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ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

Hybrid Bodies and Hybrid Identities in the Fiction of Octavia Butler

Hybridní těla a hybridní identity v dílech Octavie Butlerové

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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Abstract

The thesis explores the theme of hybridity in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy and in her last novel, *Fledgling*, which both deal with complex relationships between humans and a different species. The main focus is on the characters of mixed origin – offspring of two distinct species and beings whose existence is a result of genetic experiments. These individuals occupy a metaphorical "in-between" space where cultural, racial, sexual and other boundaries meet and blur. The theoretical framework follows two sets of ideas – Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity and the so-called Third Space, and Donna Haraway's cyborg figure.

The second chapter of the thesis is centered on the origins and development of the concept of hybridity and its current use in postcolonial discourse. Furthermore, it introduces the most relevant ideas from Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* and Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" and compares them. The following two chapters are mainly devoted to Butler's hybrid characters, Akin and Jodahs from *Xenogenesis* and Shori, the protagonist of *Fledgling*. This section analyses, among other issues, their physical features and special skills connected with hybridity, the construction of their identity, their relationship with others and their relation to the clash between different species and cultures. The main aim is to discuss the ways in which these characters transgress various boundaries and blur binary oppositions which often perpetuate unequal power structures and hierarchical behavior – self/Other, human/non-human, human/animal, black/white, male/female and so on. Another objective is to determine whether these individuals represent the possibilities outlined by Bhabha and Haraway and to comment on the ways in which they influence the community.

The analysis and the summarizing comparison conducted in the final chapter reveal that although her hybrid characters have many common characteristics, such as their

multiplicity, openness towards difference and change, transgression of boundaries or their ability to negotiate and to come up with new alternatives, Butler's two texts do not offer a unified view on hybridity. In *Xenogenesis*, hybrid protagonists bring about promising options, but the instability connected with their hybridity poses a threat for the community. In *Fledgling,* the depiction of the protagonist's hybridity does not seem to include any dangerous elements. What is morally problematic in this text is the uneven relationship between humans and the Ina, which the hybrid character influences in a positive way, but she does not resolve it. Furthermore, the thesis shows that even though the author depicts hybridity as a source of new possibilities, she does not idealize it, nor does she present it as a utopian solution to the problematic situations in her novels.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá tématem hybridity v dílech Octavie Butlerové, konkrétně v trilogii *Xenogenesis* a v románu *Fledgling,* což jsou texty, ve kterých hrají velkou roli složité vztahy mezi lidmi a jiným živočišným druhem. V centru zájmu této studie jsou postavy smíšeného původu – potomci příslušníků dvou odlišných druhů a bytosti, jejichž existence je výsledkem genetických experimentů. Tito jedinci obývají metaforický liminální prostor, kde se setkávají a překrývají kulturní, rasové, genderové, sexuální a další hranice. Teoretický rámec této práce je založen na myšlenkách Homiho Bhabhy, které se týkají jeho pojetí hybridity a takzvaného třetího prostoru, a na konceptu kyborga Donny Harawayové.

Druhá kapitola je zaměřena na původ a vývoj termínu hybridita a jeho současné využití v postkoloniálním diskurzu. Dále pak vymezuje relevantní pojmy a koncepty z Bhabhovy knihy *The Location of Culture* a z „A Cyborg Manifesto" od Harawayové a srovnává je. Následující dvě kapitoly jsou věnovány především hybridním postavám Butlerové – Akinovi a Jodahsovi z *Xenogenesis* a Shori, protagonistce knihy *Fledgling*. Tato část mimo jiné analyzuje jejich fyzické rysy a zvláštní schopnosti spojené s hybriditou, konstrukci jejich identity, jejich vztah s ostatními a jejich roli v konfliktu odlišných druhů a kultur. Hlavním cílem této části práce je objasnit, jakým způsobem tyto postavy překračují hranice a rozostřují binární opozice, které souvisí s nerovnými mocenskými vztahy a hierarchickým chováním, jako například já/ti druzí, černý/bílý, muž/žena a tak dále. Dalším účelem těchto dvou kapitol je zjistit, zda výše zmínění jedinci reprezentují možnosti nastíněné v textech Bhabhy a Harawayové a vysvětlit, jakým způsobem ovlivňují společnost.

Tato analýza a shrnující srovnání provedené v poslední kapitole ukazují, že ačkoliv hybridní postavy Butlerové mají mnoho společných znaků, jako je multiplicita, otevřenost

vůči odlišnosti a změnám, překračování hranic nebo schopnost vyjednávat a přicházet s novými alternativami, její texty nepřináší jednotný pohled na hybriditu. Hybridní protagonisté v *Xenogenesis* sice dávají podnět k mnoha slibným změnám, ale nestabilita spojená s jejich hybriditou představuje hrozbu pro společnost. V díle *Fledgling* jsou etické problémy spjaté spíše s nerovným vztahem mezi lidmi a druhem Ina, než s hybriditou jako takovou, která je zde vnímána pozitivně. Mimoto z této analýzy vyplývá, že i když autorka popisuje hybriditu jako zdroj nových možností, neidealizuje ji a neprezentuje ji ve svých románech jako utopické řešení problémů.

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1. Introduction

"The grand dame of science fiction,"[1] a "theorist for cyborgs,"[2] "the first successful female African American writer of science fiction and fantasy,"[3] "a postmodern storyteller who is able to break down the boundaries between nature and culture and race and gender."[4] These and other similar labels are frequently attached to Octavia Butler, a famous literary author who has won many literary prizes, including Hugo and Nebula awards, and whose texts can be found in many anthologies. Nevertheless, it was not until recently that Butler's work has attracted scholarly attention that it deserves. As Gregory Hampton observes, "scholarship published in the 1980s and 90s on [her] novels and short stories were too often cursory reviews or glances that overlooked the critical potential of the fiction."[5] Since the author's untimely death in 2006, the number of scholarly articles, book chapters and dissertations that deal with her fiction has increased and some of them have pointed out that she addresses issues which are of a great concern in contemporary literary theory and criticism.

Butler's work is often described as science fiction, but it is actually embedded in multiple discourses. According to Patricia Melzer, this writer's texts reflect "intersections of feminist theories, anticolonial discourses, science fiction, and black women's writing."[6] In many of her novels and short stories, Butler explores the pitfalls of human civilization,

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[1] Beata Zawadka, "Teleportation in the Service of American Cultural Communication in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*," *Tools of Their Tools: Communications Technologies and American Cultural Practice*, ed. Krzysztof Majer (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009) 231.
[2] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 173.
[3] *Encyclopedia of African American Women Writers*, ed. Yolanda Williams Page (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007) 64.
[4] Louise H. Westling, *The Green Breast of the New World: Landscape, Gender and American Fiction* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996) 151.
[5] Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Changing Bodies in the Fiction of Octavia Butler: Slaves, Aliens, and Vampires* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010) xii.
[6] Patricia Melzer, *Alien Constructions: Science Fiction and Feminist Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006) l. 1148/7915. (ebook)

such as hierarchical behavior, xenophobia, violence, degradation of the environment, growth of corporations, insistence on the notions of purity or unwillingness to adapt to changes, and she explores the outcomes that these problems may lead to. She often writes about various encounters with difference, whether it is represented by extraterrestrials, different species or humans with special abilities. She uses her alien characters to explore the problems of individuals who are marginalized by wider society because of their race, gender, sexuality or nationality, and cultural determinants of defining "the other" as dangerous. As Jenny Wolmark puts it, Butler's fiction is concerned with "transformations, difference, and the transgression of boundaries, which call into question the way in which the dominant discourses of race and gender attempt to fix definitions of 'alien' and 'other'."[7]

This thesis aims to discuss an issue which reoccurs in Butler's texts and which is very much related to the above-mentioned encounters with difference – the theme of hybridity. The main focus will be on characters of mixed origin – offspring of two distinct species and beings whose existence is a result of genetic experiments. These individuals occupy a liminal space between species, races, cultures and even genders; they are neither/nor as well as both/and. Using Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity and Donna Haraway's cyborg theory, this study aims to explore the hybrid characters in Butler's fiction, to examine how their identity is constructed, to evaluate how their "in-betweeness" influences their interactions with other individuals and to discuss the ways in which their status challenges the claims of boundedness within race, gender, sexuality, the self and even humanity. The thesis attempts to show that although Butler does not present hybridity as a solution to the tensions between the cultures/species/groups that are in contact and although it is associated with great ambivalence, it always brings about some new

[7] Jenny Wolmark, *Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994) 29.

possibilities and changes in her novels. In each of the discussed texts, the in-between characters are typified as mediators, translators and negotiators of difference and affinity.

The theoretical framework of the thesis follows two paths, Bhabha's ideas and cyborg feminism represented by Haraway, for several reasons. Primarily, the concept of hybridity is very broad, unstable and problematic, so it seemed reasonable to approach it from more than one angle. Secondly, Butler's characters exhibit multiple levels of hybridity and neither of the theories appeared as completely sufficient for their understanding. As Cassadra L. Jones points out, "while postcolonial theory does not address the specifics of technology and nature, cyborg theory often elides race to focus on the gendered aspects of embodied technology."[8] Finally, the thesis deals both with hybrid bodies and hybrid identities, and while Bhabha's theory focuses on identity and culture, it does not address issues connected with the body. Hence, Haraway's notion of the cyborg serves as a framework for the discussion of this aspect as it connects a discursive body with a material body.

This study will work with the so-called *Xenogenesis*[9] series which includes three books – *Dawn*, *Adulthood Rites* and *Imago*, all written in the 1980s. Furthermore, it will examine Butler's last novel, *Fledgling*, which was first published in 2005. Thus, the thesis will present the author's view on the issue of hybridity from the early years as well as from the end of her career. The second chapter will deal with the term "hybridity" – its history, problematic nature and position in contemporary postcolonial studies. Furthermore, it will introduce the main points and concepts related to Bhabha's notion of hybridity and

[8] Cassandra L. Jones, "FutureBodies: Octavia Butler as a Post-Colonial Cyborg Theorist," Electronic Dissertation, Bowling Green State University, 2013, *OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center*, 10 Jun 2015

[9] Although the trilogy has been published under the title *Lilith's Brood* since 2000, I will refer to it as *Xenogenesis* in the main text, because it is the original name of the series which is used in the critical essays cited in this study.

[9] Naomi Jacobs, "Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*," *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York: Routledge, 2003) 95.

Haraway's cyborg. I will point out that although there are many differences between them, both of these theories view the issue of hybridity positively. Both of them have to do with a creation of an in-between space where the construction of identity may be envisioned anew and from which homogenous discourses, hierarchical power structures and binary oppositions may be challenged.

The third chapter will focus on the representation of hybridity in *Xenogenesis* trilogy. It will mainly concentrate on the offspring of the union between humans and Oankali, the aliens who colonize Earth in this series, and it will show the ways in which these hybrid characters embody the possibilities outlined by Bhabha and Haraway and in which they offer new options and change the power structures in human/Oankali society. Furthermore, I will draw attention to the limitations associated with hybridity in these novels. The fourth chapter will explore the human/vampire protagonist of *Fledgling* and the ways in which she blurs the binaries connected with power and in which she resembles Haraway's cyborg and Bhabha's hybrid. In addition, I will explore the issues connected with race since it serves as a marker of hybridity in this text. The final chapter will compare and contrast the *Xenogenesis* trilogy and *Fledgling* in terms of characters featured in these novels and in terms of the views on hybridity presented in them.

2. Hybridity, Third Space and the Cyborg

2. 1 Why Hybridity?

Although there is a set of related terms that are frequently used as equivalent or as synonymous to hybridity, such as mestizaje, creolization, syncretism or transculturation, this text mainly employs the term hybridity. It is true that there are overlaps between these concepts, but Anjali Prabhu and other scholars warn against using them interchangeably since each of them was "born within a particular theory and their use implicate a certain specific politics."[10] Hybridity, in spite of its problematic nature, seems to be the most appropriate term for the purposes of this study because, as Nestor García Canclini notes, it "includes diverse intercultural mixtures" whereas mestizaje tends to be limited to racial ones, creolization is related to linguistic discourse and syncretism "almost always refers to religious fusions or traditional symbolic environments."[11] Moreover, the term "hybridity" is inseparable from Bhabha's theoretical views which form the basis of this study.

2. 2 Hybridity in the Nineteenth-Century Western World

The term "hybrid" was originally used in biology to denote a product of a crossing between two distinct species. Robert Young states that it was derived from the Latin expression "hybrida" meaning "the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar" and that the first examples of the word can be found in documents from the seventeenth century.[12] It was in the nineteenth century when the term started to be used in the context of human fertility. The assumption that there could be such a thing as a human hybrid was connected with the rising cultural debate surrounding the question whether all humans belong into the same family. This debate divided Western authorities into two groups – the first believed

[10] Anjali Prabhu, *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007) 2.
[11] Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) 11.
[12] Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 2005) 9.

that whites and blacks were of different origins, although the idea of humanity being of distinct species was in fact against the biblical story, and the second regarded all humans as one species with the different races as varieties.

The so-called monogenism finally prevailed, but the word "hybrid" continued to be used to describe the products of the unions between different races and thus became a symbol of miscegenation and racial impurity. As Randall Kennedy observes, "the idea of the hybrid has been a gathering point for racial mythologies."[13] Such humans were considered as inferior copies of the original and associated with degeneracy and disease. As Young explains, racialism in the nineteenth century "operated both according to the same-Other model and through the 'computation of normalities' and 'degrees of deviance' from the white norm, by means of which racial difference became identified with other forms of sexual and social perversity […]."[14] As a result of this system, people of mixed race were sometimes demonized even more than those belonging to different "othered" groups because they were seen as deviant from both the white norm and the black norm, and thus unnatural and doomed to extinction.

In the twentieth century, hybridity started to be considered as more than mixing of races or species and it was applied in a variety of contexts, such as linguistics, music, art, technology and literature. According to Young, the term, which was mainly used to refer to a physiological phenomenon in the nineteenth century, "has been reactivated to describe a cultural one."[15] In many late twentieth-century postcolonial theoretical and critical texts, hybridity is presented as a positive phenomenon which is, in spite of the previous derogatory meaning of the word, seen as a cultural strategy to challenge existing hierarchies and binarisms.

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[13] Randall Kennedy, *The Persistence of the Color Line: Racial Politics and the Obama Presidency* (Toronto: Pantheon Books, 2011) 68.
[14] Young 170.
[15] Young 5.

