. Hogle, by means of Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto", we are going to explore the construction of a posthuman female cyborg subjectivity in the figure of the monstrous mother in Octavia E. Butler's trilogy.

According to Cary Wolfe, posthumanism is a postmodern-influenced historical, cultural, and philosophical movement that, through the decentering of the human being—by "rejecting the various anthropological, political, and scientific dogmas" of humanism and removing the human from its "privileged position in relation to matters of meaning, information, and cognition" (xvi, xii)—seeks to progress historically towards an ontology that does not discriminate on the grounds of being other than a cis, hetero, colonial, and male Western human subjectivity (xvii). In parallel, within the broad field of ecocriticism, ecofeminism is the "movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the nonhuman natural world and the subordination and oppression of women" (Mellor 1). As many ecofeminist scholars defend, the ideology behind the oppression of women and other social minorities is the same that legitimizes the domination of nonhuman nature (Warren and Gaard qtd. in Wang 2410-1).

The patriarchal discourse of Western culture conceptually organizes the world in oppositional, disjunctive, and hierarchical

[1] And, by extension, the patriarchal narrative underpinning Western culture as well.

dualistic pairs of elements. It assigns a higher value to the category considered superior to the other within each pair (Gaard 115-6). A few examples of these sets of oppositional pairs can be found in the work of Val Plumwood: man/woman, culture/nature, mind/body, reason/emotion, public/private, self/other, subject/object… (qtd. in Gaard 116). In this analysis, however, we will be paying special attention to the human/alien divide, without losing sight of others.

Ecofeminism argues that the hierarchical dualism underlying the patriarchal logic of domination—like patriarchy itself—is historically produced and therefore open to change. This transformation can occur through the deconstruction of oppositional categories and of dualism as a concept, alongside a reconfiguration of the relationship between women, nature, and other marginalised beings (Booth 331).

In this regard, the posthumanist Rosi Braidotti defines "the critical posthuman subject within an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity, that is to say a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable" (49). Taking all this into account, we could assert that posthumanism and ecofeminism are two philosophical, cultural, and political movements that, through an intersectional approach, seek to challenge anthropocentric paradigms, dismantle entrenched hierarchies of domination, and reconfigure the relationships between humans, nonhuman beings, and the environment.

## THE RISE OF A NEW LILITH

Although many consider Eve to be Adam's first and only wife, the truth is that that is only the case in Christianity. Two different versions of the myth can be recovered from history: the one of Jewish origin that identifies Lilith as Adam's first and equal companion, and the most widespread version of Christian origin, which eliminates all traces of a prior female figure (Rousseau 95).

According to different Jewish accounts,[2] Lilith, unlike Eve, was created in conjunction with Adam; she was made out of the same earthly materials and was definitely not created from Adam's rib or flesh, which unknowingly established her as a potential threat to the

[2] As Osherow elucidates, "the myth of Lilith comes from a rabbinic *midrash*, a kind of literature devoted to biblical interpretation" (69).

patriarchal order in the Garden of Eden (Rousseau 96). Being an equal and all, Lilith never submitted to Adam's will; she decided not to lie down with her companion (96). Consequently, Lilith was expelled from Eden and thrown into a purgatory where she found herself as an equal in her coupling with the demonic and fallen angel figure of Sammael (96).

An angered God then urged Lilith to return to the Garden and voluntarily submit to Adam's wishes if she did not want to lose her newborn demon children; and, thence, forced to sacrifice her children in favour of her freedom and independence (Rousseau 96). That is how the myth of the demonic, lustful, and filicidal Lilith was created: in the words of Vanessa Rousseau, the myth of "a woman with demonic male attributes who is reputed to give birth to monsters, kill newborn babies or stifle *in utero* children about to be born" (95).

As Michele Osherow states, "in a genre [science fiction] in which women generally take the form of the alien other" that must be defeated, it is not surprising that the figure of the biblical Lilith makes its appearance (71). As it happens in most literatures, women are relegated to the role of mothers or seductresses, either conforming to their given roles in society or threatening them together with the patriarchal order in itself. After all, being the embodiment of male fear of powerful women, Lilith is the best candidate for being the representative of "the female alien other" in science fiction literature.

To begin with, *Dawn*, the first novel of the trilogy, starts with Lilith Iyapo's awakening in an alien spaceship after years of being kept under suspended animation. As we later learn, the nuclear war that took place two hundred and fifty years before led to the planet Earth being no longer inhabitable. To put it another way, keeping ecofeminist theories in mind, the logic of domination underlying patriarchal political, economic, cultural, and social practices caused the removal of Lilith from her old life on Earth; similarly, patriarchal power and mythical Lilith's resistance to it were what ultimately precipitated her expulsion from Paradise; turning both of them into surviving alien pariahs as a result.

Furthermore, Butler's Lilith not only got expelled from her motherland, but also lost her child, husband, and family along the way; apart from the physical limbo in which she had to stay put as well. Lilith Iyapo, like the mythical Lilith, was forced to abandon her family and progeny; only to find and build a new one with the alien and monstrous Oankali, condemning humanity to the discontinuation of the faulty human race, in favor of an evolutionary superior hybrid

monstrous and demonic Lilith's Brood: the only real chance of survival of the human genes. On this subject, it would be suitable to bring up Rousseau's description of the mythical Lilith as a "dark mother":

> Lilith is not only a virgin but also a prostitute. She has sex without coitus. Devouring men's sperm till they are totally exhausted, she is for that reason seen as snatching away and eating the children that might have been possible. She possesses the art of stifling all the reproductive forces and making them sterile. […]
>
> She is a dark mother, a woman who rejects motherhood as her biological destiny. She positions herself in the interplay of pleasure and sexuality, in control of procreation. In her view there is no gender destiny: she freely chooses that the child be born and recognizes it outside of any external obligation to give birth. (97-8).

In a similar vein, the protagonist of *Xenogenesis* rejects her "biological destiny" and takes upon herself to mother the new demonic and monstrous hybrid species—as the same title of the trilogy pinpoints[3]—, awakening the hatred, resentment and disgust of her own people. In the words of Justin Louis Mann, "Lilith is presented as the progenitor of human evolution, simultaneously perpetuating and destroying the species. Lilith herself is deeply anxious about this capacity; although she moves inexorably along the path of survival, she also demonstrates deep fears about what will result from trading with the Oankali" (63).

