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“Hegel wrote that the only thing we can learn from history is that we learn nothing from history, so I doubt the epidemic will make us any wiser.”

— Slavoj Žižek, *Pandemic!: COVID-19 Shakes the World*

“We long to return to normal, but **normal led to this**. To avert the future pandemics we know are coming, we MUST grapple with all the ways normal failed us.”

— Ed Yong (@edyong209) Twitter. August 3, 2020

“There is nothing to fear in life, you just have to understand it. Now is the time to understand more, so we can fear less.”

— Marie Curie (Qtd. in *Our Precarious Habitat* by Melvin A. Benarde)

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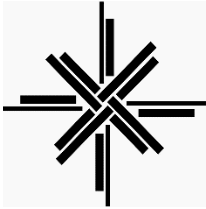

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EDITORS' NOTE

Deeksha Suri & Md. Faizan Moquim

"The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space."
— Michel Foucault
"Of Other Spaces," 1967

Challenges in reconfiguring any form of existence find spatial dynamics at the fulcrum of their transformative vision. To think of our times in their irreducible complexity, therefore, is to think anew of space—a respacing of our existence in the world. Space, being the condition of possibility, prompts new significations that usher towards different ways of knowing and being. The concept of *espacement* by Derrida highlights the fundamental dimension of space where the very conception of formations—of say, subjectivity, epistemology, politics, ethics, intelligibility, and identity among others—is spatial, permitting the relations and structures *to be*. The network of these formations, as the formative spatial dimension determining our actions, transfigures the heterogenous folds of the space of present. Amidst the current global crisis of COVID-19 in particular, the dynamics of these formations have become even more forceful appropriating both change and stability simultaneously.

In contrast to historiographies positing human as the only agent of change, epidemiological history foregrounds the agency of pathogens as drivers of historical change (McNeill 23).[1] The global scale of COVID-19 too has brought tectonic shifts in our understanding of diseases and their impact on humans. The stable relational spatiality of traditional social forms, generative ground for thriving of the virus, is ruptured and our existing modes of interconnected living have seen unprecedented changes. Managing intersubjective space through social distancing—the regulation of space—turns out to be the only immunity available before the development of vaccine. People remain house-bound in the hopes of stopping the contagion, resulting in the transformation of shared spaces—markets, schools, factories, recreational sites, and roads—into barren and eerie ones. Feeling caged and incapacitated under imposed lockdowns, the contours of mental space too have crumbled with their humanitarian instincts numbed in favour of self-preservation. With the growing anxiety and precariousness in such alien circumstances, a pressing dialogue emerges about survival in a world whose evermore criss-crossed character facilitated by modern technology and transport ironically becomes a catalyst to precipitate pointless deaths. The unabated waves of lockdown to counter it have given currency to new questions pertaining to the respacing of existence—ways of cohabitation and interaction. The viral nature of the disease provokes reinterpreted configurations of

[1]William H. McNeill's seminal work *Plagues and Peoples* is noteworthy in its account of how the exchange and contraction of virus and bacteria brought unprecedented changes in structures of society in different periods of world history. Whether it be Antonine plague in 2nd century, Black Death in 14th century, diseases like syphilis and smallpox during transatlantic exchange in post-1492 or cholera in 19th century, role of infectious diseases has been pivotal in shaping human history.

old spaces and agencies to ensure sustainable models of inclusivity, recreation, along with protection. As the world gears towards this *new normal*, the romantically naïve impulse to 'return to the normal' at its earliest—social gatherings of different kinds like marriage receptions, sports tournaments, social or political gatherings, etc.—is a sign of misreading the present human situation.

The formation of space, brought to fore in the context of living, has modified our understanding of the reality of death as its foil. The miasmic sweep of the pandemic, with mass burials and cremations, conveys a sense of inescapable doom. Due to the fear of contagion, performing of last rites has seen compromises in making cultural-specific forms of giving honour to the dead. The pain of the survivors, already incomprehensibly flustered in thought, can't find shelter in the communal spaces of bereavement that traditionally offered comfort as spaces of solidarity. The generations surviving the pandemic are bound to have an altered sense of cohabited space: measured proximity being the norm of new forms of living. While we are still struggling for a stable society to emerge, looking at ways of death in the pandemic may perhaps shape the ways of living and thereby that of culture, for "Culture itself, culture in general" Derrida contends, "is essentially, before anything, even a priori, the culture of death. Consequently, then, it is a history of death" (43).