2. 3 Hybridity in Contemporary Postcolonial Studies

In the field of postcolonial studies, hybridity is a widely used and much discussed concept. One of the main reasons for the growing interest in it is its interconnectedness with other significant contemporary issues, such as globalization, multiculturalism or ethnicity. As Anjali Prabhu puts it, "in examining any of these terms the question of the hybrid becomes implicated."[16] It would be difficult to come up with an all-encompassing definition of hybridity in postcolonial studies since it is open to varying interpretations and there are disputes concerning its meaning, usefulness and implications. Some scholars also call attention to the fact that the notion somehow resists exact definition. For instance, Marwan Kraidy does not describe hybridity as a single idea, but as "an association of ideas, concepts, and themes that at once reinforce and contradict each other."[17] Likewise, Young assumes that "there is no single, or correct, concept of hybridity: it changes as it repeats, but also repeats as it changes."[18]

Thus, instead of attempting to provide an unequivocal definition of hybridity in contemporary theory, one can mention what the concept is usually associated with and summarize the main approaches to it. In postcolonial studies, the word "hybridity" is often used in connection with the processes of combining, recombining, negotiating, mediating and translating as well as with ideas such as inclusiveness, diversity and even subversion. According to Michael Asbury, hybridity is related to "mediating processes between centre and periphery."[19] Papastergiadis distinguishes three levels of hybridity – he claims that it usually has to do with "the effects of multiple cultural attachments on identity or the

[16] Prabhu 18.
[17] Marwan M. Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization (*New Delhi: Temple University Press, 2005) vi.
[18] Young 27.
[19] Michael Asbury, "Changing Perceptions of National Identity in Brazilian Art," *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America,* ed. Felipe Hernández (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998) 59.

process of cultural mixture" and he adds that both of these possibilities can also lead to "a critical form of consciousness."[20]

As regards to the approaches to hybridity in terms of the applicability of the concept, it is difficult not to generalize when trying to divide them into some categories. For the purposes of better understanding, one may turn to Prabhu's model which identifies three broad positions. The first one is associated with the notion that hybridity can be found everywhere and that it "represents in many instances the triumph of the postcolonial or the subaltern over the hegemonic." Scholars connected with the second position regard hybridity as a concept which "applies more to metropolitan elite emigrés and far less to migrant diasporas and even less to those who have "stayed behind in the (ex)colony." Finally, the third group of scholars generally argues that any account of hybridity must contend with its history which is, as Prabhu avows, a history of "slavery, colonialism, and rape, inherited in terms of race."[21]

2. 4 Problems with Hybridity

The three positions outlined by Prabhu bring us to the problematic nature of the postcolonial concept of hybridity which partly results from the historical genealogy of the term. Firstly, even though hybridity has been revalorized in the late twentieth century, some theorists argue that it is not really possible to elude the negative connotations that were attached to it in the nineteenth century. For instance, Prabhu maintains that the term "served certain interests which were central to the colonial enterprise" and that it is, then, "first and foremost a 'racial' term."[22] Similarly, Young states that "we are utilizing the vocabulary of the Victorian extreme right as much as the notion of an organic process of

[20] Nikos Papastergiadis, "Hybridity and Ambivalence: Places and Flows in Contemporary Art and Culture," *Theory, Culture & Society* 22.4 (August 2005): 40
[21] Prabhu 12.
[22] Prabhu xii.

the grafting of diversity into singularity" when reinvoking the concept.[23] However, there is an emancipative potential in negative terms such as this one, as Papastergiadis points out. He asks the following question: "should we use only words with a pure and inoffensive history, or should we challenge essentialist models of identity by taking on and then subverting their own vocabulary?"[24]

Another problem which also arises from the history of the term hybridity is its "double-voicedness" in terms of the issue of purity. Although the postcolonial notion of hybridity opposes the idea of purity, the word suggests a fusion of two originally pure components. Paul Gilroy tries to avoid the term since, as he asserts, "the idea of hybridity, of intermixture, presupposes two anterior purities […] and there isn't any purity […]."[25] This problematic dimension cannot be erased even by regarding hybridity as more than a third thing coming from two originally pure elements. Nevertheless, one can get around it by not regarding things that are claimed to precede hybridity as really pure, but only as what is/was thought of as pure or enclosed.

Last but not least, the wide popularity of hybridity in postcolonial studies seems to be accompanied by a tendency to reduce or dismiss essentialism, which is described by Papastergiadis as a set of theories that "claim that cultural identity is rooted in a particular landscape and locked into atavistic values."[26] Essentialism has become a buzzword which is frequently used as an opposite of hybridity or as a "fraught term" which one can flee from by invoking hybridity. Samira Kawash notes that "in the effort to surpass apparently erroneous ideas of purity or essence that seem to be part of the logic of the color line one might be tempted too quickly to ignore or forget the constitutive power of the color line

[23] Young 9.
[24] Nikos Papastergiadis, "Tracing Hybridity in Theory," *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (London, Zed Books, 1997) 258.
[25] Paul Gilroy in Paul Williams, *Paul Gilroy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013) 54.
[26] Papastergiadis, "Hybridity and Ambivalence" 41.

itself."[27] Thus, one should bear in mind that by embracing hybridity and pointing "one's finger at 'those bad essentialists,'"[28] one can neither escape nor effectively banish essentialism.

2. 5 Homi Bhabha's Theory of Hybridity

One of the leading figures in the above-mentioned debates is Homi Bhabha, who uses "the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world […] as the paradigmatic place of departure" for his theoretical work.[29] In his *The Location of Culture,* published in 1994, this author introduced certain innovative ideas on the colonizer/colonized relations and on the construction of culture and identity which had a profound influence on postcolonial studies, theory and criticism. Bhabha's views play a significant role in almost every text dealing with hybridity that was written after the emergence of *The Location of Culture* – other scholars who address these issues develop his ideas further, define themselves against them, or at least reference his work.

Bhabha is often referred to as a theorist who has shifted the concept of hybridity from its colonial context to the postcolonial one. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's linguistic theories, Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical work and Franz Fanon's views on national consciousness, this scholar uses his concept of hybridity to depict the formation of identity and culture within conditions of colonial inequity. According to Bhabha, a hybrid identity emerges from the intertwining of elements of the colonizer and the colonized, whose relationship, as he asserts, is not solely based on binary opposition but on mutual dependence. He does not regard the colonial power as "the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions;"[30] for him, the dominant and the

[27] Samira Kawash, *Dislocating the Color Line: Identity, Hybridity and Singularity in African-American Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 4.
[28] Kawash 4.
[29] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 21.
[30] Bhabha 112.

dominated both experience subtle and continued cultural changes and the result of their encounters is the production of hybridization. Bhabha's hybridity, then, is associated with the idea that differences are interdependent and mutually constructed. As Sarah Wood explains, it involves the ability to "rethink and reformulate principles, structures and boundaries, not in an effort to reconstitute static boundaries of self and other, but rather in an acknowledgement of the permeability and intertextuality between self and other in formations of identity and culture."[31] Thus, hybridity is something more than a third term which resolves the conflict between two cultures or two supposedly "pure" positions, or as "a synthesis of thesis and antithesis," as David Huddart puts it.[32] As Bhabha affirms, it is not about being "able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges," rather he conceives of it as a form of liminal space which "enables other positions to emerge."[33]

In *The Location*, hybrid space is conceptualized as ambivalent and unstable. The author of this text repeatedly describes hybridity as an ongoing process rather than something one can own. As B. Kumaravadivelu remarks, Bhabha does not present it as a culminating product, but as "a way of understanding and perceiving the ambiguous cultural transition that carries no promise of perceptible closure."[34] Another phrase which is used in *The Location* in connection with hybrid identities is "incommensurable cultural temporalities."[35] As McLeod maintains, Bhabha does not conceive of hybrid identities as "total and complete in themselves" but as something which is "perpetually in motion, pursuing errant and unpredictable routes, open to change and reinscription."[36]

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[31] Sarah Wood, "A Third Space for Cyborg Politics," *Language and Marginality*, ed. Stephen McGill (Exeter: Elm Bank Publications, 2000) 64.
[32] David Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 126.
[33] Homi K. Bhabha in Huddart 126.
[34] B. Kumaravadivelu, *Cultural Globalization and Language Education* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) 124.
[35] Bhabha 3.
[36] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) ebook location 4611/6273.

Bhabha associates hybridity with other concepts and ideas which should be discussed here. The first of them is the so-called Third Space of enunciation, an interstitial site situated in between the existing systems of reference where hybridization takes place and which is in fact the location of culture since it contributes to the continual production of meaning. It is a zone of negotiation and it is also seen as the starting point for translation strategies. According to Bhabha, the Third Space "constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity, that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew."[37] The most important characteristic of this in-between space is that it problematizes limits, boundaries and fixed national, cultural or racial discourses because, as Michaela Wolf puts it, it can "neither be reduced to the *self* nor the *other*, neither to the First nor to the Third World, neither to the master nor to the slave."[38] In Bhabha's words, the intervention of the Third Space "quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People."[39]

Other two important concepts that Bhabha connects with hybridity are mimicry and ambivalence. Mimicry is described by this theorist as a "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*."[40] Within a colonial context, the term basically refers to the colonizers' demand that the colonized subjects "mimic" their behavior, morals, beliefs, customs and so on, which necessarily leads to ambivalence, because the copying is bound to be imperfect and it seems to mock whatever it imitates. Mimicry "continually suggests an identity not quite

[37] Bhabha 37.
[38] Michaela Wolf, "The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation," *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*, ed. Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000) 135. Emphasis in the original.
[39] Bhabha 54.
[40] Bhabha 122. Emphasis in the original.

like the colonizer;"[41] thus, the colonized subjects are both appropriate and inappropriate, both "resemblance and menace."[42] The ambivalence disturbs the binary division between the colonizer and the colonized and undermines the authority of the colonial discourse. McLeod points out that this premise is mainly innovative in the way that Bhabha "locates the possibility of the critique of colonial discourses not in the conscious activities of the colonized, in their acts of resistance or alternative knowledges, but within the very substance of colonial discourses themselves."[43]

The construction of hybrid identity also involves the so-called "unhomeliness," which is "a paradigmatic colonial and postcolonial condition" as well as a condition arising from the migrant experience. The term is, as Bhabha himself affirms, very close to Freud's notion of "Das Unheimlich" which is usually translated as "The Uncanny."[44] In *The Location*, unhomeliness is described as an "estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world […] that is the condition of extraterritorial and cross-cultural initiations."[45] It does not refer to homelessness, but to the moment when home, the place which is supposed to be intimate, familiar and secure, becomes uncomfortable, foreign and even frightening as a result of a cross-cultural experience. This unhomely moment is illustrated through the example of Henry James's heroine Isabel Archer, who takes the measure of her dwelling "in the state of incredulous terror."[46] However, Bhabha also links unhomeliness with the repression of historical trauma when he claims that the unhomely moment may also be the one in which "the recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions" and uses Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as an example. In both cases, unhomeliness

[41] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 3rd edition (London: Routledge, 2013) 115.
[42] Bhabha 123.
[43] McLeod l. 1339/6273.
[44] Bhabha notes that for Freud, "the *unheimlich* is the name for everything that ought to have remained […] secret and hidden but has come to light." [Bhabha 14.]
[45] Bhabha 13.
[46] Bhabha 13.

has to do with blurring of the boundaries between the private and the public sphere; between home and the world.

To sum up, in *The Location*, hybrid space is described as a liminal space whose construction involves ambivalence, which enables new positions to emerge and which, by entertaining "difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy,"[47] challenges a dominant cultural power and undermines the binary oppositions on which society has been built. Therefore, hybridity is posited as a counterforce to essentialist theories and as a resistive power to cultural hegemony. Bhabha sees great potential in the in-between spaces as they "provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity."[48] According to him, the willingness to acknowledge the Third Space "may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity."[49]

Nevertheless, some critics find Bhabha's premises problematic and questionable. He is mainly admonished for a generalizing approach and for paying little attention to the specific circumstances that influence the diasporic experience. This is sometimes connected with his alleged privileged position of an immigrant intellectual living in a metropolis. For example, according to Arif Dirlik, this theorist substitutes "poststructuralist linguistic manipulation for historical and social explanation."[50] Benita Parry, who belongs to the group of scholars that regard hybridity as a concept for the elite, also criticizes the totalizing tendency within Bhabha's use of phrases like "the colonial condition" or "the postcolonial experience." Furthermore, she disapproves of his insistence on the primacy of discourse. While "appreciative of the ground Bhabha has broken in asking new questions

[47] Bhabha 5.
[48] Bhabha 2.
[49] Bhabha 38.
[50] Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20 (1994): 333

of old problems," Parry is "uneasy about his disposal of the language model to explain both colonialism's pasts and contemporary 'postcolonial situations'[…]."[51] Another commentator, Ania Loomba, disagrees with Bhabha's (and other postcolonial critics') tendency to "forget the links between the recasting of third world cultures and the spread of consumer capitalism" and their positive view of globalization as the producer of a new and liberating hybridity or multiculturalism. She claims that these terms "now circulate to ratify the mish-mash of cultures generated by the near unipolar domination of the Western, particularly United States, media machine."[52] All these criticisms are certainly something that one has to bear in mind when working with Bhabha's ideas, even though this thesis deals with imagined fictional communities and does not use the concept of hybridity as a social reality with historical specificity.

2. 6 The Notion of the Cyborg and Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto"

Another interesting and widely discussed figure of cultural theory that may be used to approach the issues connected with hybridity is the cyborg. Traditionally understood as a creature combining mechanical and organic elements, the cyborg is a prominent character in science-fiction, a real-life subject and also a useful theoretical figure. The word, which is short for "cybernetic organism," was coined in 1960 by two scientists, Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline, to "describe how man might be amalgamated with machine in order to survive the adverse conditions of space travel," as David Seed alleges.[53] Gradually, the term has been extended to include almost any living organism which is changed by or which interacts with the mechanical and biotechnologies.

Donna Haraway, a feminist scholar and a historian of science, has taken the figuration of the cyborg and transformed it into one of the key concepts of the 1990s

[51] Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London: Routledge, 2004) 57.
[52] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism-Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 257.
[53] David Seed, *A Companion to Science Fiction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 276.

thinking about gender and humanity. The historical background of her seminal text is important for the understanding of the impact that it had in academic circles. "A Cyborg Manifesto" was first published in 1985, in the so-called Reagan "Star Wars" era when the U.S. government planned to develop a space-based defensive shield against nuclear attack. Moreover, it was a period when feminist theory and politics were divided into multiple "feminisms." Last but not least, it was the time when scholars and critics began to use computers at work, which brought them closer to technology. Haraway wrote "A Cyborg Manifesto" in order to respond to the question she was asked – the question of the future of socialist feminism in this era. As she admits, the essay was "a somewhat desperate effort in the early Reagan years to hold together impossible things that all seemed true and necessary simultaneously."[54]

The text is described by its author as an attempt to build "an ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism."[55] Why ironic? As Barbara Brook claims, Haraway uses a perspective of irony and its implication of detachment to embrace "the apparent contradictions and discontinuities."[56] A part of the irony of the "manifesto" is the fact the cyborg seemed as a very unlikely site of potential for feminism. In the post-World War II era, technology and cybernetics were increasingly perceived as anti-nature and anti-woman – as Joseph Schneider maintains, many US socialists and feminists in the mid-1980s "tended to see high technology and science as strengthening the dualisms that entrench Western dominations […] and thus calling for strong resistance."[57] The cyborg actually emerged from militarist, industrial, space-race visions; it is, as Haraway writes,

[54] Donna Haraway in David Bell, *Cyberculture Theorists: Manuel Castells and Donna Haraway* (New York: Routledge, 2007) 109.
[55] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature,* second ed. (London: Free Association Books, 1991) 149.
[56] Barbara Brook, *Feminist Perspectives on the Body* (New York: Routledge, 2014) 140.
[57] Joseph Schneider, *Donna Haraway: Live Theory* (London: Continuum, 2005) 66.