Lilith's need to transcend her heteropatriarchal and ecocidal reality connects with the narrative's urgent turn towards posthumanism. In relation to that, Afrofuturism—often associated with Black Science Fiction—, a literary genre and aesthetic in which the *Xenogenesis* trilogy could be inserted, is understood as "a lens to better understand [black] lives and possibilities beyond [their] present circumstances" (Gipson 84); not only that, as the artist and author Ytasha Womack highlights, the "intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation" along with black culture and identity is of utmost importance within the artistic and aesthetic movement (qtd. in Gipson 84). After all, Afrofuturism has always been preoccupied with reclaiming, preserving, and continuing African diasporic history and knowledge through old and new narratives (85).

[3] As Cathy Peppers states, "xenogenesis" "'means the production of offspring different from either of its parents'; this is reproduction with a difference, the (re)production of difference. And the 'xeno' of this genesis comes from the Greek *xenos,* which in its original bivalence meant both guest/friend and alien/stranger" (47).

As evidenced above, though focusing on racial concerns, Afrofuturism engages with many posthuman themes such as hybridization, tech integration, and Western humanism criticism, what allows for a natural connection between the two concepts. On that subject, Donna Haraway, in her renowned "Cyborg Manifesto," defines the posthuman "cyborg" as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (65). Using this powerful image, Haraway urges the readers to transgress all societal, cultural, and political boundaries, abolishing the dangerously discriminating and constraining dualisms of Western thought—particularly those like "animal and machine" and "idealism and materialism" related to the realms of "high technology" and "scientific culture"—along the way; to resist patriarchal domination in "technologically-mediated societies" (71). In the words of Haraway,

> a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. The political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point. Single vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters. Cyborg unities are monstrous and illegitimate; in our present political circumstances, we could hardly hope for more potent myths for resistance and recoupling. (72)

That is exactly the case of Butler's Lilith, together with the Oankali and the newly born constructs that take part in the reconstitution and re-elaboration of the sublime myth[4] that breaks all existing limits and symptomatizes all the violences taking place within the existing power structures, haunting and challenging the main

[4] The Gothic genre, to which the *Xenogenesis* trilogy is ascribed, is a genre characterized by its dark, mysterious, and gloomy atmosphere. Its emphasis on the excesses of imagination and emotions draws on the wildness and suggestiveness of natural landscapes to invoke the intense feelings of terror and horror traditionally associated with the aesthetic principle of the sublime (Botting 3). As defined in Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), the sublime is an emotion of awe and terror evoked by vast, magnificent, and obscure objects that produce a sense of extension and infinity (Botting 39). The atmosphere of fear—terror, or horror—, central to the genre, in a manner similar to posthumanism and ecofeminism, serves the purpose of re-examining and reasserting the values and boundaries of a given society.

masculinist, Christian, aristocratic, bourgeois, capitalist, colonial, racist, and heteronormative canonical discourses in the process.

As Catherine S. Ramírez suggests, "through her heroines, Butler challenges and relativizes masculinist notions of power. She redefines power and agency by theorizing a feminist, woman-of-color [and coalitional] subject emblematic of Donna Haraway's 'cyborg'" (383), "a figure of postmodern subjectivity that 'takes pleasure in the confusion of boundaries'" (Federmayer 108); that is to say, an identity shared by all of those individuals that have been excluded from society on a discriminatory basis because of their perceived "otherness and difference" (Haraway 73).

There is a specific passage in the first book of the trilogy that confronts quite explicitly the human species' necessity of change, the need to move away from the patriarchal hierarchical binaries of Western thought. When talking about the imminence of the trade, Jdahya, the first alien that Lilith is in contact with, describes the changes that will be happening to both living species and plainly communicates that the only other alternative to the crossbreeding is death, emphasizing the imperative for change:

> "Your people will change. Your young will be more like us and ours more like you. Your hierarchical tendencies will be modified and if we learn to regenerate limbs and reshape our bodies, we'll share those abilities with you. That's part of the trade. We're overdue for it." […]
>
> "No!" she shouted. "A rebirth for us can only happen if you let us alone! Let us begin again on our own. […] I think I wish your people had left me on Earth," she whispered. "If this is what they found me for, I wish they'd left me." Medusa children. Snakes for hair. Nests of night crawlers for eyes and ears." […]
>
> "I can't unfind you," he said. "You're here. But there is … a thing I can do. It is … deeply wrong of me to offer it. I will never offer it again." […] "Touch me here now," he said, gesturing toward his head tentacles, "and I'll sting you. You'll die—very quickly and without pain."
>
> She swallowed.
>
> "If you want it," he said.
>
> It was a gift he was offering. Not a threat. (Butler, *Dawn* 40-1)

Even though Lilith does not accept this tempting suicidal offer, this excerpt is rather compelling, since, as we will be arguing, she does in

fact suffer a metaphorical, psychological, and physiological death in this chapter.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the Gothic engages with the fear of the physical or psychological dissolution of the self by the real or imagined monstrous threat that symbolizes the repressed desires and fears of a hidden past and conflicted self (Hogle; Savoy). In the specific case of *Xenogenesis*, we do not only find horror in the meeting face to face of humans with aliens, or the imminence of violence or death, but in the physical, cultural and psychological modifications that humans will have to undergo in the advent of a new symbiotic model of society that would blur all cultural, societal and natural norms as well, not to mention the death of human life as we know it.