"the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism […]."[58] Besides this, its fictional representation was usually a masculine, weaponized creature from Hollywood films and sci-fi novels. Thus, as David Bell observes, "the irony is in taking the cyborg, whether a vivisected lab rat fitted for space flight, or *tech-noir* fantasies of hypermasculine Terminators […], and turning them into something politically potent, feminist and progressive."[59]

When discussing the cyborg, Haraway seems to take into account its existence as both fictional and real-life creature, its military origins as well as its life-saving potential; its possibilities for both domination and freedom. She emphasizes the ambivalence and inconsistency characterizing this subject. As she writes, there is more than one way of reading the cyborg. From the first perspective, it is about "the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet […], about the final appropriation of women's bodies in a masculinist orgy of war"; from another point of view, it "may 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."[60] Nevertheless, her point is that one has to see the cyborg from both of these perspectives at once since "each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other [one]."[61]

Although the cyborg is defined as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction,"[62] in "A Cyborg Manifesto," it indicates more than a synthesis of the organic and the mechanical. It is posited as an embodiment of the blurring of several boundaries. Haraway identifies three key boundary breakdowns which make the emergence of this figure possible – the one between human and animal, the one between animal-human (organism) and machine, and

[58] Haraway 151.
[59] Bell 108.
[60] Haraway 154.
[61] Haraway 154.
[62] Haraway 149.

the one between the physical and the non-physical. Because it is no longer clear what is machine/organism, self/other, whole/part, mind/body, active/passive in the cyborg, this image challenges dualisms that have been persistent in Western culture and problematizes "the statuses of man or woman, human, artefact, member of a race, individual entity, or body."[63]

Melzer notes that Western construction of dualisms of self and other is "based on categories of sameness (normative) and difference (deviant) […]." These categories "form a relationship of power which is naturalized and not open to change"[64] and which dictates that difference is treated simply as a pre-given counterpoint to identity and "ends up controlled by sameness" (those in power).[65] By assuming multiple, contradictory "selves" the cyborg undermines the self/other binary and thereby escapes the power structures of dominance and subordination which are reinforced by it. Therefore, this figure has, as Brook puts it, "the potential for changing basic patterns of thought in modern western society."[66]

According to Haraway, one of the most important features of the cyborg is its break with history; the fact it has "no origin story in the Western sense." Furthermore, it is "a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour […]."[67] The cyborg has never been innocent and it brings a shift away from psychoanalytic history and oedipal stories which are, as Brook affirms, "posited on a version of the myth of the Fall in Judeo-Christian scriptures and which suggest that human behavior is always based on a desire to return to the state of innocence and unity with nature/mother."[68] Thus, the idea of the cyborg opposes the notion of organic wholeness

[63] Haraway 178.
[64] Melzer l. 1422/7915.
[65] Melzer l. 1617/7915.
[66] Brook 139.
[67] Haraway 150.
[68] Brook 139.

and singularity. Instead, it is "resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity."[69] Other terms that Haraway uses in connection with this figuration include monstrosity, "potent fusions" and "dangerous possibilities."[70] As Schneider remarks, the cyborg is about "improbable but promising couplings […]."[71]

Haraway suggests that people have hitherto used a "maze of dualisms"[72] in order to explain their bodies to themselves and that cyborg imagery may provide a way out of them. Cyborg body is described as "not innocent, […] not born in a garden," as one which is "not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust" [73] and as a matter of both fiction and lived experience. These characterizations imply two important facts. Firstly, the cyborg body undermines the traditional opposition between nature and culture since it comes neither from one nor the other. Secondly, the cyborg can neither be regarded as completely discursive nor as wholly material. According to Anne Balsamo, the notion reasserts a material body and by doing this, it "rebukes the disappearance of the body within postmodernism" – it subverts "the certainty of the 'textualization of everything' by pointing to the lived relations of domination that ground cultural reading(s)."[74] However, the cyborg is not solely material either. Thus, one may conclude, as Balsamo does, that the cyborg challenges us "to search for ways to study the body as it is at once both a cultural construction and a material fact of human life."[75]

The cyborg image raises many questions revolving around the body and its boundaries. According to Mary Ann Doane, "the concept of the 'body' has traditionally

[69] Haraway 151.
[70] Haraway 154.
[71] Schneider 66.
[72] Haraway 181.
[73] Haraway 180.
[74] Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (Durham: Duke University, 1996) 33.
[75] Balsamo 33.

denoted the finite, a material limit that is absolute […]"[76] However, in the cyborg world, the body is not a set of finite limitations. Haraway calls attention to this fact by the following question: "why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?"[77] The cyborg body is leaky not only because it stands for the breaching of the man/animal and man/machine boundaries, but also because it "includes all external pathways along which information can travel," as Bateson argues,[78] and because it is "both its own agent and subject to the power of other agencies," as Jennifer Gonzáles writes.[79] In addition to the impossibility to define where exactly the cyborg body ends, it is difficult to determine what is mind and what is body in this figure. Haraway contends that this boundary is also blurred by the cyborg and illustrates it through the example of "machines that resolve into coding practices."[80]

Due to all these traits, the cyborg is presented by Haraway as a suitable figure to be situated in relation to feminist theory and also as an image which enables her to criticize some aspects of feminist identity politics, especially the notion that female embodiment is something given and organic. She argues that there is nothing about "being female" which naturally connects all women and she also suggests that the category of "women's experience" is not an absolute as many feminists understood it in the past, but a constructed concept. Haraway declares that instead of attempting to find a unified standpoint, feminists should code the cyborg self, "the reassembled and disassembled postmodern collective and personal self" which is opposed to total theory.[81] According to her, cyborg politics is "the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code

[76] Mary Ann Doane, *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, ed. Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward and Fiona Hovenden (London: Routledge, 2000) 110.
[77] Haraway 178.
[78] Gregory Bateson in Balsamo 11.
[79] Jennifer González, "Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research," *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, ed. Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward and Fiona Hovenden (London: Routledge, 2000) 58.
[80] Haraway 177.
[81] Haraway 163.

that translates all meaning perfectly […]"[82] which implies that political coalition should be based on affinity and partial connection rather than on identity. Thus, she calls for cyborg feminism, which would not be built on a dream of a common language, but on "a powerful infidel heteroglossia"[83] and which would not only be an alternative to the totalizing tendencies within feminism, but also to the so-called "informatics of domination," which is defined as a "world system of production/reproduction and communication"[84] that follows the white capitalist patriarchy of the previous era.

2. 7 A Comparison of Bhabha's and Haraway's Texts

One may notice that there are clear resonances between "A Cyborg Manifesto" and Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*. Like Bhabha, Harraway revises or reads anew a concept that has existed before. Wood argues that both these theorists provide a "catachrestic revisioning of traditional concepts that ultimately open onto new space where the formulation of identity can be reconsidered."[85] She asserts that they "seek […] an imaginative visualisation of an alternative space from which to view the social and cultural constraints of Western ideology."[86] The two theorists also share the view that hybridity is a positive force with a subversive potential – they believe that it can generate forms of resistance to hegemonic and homogenizing forces, whether it is colonial authority, patriarchal capitalism, the "informatics of domination" and so on. Like Bhabha's ideas on hybrid identity, Haraway's cyborg theory has to do with a kind of liminal, in-between existence, transgression of boundaries and a constant state of becoming. Both the Third Space and the cyborg space are characterized by their ambivalence and multiplicity – they "represent potential and a realm of possibilities, rather than certainties"[87] and they displace

[82] Haraway 170.
[83] Haraway 181.
[84] Haraway 163.
[85] Wood 63.
[86] Wood 69.
[87] Wood 67.

the notion of originary identity. Thus, they are both characterized by their potential to challenge dualisms that have long structured Western society and the power relations that are based on these dualisms.

However, there are also some differences between the two theories which should be mentioned, among other things, in order to make clear why the cyborg is also necessary for this discussion, even if it is in many ways similar to Bhabha's ideas on hybridity. Firstly, while Bhabha's hybridity is associated with the colonial situation and dissolution of geographic and cultural boundaries, the cyborg has developed, according to Haraway, analogously to the erosion of other boundaries – human-animal/machine, human/animal and physical/non-physical. The cyborg then is situated at the boundary between human and "non-human." Some of Butler's protagonists problematize the notion of humanity by their mixed-blood, alien-human status, strange appearance or special powers, and therefore, Haraway's theory is useful for the examination of these characters. As Haraway states, Butler has been "consumed with an interrogation into the boundaries of what counts as human and into the limits of the concept and practices of claiming 'property in the self' as the ground of 'human' individuality and selfhood."[88] Secondly, in contrast to *The Location of Culture* where the body is mostly mentioned only in relation to race, Haraway's theory raises questions about the boundaries of the body and the boundaries between the organic and the inorganic. As Jones maintains, "it examines the relationship between technology and the body as technology is used to understand and situate the body and moves inside the body."[89] Thirdly, *The Location of Culture* is not significantly concerned with gender whereas "A Cyborg Manifesto" invites reflections on this topic. The cyborg is presented in it as a fluid, transgressive creature which may exist outside of the gendered roles. Haraway expresses the idea that in the cyborg world "gender might not be global identity after all,

[88] Donna Haraway, "Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies: Constitutions of Self in Immune System Discourse," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 226.
[89] Jones 5.

even if it has profound historical breadth and depth"[90] and she also suggests the possibility that the cyborg may transcend the category altogether.

It should also be stated that the cyborg theory is linked with Butler by Haraway herself. Not only does she include this writer on her list of the theorists for cyborgs, but she also examines some of her works and describes them, among other characteristics, as ones that are concerned with "the contending shapes of sameness and difference in any possible future" and the movement across "the specific cultural, biotechnical, and political boundaries that separate and link animal, human, and machine in a contemporary global world where survival is at stake."[91]

[90] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 180.
[91] Haraway, "Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies" 229.

3. *Xenogenesis* Trilogy

Octavia Butler's works feature complex relationships and problems and they do not offer simple solutions. As Hampton puts it, every subject or conflict in her fiction "is complicated with several possibilities."[92] The characters that populate Butler's books cannot be divided into neat categories or types. *Xenogenesis* trilogy, which includes *Dawn*, *Adulthood Rites* and *Imago,* is no exception in this respect. At first, it may seem that the Oankali and humans in these three novels are in a typical colonizer/colonized or even oppressor/oppressed relationship. However, when one finds more about the aliens, humans and the construct children, it becomes very difficult to apply any of these categories.

3. 1 The Oankali – Colonizers, Slaveholders or Cyborgs?

The Oankali are extraterrestrials who come to Earth at a time when it is completely devastated by a nuclear conflict among several states. They heal many of the dying humans and restore the planet, but they expect to get something from its native inhabitants in return – the participation in what is referred to as "trade," an exchange of genetic information that will eventually lead to the creation of a new species and new ways of life. The Oankali need difference in order to survive. They are in fact constantly becoming "other," which echoes the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who conceive of being as becoming. According to them, becoming is "neither the imitation of a subject nor the proportionality of a form." It rather means "to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes."[93] And since becoming is never a fixed state but rather a

[92] Hampton 68.
[93] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004) 300.

constant process, the Oankali are themselves ephemeral, insofar as what defines them as a species relies on constant change," as Alison Tara Walker remarks.[94]

In *Dawn,* which is set approximately two hundred years after the apocalyptic conflict, the planet is prepared to be resettled, but the surviving humans are still held on the Oankali spaceship. The aliens' experiments and attempts to communicate with the captives are not very successful, so they choose Lilith Iyapo, a young African American woman whose family has not survived the war, as a mediator between them and humans. She is supposed to awaken some of the members of her species from the suspended animation, in which they are kept, and to inform them about the Oankali and their project. Lilith adapts to the new conditions and finally, she agrees to undertake the mission. Nevertheless, the establishment of the Oankali social contract is very problematic.

The Oankali have a humanoid form, but they differ from humans in many ways. The most noticeable dissimilarity which provokes hostile reactions from their intended partner species is their physical appearance. The aliens' skin is grey and instead of ears, nose and eyes, they have elastic, tentacle-like sensory organs which cover various places of their bodies. These attributes are usually found repulsive by humans and they often liken the Oankali to animals – worms, sea slugs or medusas. Furthermore, in contrast to the inhabitants of the Earth, the Oankali have three sexes – male, female and ooloi. The latter is neither simply without sex nor a mixture of the other two sexes, but it is an entirely different being whose existence obviously has a great influence on the Oankali reproductive system and family structures. Another important difference is the aliens' technological superiority – they are genetic engineers who are able to manipulate the DNA, recreate living beings from their "prints" or to heal wounds and diseases. Even the most feared human disease, cancer, is not perceived as a threat by them. Instead of simply trying

[94]Alison Tara Walker in Lauren L. Lacey, *The* Past *That Might Have Been, the Future That May Come: Women Writing Fantastic Fiction, 1960s to the Present* (Jefferson: MacFarland, 2014) 170.

to destroy it, they put it to a positive use – by means of human cancer cells, they develop their shapeshifting ability. As Jones maintains, "body-knowledge in this scenario opens a pathway of communication with the cancer cells and, in turn, changes a relationship of domination to one of cooperation."[95]

According to Jim Miller, the aliens in *Xenogenesis* may be described as "both colonizers and a utopian collective."[96] On the one hand, there is no doubt that the Oankali are the ones who are in control of the interspecies relationship; the ones in power. They believe that the destruction of the planet was caused by the so-called Human Contradiction, a combination of intelligence and hierarchical behavior in the Earth's inhabitants, which they see as genetically inevitable. Thus, they feel justified in taking certain measures to prevent another war which would, as they say, necessarily come if they let humankind exist independently. During their stay on the board of the Oankali ship, the guests' needs are well met, but they experience a loss of agency. Humans are put back into a stasis whenever they have a fit of anger or refuse to cooperate, and their movement and interaction with others are restricted. When they are returned back to the planet, those who resist living and reproducing with the aliens are not forced to do so, but they are sterilized in order not to spread the genetic flaw to their descendants.

Some critics even point out that the power structures in the relationship between humanity and the Oankali are reminiscent of those between slaves and their owners. For instance, the impregnation of Lilith, which is carried out by an ooloi called Nikanj without her explicit consent, or the surgery performed on her before she is awakened from the suspended animation are compared by Amanda Boulter to the invasion of black women's bodies and the control over their reproduction during slavery. She remarks that Lilith's

[95] Jones 53.
[96] Jim Miller, "Post-Apocalyptic Hoping: Octavia Butler's Dystopian/Utopian Vision," *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 25 (1998): 339

response to the first pregnancy "echoes the ambivalent feelings of the women slaves whose pregnancies were the result of forced matings or rape."[97] Nevertheless, in contrast to antebellum slaveholders, the Oankali are not driven by financial motivation, acquisitiveness or lust; but rather by their biological inclination to collect and incorporate difference. "We must do it," they declare. "It renews us, enables us to survive as an evolving species instead of specializing ourselves into extinction or stagnation."[98] As Jeffrey Tucker maintains, the extraterrestrials "have no idea what their genetic comingling with humans will produce; there is no goal, purpose, or end to the Oankali project other than the production of more difference."[99] In addition, in an interview with Stephen Potts, Butler declares: "The only places I am writing about slavery is where I actually say so."[100]

It is apparent that the aliens' relationship with humans is not innocent; however, some of their characteristics are very distinct from those that are usually associated with colonizers and oppressors. Firstly, the Oankali crave difference, they seek and collect it, unlike most humans in the book who fear it or find it threatening. Racism and xenophobia, in the human sense of the words, do not exist in their society. As Melzer notes, they do not constitute identity through physical appearances, and therefore "the 'not-I' has no physical markers."[101] Secondly, the aliens hate physical violence, which is "against their flesh and bone, against every cell of them"[102] since they understand life as "a thing of inexpressible value."[103] They want to give humans health and a long life expectancy; every loss of life is extremely painful for them, no matter whether the person is a member of the family or a

[97] Amanda Boulter, "Polymorphous Futures: Octavia E. Butler's *Xenogenesis* Trilogy," *American Bodies: Cultural Histories of the Physique*, ed. Armstrong Tim (New York: New York UP, 1996) 175.
[98] Octavia Butler, *Lilith's Brood* (New York: Aspect/Warner Books, 2000) 40.
[99] Jeffrey Tucker, "The Human Contradiction: Identity and/as Essence in Octavia E. Butler's *Xenogenesis* Trilogy," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 37.2, Science Fiction (2007): 164
[100] Stephen W. Potts, "'We Keep Playing the Same Record': A Conversation with Octavia E. Butler," *Science Fiction Studies* 23.3, Nov. 1996, Apr. 2016 <
http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/interviews/potts70interview.htm>
[101] Melzer l. 1644/7915.
[102] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 562.
[103] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 470.

resister. Thirdly, technology goes hand in hand with ecology for the Oankali. They do not produce materials or machines that are simply to be used, but living technologies which they regard as partners. The Oankali ships, towns, houses and appliances are symbiotic organisms whose ancestors have been fashioned "from their own genes and those of many other animals."[104] Westling even suggests that these extra-terrestrials represent salutary models for environmental management as "wise, restrained beings who act for the good of the entire living community."[105]

To some extent, the Oankali may be seen as "cyborgian" beings. Like the cyborg figure, they crave difference, take "pleasure in the confusion of boundaries"[106] and represent the breakdown of the boundary between organism and machine, and between human (humanoid) and animal. The aliens' bodies do not contain what we define as machines, but they are themselves genetic technologies. As Jones maintains, Butler offers "new ways of understanding the body's potential as, itself, the technology" and the two domains are "merged in her rendering of the Oankali."[107] Furthermore, the aliens embrace not only one kind of difference – humanity – but they also collect genetic information of animals and plants and they integrate it "into their ships, their already vast collection of living things, *and themselves*."[108] Another trait that the extraterrestrials share with Haraway's cyborg is that they problematize the concept of the body itself. It is difficult to determine where the Oankali body ends because the aliens often communicate directly by linking with the neural systems of other persons and living entities that surround them, which makes everyone and everything very interconnected in their world. As Jacobs asserts, they "are constantly penetrating and being penetrated, dramatizing a terrifyingly

[104] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 442.
[105] Westling 198.
[106] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 162.
[107] Jones 46.
[108] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 410. Emphasis added.

limitless intimacy."[109] Furthermore, in contrast to the humans who apparently perceive the body and the mind as divided domains that are often in conflict, the Oankali see this distinction as meaningless since their bodies seem to be synchronized with the mind and they do not exhibit any internal contradictions. For example, the readers learn that Nikanj "meant what it said. Its body and its mouth said the same things."[110]

However, unlike the cyborg and Bhabha's hybridity, the Oankali do not really represent the possibilities for liberation and for reversing the structures of domination. Although they do not represent one canon or a singular history and although their reasons for not allowing humans to continue independently in *Dawn* and *Adulthood Rites* may appear as noble, they still give the intended partner species only two options – to conform to the Oankali system of reproduction and the way they live, or to be sterile and to watch how the "fully human" people become extinct. The Oankali themselves are divided into three groups – Dinso and Toaht reproduce with the inhabitants of the Earth while Akjai remain unchanged. Nevertheless, the aliens initially do not give a similar chance to the humans because, as they believe, to provide them with a new world and let them procreate again "would be like breeding intelligent beings for the sole purpose of having them kill one another."[111] In fact, they claim an essential knowledge of the human condition (the so-called Human Contradiction) and they "ultimately seek to homogenise the humans into their vision of identity," as Wood points out.[112] Thus, the setting of *Dawn* may be described as rather dystopian. Jacobs, for example, avows that the opening of this novel "employs many of the common tropes of dystopia – and indeed, of alien abduction

[109] Jacobs 98.
[110] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 548.
[111] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 501.
[112] Wood 71.

accounts."[113] Yet, the situation develops throughout the other two parts of the trilogy – it is influenced by the hybrid construct characters who come up with new, promising options.

3. 2 Akin, the "Brave Boy"[114]

Although the Oankali and Lilith echo some of Haraway's and Bhabha's ideas, the possibilities of the Third Space and the cyborg are best represented by the constructs, the offspring of the union between aliens and humans. One of these characters is Akin, the protagonist of *Adulthood Rites*. Although he is born from the body of a human woman, he has been created from the DNA of five people, three Oankali – Ahajas, Dichaan and Nikanj – and two humans – Lilith Iyapo and her dead Asian partner, Joseph Shing. Thus, Akin's birth problematizes not only the notion of racial purity but also that of "humanness." Moreover, as the first male human-born construct, he represents a potential danger to the human-Oankali gene trade since he skirts "as close to the [Human] Contradiction as anyone has dared to go," which leaves him with his own contradiction.[115]

During his infant stage, Akin looks like a human child; the only visible marker of "otherness" is his long grey tongue which has similar functions like the Oankali sensory tentacles. However, his psychological development is much faster than a "fully" human baby's would be. At the age of one, his intelligence is comparable to that of an adult human and he speaks English and Oankali fluently. Furthermore, he has some special abilities, for example, he never forgets anything that he has heard or experienced, he is able to collect and store genetic information and he can give a lethal sting. Because of all these

[113] Jacobs 96.
[114] Akin's name is from Yoruba and it means "hero" or, if the letter s is put on it, "brave boy." [Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 351.] Because of the name and his position of the first boy born to a human woman on Earth after the war, some critics regard him as a Christ figure. For example, Aparajita Nanda states that his mission "is spelled out and prefigured in his name like Christ, the first-born son of a human woman, meant to save mankind, meant to be a hero. Furthermore, the *s*, an additive to Akin's name, pluralizes the kin indicating his dual origins, a literal illustration of the necessity of Akin to become someone brave and heroic on behalf of his kinsmen, his kinsfolk." [Aparajita Nanda, "Re-writing the Bhabhian 'Mimic Man': Akin, the Posthuman Other in Octavia Butler's *Adulthood Rites*," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 41. 3-4 (2011): 123]
[115] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 475.

characteristics, he poses a threat not only to the humans who resist reproducing with the Oankali but also to those who already are their mates. Lilith predicts that resister men will hate him because "he is one of their replacements" and the people from the so-called trading villages will "resent him for not being completely Human and looking more Human than their kids" or "for looking much younger than he sounds."[116]

One may notice that Akin is a hybrid being on more than one level; he is in the position of both/and if we speak of categories such as black/white, human/non-human, self/other, colonizer/colonized or child/adult. He apparently inhabits an in-between space which in some ways resembles the Third Space. It is not exactly a crossing between a locality (spatiality) and différance (temporality) like Bhabha's concept, but it is a space of ambivalence which puts into relation the above-mentioned binaries. The construct boy displaces the notion of originary identity.

Akin is a product of merging with other beings, which is a trait that echoes the cyborg. From his pre-natal stage, he "embodies an intensely relational form of subjectivity," as Jacobs contends.[117] When he touches and tastes his family members and they do the same, he understands that he "is part of the people who touched him – that within them, he could find fragments of himself. He was himself, and he was those others."[118] Like Haraway's figure, the construct boy is "wary of holism, but needy for connection […]";[119] both physical and mental one. Sharing his feelings and experiences with others is essential for him. In addition, he craves what he calls "tasting"– burrowing the sensory filaments on his tongue under the skin or surface of other organisms, plants and things which means that he basically attains information and experience through his mouth. Akin's "tasting" challenges the mind/body distinction and, as Stacy Alaimo avows,

[116] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 258.
[117] Jacobs 103.
[118] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 255.
[119] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 163.

it points to the fact that "corporeality, like culture, is coded and bodies, not just minds, have the power to interpret these codes."[120]

When Akin is seventeen months old, he is kidnapped by resister raiders who, although they think of themselves as colonized and oppressed by the aliens, are actually comparable to colonizers since they act as dominant entities attempting to define others. The abductors' plan is to exchange Akin for gold or women and they later manage to sell him to a rich anti-Oankali village called Phoenix, which is led by his mother's former friends, Tate and Gabriel. Thanks to the way he looks, Akin is quite well received by almost everybody that he encounters. Most of the resisters in the novel regard human-like appearance as a trait of great value and the main sign of humanity. In contrast, Oankali-like features are referred to as "something wrong." Iriarte, one of the abductors, demonstrates this attitude when he says that Akin's talking is better than "being covered with tentacles or grey skin. It's better than being without eyes or ears or a nose. It's looks that are important."[121] Some of the villagers are even willing to go as far in their attempts to destroy physical difference as to amputate the construct children's tentacles so that they could learn to use their Human senses, and then see the world as humans do and be more like them.[122] Akin does not have any tentacles, hence, the resisters always see him as beautiful at first sight. Nevertheless, they often get angry or feel threatened when he starts to exhibit things that human babies would not do, for example, when he shows his ability to poison a suffering animal using his tongue. Through these "non-human" traits, they construct his "otherness."

The attitude of the kidnappers and the inhabitants of Phoenix to Akin as well as his attitude to them is characterized by ambivalence; it is both attraction and repulsion at the

[120] Stacy Alaimo, "'Skin Dreaming': The Bodily Transgressions of Fielding, Burke, Octavia Butler and Linda Hogan," *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*, ed. Greta Gaard and Patrick Murphy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998) 128.
[121] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 341.
[122] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 375.

same time. The construct boy feels "drawn to [humans], yet warned against them."[123] He is fascinated by "the compelling, seductive, deadly contradiction"[124] in them, but he is troubled by their violent behavior which is often caused by their fear of difference. In order not to scare people and not to provoke violence, Akin tries to adapt to their culture and habits. For instance, he initially does not speak and cries more in order to appear as a "fully" human baby, starts to wear a pair of pants even though it covers his sensory spots, does not talk about the Oankali unless he is asked directly or listens to the resisters' fairy tales in spite of his aversion to stories that are not completely true. One may say that Akin is in a similar relation to his captors as Bhabha's colonial mimic men, "*a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite*."[125] He is "at once resemblance and menace,"[126] because he looks like them; yet, some of his actions and his reactions to the resister's culture disclose that their dominant discourse centered on essential identity is full of anxieties. Although his presence and the presence of other construct children please the people of Phoenix, they also remind them that they cannot have children on their own and that pure humanity which they value so much is unsustainable in the long run.

Akin's relationship with the Oankali is also complicated. He was raised among them and may also be seen as a mimic man in relation to them. He was taught as an Oankali child with a human part in him; not the other way round. As it turns out later, he was intended to become an informer for the aliens – there was a consensus that the boy should be left in Phoenix in order to observe humans. This decision deprives him of the important bonding with his paired sibling who is born during his absence at home, but at the same time, it enables him to get to know the resisters' thinking, not only their bodies, which have always been prioritized by the aliens. After spending more than a year with

[123] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 266.
[124] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 266.
[125] Bhabha 127. Emphasis in the original.
[126] Bhabha 123.

them, Akin is uncertain whether the Oankali "are progenitors of an altruistic symbiotic mode that ensures human survival or predators of an egoistic discourse that intends to bring about human extinction," as Aparajita Nanda contends.[127] He doubts whether the aliens have the right the control human procreation and compares their reproductive politics to consuming. "What are we that we can do this to whole peoples? Not predators? Not symbionts? What then?"[128] Akin not only becomes convinced that there should be a human Akjai, a group of fertile humans who choose not to reproduce with the extraterrestrials, but he also starts to take concrete steps towards accomplishing this plan. Hence, he rewrites his role of an informer that was assigned to him by the Oankali and turns out to be a mimic man, "whose semblance of mimicry becomes a potent site of negotiation and resistance molded by his own needs," as Nanda puts it.[129]

As the readers may notice, Akin seems to embody the subversive possibilities of the Third Space and the cyborg. He apparently does what bearers of hybrid identity do according to Bhabha: he negotiates, translates and uses his hybrid identity as a tool in his negotiations with humans and the Oankali. The young construct recognizes that he is situated within the system, but outside its power structures and, as Melzer suggests, "from this position, power can be redistributed."[130] Even though he agrees with the opinion that there is a contradiction in human genes causing their tendency towards violence and destruction, he still believes that the native inhabitants of the Earth should get a chance. Akin's mission – to persuade the Oankali to give humans the possibility to live independently of them and to reproduce in their own way on Mars – requires a total physical and psychological investment from him. Because he is regarded as a child in the Oankali world, he finds an adult ally, an Oankali Akjai ooloi, and achieves a perfect

[127] Nanda 115.
[128] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 443.
[129] Nanda 117.
[130] Melzer l. 2130/7915.

connection with it; a bond in which the two beings almost merge and share their experience. The Akjai later transmits what Akin has learned about humans – their fears, hopes and pain resulting from their pointless lives – to the Oankali. His experience of the "other" is thus passed on and it inspires constructs "to start to examine their human heritage as they had not before."[131]

Nevertheless, Akin has to convince not only the aliens, but also the resisters who mostly do not trust anything connected with the Oankali. Again, the success of his plan depends on his communicative skills and on delivering the right amount of information at the right time. He utilizes his both/and position to identify with humans and to justify his moves. As he tells Tate, he has to deal with the resister question since it is not simply an important cause, but "it's part of [him], too. It concerns [him], too."[132] Thus, he gradually moves towards accomplishing his goal and finally manages to gather a group of constructs and resisters who will help him to start the new colony on Mars.

According to Bhabha, the Third Space "displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives […]."[133] Akin's in-between space does not really displace histories, but it opens up new possibilities. Firstly, it questions the fixity of the Oankali opinions about the Human Contradiction. As he explains, "chance exists. Mutation. Unexpected effects of the new environment. Things no one has thought of. The Oankali can make mistakes."[134] According to Nanda, Akin's message transforms "the power discourse that stems from the limiting and debilitating vision of the Human Contradiction to the profession of a sermon of hope and futurity."[135] Secondly, it challenges the resisters' insistence on purity and essential identity connected with the Earth, which they see as something that naturally belongs to them. Humans who

[131] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 471.
[132] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 403.
[133] Bhabha in Huddart 126.
[134] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 501.
[135] Nanda 128.

will decide to move to Mars will have to embrace difference to some extent – they will leave the planet and they will have to trust the constructs and cooperate with them. Akin's efforts are thus reminiscent of what Haraway refers to as cyborg politics – the struggle "against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly."[136] The ending when the hero literally rises up from the ashes of Phoenix, which was set on fire by some of its most xenophobic and revengeful inhabitants, with his resister friends, who will follow him on his mission to prepare Mars for humans, is a hopeful one. However, Akin's plan is not presented as a solution to the human/Oankali problem and it does not produce a tolerant society on Earth. Butler never shows what is going on in the Mars colony, but the third book of the trilogy implies that although many humans accept this new option as an answer to their problems, there is no real peace between some groups of resisters and the Oankali.