Lilith finds herself in a position of extreme constraint, compelled to make a fundamental choice between life and death: evolution or stagnation. As Jdahya words it, "we *must* do it [genetically crossbreed]. It renews us, enables us to survive as an evolving species instead of specializing ourselves into extinction or stagnation" (Butler, *Dawn* 39). Without going further, Nikanj argues that, even though Lilith's children will be different, they will be better, since they will be inheriting both species' best traits. The olooi will deliberately and precisely manipulate DNA in order to create an optimum gene mix for the mother. As Lilith's ooloi partner explains it to a reluctant Lilith,

> "Our children will be better than either of us," it continued. "We will moderate your hierarchical problems and you will lessen our physical limitations. Our children won't destroy themselves in a war, and if they need to regrow a limb or to change themselves in some other way they'll be able to do it. And there will be other benefits."
>
> "But they won't be human," Lilith said. "That's what matters. You can't understand, but that is what matters."
>
> [Grotesque[5]] Medusa children snakes for hair
> The incubator for a type of devil's spawn. (Butler, *Dawn* 247)

In sum, the imminent confrontation with death is what compels the ego to face the repressed desires and fears of its

[5] This is the very same appellative that Lilith uses to, repulsively, refer to the crossbred construct children when thinking about the possibility of Human-Oankali miscegenation for the first time: "[s]he thought of her son—how like her he had been, how like his father. The she thought of grotesque, Medusa children. 'No!' she said. (Butler, *Dawn* 41).

unconscious self. It is not until it finds itself with no escape that it takes a leap of faith and sacrifices its past, superficially coherent identity[6] in order to bring a new and improved ecofeminist posthuman subjectivity that incorporates all the rejected parts of "the Other" and repudiated self.

## BECOMING A COMPASSIONATE CYBORG: TOWARDS A POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITY

Concerning the transformations humans underwent before and after their crossbreeding with the Oankali, the aliens first placed them in suspended animation. Rescued from a devastated Earth, humans required time to heal, and this process provided it. The suspension also enabled the Oankali to study and treat them. In doing so, they increased their overall resistance to disease.

Nevertheless, Lilith, as the appointed parent of the first group of humans—"to teach, to give comfort, to feed and clothe, to guide them through and interpret what will be, for them, a new and frightening world" (Butler, *Dawn* 110)—going to Earth, as protection, is granted much more power and abilities than the rest of her kind; what in the long run increases the existing tensions between her and her parented humans.

First, the Oankali remove her cancerous tumour by making her body reabsorb it, then Nikanj alters her brain chemistry to enhance her memory, to later give her the superhuman abilities that would include increased physical strength, improved sensory capabilities and the capacity to control the vegetal wall structures of the life instilled ship to become a "bridge between Humans and Oankali" (Federmayer 107). In the words of the narrator, "the Oankali had given her information, increased physical strength, enhanced memory, and an ability to control the walls and the suspended animation plants. These were her tools. And every one of them would make her seem less human" (Butler, *Dawn* 120).

[6] The spectres and monsters that rise from the Gothic space are nothing but the projection of the repressed desires and fears of the unconscious self. After all, as Tom J. Hillard well expresses, "we psychologically abject (or 'throw off') those things that unsettle a stable, coherent identity (whether individual, or more widely cultural), yet those denials or 'throwings off' remain a fundamental aspect of that identity, inextricably a part of it" (29).

In this context, Osherow brings up C. L. Moore's "Fruit of Knowledge" (1940), another science fiction work that, along with *Xenogenesis,* makes "a careful [feminist] revisioning of the myth of Lilith" (68). In these two stories about high-powered women, the representation of powerful women as alien and evil is brought into question by offering an alternative interpretation of the events.

According to Robin Roberts, "male [pulp] science fiction writers did exclude human women from their texts, but they represented the feminine through the female alien" who would both sexually attract and terrorise the male protagonist (qtd. in Osherow 72), leaning into and embracing the trespassing powers of the sublime. Lilith, as the main representative of those she-devil and *femme fatale* characters, "has been haunting such tales for over 50 years, beginning with C. L. Moore's story 'Fruit of Knowledge'" (72). As it happens, "the evil attributed to Lilith is now identified as mankind's fear of potent women" (72).

In "Fruit of Knowledge," Moore presents Lilith as "The Queen of Air and Darkness," a super-human immortal, sensual, and necessary evil being that was prior to and summoned by Adam's own desires. Not only is she mightier than Adam, but God's only "worthy opponent" as well (Osherow 73). Being a tale that convincingly portrays a potent woman at ease with her power, intelligence, independence, freedom, and determination, similar to what happens in *Xenogenesis*, "Fruit of Knowledge" successfully achieves a defence and standardisation of a powerful woman capable of confronting the patriarchal order.

Commenting on the subversive potential of the narrative, Federmayer asserts that Butler's trilogy is "a black female fantasy of cyborg alternatives" that "offers a powerful feminist revision of the science fiction" and is both "inspired by communications technology and biotechnology" and "a fictional response to militant Reaganite politics"[7] (104). The author questions Western hegemonic power

[7] As Justin Louis Mann points out, Butler's work is a direct response to the nuclear policies of the United States under Ronald Reagan's administration (63). In the words of the author, "[i]n an interview with *In Motion Magazine,* Butler stressed the relationship between her work and Reagan's security regime" (63): "I got my idea for the Xenogenesis books […] from Ronald Reagan because he was advocating this kind of thing [, that a nuclear war was winnable]. I thought there must be something basic, something really genetically wrong with us if we're falling for this stuff" (Butler qtd. in Mann 63; Sanders). As a consequence, "in *Dawn,* Butler rejected the link between

discourses by presenting the evolution of different multiracial communities and their positive interrelations culminating in the successful crossbreeding or miscegenation of the species (105).

For this to be achieved, Butler emphasizes the importance of the historical figure of the black mother[8] and mentor as the champion of eco-social justice and beacon of compassion, empathy and freedom for all living species in her writings (Federmayer 105). It is from this standpoint that the first instalment of the series could be considered a *bildungsroman,* particularly, the coming of age of Lilith Iyapo, insomuch as "the narrative revolves around the changing of this young African American Woman from an ordinary middle-class Human woman into a 'cyborg'" posthuman, compassionate, hybrid woman, in Haraway's very sense of the word (106-8).

Interestingly enough, this transgressive hybrid cyborg is perceived as monstrous not only for its superhuman or, rather, posthuman traits, but also for its androgynous traits. As Federmayer offers, "her [Lilith's] genetically mixed identity, displaying traditional masculine and feminine features, arouses indignation, even disgust in the awakened Humans, including women, who, at one point, call her a sexless monster" (109). Although it is true that Lilith, as a cisgender woman, may not be the main representative of intersexuality, it is also true that she "negotiate[s] her femininity around [the] existing boundaries" (109), what ultimately poses a bigger threat, since she does not fit in any stable category, something that has its maximum exponent in the third instalment of the trilogy in the first ooloi construct character of Jodahs.[9]

---

increased security and survival, and instead opted to construct survival as a quandary faced by a young black woman" (63).