3. 3 Jodahs – "A Promising and Dangerous Monster"

Another interesting hybrid character in *Xenogenesis* that goes beyond Akin "in retaining a permanent instability and deferred context"[137] is the protagonist of the third book, *Imago*. Jodahs is also a child of Lilith. Like his older brother, he is a product of the union between two humans and three Oankali, but in contrast to Akin, who has conceived of himself as male even before he was born, Jodahs is "eka," a child too young to have developed sex, until the time of its metamorphosis. Most construct children are sexless; they can "literally go either way, become male or female."[138] They have apparent sex, which is usually the opposite of their paired sibling's, and they mostly become what they seem to be during their childhood, but it does not have to be this way. Personal choice and the influence of close family members are also involved in this process of becoming a sexed being. For example, Akin's paired sibling, Tiikuchahk, changes from apparent female into actual male. When it is not sure whether it will develop into a male or female,

[136] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 188.
[137] Nanda 130.
[138] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 471.

others ask it what it wants, so it seems that personal feelings and wishes play an important role in the process. Similarly, Jodahs starts to display signs of turning into an ooloi although it looked male as a child and thought of itself as masculine, because it takes on the sex of the parent that it felt most drawn to. Thus, as opposed to being born with a sex, the life of the construct children is about becoming one. Due to this, "the nature of their difference is never fixed or predetermined; rather subjecthood becomes a complex series of negotiations," as Wood asserts.[139] Butler apparently uses the asexuality of the construct children to imply that "markers like sex can be non-defining and unnecessary coincidences with regards to the construction of a body"[140] and she also raises a debate whether male/female roles and sexual orientation are genetically or culturally determined.

Jodahs represents radical difference since it is the first Human-born ooloi – a person that the Oankali have not yet allowed to exist on Earth, in spite of their inclination to create more and more difference. In the Oankali world, ooloi are the main genetic engineers whose role is to work with genetic information, to mediate sexual intercourse between males and females, to produce children, to heal, to assimilate biological data and to use them in a proper way. As Jodahs himself sums it up, they exist to "make the people and to unite them and to maintain them."[141]A construct ooloi who is not in control of its actions is therefore a potentially deadly being since it may negatively affect animals, plants, organic technologies and persons – it may cause various genetic mutations, cancerous growths, new diseases and other dangerous changes with a moment's inattention. It is no wonder that Jodahs feels like "one of the dormant volcanoes […] – like a thing that might explode anytime, destroying whatever happened to be nearby."[142]

[139] Wood 71.
[140] Hampton xxi.
[141] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 622.
[142] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 547.

Ooloi in general defy standard human gender categorization and gender roles, which is not to say that they are beyond gender, as Haraway suggests about the cyborg; they are only beyond the man/woman binary. According to Wood, the ooloi fills the gap between the I and the You and "in this sense of mediation [it] appears to function as representative of Bhabha's Third Space" since it embodies "the possibility of translation but also […] the potential of difference."[143] Humans in the trilogy are apparently more prejudiced towards the third sex than to the Oankali of sexes that they know. It is not only because ooloi are the element questioning the "naturalness" of heterosexual coupling and human reproduction, but also because humans are afraid of the loss of self-determination which is connected with the encounter with the ooloi's seductive pheromones. As Jacobs maintains, it lures them "into neuro-physical linkages that are exquisitely pleasurable yet involve complete loss of agency and a terrifying dissolution of the boundaries of the self."[144] It is especially men who tend to avoid the contact with ooloi even for healing because they feel as if their manhood was threatened. They frequently depict the experience as being "taken like a woman"[145] and some even perceive it as a manifestation of homosexual desire. However, concepts like heterosexuality and homosexuality seem to lose their meaning in a world where sexuality and procreation involve three to five people of three different sexes.[146] As Wolmark remarks, "Butler uses the new sexual configuration of human-ooloi relations as a device to raise the possibility of definitions of desire other than those which are determined by heterosexuality and the family."[147] The characters of

[143] Wood 70.
[144] Jacobs 99.
[145] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 203.
[146] The Oankali sexuality and family relations seem to be subversive at first because they comprise more than two people and more than two genders. However, according to Jeff Shantz, they also create an anarchonormativity, which means that these relations are normative, albeit within a subversive context. "Although a three or five member reproductive community is strange in terms of both human and Oankali practice, both pairs of humans and Oankali are heterosexual. There is little room for non-heteronormative sexual relations within the subversive structure, save for the third-sexed ooloi," he remarks. Jeff Shantz, *Specters of Anarchy: Literature and the Anarchist Imagination* (New York: Algora, 2015) 266.
[147] Wolmark 37.

the third sex enable the author of *Xenogenesis* to explore Haraway's suggestion that the cyborg does not "mark time on an oedipal calendar."[148]

Jodahs and Aaor, its paired sibling who also becomes the third sex, are not only ooloi; they are constructs – hybrid beings distinct from the Oankali ooloi. They combine ooloi powers and differences with human capriciousness and, in addition, they have an extraordinary skill which they developed thanks to the innovative utilization of human cancer cells – they can alter their form and appearance according to their and other close people's needs and feelings. Thus, besides combining contradictory characteristics mentally, they assume multiple selves in physical terms. The readers witness Jodahs's transformations into a Philippine man, a frog-like green creature, a woman some man used to dream about or a scaly quadrupedal being. It is impossible to determine which of its bodily forms the "real" Jodahs is and its sense of identity is no longer based on physical characteristics, as it used to be when Jodahs was younger. "I remembered…having a strong awareness of the way my face and body looked, and of that look being *me*. It never had been, really," Jodahs claims.[149]

It is apparent that Jodahs represents multiplicity and fluidity. As Wood avows, it possesses "the ability to rewrite the text of [its] body, to create [itself] in an image of [its] own making."[150] The boundaries of Jodahs's body are even more permeable than those of the Oankali and other constructs and like Haraway's cyborg figure, it challenges the organism/machine, human/animal and physical/nonphysical distinctions. Not only does Jodahs have similar traits and skills as Akin and other siblings, but it can also directly manipulate genetic codes and store material within its body. Moreover, the human/animal boundary becomes even more meaningless in this case since Jodahs has the ability to grow

[148] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 190.
[149] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 612. Emphasis in the original.
[150] Wood 73.

any body parts that are traditionally associated with animals, to breathe under water and to deliberately lose characteristics that are considered as ones that separate humans from animals, such as speech or bipedal movement.

Jodahs's heterogeneity and uncertainty are reminiscent of the ambivalence which is associated with Bhabha's concept of "dwelling beyond." As Bhabha maintains, "beyond […] marks progress, promises the future; but our intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary – the very fact of going beyond – are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the 'present.'"[151] Haraway uses a phrase in connection with the cyborg which captures a similar ambivalence and which is convenient for characterizing Jodahs and Aaor – "promising and dangerous monsters."[152] The two construct ooloi are promising as their existence means progress for the Oankali, but their unpredictability and instability are a threat. On the one hand, they embody the last element that is necessary for the successful completion of the new species and for its reproductive independence. Furthermore, they can adjust their bodies to match the preferences of their human partners; hence, they minimize the physical "otherness" which is found disturbing by many humans and make the connection with them easier. As Hampton claims, they are "the embodiment of a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places without regards to propriety or custom."[153] On the other hand, their shapeshifting together with their physical need for the other is very risky. If a Human/Oankali ooloi is lonely, without mates, its body may wander, or become less and less complex. This is exemplified by Aaor, who at one point becomes a kind of a big slug without bones, eyes and other human sensory organs and is unable to breathe air or make a sound, just because it misses contact with humans. The slipping away may eventually lead as far as to the complete dissolution of the body, which is suicidal for the construct ooloi and harmful for other living organisms. Jacobs states that

[151] Bhabha 6.
[152] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 191.
[153] Hampton 78.

"in the devolutions of her human/alien hybrids, Butler places into question any wholly utopian account of boundless posthuman subjectivity and mutable posthuman bodies."[154] This aspect also points to the possible limitations of the cyborg figure and Bhabha's hybridity. While Haraway and Bhabha depict the breakdown of clean distinctions as uncertain, but mainly as empowering and positive, Butler shows that the confusion of boundaries may also lead to a negative, fatal loss of coherence of the self.

Due to the unpredictability of the construct ooloi, the Oankali insist on their temporary relocation to the forests far from their hometown Lo and on their transportation to the spaceship when they are adult. However, shortly before his second metamorphosis, Jodahs encounters Jesusa and Tomás, siblings from a village in the mountains which has remained undiscovered by the Oankali for many years. Most of the inhabitants of this isolated settlement are, in contrast to other humans living on Earth, young and fertile since their ancestress, the so-called First Mother, had not been sterilized by the extraterrestrials and became pregnant after being raped. This incident gives rise to an essentialist society built on the idea of God's chosen people led by the so-called elders – resisters who had been sterilized and healed by the Oankali, so they look young. They believe that the aliens may be defeated if the fertile settlers do their duty to humanity and try to give birth to as many children as possible, although there is a great level of disease, deformity and infant mortality caused by inbreeding. They support their cause by adjusting it to Christian myths – the First Mother is seen as the new Virgin Mary, and is worshipped as such, whereas the Oankali are interpreted as the personification of evil and are associated with the Devil. The community is thus shaped by a mixture of hope that they might save the world by producing "pure" humans and terrible suffering. The elders of the "First Mother's children" seem to be very oppressive. They decide who will marry whom and force the fertile settlers to have more children although most of them die. Like some resisters from

[154] Jacobs 108.

Phoenix and other towns, they exemplify Jacobs's assertion that "throughout the trilogy, those human beings who hold most tightly to their human identities are also the ones who exhibit the worst elements of humanity."[155]

Jodahs and Aaor manage to get into the village and to persuade its settlers to put an end to their painful way of living and to choose from other options that these people have not known about. Thus, instead of returning to wholeness and original innocence, which has been the goal of the "First Mother's children" community, the book is concluded by the establishment of a new kind of society – an organic town planted by Jodahs which accepts all kinds of difference. It is the only place on Earth where ooloi constructs can live and function in the same ways as Oankali ooloi. One may say that Jodahs takes part in the reconstruction of the future; as Bhabha puts it, it re-describes the cultural contemporaneity and touches "the future on its hither side."[156] Like Akin before it, Jodahs comes up with new possibilities and, as Lacey contends, it "challenges even the Oankali to accept further potential and change."[157]

The ending of *Imago* is hopeful, but the coexistence of all kinds of inhabitants of the post-apocalyptic Earth does not become completely untroubled. Even the new town, which is created at the end of the book, is definitely not described as a perfect solution; as a utopian community. Even though Jodahs and Aaor manage to overcome essentialist ideals of the elders of the "First Mother's children" village and to end the suffering of its settlers and even though they convince the Oankali to accept the ultimate embodiment of difference (the construct ooloi) as a part of the population of the Earth, the relationship between the Oankali, humans and constructs does not eventually become completely peaceful and horizontal one. Among other things, there is still the problematic aspect of

[155] Jacobs 98.
[156] Bhabha 10.
[157] Lacey 172.

neurochemical control that the ooloi has over its partners – its substance causes that they are physically addicted to its presence and can never leave it. As the readers may notice, Jodahs genuinely cares for its mates and tries to respect their self-conception, opinions and habits, but it is not and, in fact, cannot be completely equal to them in terms of power. To make things even more complicated, Jodahs does not tell its mates that they would be bound to it for their lifetime, by which it undermines their agency. Nevertheless, the ooloi is similarly dependent on its partners – it dies when one of them dies. This "intensified dependence and an apparent loss of individual autonomy," may be understood as costs of becoming a posthuman, as Jacobs suggests.[158]

3. 4 *Xenogenesis* – Conclusion

Even though the relationship between the Oankali and humans is not exactly the colonizer/colonized one and even though their bodies do not incorporate machines per se, the constructs represent some of the fluid possibilities of Bhabha's hybridity and Haraway's cyborg. The offspring of humans and the aliens are hybrid both in terms of the body and identity and they transgress multiple boundaries. Their bodies and actions challenge "the maze of dualisms" in which humans explain themselves and the world around them. Furthermore, they question the problematic tendencies of the Oankali who, on the one hand, crave difference, but on the other hand, have to be taught that to embrace difference may also mean to give their partner species an opportunity to live without them or to let new forms of life stay on Earth. Like those of Bhabha's hybrid and Haraway's cyborg, Akin's and Jodahs's identities are never complete; they are open to change. They "do not stay still,"[159] they move, learn and develop. Both Akin and Jodahs use their "in-between" position to their advantage and they make some important changes in the society in which they live – they both find workable possibilities of facilitating the coexistence of

[158] Jacobs 109.
[159] Haraway in Bell 107.

the Oankali, humans and constructs. The two constructs repeatedly mention that their "in-betweeness" empowers them and enables them to see things from different points of view than those of the Oankali and humans. As Jodahs explains to a woman who travels through Lo, their hybrid status helps them "to understand both you and the Oankali. Oankali alone could never let you have your Mars colony."[160]

Nevertheless, Butler does not portray the constructs as better, but as different and truly open towards difference. She also points out that there are some risks and limitations connected with the hybrid status, such as the danger of dissolution in the case of construct ooloi or the loss of individual autonomy which is characteristic of the new kind of sexual relationships between the Oankali, humans and constructs. The situation at the end of the trilogy is not presented as an ideal one, but compared to the dystopian setting in *Dawn*, it is apparent that the situation has changed and there are two new possibilities for humans created by Akin and Jodahs. Firstly, they have the option to go to Mars and be a part of a human community uncontrolled by the Oankali, which was set up by Akin. Secondly, humans may choose Jodahs's new town which is promising because it incorporates all kinds of difference and blurs the distinctions between categories like self/Other, alien/human, animal/human, male/female, and so on. There is hope that these binaries perpetuating unequal power structures and hierarchical behavior might eventually be overcome.

[160] Butler, *Lilith's Brood* 529.

4. *Fledgling*

4. 1 The Ina, a New Kind of Vampires

Butler's last novel, *Fledgling*, also features a species which is distinct from humans. The Ina, as these creatures call themselves, are very similar to humans in appearance and they have coexisted with them on Earth for centuries. Their origins are unclear; some of them believe that their ancestors have come from another planet thousands of years ago, while others think that they have evolved "alongside humanity as a cousin species like the chimpanzee."[161] The Ina are what humans have traditionally described as vampires – they have longer canine teeth, their nourishment is blood, they sleep during the day, they are awake at night and their senses are sharper than those of humans. However, they differ from the conventional vampire tropes in many ways. They are not immortal, do not turn into bats or other animals and do not magically convert humans into their kind. Their special powers are presented not as supernatural, but as biological facts. Furthermore, unlike popular vampire figures, such as Dracula, the Ina are not violent predators; they mostly drink blood only from the so-called symbionts – humans who have agreed to become their hosts and companions. The connection between them is referred to as mutualistic symbiosis or mutualism in the book.

On the one hand, being an Ina symbiont usually means to be well cared for, healthy and long-lived. Besides this, the bite is a source of a great pleasure for humans; one of the characters who experience it even describes it as the best feeling that he has ever had. The bloodsucking usually takes place in bedrooms and involves some kind of sexual intimacy. In contrast to Ina-Ina sexual relationships which seem to be strictly heterosexual and formed mainly in order to produce children, there are no reservations or prohibitions about interracial and homosexual sex between the vampires and their human symbionts, as Ali

[161] Octavia Butler, *Fledgling* (London: Headline, 2014) 13.

Brox notes.[162] On the other hand, the biting enables the Ina to influence human behavior and is addictive. There is an element in their saliva that is referred to as "a powerful hypnotic drug" which makes humans "highly suggestible and deeply attached to the source of the substance."[163] When an Ina dies, his or her symbionts suffer greatly and they die too, if they are not taken by another Ina. The vampires are not physically addicted to the symbionts, but they do not crave them only for the blood. "We need...physical contact with them and emotional reassurance from them. Companionship," as one of them explains.[164]

The effects of the venom which give the Ina power over humans problematize the relationship and link the two groups in what Susana M. Morris calls "an uneasy codependency."[165] The bloodsucking which is addictive and may influence human behavior to a great extent may be seen as a colonization of both bodies and minds, and it raises questions of control. Some Ina in the novel treat their symbionts in a very kind manner; they want these people to be happy and to make their own decisions and do not force them to believe lies or to obey all the time. They assume, like the father of the protagonist, that it is "wrong, shortsighted, and harmful to symbionts to do such things."[166] There are also other Ina who treat their human companions as inferior beings that exist only to be exploited and some of them even manipulate them into violence or killing others. These people then fulfill their commands without realizing what they do. However, even those Ina who seem to be caring and thoughtful in their relationship with humans also use their saliva in ways that are questionable. There are instances in the book when they utilize the power of their venom to their own benefit; for example, one of them bites a lawyer "who, as a result, will be very helpful and very honorable about seeing that [the

[162] Ali Brox, "'Every Age Has The Vampire It Needs': Octavia Butler's Vampiric Vision in Fledgling," *Utopian Studies* 19. 3, Octavia Butler Special Issue (2008): 395.
[163] Butler, *Fledgling* 79.
[164] Butler, *Fledgling* 276.
[165] Susana M. Morris, "Black Girls Are from the Future: Afrofuturist Feminism in Octavia E. Butler's 'Fledgling,'" *Women's Studies Quarterly* 40. 3/4, ENCHANTEMENT (Fall/Winter 2012): 157
[166] Butler, *Fledgling* 94.

vampire's friend's] rights are respected."[167] Furthermore, they sometimes make their symbionts do things which they think are necessary for their well-being or survival, but which are not in accordance with the humans' wishes. Although these interferences may be beneficial to both sides, they limit the symbionts' agency.

Throughout the book, the Ina display certain qualities that are traditionally associated with the animal world rather than with humans – they can move very fast, their hearing is sharp, they often rely on their sense of smell, they attract mates by their scent, they have special healing abilities and when they have to kill, they rip the enemy's throat. They also frequently mention the ways in which biology influences their lives or at least the ways in which they think it does, which, as in Butler's other works, raises the question of biological determinism. According to Florian Bast, they position "instinctual urges as immensely powerful forces which […] have the power to rule a person's behavior if unchecked."[168] It is mainly their sexual behavior and sex roles which the Ina present as the consequences of these biological drives. For instance, females live separately from males, mothers with daughters and fathers with sons, since they cannot stand each other's pheromones for a long time. Furthermore, many Ina claim that the urge to reproduce with an unmated young female is very powerful for the males, just like the impulse to bite and thus bind an unmated male is for the females. When Shori, the protagonist, comes to her father's house before it is destroyed, he and her brothers are very much disturbed by her female scent even though she is a member of the family. Another example of these tendencies that are regarded as inevitable by some Ina is the need to eat raw meat for healing, which makes the vampires dangerous for any human when an Ina is seriously injured. However, it does not mean that the Ina are mainly controlled by their biological

[167] Butler, *Fledgling* 160.
[168] Florian Bast, "'I won't always ask': Complicating Agency in Octavia Butler's *Fledgling,*" *COPAS* 11 (2010) Jan 2016 <http://copas.uni-regensburg.de/article/viewArticle/128/152>

drives. As Iosif, the father of the protagonist puts it, "[we] have our genetic predispositions – our instincts – but we are also intelligent. We are aware of our urges. We can stand still even when the instinct to move is powerful."[169] Kristen Lillvis avers that much of the way the Ina behave "has to do with social norms and expectations," as the heroine of *Fledgling*, who forgets these norms and is not always driven by the allegedly inevitable biological urges, proves.[170]

4. 2 "The New, Improved Model"

Shori Matthews, the protagonist of the book, is a special kind of being. She is part Ina but also, due to the genetic engineering conducted by her grandmothers and their symbionts, part human. In addition to her Ina mothers and father, she has a human mother, a black female who contributed her DNA to the process of her creation. Shori looks like a skinny child of ten or eleven from a human point of view, but she is actually fifty-three years old, seems to be psychologically mature and is able to have sexual relations with humans. In spite of this, she is still not considered an adult prepared for mating in the Ina world. Shori is the only survivor of a mass murder of her family carried out in order to stop their genetic experiments. The strategy of the attackers is effective – they set fire to the houses during the day when the vampires and their symbionts are all asleep. Thus, they succeed in wiping out Shori's mothers' community and then her father's one. She has lost not only her entire family, but also her memory. Since the first attack, she suffers from amnesia and gradually learns about her past life and her Ina heritage from others, mainly from the Gordon family where she seeks refuge after she and her three symbionts were nearly killed in her dead father's guest house. The Gordons, who were in negotiations with Shori's father regarding the mating of their younger sons and the three Matthews sisters,

[169] Butler, *Fledgling* 86.
[170] Kristen Lillvis, "Essentialism and Constructionism in Octavia E. Butler's *Fledgling,*" *Practicing Science Fiction: Critical Essays on Writing, Reading and Teaching the Genre*, ed. Karen Hellekson et al. (Jefferson: McFarland, 2010) 180.

help her to accuse the Silk family and to begin a legal process against them. They organize a so-called Council of Judgement, a three-day trial which brings together representatives of thirteen Ina families, in order to decide whether the Silks are, as the attackers who were bitten and commanded to kill Shori's male and female families have reported, responsible for the murders.

The above-mentioned characteristics may seem to be rather disadvantageous for Shori, especially in the situation in which she finds herself. Initially, she is alone without any Ina connections, symbionts, memories or a place to live; subsequently, she has to defend herself in a legal process and prove the guilt of an ancient Ina family who stands behind the mass murders. Her blackness marks her as different among the extremely pale and blond Ina, her young age and small size are often a reason why people underestimate her, and her amnesia makes her feel insecure about her identity and causes others to distrust her. Humans also regard her as "other," even though she looks more human than other Ina. It is mainly because she drinks blood, does not act in accordance with her child-like appearance and needs to be in a relationship with more people at the same time.

Nevertheless, Shori has special abilities which are connected with her physical hybridity. Thanks to these features and skills, she survives the attacks and is capable of protecting others. Wright, a young man who lets Shori live with him after her home has been burned down and who becomes her first symbiont, emphasizes this by describing the young woman as "the new, improved model."[171] In contrast to other Ina, who lapse into a state comparable to unconsciousness when the sun rises, Shori does not have to sleep in daytime and therefore is less susceptible and hard to kill during the attacks directed against her and her family. Due to extra melanin, her skin does not burn in the sun as much as the pale skin of the vampires around her. Furthermore, despite her lean and small figure, she is

[171] Butler, *Fledgling* 162.

apparently very strong and her venom seems to be even more powerful and more pleasurable for humans than the venom of the others. Brook, one of her symbionts, claims that her "bite is spectacular" even though "she's only a kid."[172] Another proof of this is the fact that the assailant whom Shori bites for interrogation survives and is able to answer many questions even though he is under the influence of another Ina's saliva, which is a dilemma that usually kills humans. As Melissa Strong maintains, the power of Shori's venom "makes it easier for her to collect symbionts, further enhancing her adaptability and making her less vulnerable."[173]

Shori's physical hybridity is a source of power; her black female body with a human DNA is in fact stronger than other white Ina bodies in the text. However, even though "Shori's ability to move in spaces that are out of the bounds of mobility for Ina […] bodies should translate into immediate power and respect," it does not "because it deviates from images of Ina homogeneity," Hampton contends.[174] The attitudes of other Ina towards Shori vary greatly. Some of them recognize her special abilities as advantages that are of great value for their society. For example, one of her distant relatives, Margaret Braithwaite, sees her as a treasure. "There isn't a community that wouldn't be happy to have an Ina guardian who could be awake and alert during the day," she says.[175] Similarly, Daniel Gordon and his brothers want to mate with Shori despite the fact that she will have to bear all their children alone instead of sharing this responsibility with a group of sisters. They are willing to take the risk since they think that she will "be able to pass on [her] strengths to [her] children."[176]

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[172] Butler, *Fledgling* 169.
[173] Melissa J. Strong, "The Limits of Newness: *Hybridity* in Octavia E. Butler's *Fledgling*," *Femspec* 11.1 (2010): 30
[174] Hampton 119.
[175] Butler, *Fledgling* 220.
[176] Butler, *Fledgling* 224.

However, some Ina do not want to accept the protagonist as one of them. Shori dwells "in-between" and she troubles the human/Ina binary which is, as Strong points out, "hierarchical, and those who adhere to it proudly define themselves in opposition to humans."[177] She is, physically, both Ina and human, but those Ina who are concerned with the alleged purity of the species rather try to posit her as neither of these categories. For instance, Katherine Dahlman, a friend of the Silks and a member of the Council, tells her that "no one can be certain of the truth of anything you say because you are neither Ina nor human. Your scent, your reactions, your facial expressions, your body language – none of it is right…We are Ina. You are nothing!"[178]As it turns out later, some vampires see her as such a threat that they want to exterminate her at any cost, no matter how many other lives it will take, because they want to preserve a pure Ina identity and their alleged superiority over humans. As Hampton points out, they fear that Shori's hybridity will translate into a cultural complexity which "threatens the Ina aesthetic that [some] elders equate with stability and order in Ina society."[179]

4. 3 Shori as a Cyborg Figure

Shori is not a cyborg figure in the traditional sense of a hybrid of organism and machine. However, there is technology connected with her creation present in the form of genetic engineering through which she was made. Thus, she defies the notion of naturalness; like the cyborg, she skips the step of "identification with nature in the Western sense."[180] The protagonist of *Fledgling* also resembles Haraway's cyborg in that she, as someone who has lost all memories and as the only existing human/Ina hybrid, has no origin story in the sense of the memories of the first fifty-three years of her life as well as a mythical story of origins. At the beginning, Shori is life "stripped of its historically specific

[177] Strong 31.
[178] Butler, *Fledgling* 278.
[179] Hampton 120.
[180] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 148.

form," as Ewa Ziarek contends.[181] She has no idea who she is or where she has come from; it is as if her history has been completely erased. Although others gradually give her some information about her life, she does not remember anything and the loss of memory is irretrievable. "They were all gone. The person I had been was gone. I couldn't bring anyone back, not even myself. I could only learn what I could about the Ina, about my families," she says.[182] Her amnesiac state seems to be both very inconvenient and advantageous. The fact that Butler's vampires pride themselves in their good memory gives the Silks an opportunity to use Shori's amnesia to "further highlight her difference from the Ina" and "to negate her identity and belonging as Ina," as Esther L. Jones maintains.[183] They do this by stressing that memory problems are exclusively human and by bringing a human doctor to the court to examine her. On the other hand, Shori's loss of memory protects her from the unbearable pain that she would experience if she remembered the family members and symbionts that had been killed. Moreover, it gives her a chance to start a new life without dwelling too much on the ghosts of the past.

On the second level, the protagonist has no origin story in the sense of a mythical narrative. Her enemies clearly attempt to exclude her from the myth of the Ina origins, the story of the great mother Goddess, who, according to the legend, sent the Ina to Earth so that they could prove themselves and then return back to her paradise. Russel Silk presents it as something which belongs only to the allegedly pure Ina. "Children of the great Goddess, we are not [humans]. Nor should we try to be them. Ever," he claims.[184] As part human and part Ina, Shori is disconnected from the Goddess story as well as from human religious myths based on the return to wholeness and original innocence. According to

[181] Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, "Bare Life on Strike: Notes on the Biopolitics of Race and Gender," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107.1 (2008): 96
[182] Butler, *Fledgling* 316.
[183] Esther L. Jones, "Untangling Pathology: Sex, Social Responsibility, and the Black Female Youth in Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*," *Black Female Sexualities*, ed. Trimiko Melancon and Joanne M. Braxton (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015) 66.
[184] Butler, *Fledgling* 298.

Giselle Anatol, "Butler suggests there is no return to 'origins' – the legacy is one of loss, although also one of promise."[185]

Like many other Butler's characters, Shori blurs the human/animal boundary mentioned by Haraway in connection with the cyborg. At the beginning of her first-person narrative, she wakes up alone in a cave and she is hungry, blind, and injured. It is also unclear what kind of organism she is. The readers may categorize her as an animal or some unknown alien creature rather than a human since she focuses only on her instincts, her hunger and pain, and her first impulse is to hunt, which she eventually does – she tears up another creature in a predator-like, violent manner without even knowing it was a human. In the cave, "Shori is some-*body* whose primal instincts are in place, but possesses very little of anything else," Pramod Nayar suggests.[186] She is a "primordial, primeval – biological – self."[187] Butler does not reveal Shori's looks in the first two chapters; the uncertainty about who she is continues until the moment when she interacts with another person, Wright, who identifies her as a teenage girl. The Ina girl then specifies her appearance when she looks at herself in the mirror and sees "a lean, sharp-faced, large-eyed, brown-skinned person – a complete stranger."[188] Later, it becomes clear that Shori's violent, instinct-based behavior was caused by the near-death state in which she could barely control herself due to the injuries and pain that she experienced. However, although this seems to be an inevitable biological drive at the beginning of the book, Shori proves that even this can be overcome when she is in a very similar situation at the end of the book. Although the hunger for raw meat, which is needed for healing, causes her immense pain and blurs her other senses, she is able to stop herself from attacking Wright.

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[185]Giselle L. Anatol compares Shori, because of her lack of origins, to the members of African diaspora "whose ancestors were forced to disremember cultural practices, religious beliefs, languages, and personal pasts." Giselle Liza Anatol, *The Things That Fly in the Night: Female Vampire in Literature of the Circum – Caribbean and African Diaspora* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015) 248.
[186] Pramod K. Nayar, "A New Biological Citizenship: Posthumanism in Octavia Butler's *Fledgling," Modern Fiction Studies* 58.4 (2012): 798
[187] Nayar 799.
[188] Butler, *Fledgling* 24.