[8] Following Haraway, we will be strategically using the category "women of color"—or black woman, to be more specific—as a political coalitional "post-modernist identity" based on "otherness and difference" (73, 93). Haraway talks about "the construction of a potentially helpful cyborg myth" in her writing, that is to say, "constructions of women of color and monstrous selves in feminist science fiction" that aim to question, deconstruct and undermine the patriarchal, sexist, racist, colonial societal system that we live in (73, 93). In the end, in Butler's narratives, women of color, as it has often happened to racialised women in their colonial histories, become the negotiators between two different cultures, even more so in the case of mothers of culturally hybrid children.

[9] Jodahs, the protagonist of *Imago*, is Lilith's second construct child, as well as, "the first Human-born construct to display ooloi characteristics," what makes him a special oddity around both humans and aliens, together with the rest of the hybrids of its kind (Federmayer 110). As Robin Chen-Hsing Tsai comments, "Jodahs functions as a [shape-shifter] coyote-trickster figure who represents a witty 'agent and actor' in the posthuman

For all that has been said, Lilith Iyapo is the symbolic mother of the crossbred, the mother of a new hybrid species with both Human and Oankali characteristics. As the black mother to a new and improved species and leader and spokesperson for the group of rescued humans, she is also the bridge between the two cultures, and, therefore, "has to negotiate her role as a 'race mother'" (Federmayer 111). Whilst, on the one hand, she has to prove herself to the aliens by showing herself capable of leading her people towards survival, on the other hand, she has to confront and disprove her tarnished reputation in the eyes of the human resisters. In the words of Lilith herself,

> I awakened the first three groups of Humans to be sent back to Earth. I told them what their situation was, what their options were, and they decided I was responsible for it all. I helped teach them to live in the forest, and they decided it was my fault they had to give up civilized life. Sort of like blaming me for the goddamn war! Anyway, they decided I had betrayed them to the Oankali, and the nicest thing some of them called me was Judas. […] So now and then when we get ex-resisters traveling through Lo and they hear my name, they assume I have horns. Some of the younger ones have been taught to blame me for everything—as though I were a second Satan or Satan's wife or some such idiocy. Now and then one of them will try to kill me. (Butler, *Adulthood Rites* 48)

As we have seen, an explicit connection is made between Butler's Lilith and her mythic namesake in the book. Lilith Iyapo, like the Lilith from Hebrew folklore, is considered to be Satan's wife and,

---

[sublime] world" (28). In point of fact, Federmayer refers to the same, when talking about Akin—the first Human-born Human-Oankali male construct—and Jodahs—the first Human-born Human-Oankali ooloi construct. On the one hand, Akin is a construct "whose Human looks hide his superhuman Oankali capabilities that are greater than Lilith's. As a hero of double genealogy and hybrid with malleable gender identity until metamorphosis, Akin has been genetically encoded by its/his five parents […] to link 'races'" (109). Not only that, the name (of Yoruban origin) of "this cyborg baby" "in English suggests 'a *kin* to [both Humans and Oankali]" (109-110). On the other hand, Jodahs is a "cyborg that baffles cyborgs themselves […]. Having inherited Nikanj's neuter gender, Jodah's life is aggravated by multiple identity: double metamorphosis […] and permeable body boundaries make him a kind of shape-shifter" (110). As Johns also offers, "the construct ooloi's embodiment does not take form apart from its desire, and its lack of a coherent self outside of relations with others is threatening to our notion of identity (Patricia Melzer qtd. in Johns 394).

thereby, the monstrous mother of a demonic progeny. From the perspective of Human resisters, Lilith, like her predecessor, "was possessed of the devil, […] she had sold first herself, then Humanity, […] she was the first to go willingly to an Oankali bed to become their whore and to seduce other Humans" (Butler, *Adulthood Rites* 48). Returning to previous considerations about the original Lilith, as we have already suggested, Lilith Iyapo, is also considered to be a prostitute, since, like the mythical Lilith, she has sex without coitus, making Human procreation sterile: "she is a dark mother, a woman who rejects motherhood as her biological destiny. She positions herself in the interplay of pleasure and sexuality,[10] in control of procreation" (Rousseau 97-8).

In the aftermath of the nuclear war, among many other things, the ability of humans to reproduce was compromised, given that, due to nuclear radiation, Human children, after being born, would inevitably develop different tumours. And if that were not enough, throughout the novels, we learn that Human DNA has proven to be faulty, since Human's hierarchical tendencies in combination with their intelligence have condemned humanity to violence and self-destruction. As a way to face up to the problem, as it has already been mentioned, Lilith decides to take part in the Oankali gene trade, as it is the only real chance that the human race or, better worded, human genes have of surviving in any way possible.

Nevertheless, for making that informed and limited decision, Lilith is passionately and violently recriminated by all of her peers. She rejects coital reproduction in favour of a new model of sexual

[10] As Nanda offers, "Lilith strives beyond the typically defined (read sexually contained) human, as she transforms domestic space into a sexually charged revolutionary zone where transgressive desire aspires to fulfil the novel's fantasy of the posthuman" (779). Not only that, it is the awakening and acceptance of her own sexual desire for the alien what enables her to transcend into the posthuman. As Nanda states, "Lilith is forever changed through contact with the ooloi/Oankali, embracing what Erin Ackerman calls 'a molecular subjetivity' where 'sexuality becomes an integral part of becoming,' or what Nolan Belk describes as 'the ability to become more than the limitations of their societies … chang[ing] in ways that make them unrecognizable posthumans'" (779). Nolan Belk, for his part, following Audre Lorde's theories on the erotic, explains how "the erotic nature of the body—that is the body's ability to 'know' without thought what it desires—[…] 'is a resource within each of us […] firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling'" (376), a powerful resource that, as it has already been mentioned, and Plato already hinted at, by pointing towards "the Real", would let us surpass human limitations. As it happens, in *Xenogenesis* the Oankali, being the embodiment of "the Other", by highlighting "the importance of a sexual connection", also "personify the power of the erotic" (376).

relationship between two human beings mediated by an intersexual Oankali ooloi that would gather and mix the genetic information of both Humans and Oankali in order to give birth to a new and improved hybrid species. As Stacy Magedanz asserts, "Lilith […] saves the human culture that rejects her as a traitor" (50).

Taking everything that has been said into consideration, we can declare that the character of Lilith Iyapo perfectly fits the description of "the female alien other" distinctive of science fiction. On the one hand, she thoroughly follows the footsteps of her predecessor, as she is also an "independent, bold, and curious," menacing "she-devil" that withstands patriarchal "tyranny" (Osherow 75). On the other hand, as the human vessel for the first Human-Alien hybrid progeniture and the first Human woman that after years of isolation is in contact with other male Humans, like the original Lilith, often finds herself "in danger of being raped," reason why she is granted with superhuman abilities as protection (75). Consequently, Lilith is established "in both a human and alien realm," nevertheless, as "a human minority among an alien majority," at first, and a not completely human being, afterwards, "Lilith is the 'alien other' to all those with whom she comes in contact" (76). As Osherow, accurately, puts forward, "the price of Lilith's empowerment is her estrangement" (76).

## DARK MOTHERHOOD: BREEDING THE POSTHUMAN

Going back to the already mentioned role of Lilith as a dark mother, given that she, "like her predecessor, is also the incubator for a type of devil's spawn" (Osherow 75), we could say that she is the shadow side[11] of Eve. Notwithstanding, Butler's Lilith is more Eve-like than we give her credit for. As "the great 'enabler,'" Eve is "the epitome of altruism," always disposed to sacrifice herself "in the interest of others" (Cantor qtd. in Osherow 76).

In like manner, Lilith Iyapo proves herself useful to both Oankali and human being, complying with their needs and wishes whenever they require: she is vital to both Human's and Oankali's survival and ends up conforming to that role (76). According to Nanda, "[h]er peremptory rejection of motherhood, which contradicts the

[11] That is to say, Lilith is the unleashed version of Eve, as she represents the repressed traumas, wishes, and desires that could no longer stay hidden in the unconscious of Eve.

traditional maternal pledge to love one's children unconditionally, clearly fails to qualify her as an ideal mother, one who submissively abides by colonial tenets. And yet, despite her initial reaction, she never opts out of her maternal role" (778).

As the following fragment illustrates, Lilith is symbolically and practically everything for those of her kind:

> they said you could do almost anything. Some of them said your powers came from the devil. Some said you were devils. Some were disgusted with that kind of talk. To them, you were only the enemy. They didn't believe you had raped the Mother. They believed the Mother could be their tool to defeat you. (Butler, *Imago* 137)

Not only that, as we can see, Lilith is also considered to be a "Great Mother," be it to the awakened humans, or the Oankali for birthing a new and improved hybrid species, in the same way that Eve is considered to be "the mother of all" (Osherow 76). Nevertheless, Lilith does not take up the mother without resistance. As Osherow proffers, "Lilith has never been the maternal type, but Butler's Lilith has few options. This Lilith assumes the mother role, though with reluctance and antipathy" (76).

When Lilith learns about the part that she will have to fulfil as the parent, guide or mentor of the first awakened group, she revolts against it: "'You're going to set me up as their mother? […] They won't trust me or my help. They'll probably kill me. […] [p]ut me back to sleep, dammit, […] I never wanted this job!'" (Butler, *Dawn* 110-1). In a similar vein, when Lilith discovers that she is pregnant with a Medusa child, she recoils in horror and disgust: "'I'm not ready! I'll never be ready! […] It won't be a daughter. […] It will be a thing—not human.' She stared down at her own body in horror. 'It's inside me, and it isn't human! […] [I]t won't be human […] It will be a thing. A monster'" (Butler, *Dawn* 246).

Curiously enough, she is caught between two worlds. She is equally disturbed by the prospect of embodying the traditional maternal role of caregiver and of bringing into existence a posthuman being defined by greater compassion. As it can be observed, through the character of Lilith, Butler is able to explore the ambivalence and, therefore, anxiety that women feel towards motherhood (Osherow 77), something that, reminds us of *Frankenstein*, the Gothic and science fiction work that constitutes a birth myth about "revulsion against newborn life" and "the trauma of the after-birth" (Moers 5).

In the particular case of *Xenogenesis*, there is a tension between the positive valuation of motherhood, given "the necessity of procreation" and the resentment towards "the imposition of [said] reproduction" (Osherow 77); in other words, Lilith, together with other powerful "female alien others," is caught between her nurturing nature and her desire to be something more and not to be constricted by it. She does not want to choose between being sexual or maternal, and wants to be both threatening and nurturing as well. This reflects a rejection of the rigid binaries that feminist theorists critique. Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection[12] shows how women are often forced to define themselves against what is considered socially unacceptable or "other," such as sexuality or aggression. By embracing both traditionally "feminine" (maternal, nurturing) and "dangerous" (sexual, threatening) traits, the character resists the patriarchal demand to fit neatly into one role.

From a posthumanist perspective (Haraway; Hayles; Wolfe; Braidotti), this hybridity mirrors the destabilization of fixed categories—human/alien, male/female, natural/artificial. Her desire to integrate multiple, even contradictory traits echoes Haraway's cyborg theory, which celebrates the breakdown of essentialist boundaries. In this way, her identity becomes a site of resistance, experimentation, and empowerment, challenging traditional notions of gender, reproduction, and human subjectivity.

In this manner, Lilith interrogates the stereotypical traditional depictions of women and cross-examines the validity of imposed sexist gender roles. Lilith Iyapo, as the sublime[13] posthuman monstrous

[12] According to Kristeva, "there looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable […] The abject is not an ob-ject facing me… What is abject […] is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (1-2). It is "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). Considering that the idea of "the border" is key in the construction of monstrousness, it comes as no surprise the fact that women, from their menstrual "polluting" fluids to their gestational roles, are deemed abject (10). In the words of Kristeva, "the abject confronts us […] within our personal archeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of maternal entity even before ex-isting outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language. It is a violent, clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling" (13).