Furthermore, the protagonist of *Fledgling* reminds one of Haraway's cyborg, "the creature in a post-gender world,"[189] by transcending the male/female roles binary and the conceptions of female behavior, both human and Ina. The Ina gender and sexual norms differ from human ones in many ways, so Shori in fact undermines human heteronormative gender roles only by doing what the Ina consider as standard – she has sex with adult humans although she looks like a pre-pubescent girl, she has multiple sexual partners, she does not understand the heterosexual/homosexual binary[190] and she plans to mate with a group of brothers instead of just one of them. In addition, the Ina society is not based on the patriarchal notion that men are naturally stronger than women and therefore superior. The Ina are even described as matriarchy by some people because "venom from Ina females is more potent than venom from males"[191] and as a result of this, a group of men becomes addicted to the venom of their mates which resembles the mechanics of the human-Ina encounters.

However, the apparent freedom in the Ina-human sexual relationships does not imply that there are no rigid norms concerning gender and sexuality in the Ina-Ina ones and the superior power of the female venom does not mean that patriarchy is completely eradicated in this society.[192] For instance, it is customary for Ina males and females to live separately and motherhood seems to be fundamentally interconnected with female roles. The protagonist transgresses both of these rules. She decides to stay with a male community for a long time although her presence is disturbing for them. Furthermore, even though Shori plans to be a mother and never considers the option not to procreate at all, she "counters the idea that women and Ina females are defined solely by their maternal

[189] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 150.
[190] Like other Ina, Shori sleeps with both men and women and when Wright accuses her of swinging "both ways," she does not know what he means and does not see any problems or differences. For her it is simply sex "with my symbionts if both they and I want it." Butler, *Fledgling* 91.
[191] Butler, *Fledgling* 115.
[192] As Brox points out, "Daniel Gordon and his family remain preoccupied with the prospect of unborn sons inheriting Shori's genetic advantages." Brox 405.

capacity," as Lillvis contends.[193] It seems that women are automatically supposed to become mothers in both Ina and symbiont communities. Shori steps outside these boundaries and does not hold "other Ina and women within these constraints."[194] "You do have the right to have your own human mate, your own children, or just have pleasure with a man when that's what you want," [195] she tells Celia. Shori herself also acts according to this, as the readers may infer from her encounter with Daniel Gordon, when her sexual desire for him is clearly unrelated to the desire to bear his children.

Another action which is against the Ina standards is Shori's decision to live only with her symbionts. As a young woman who lost her parents and siblings, she is expected to be adopted by another family since it would be very exceptional for a young female of her age to live alone, without the protection of Ina elders, the most empowered members of the group. Besides this, in the Ina world, parents are responsible for choosing mates for their children, with regard to the relations between the families and to the chances that the union will produce strong children. Nevertheless, in spite of these rules, Shori decides to stay independent and to choose her way of life and mates herself. She wants to visit other Ina communities and learn from them, but she does not agree that she should be adopted because, as she says, "[her] female family vanishes into history just like [her] male family did," if she is.[196]

4. 4 Shori's Hybridity and Race

As soon as Shori is identified as a teenage girl and labeled as a vampire, the issue of race and its importance in the human world emerges. It is Wright who first utters the word "black" in connection with her. "I had been about to protest that I was brown, not black,

[193] Lillvis 179.
[194] Lillvis 179.
[195] Butler, *Fledgling* 253.
[196] Butler, *Fledgling* 292.

but before I could speak, I understood what he meant," Shori claims.[197] As Brox puts it, "she quickly remembers that black is not meant to describe her actual coloring or tone, but rather to designate her position within a certain racial category."[198] It is also Wright who suggests racism as a possible reason why the attacks are happening. "Shori is black, and racists – probably Ina racists – don't like the idea that a good part to [Ina] problems is melanin," he says.[199] At first, it really seems that the issue of race will not play an important role in the mystery of why Shori's family was killed and why someone is attempting to take her life because the vampires as well as their symbionts repeatedly proclaim that the Ina are not concerned with human races. When the Gordons hear that racism may be the source of the problems, they are almost offended. "Human racism meant nothing to the Ina because human races meant nothing to them. They looked for congenial human symbionts wherever they happened to be, without regard for anything but personal appeal," Shori explains.[200] Likewise, when Wright complains that Shori did not inform him that her new male symbiont, Joel, was black, Brook tells him: "They're not human […]. They do not care about black or white."[201] Nevertheless, although it initially appears that what matters in the conflict is the purity of the species, race becomes the means through which it is conveyed.

Shori's blackness is a visible marker of a human DNA in her body. Thus, as Strong alleges, "species differences become coded as racial differences, and what seems to be race stands in for hybridity. Her 'race' fuses to her hybridity so that one becomes shorthand for the other."[202] This becomes clear when Shori questions Victor, a human assailant who is under the influence of the Silks' venom and who, as a consequence, mutters offensive phrases that the family attaches to her. The insults, such as "dirty little nigger bitch" or

[197] Butler, *Fledgling* 37.
[198] Brox 396.
[199] Butler, *Fledgling* 153.
[200] Butler, *Fledgling* 154.
[201] Butler, *Fledgling* 168.
[202] Strong 30.

"goddamn mongrel cub," which are later repeated in the courtroom by the Silks themselves, are clearly racist. Other Shori's enemies also mention race when they speak of her hybridity. For example, Katharine Dahlman not only emphasizes that Shori will bear "black, human children," but she goes as far as to invoke human racist standards when she says that "here in the United States, even most humans will look down on them. When I came to this country, such people were kept as property, as slaves."[203]

The connection of race and hybridity in *Fledgling* is reminiscent of the nineteenth-century discussions whether different races are actually different species. As Young states, "the claim that humans were one or several species stood and fell over the question of hybridity, that is, intra-racial fertility […]."[204] The Silks' great concern for Shori's future reproduction echoes the preoccupation with interbreeding characteristic for these nineteenth-century debates on human races. They intend to dispose of Shori, the artificially created hybrid being, mainly because they want to prevent her from breeding, as they repeatedly stress. Victor, the attacker, tells Shori that they, above all, could not "let you and…your kind…your family…breed."[205] They apparently fear the possibility of her reproduction since her potential offspring, natural hybrids, would threaten the notion of the Ina as the superior species and disrupt their claim to power, as Brox points out. According to him, a naturally occurring hybrid would "force a redefinition of 'normal' because science could not be blamed for the outcome; rather, the Ina would be forced to confront the fear and anxiety that result from the recognition that hybrid is just as 'normal' as 'pure' is, if not more so."[206] In addition, given Shori's young age, there is still an improbable, but possible chance that she will be fertile with humans, which is even more disturbing for the speciesist Ina.

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[203] Butler, *Fledgling* 278.
[204] Young 8.
[205] Butler, *Fledgling* 179.
[206] Brox 400.

The Silks' and Katherine Dahlman's behavior towards Shori and the derogatory terms that they use in relation to her appear to be informed, to some extent, by stereotypes. Bhabha discusses the stereotype as a mode of representation and sees it as an attempt to accommodate that which is different. As he suggests, "it is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations."[207] The stereotypes that are used against Shori are specifically those of black women and their sexuality. According to Susan Bordo, racist ideology and imagery construct black people "as primitive, savage, animalistic, and indeed more *bodily* than the white 'races'." The stereotype has it that by virtue of her race, a black female "is instinctual animal, undeserving of privacy and undemanding of respect."[208] It seems that establishing Shori as an inferior, animal-like being and as an out-of-control seductress is another strategy that her enemies adopt when they do not manage to persuade the Council that she is mentally ill or confused because of her amnesia. Although Butler's vampires in general blur the boundary between humanoid and animal to a certain extent, given their special skills, some of them treat Shori as an animal rather than an individual and use animal imagery to insult her. For instance, Milo Silk declares that she has "no more business at the Council than would a clever dog."[209] Likewise, Russel Silk invokes animalistic tropes when he yells: "What will she give us all? Fur? Tails?"[210]

Moreover, the Silks try to accuse the protagonist of a violation of the Ina sexual taboo that she is not guilty of – they claim she seduced and prematurely bit her future Ina mate, Daniel Gordon. This maneuver is designed to "prove her utter disregard for the

[207] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 75.
[208] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 10. Emphasis in the original.
[209] Butler, *Fledgling* 244.
[210] Butler, *Fledgling* 306.

welfare of other Ina, deeming her irresponsible and dangerous for the welfare of the state writ at large," as Esther Jones suggests.[211] This accusation again seems to be based on the stereotype of a hypersexual black female who "represents the temptations of the flesh and the source of man's moral downfall."[212]

Another racial stereotype which may come to mind in connection with Shori and her hybridity is the so-called tragic mulatto, a character type which may be found mainly in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American fiction. According to Joseph M. Flora et al., it is usually a young beautiful woman who upon discovering her one drop of African blood "loses her white suitor and submits passively to the consequences of this discovery, being sold to slavery or committing suicide."[213] Like the tragic mulatto, Shori does not entirely fit in any community because of the proverbial "one drop of black blood" and there is a great tragedy in her life which is connected with it. Otherwise, the tragic mulatto is rather a position into which her enemies want to force her by classifying her as neither Ina nor human. Shori herself is far from passively accepting the speciesist Ina's opinions. As Strong avows, "she actively resists the tragic mulatto stereotype: she sees regressive, chauvinistic attitudes, rather than her hybridity, as the source of her problems."[214]

4. 5 Shori as a Representative of the Possibilities of Bhabha's Hybridity

As was mentioned above, Shori's hybrid status has many advantages thanks to which she is physically stronger and more resistant than both Ina and humans. However, not only is she a hybrid figure in the sense of being, physically, a mixture of two elements but she also embodies the possibilities of the model of hybridity proposed by Bhabha.

[211] Esther L. Jones 66.
[212] Bordo 11.
[213] *The Companion to Southern Literature*, ed. Joseph M. Flora and Lucinda H. Mackethan (Baton Rogue: Louisiana State University Press, 2002) 700. Emphasis in the original.
[214] Strong 34.

Shori embodies hybridity within what was seen as a unity. She represents hybridity in the sense of "a displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative"; hybridity which causes that "other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition."[215] She is a new subjectivity, "neither the one nor the other,"[216] which troubles the binaries of Ina/human, self/Other, black/white, homosexual/heterosexual or male/female and, like Bhabha's hybrid, she challenges the dominant power – the power of the Ina elders which rests on the notions of purity and superiority. She does so not only by means of her physical advantages but also by means of her ability to turn power back on herself by appropriation of structures of the dominant power.

One of the ways in which the protagonist undermines the notions of superiority that are connected with the Ina/human binary is her egalitarian treatment of her symbionts and humans in general. Her behavior towards these individuals differs from the Ina who think of her as a threat to their "pure" community. In contrast to the Silks and the Dahlmans who seem to hate their dependency on their symbionts and who use these people as tools for doing anything they want, including criminal actions, Shori always treats her symbionts with respect. Lillvis calls attention to her "focus on consent,"[217] which the protagonist demonstrates from the beginning. Besides asking for their approval before taking a "full meal" from them, she gives her symbionts a chance to decide whether they want to be a part of her family or not, although she could just make them acquiescence. Even at the time when she does not know how exactly the relationship works, she gives Wright an opportunity to leave her when she feels that he will soon be irretrievably bound to her. Similarly, when Shori asks Theodora whether she wants to join her, she is "careful to let

[215] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 162.
[216] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 37.
[217] Lillvis 174.

her make up her own mind."[218] Secondly, Shori values the opinions and experience of humans around her. As Joel, another symbiont, mentions, she is willing to ask questions "instead of just ordering [them] around."[219] Instead of expressing superiority over them at all times like some other Ina, she does not have a problem to admit her weaknesses in front of them, especially the ignorance which stems from the loss of her memory. "I need to learn from you […]", she confesses to them.[220] She accepts advice and explanations not only from the members of her human family, but also from other humans, for example from Martin, a symbiont of one of the Gordons.

Last but not least, Shori is very much concerned with happiness of her symbionts and wants them to make their own decisions about their lives. According to Strong, her "reluctance to control her symbionts characterizes her as more respectful of their autonomy than other Ina, perhaps because her hybridity enhances her ability to empathize with others."[221] It is true that Shori's human partners are limited by following her wherever she goes, but she wants them to do what they want and to support them in their choices. When Celia tells her that she would like to have children in the future, Shori likes the idea. "I wanted that – a home in which my symbionts enjoyed being with me and enjoyed one another and raised their children as I raised mine," she says.[222] To sum up, the relationship between the protagonist and the members of her human family seems to be beneficial for both sides. Shori cares for them, respects them, gives them pleasure and would clearly do anything to protect them while they, in turn, support her both physically and emotionally.

However, despite all this, Butler does not idealize this relationship. Although Shori treats her symbionts in an egalitarian way, her family is not portrayed as an unproblematic community or as a utopian solution. There are some instances in the novel when Shori's

[218] Butler, *Fledgling* 98.
[219] Butler, *Fledgling* 288.
[220] Butler, *Fledgling* 129.
[221] Strong 39.
[222] Butler, *Fledgling* 133.

behavior towards her human partners seems to be ethically troubling, such as the "rape" scene when she bites Theodora for the first time although the woman struggles wildly. There are also moments when her symbionts are dissatisfied or feel exploited, for example when Wright finds that he cannot have Shori for himself and contemplates leaving her if he could. "By the time we realize what's happened to us, it's too late," he declares. [223] He even compares the mutualist symbiosis to being a part of a harem and having his own human family initially seems to him as helping "produce a next generation of symbionts."[224] Butler makes it clear that those who are involved in the Ina-symbionts bond cannot be completely equal; it is Shori who has greater agency in it and who makes decisions for the whole group. As Bast avers, "whatever agency [her] symbionts have is agency which they have because Shori does not take it away from them."[225]

During the trial with the Silks, Shori demonstrates her ability to defend herself and to actively resist the power of her enemies which is based on their alleged purity and wholeness. Although she is regarded as disabled and as not belonging among the Ina by many members of the council, she is able to turn power on herself. As Strong states, "she insists upon telling her story herself instead of permitting others to reduce it to a new spin on a familiar tragedy."[226] Finally, Shori defeats her enemies by appropriating some elements of their power and using these elements to destabilize that power. In spite of being constantly excluded from the ancient Ina tradition and from what Milo Silk refers to as "the truths that make us who we are"[227] because of her physical hybridity, she manages to prove that the Silks failed to act according to the thousand years' old honorable Ina rules themselves. She points out that they chose to wipe out her families instead of calling for a

[223] Butler, *Fledgling* 167.
[224] Butler, *Fledgling* 90.
[225] Bast <http://copas.uni-regensburg.de/article/viewArticle/128/152>
[226] Strong 34.
[227] Butler, *Fledgling* 238.

Council of Goddess which can be summoned if somebody believes that some Ina does something to the detriment of other Ina.