[13] In the words of Osherow, Butler's Lilith, not unlike Eve—"the great 'enabler'"—"'enables' all those with whom she comes in contact. She is essential to the Oankali's [and human's] survival: 'We… do need you,' an Oankali tells Lilith, and, alluding to the

cyborg that she is, is capable of transcending the corporal and societal boundaries in order to establish a new model of motherhood and womanhood for herself. As expressed by Osherow,

> Butler's Lilith challenges how we define and consider our female social selves. Lilith Iyapo is sexual and powerful; she is also maternal. […]
>
> By endowing Lilith with characteristics traditionally associated with Eve, Butler revisions Lilith with an eye for the anxieties experienced by women and mothers of the twentieth century. In this revision, we are encouraged to reconcile women's self-love with altruism, female desire with motherhood. That Lilith is not perfect is crucial, for her imperfection enables her to appear human, unfit for idealized fantasies and expectations. […]
>
> The depiction of Butler's heroine as both maternal and sexual obscures those stereotypes that have plagued considerations of women since Eden (78)

On this subject, the narrative structure of *Dawn,* the first instalment of the trilogy, evokes a connection with female romances, since the four chapters represent the "four significant stages of a woman's career: from birth and female education ([in]famously elaborated first by Rousseau in *Sophie*) to birthing and mothering, as the titles 'Womb,' [—where Lilith is awakened from her suspended animation—] 'Family,' [—where she meets and connects with the Oankali—] 'Nursery,' [—where she awakens and parents the first group of humans—] and 'Training Floor' [—where she prepares the humans for their future survival on Earth—] suggest" (Federmayer 111-2).

Nevertheless, the fact that Butler follows those stages does not mean that Lilith accepts them or that Butler endorses them without question. According to Federmayer,

> [t]hroughout the narrative, the reader is encouraged to take a "mid-region" position in order to see Lilith as a mediator rather than a Great Mother […]. She is born, educated, and facilitated with skills to foster the "rebirth" of the Humans after the apocalypse. But it is not Lilith alone who undergoes physical and psychic changes to attain her status as a female subject in her double capacity of leader and mother of a new generation of earth dwellers but all the people (her "children"),

ancient myth, describes her as 'horror and beauty in rare combination', that is to say, like the sublime (76).

> whom she awakens and educates. That is to say that Lilith, from the very beginning, functions in her cyborg capacity as child and mother: she both teaches and is taught. Likewise, the Oankali are not merely her masters (that at times invoke nightmarish associations of slavery for the black protagonist) but are themselves to be educated and reformed by Lilith. In the same way, while Lilith is trying to educate her people for survival, she is simultaneously being trained by her "children" (both the Humans and the Oankali who are also willing, by necessity, to learn from her). (112-3)

Butler's narrative is not only informed by Jewish culture, but by African American history and settler colonialism as well (Osherow 78; Dayal 97). As Smaran Dayal contends, "the generic possibilities of science fiction allow forms of expression and modes of processing historical experience that are unavailable to other genres of literature. *Xenogenesis* skillfully mobilizes the narrative, conceptual, and world-building possibilities of the genre of science fiction to reimagine settler colonialism [, from an Afrofuturist and Indigenous futurist perspective,] on a planetary scale" (97).

That is to say, anticipating critiques like Mark Rifkin's, who considered that Butler, despite successfully offering "an antiracist account of human unity" (qtd. in Dayal 98), she ultimately failed to abide by a pluralistic and intersectional approach that acknowledged the diverse experiences of both racialized and non-racialized peoples, Fredric Jameson proposed that "race in SF is 'relatively neutralized by the presupposition of alien life,' and that, in Butler's fiction, alienness comes to 'stand as the allegory of race [and racial experiences like slavery and settler colonialism]'" (qtd in Dayal 98).

From denial of autonomy, planetary dispossession, and plundering of natural resources to captivity, transportation, and non-consensual surgical intervention—medical experimentation, reproductive control with "coerced miscegenation" (Peppers 50; Tucker 172) and sterilization, and routine medical treatments, *Xenogenesis* rises as powerful commentary and metaphor on European settler colonialism and the Atlantic slave trade—the Middle Passage, more specifically—that took place between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (Dayal 96-103). In this regard, "Michelle Green argues that in Butler's trilogy, humans 'have been constituted as the colonized Other by' and 'are like animals to' the Oankali, who reduce human beings to 'package(s) of genes'" (Tucker 172). Furthermore, as Tucker elaborates, "[t]he 'slavery' hypothesis allows readers to view race not

as essence but as a culmination of historical events; that is, the trilogy's white characters live a history comparable to that which contributed to the production of African-American identity" (172).

Following Haraway's idea of forming a coalition of women based on their affinity in relation to their shared experiences as discriminated others, recovering the cultural histories of women from different ethnicities, Butler explores the reality of being a woman, specifically, a racialized woman under the patriarchy (78). In the words of Osherow, "[Butler] surveys her inherited mythological and historical pasts, recognizes them as influential in female development, and attempts to improve that development by recreating and revising women's history" (79).

In that regard, considering Lilith's role in the story, we could assert that she symbolically fulfils the part of a black matriarch, given that she is continuously mediating and negotiating for her and her people's "survivance" in an unfamiliar new environment (Osherow 79). Nevertheless, as Angela Davis in "Reflections of the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves" offers, to employ the word "matriarch" on a black woman is inadequate because it does not accurately represent black slaves experience, as they were never authoritarian in their familiar relationships, it was more their "constant state of instability and fear" what molded their experience (qtd. in Osherow 79).

As it happens, both *Dawn* and *Aldulthood Rites,* the first two instalments from the trilogy, could be read as captivity narratives, the foundational and popular literary genre of North America, with all the historical, cultural and racial implications that the genre has. As we may recall, Indian captivity narratives are propagandistic colonial stories that revolve around the kidnapping of a European American at the hands of Native Americans that contribute to the bestialization, demonization and dehumanization of the original peoples. While in *Adulthood Rites*, where the first hybrid construct male child is abducted by a group of human resisters, interesting parallels are drawn between the uncivilized and violent resisters and the stereotypically savage and demonic Indians from captivity narratives, in *Dawn* we can see a reversal of those kind of narratives, as the novel is deeply influenced by the more developed form of the genre: the African-American slave narratives (Magedanz 46).

According to June Namias, there are "three types of women captives" in captivity literature: "the Survivor, the Amazon, and the Frail Flower," and Lilith is, undoubtedly, a survivor (qtd.in Magedanz

50). Along with the afore mentioned events, she lives through some other incidents that remind us of slave accounts: she is denied access to writing instruments, subjected to enforced reproduction, and even an attempted escape from her enslavement makes its appearance in the narrative (Magedanz 50).

However, unlike both types of captivity narratives, "Lilith neither escapes her captivity nor adopts her captors' culture" (50)[14]. As Magedanz explains, Lilith does not exactly feel like a slave or a prisoner, she feels more like a domesticated animal, so far as comparing herself to isolated, inoculated and operated breeding stock animals, zoo animals, and pets (50). In the end, she sides with the Oankali project, but not without diffidence. She concedes that the Oankali way is the only path to survival, yet she acknowledges that she has been coerced into it (50).

In the words of Magedanz, "[Lilith's] spiritual journey does not end in freedom or in full assimilation, but in heroic endurance, what Patricia Melzer terms 'survival as resistance'" (50) and, as we know, what Gerald Vizenor calls "survivance" (93). As it happens, for Lilith to be a good parent, guide, or trainer, she does not have to teach humans to surrender to the alien order, but to learn as much as they can in order to be able to run (Federmayer 113). As Federmayer contends, "[t]he novel ends on the historic note 'learn and run' that echoes various slave narratives, such as Harriet Jacob's, Frederick Douglass', and William Wells Brown's in which learning was clearly shown as the prerequisite for running from slavery" (113).

Recovering some of Davis' considerations, "studied indolence" is "essential to the slave mothers' mission" as they have to appear to cooperate with their enslavers in order to protect themselves and her own people (qtd. in Osherow 79). That is why sometimes, they have unfairly been perceived as slave collaborators or traitors to their own race, inaccurate characterisations of colonized or enslaved mothers that we have the obligation to continue to interrogate and deny (Osherow 79; Federmayer 113).

[14] As observed by Magedanz, "[o]ne of the most intriguing aspects of these tales of dominated and dominating cultures is the many instances in the captivity genre where the captive representative of the dominating culture elects to 'go native,' or specifically in the context of the Indian captivities, to become a 'white Indian'" (47). In this sense, Lilith defies the expectation of the genre; in Akin's case, however, he does, in fact, "go native," but contests the captivity narrative in other ways as well: he is "neither white nor human, [...] and unlike the narrators of classic Puritan captivities, Akin is [also] male" (50).

## CONCLUSION. LILITH'S DEMONIC BREED: THE COMING OF HUMAN-OANKALI MEDUSA CHILDREN

In conclusion, in the pessimist utopia of *Xenogenesis,* even though humanity has to come to terms with the reality of the disappearance of human life as we know it, both Human and Oankali are facing a promising future incarnated in the genesis of a new Human-Oankali hybrid species; a species that would consider the necessities of all living beings as well as the interests of their Human parents, perfecting both races as a result. As Irene Sanz Alonso rightly contends,

> [w]ith these two contradictory civilizations Butler shows that the acceptance of otherness is based on respect and on the elimination of dualistic thought and patterns of domination. Therefore, we can see that neither humans nor the Oankali have completely healthy systems, since some of their practices and values do not comply with ecofeminist ideals. However, it seems that even if they are not utopian, Butler presents the aliens as a desirable species, one with which humans can escape their destruction, albeit at a high price. (228)

However, these presumptions should not be taken literally, since, contrary to popular belief, the trilogy does not favor an essentialist reading of humans' violent and hierarchical nature. Quite the opposite, this text should be taken as evidence that humans could and should evolve into a more compassionate and peaceful species in order to avoid the massive suicide that almost takes place in the books.

In summary, *Xenogenesis*, despite being a post-apocalyptic pessimist utopian work of science fiction, is an example of Female Gothic fiction as well. It deals with the very much horrifying encounter of humanity with a different and unknown alien species that threatens the patriarchal order founded on the hierarchical logic of domination within an imperialistic, capitalist, xenophobic, sexist, exploitative, and ecocidal patriarchy. As if that were not enough, the trilogy confronts the darkest and most terrifying side of humanity, while tracing a female genealogy and exploring the anxieties surrounding motherhood at the same time.

In this manner, not only is the importance of life and procreation highlighted, but also the fact that, once again, alienness,

strangeness, and the unknown are not the real monsters; as they simply symptomatize the monstrousness of our own repressed desires and fears: more specifically, our hierarchical thought that derives from the logic of domination of the patriarchy, source of all violence, rooted in hyper individualism and xenophobia. Although Lilith is not the main character of all three novels, since the trilogy deals with two of her most notable offspring, we could conclude that the work of fiction, as a whole, focuses on Lilith's maternal lineage and the anxiety and fears surrounding it. As Johns offers,

> Butler's fiction demands that we push sociobiology beyond its own borders, to consider the end of humanity, whether the end is simply annihilation or the beginning of a biologically new post-humanity with new ideas and new institutions flowing from that biology. She imagines a new kind of being, and a future, that are oriented toward death (or evolution) for the sake of life. (398)

In other words, by means of this pessimistic utopia, which could also be perceived as a cautionary tale, Butler urges her readers to put an end to the cycle of violence motivated by human hierarchical models of thought and informs us of the inevitable fatal consequences that following this type of behaviour would bring about. In relation to this, Hoda M. Zaki observes how "the overt pessimism of a specific dystopia is often belied by the covert utopian hope that readers will change the trajectory of their society. Such dystopias [like *Xenogenesis*], then, are intimately connected to utopias in offering oblique hope for the reader" (244). In short, in *Xenogenesis* Lilith, with the support of her Oankali family, though with reluctance, embraces her role as the progenitor of a monstrous, yet sublime, more compassionate and life-affirming posthuman species.

**WORKS CITED**

BARKER, Pat. *The Silence of the Girls*. Hamish Hamilton, 2018.

BELK, Nolan. "The Certainty of the Flesh: Octavia Butler's Use of the Erotic in the Xenogenesis Trilogy." *Utopian Studies,* vol. 19, no. 3, 2008, pp. 369–89. https://doi.org/10.2307/20719917.

BOOTH, Sherry. "Landscape, Metaphor and Biology: Rethinking Women and Nature." *Spatial Practices*, vol. 10, 2010, pp. 329–51. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042030763_020.

BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*, Routledge, 1996.