The Council of Judgement ends neither in a celebration nor in an unequivocal acceptance of Shori's hybridity. Nevertheless, her behavior during the trial apparently changes the opinions of many Ina on her and her hybrid status. Although some of them do not like her and do not fully accept her, her honest answers and perfect reasoning move them to such an extent that they are willing to stand by her against the two ancient families who represent dominant Ina power. At the end of the council, the Silk family is pronounced guilty of the mass murders and dissolved, which effectively finishes "their sovereignty as a political unit," as Esther Jones claims.[228]

4. 6 *Fledgling* – Conclusion

The protagonist of *Fledgling* is an "in-between" character who becomes, due to the mixture of Ina and human DNA in her body and an extra melanin in her skin, a target of attacks of those Ina who regard her as a threat to the alleged purity and unity of their society. Shori's hybrid status undermines the Ina/human binary which is so important for many Ina because it is a source of power and species superiority. Nevertheless, Shori's hybridity and unstable identity challenge more dualisms, such as black/white, self/Other, homosexual/heterosexual and even male/female. As Brox puts it, she forces the readers as well as other characters in the book "into ambivalent realm of the hybrid Third Space where one must rearticulate the conversation about identity beyond fixed […] categories."[229] Shori reminds one of Haraway's cyborg in that she, due to her amnesia, is a creature without a past, without an origin story, both because she does not remember her past and because she is disconnected from mythical stories of origin. Furthermore, like the cyborg, she transgresses the human/animal boundary as well as the boundaries of human

[228] Esther L. Jones 67.
[229] Brox 395.

and Ina gender roles. Although the conflict between Shori and those who think she should not live is formulated as a matter of species, race plays an important role in it since the protagonist's skin color is a marker of her humanity and "otherness." As Strong maintains, it "comes to represent all that is human and hybrid in her."[230] Shori, however, resists racial stereotypes and unlike the tragic mulatto figure, she is far from passively accepting her fate.

According to Brox, "Shori emerges as a symbol of change."[231] Her hybrid status gives her advantages that make her stronger and enhance her ability to defend herself and her human partners. Nevertheless, Butler does not locate Shori's strength only in the skills connected with her body, such as her darker skin which does not burn fast or her ability to stay awake during the day. The protagonist of *Fledgling* also represents the possibilities of Bhabha's notion of hybridity – the hybridity which creates ambivalence at the source of authority. She echoes it not only by respecting human symbionts and treating them as equals, by which she further undermines the human/Ina binary, but also by appropriating structures of the dominant power in order to destabilize that power during the trial with the Silks.

Shori and the surviving members of her symbiont family come out as stronger at the end of the book. Together, they overcome various problems – the exhausting trial, the pain and revulsion that Brook and Celia have to suffer while being taken over by Shori after the death of their Ina, the murder of Theodora orchestrated by Katharine Dahlman or Wright's jealousy towards Joel. However, Butler does not portray them as an ideal community or as a perfect alternative to human families or to other Ina groups. It is evident that her view of the mutualistic symbiosis between her vampires and humans, even in Shori's case, is ambivalent.

[230] Strong 33.
[231] Brox 399.

5. Conclusion – A Comparison of the Views on Hybridity in *Xenogenesis* and *Fledgling*

The main objective of this thesis was to examine the issue of hybridity in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy and *Fledgling* using the theoretical frame provided by the selected studies of Homi Bhabha and Donna Haraway. The final chapter aims to summarize the main points of the analysis conducted in this study by means of comparing the "non-human" characters and the hybrid protagonists in the above-mentioned books. Furthermore, it will point out the differences in the representation of hybridity in them since, as the readers may observe, Butler offers two views on this issue. She writes about hybridity which is simultaneously empowering and highly dangerous and hybridity which is more interconnected with race and which itself does not pose any real threat to society.

The "non-human" beings in the texts analyzed in the previous chapters, the Oankali and the Ina, may seem very distinct at first. The former are grey tentacled extraterrestrials coming from outer space while the latter are a species living on Earth who are able to pass as humans, so their presence is unnoticed by the majority of the population. The Oankali crave difference to such an extent that they are oppressive to humans whose characteristics they intend to incorporate, whereas many Ina prefer sameness and want to preserve the "purity" of the species. What they have in common is that they both may be seen as colonizers. The Oankali save many humans and their planet from the consequences of the nuclear conflict that would otherwise destroy them, but, without any negotiations, they give humans only two options – to merge genes with them, which is translated as the loss of their humanity by the indigenous inhabitants of the Earth, or not to reproduce at all. The Ina do not colonize the Earth, but they are in fact colonizers of human bodies – they depend on human blood as a source of nourishment and energy and they take it from them without their consent, at least when it is done for the first time. Yet, both stories defy the

oppressive colonizers/helpless colonized binary. The "non-human" beings in *Xenogenesis* and *Fledgling* have some positive qualities and they go beyond certain human traditional notions. For instance, the Oankali live in harmony with nature, they despise physical violence, and the concept of racism does not seem to exist in their society. Moreover, both the Oankali and the Ina surpass humans in their openness towards difference, mainly in sexual relationships. However, in contrast to the lack of bias and dichotomies as, for example, heterosexuality/homosexuality in sexual relationships with humans, there is a high level of normativity when it comes to family and reproduction in both Oankali and Ina societies.

The Oankali-human and the Ina-human relationships are also worth comparing since there are many interesting parallels. Both of these "non-human" groups offer their partners desirable opportunities concerning health, life-span and special abilities, but both of these attachments involve a significant loss of agency on the part of humans. In both relationships, there is an ethically problematic element of physical addiction to a certain chemical substance which gives intense pleasure, but at the same time makes the bond impossible to break. In *Xenogenesis*, it is the ooloi who instill the strong attachment by means of their ooloi substance. Neither Nikanj nor its construct ooloi descendant Jodahs tell their human partners about this bonding beforehand, which makes it even more troubling. In comparison with the Oankali, the Ina-human partnership initially appears more as a matter of choice – humans are mostly asked whether they want to join the Ina before they are fully addicted to their venom. However, the readers also witness scenes where humans blindly obey anything that the Ina tell them to do after the first bite, so it is questionable whether they actually opt for the relationship out of their free will.

Although both the Oankali and the Ina claim that they value companionship with humans and care for their opinion, it seems impossible for these relationships to become a

bond between two equal partners. The Oankali are scientifically superior and are able to make great changes in bodies and natural objects. Furthermore, they are very hard to kill and although they despise violence, they have their own methods of coercion, such as putting humans to sleep or calming them chemically. The Ina are not as technologically powerful as the Oankali, but they are able to influence and manipulate humans even more effectively than the extraterrestrials by means of their venom. Both groups have a tendency to do what they think is best for humans on the basis of their superior knowledge and powers, often without an explicit consent of humans. Moreover, both the Oankali and the Ina seek a high degree of ownership in the relationship which is expressed, for example, by the specific verbal markings of their human partners and by a sense of possessiveness towards them. In *Xenogenesis*, the full names of the people who live with the aliens are formed as the Oankali ones. In addition, the ooloi are overprotective and jealous towards those whom they have touched. Similarly, in *Fledgling*, the Ina often use possessive pronouns in relation to the humans living in the Ina communities and these people are referred to as "sym" and the name of their Ina. As Strong alleges, "this construction signifies a verbal branding, an expression of ownership that defies the mutualism of symbiosis."[232]

Sexual relationships between humans and different species and power structures in them seem to be of a great interest for Butler, which is exemplified not only by the books discussed in previous chapters, but also by her famous short story "Bloodchild," which was written before them. Bast suggests that one of the many important questions posed in these texts is "whether the highest degree of agency is automatically the most desirable state of

[232] Strong 38.

being or whether there is a higher potential for happiness in choosing a specific kind of dependence."[233] This question is certainly implied there, but it remains unanswered.

The main focus of this thesis were three of Butler's hybrid characters – Akin and Jodahs, human-Oankali constructs from *Xenogenesis* series, and Shori, a human-Ina protagonist of *Fledgling*. As this study has demonstrated, all of them represent some of the possibilities of Bhabha's hybridity and Haraway's cyborg. There are several characteristics that connect these protagonists. Firstly, they "dwell beyond", in the liminal space which defies fixed identity and fixed categories. Their hybrid bodies and hybrid identities put them in an ambiguous position in relation to binary opposites which often support power structures in the maintenance of domination. As a result of their multiple identity, Akin, Jodahs and Shori seem to be able to better understand the viewpoints of other individuals and groups and to truly embrace difference. As Wood puts it, "their identities, always partial and permanently fractured, underline a fluidity that embraces difference."[234]

Secondly, the three characters are typified as individuals with increased survival skills that are unmistakably linked with their hybridity. Their power to survive is, as in the case of Haraway's cyborg, based not on the original innocence, but on using hybridity to their advantage, on "seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other."[235] According to Hampton, Butler suggests that "the importance of ambiguity with regards to sex, race, gender, class, and identity is immeasurable in any quest for survival."[236]

Thirdly, Akin, Jodahs and Shori may be characterized as instigators of change. They use their hybrid status as a tool of negotiation among the communities that they come from and they make them modify their rules and policies which are often based on

[233] Bast <http://copas.uni-regensburg.de/article/viewArticle/128/152>
[234] Wood 73.
[235] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 175.
[236] Hampton 67.

monolithic thought structures, on "one code that translates all meaning perfectly."[237] Therefore, these characters have a considerable influence on the future coexistence of the members of their society. Akin creates an alternative option for humans when he persuades the Oankali to establish the Mars colony which they will not control. Thus, he "subverts the ontology of the Contradiction and restores the choice of human reproduction to the colonizers in a creative act of making them fertile,"[238] as Jeff Shantz remarks. Jodahs convinces the Oankali to let the construct ooloi live on Earth and, thanks to its shapeshifting abilities and empathy, encourage some resisters to reconsider their fear of difference. Likewise, Shori's actions not only contribute to her own safety, but also significantly influence others, both Ina and human. The human DNA in her body which will be passed on her offspring will blur the human/Ina binary and may have some impact on the Ina treatment of their symbionts in the future.

However, as this thesis has shown, the representation of hybridity in the two texts differs in one major aspect – in *Xenogenesis,* hybridity *itself* is portrayed as more problematic and potentially dangerous than in *Fledgling,* where the depiction of the protagonist's hybridity does not seem to include any dangerous elements. Simply put, in the latter, hybridity is only seen as a threat by those Ina who maintain essentialist notions, whereas in the former, it actually is a threat. Akin, the first human-born male construct is perceived as dangerous by the Oankali since according to them, he is closer to the Human Contradiction than any other hybrid being. Nevertheless, the real problems and limitations of the hybrid status in *Xenogenesis* are predominantly represented by the construct ooloi, Jodahs and Aaor. Their presence on Earth is regarded with fear and distrust not only because they blur many boundaries but because it truly is risky. Due to their ability to manipulate genes, even a little mistake on their part might be fatal for any living organism,

[237] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 188.
[238] Jeff Shantz, *Specters of Anarchy: Literature and the Anarchist Imagination* (Algora, 2015) 271.

if it is unnoticed and uncorrected. Furthermore, their new shapeshifting ability, which otherwise has many advantages, is characterized by a great instability. Without human mates, they have little control over the transformative processes in their bodies and they are constantly in danger of the dissolution of the self, which is not only harmful for them, but also for the whole ecosystem. This aspect associated with Jodahs and Aaor's hybrid status is rather negative. By including it into her portrayal of hybrid characters, Butler goes beyond Bhabha's treatment of hybridity, fluidity of the self and transgression of boundaries as positive and empowering, and perhaps even beyond Haraway's notion of the cyborg as the "promising and dangerous monster"[239] and points to the possible problematic issues connected with hybridity. She shows that in-betweeness, openness and radical difference may bring "its own terrors, its own peculiar depredations to perceived integrities of the self," as Roger Luckhurst comments.[240]

In contrast to this, Shori's hybridity in *Fledgling* is only seen as a threat by some members of the Ina community because they think of it as an abnormality that will stain the purity of the Ina and weaken the species. They regard Shori as dangerous since her existence threatens old hierarchies and practices based on sameness. Nevertheless, there are no actual dangers related to her hybridity comparable to the dangers posed by Jodahs and Aaor. If one considers Shori's physical hybridity itself, separated from all the prejudice and hatred that clearly disempower her, it is rather advantageous and empowering because it enables her to transcend the Ina limitations, for instance the incapability to endure sunlight and inability to stay awake during the day. There is no increased vulnerability or dissolving of the self-accompanying these special powers. Thus, the main ethical problem in the novel is not associated with hybridity, but with the implications of the relationship between the Ina and humans. One may even observe a

[239] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 191.
[240] Roger Luckhurst in Jacobs 107.

positive shift towards a more equalitarian treatment of symbionts in Shori's family. Nevertheless, not even her conception of this relationship, which is clearly influenced by her in-between status, is seen as ideal or as a utopian solution.

Another difference in the representation of hybridity in *Xenogenesis* and *Fledgling* which should be mentioned here is that in the latter text, the issue of hybridity is more interconnected with race than in the former. Shori's blackness is the marker of her hybridity and, at the same time, one of the greatest physical assets that it brings to her. On the one hand, in contrast to the archetypal hierarchies of race, being black actually makes her much more powerful than the white Ina are. On the other hand, it makes her visibly different and more vulnerable to racial stereotyping. The fact that Shori herself is the target of the attacks, rather than the gene splicing technology that made her creation possible, "replicates a real-world social structure that demonizes physical signs of difference, especially those that do not confirm to standard binaries," Strong alleges.[241] The interconnectedness of race and hybridity in *Fledgling* enables Butler to critique race as a biological essence and to portray it as a social construct in an innovative way.

This thesis has demonstrated that Butler does not offer simple, one-dimensional solutions. As Morris remarks, her "visions of the future are often ambivalent ones that reveal an ongoing struggle for peace and justice."[242] Hybrid characters in *Xenogenesis* and *Fledgling* have special abilities and advantages coming along with their status and giving them power. They are characterized as individuals who use their in-between status to their benefit – they negotiate, instigate changes, come up with new possibilities, challenge binaries and hierarchical power structures. Furthermore, they never stand still; they keep on learning, moving and changing.

[241] Strong 31.
[242] Morris 10.

Yet, neither of Butler's two views on hybridity discussed in the third and the fourth chapter posits it as a definite answer to the major problems that her fictional societies deal with and she does not idealize it. In *Xenogenesis*, hybrid characters create more possibilities for humans and constructs. Akin's negotiations lead to the establishment of the Mars colony which enables humans to reproduce without the Oankali, but the readers never get to see the outcome of it. Jodahs and Aaor facilitate the coexistence of all members of the post-apocalyptic society, but their hybridity has dangerous limitations. In *Fledgling*, Shori's hybridity itself does not pose any threats; it is depicted as positive. However, although it wins its battle against the speciesist notions of some Ina in the courtroom, it certainly does not manage to eradicate these ideas completely and does not resolve the problematic implications concerning the unequal relationships between the Ina and humans. The question whether the new options and changes prompted by her hybrid protagonists actually turn out to be beneficial in the long run is, like many other questions, not answered; nevertheless, Butler's texts examined in this study imply that there is a resource of hope in hybrid bodies and hybrid identities.

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