BRAIDOTTI, Rosi. *The Posthuman*, Polity Press, 2013.

BURTON, Jessie. *Medusa*, Bloomsbury, 2021.

BUTLER, Octavia E. *Adulthood Rites*, Warner Books, 1988.

BUTLER, Octavia E. *Dawn*, Warner Books, 1987.

BUTLER, Octavia E. *Imago*, Warner Books, 1989.

CARTER, Angela. *The Passion of New Eve*, Virago, 1982.

DAYAL, Smaran. "Octavia Butler and the Settler Colonial Speculative: *Xenogenesis* and Planetary Loss." *American Studies,* vol. 60, no. 3/4, 2021, pp. 95–118. https://doi.org/10.1353/ams.2021.0030.

FEDERMAYER, Éva. "Octavia Butler's Maternal Cyborgs: The Black Female World of the Xenogenesis Trilogy." *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies,* vol. 6, no. 1, 2000, pp. 103–18.

GAARD, Greta. "Toward a Queer Ecofeminism." *Hypatia*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1997, pp. 114–37. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1997.tb00174.x.

GIPSON, Grace. "Creating and Imagining Black Futures through Afrofuturism." *#identity: Hashtagging Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Nation*, edited by Abigail De Kosnik and Keith P. Feldman, U of Michigan P, 2019, pp. 84–103.

HAYLES, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. U of Chicago P, 1999. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226321394.001.0001.

HARAWAY, Donna. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." *Socialist Review,* no. 80, 1985, pp. 65–108.

HILLARD, Tom J. "Gothic Nature Revisited: Reflections on the Gothic of Ecocriticism." *Gothic Nature*, no. 1, 2019, pp. 21–33.

HOGLE, Jerrold E. "Introduction: The Gothic in Western Culture." *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction,* edited by Jerrold E. Hogle,

Cambridge UP, 2002, pp. 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521791243.001.

JOHNS, J. Adam. "Becoming Medusa: Octavia Butler's 'Lilith's Brood' and Sociobiology." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2010, pp. 382–400. https://doi.org/10.1525/sfs.37.3.0382.

KRISTEVA, Julia. *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Columbia UP, 2024. https://doi.org/10.7312/kris21457.

MAGEDANZ, Stacy. "The Captivity Narrative in Octavia E. Butler's Adulthood Rites." *Extrapolation,* vol. 53, no. 1, 2012, pp. 45–59. https://doi.org/10.3828/extr.2012.4.

MANN, Justin Louis. "Pessimistic Futurism: Survival and Reproduction in Octavia Butler's *Dawn*." *Feminist Theory,* vol. 19, no. 1, 2018, pp. 61–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700117742874.

MELLOR, Mary. *Feminism & Ecology*. New York UP, 1997.

MILLER, Madeline. *Circe*. Little, Brown and Company, 2018.

MOERS, Ellen. "Female Gothic: The Monster's Mother." *New York Review of Books,* 21 March 1974, pp. 1–12, https://janeaustensummer.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/moers-female-gothicthe-monster_s-mother.pdf. Accessed 20 July 2019.

MOORE, C. L. "Fruit of Knowledge." *The Best of C.L. Moore*. Ballantine Books, 1975.

NANDA, Aparajita. "Power, Politics, and Domestic Desire in Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood*." *Callaloo,* vol. 36, no. 3, 2013, pp. 773–88. https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2013.0164.

OKORAFOR, Nnedi. *Who Fears Death*. Daw Books, 2010.

OSHEROW, Michele. "The Dawn of a New Lilith: Revisionary Mythmaking in Women's Science Fiction." *The National Women's Studies Association Journal,* vol. 12, no. 1, 2000, pp. 68–83.

PEPPERS, Cathy. "Dialogic Origins and Alien Identities in Butler's Xenogenesis." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1995, pp. 47–62.

RAMÍREZ, Catherine S. "Cyborg Feminism: The Science Fiction of Octavia E. Butler and Gloria Anzaldúa." *Reload: Rethinking Women + Cyberculture,* edited by Mary Flanagan and Austin Booth, 2002, pp. 374–402.

ROUSSEAU, Vanessa. "Eve and Lilith: Two Female Types of Procreation." *Diogenes*, vol. 54, no. 4, 2005, pp. 94–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192105059474.

RUSS, Joanna. *The Female Man*. Orion, 2010.

RUSS, Joanna. "What Can a Heroine Do? or Why Women Can't Write." *To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction,* edited by Joanna Russ, Indiana UP, 1995, 79–93.

SANDERS, Joshunda. "An Interview with Octavia Butler, 2004." *Medium,* 22 June 2018, https://joshunda.medium.com/an-interview-with-octavia-butler-2004-8933300df98a. Accessed 15 May 2025.

SANZ ALONSO, Irene. "Ecofeminism and Science Fiction: Human-Alien Literary Intersections." *Women's Studies*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2018, pp. 216–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2018.1430408.

SAVOY, Eric. "The Rise of American Gothic." *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction,* edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge UP, 2002, 167–88. https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521791243.009.

TSAI, Robin Chen-Hsing. "Technology, the Environment and Biopolitics in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*." *Foreign Literature Studies,* vol. 36, no. 6, 2014, pp. 18–30.

TUCKER, Jeffrey A. "'The Human Contradiction': Identity and/as Essence in Octavia E. Butler's 'Xenogenesis'." *The Yearbook of English Studies,* vol. 37, no. 2, 2007, pp. 164–81. https://doi.org/10.1353/yes.2007.0001.

VIZENOR, Gerald, and A. Robert Lee. "Discursive Narratives." *Postindian Conversations,* University of Nebraska Press, 1999, pp. 79–94.

WANG, Wang, Alvin Y. "Gender and Nature: A Psychological Analysis of Ecofeminist Theory." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology,* vol. 29, no. 11, 1999, pp. 2410–424. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1999.tb00118.x.

WOLFE, Cary. "Introduction: What Is Posthumanism?" *What Is Posthumanism*?, edited by Cary Wolfe, U of Minnesota P, 2010, pp. xi–xxxiv.

ZAKI, Hoda M. "Utopia, Dystopia, and Ideology in the Science Fiction of Octavia Butler." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1990, pp. 239–51. https://doi.org/10.1525/sfs.17.2.239.