The effects of pandemic are not limited to biological side of life, rather are adopted as essential factors in calculating the useful and the disposable within the political matrix. As evident, along with the spaces prompting infection and disease, there are other forms of fear and violence imbricated in the pandemic owing to the State's systemic strategies of erasure and denial. With the politicization of space, efforts to create a globally shared dialogue get uncovered as nothing but niceties hiding ugly rationales behind the national and international policies. Using the norms of social distancing and self-isolation, the enforcing power of the dominant State has utilized space to silence bodies of dissents and protests. The rhetoric of war against the pandemic employed by the State allows, contends Alex de Waal, the State to justify its extreme measures and suppression of dissent. Facing the danger of what Agamben calls normalization of the state of exception (Peters 1), the individual citizen too is displaced from the discourse that weighs against him in favour of statistical solutions. The State refuses to let its citizens either leave or enter its boundaries, unabashedly claiming to espouse the principle of greater good, even as common man remains suspended between spaces to succumb to either the virus or to the policies put in place to save them from the said virus. State's interventionist policies also politicize the debates within medical community—seen in the conflicts between virologists and epidemiologists on what are, supposedly, purely scientific questions—and conversely, politics is medicalized where State treats its "citizen as a patient in need of perpetual care and turning social deviance into an epidemic disruption to be treated or suppressed" (Esposito).

The digital space too, in many ways, has spawned dis/misinformation that is impossible to sift through, hazarded psychological health of people through their overdependence on technology, and in general has helped contribute to the fear of

psychosis gripping the precarious populations restricted in isolated spaces. An array of socio-economic and political questions also emerged out of this over-reliance on digital platforms, pertaining to the accessibility and equity as "those without internet access [found] themselves locked out from an increasing number of social spaces" (Archer and Wildman 32). Conversely, it has also helped us retain a semblance of civilizational poise by facilitating continuation of socio-economic structures in the form of work-from-home culture, formation of work-stations, and circulation of necessary commodities as well as healthcare and educational services, thereby saving lives and economies from complete collapse. It allows us to recast the role of virtual space as a nodal pivot providing quantifiable data on trauma, rate of infection and survival, domain of altruistic benefits through constant flow of information, as well as a recreational space permitting us to cope with the calamitous tragedy unfolding outside in physical space.

Diverse disciplines have distended their contours to design formative spaces of thinking through this liminality. The incipient changes brought by the virus are manifest, not only in our health care system, but across politics, urban planning, economics, architecture, ethics, proxemics, and psychology among others. In this emerging new configuration, the realm of our experience—domestic sphere, social environment, and body as breathing spaces—mobilizes a complex dynamic of spatiality where, to put in Deleuzian terms, the subject/self is enfolded with the *other* and the *outside*. It remains to be seen, however, how the differential quotient of the contemporary historical moment gets unfolded in times to come. Yet, the attempt to reimagine space in the context of such new folds of time vitally bears on new modalities of becoming; and new kinds of subjectivities are already undergoing formation in the ongoing crisis.

The last Issue of this Volume that broadly concentrated upon aspects of reality which resist subsumption in the rational frameworks of understanding—dystopia, aporia, and fantasy—explores the agency of space in constituting experiences and processes through which we navigate the incomprehensible dynamics of the current pandemic. Engaging with the theme of "Rethinking Space Beyond the Pandemic," the two papers published in this Issue deal with the possible reconfigurations of space by reimagining the future via heterotopic spaces. What they have in common is a trenchant critique of colonial history and its far-reaching politics in shaping subjectivities and societies. While Damilare Bello's paper plays out the African experience of the crisis of Western modernity, William Puckett diagnoses the legacies of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its ramifications for African-American diasporic experience. Both papers bring out a way forward to conceive alternate futures beyond the hegemonic Western narratives, thereby contending that reimaginations of future are not delinked with the repurposing of history. In the wake of Covid-19, reclaiming diverse forms of indigenous knowledge systems too is a point to reckon with in the accentuated discourse on Western modernity. Incorporating this thread to build upon apocalypse-dystopia as radical sense-making paradigm, Bello's paper teases out implications of utopian-thinking in the conceptualization of new future for Africa. In doing so, it explores the liberating potentials of Africanfuturism and Afrotopia as literary-political interventions premised

upon epistemic disobedience—the operational dynamics of this project being examined through a reading of Chinelo Onwualu's story "Read Before Use." Puckett's paper, situated in the space of minor literature, engages with the colonial and postcolonial hierarchies present in Octavia E. Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy with a view to problematize questions of originary voice and hybridization within colonial history. Through the exploration of the place and space of minor literature that subverts the colonizer's language, this paper gravitates towards the construction of fluid diasporic posthuman subjectivities.

As we conclude our Volume 4, we thank all our contributors for their responsiveness and active partaking in the publication process. In bringing this work together, we all have braved against the ongoing turbulent times, and hope that through our efforts *LLIDS* encourages networks of solidarity among our readers.

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Africanfuturism—a New Commonsense? Apocalypse as Sense-Making after the Crises of Postcolonial Modernity

Damilare Bello | University of Ibadan
http://ellids.com/archives/2021/09/4.4-Bello.pdf

Abstract | Critical dystopia, apocalypse as myth of endings, and the *longue durée* of human cultural history are all circumscribed by the necessity of the future: they are subtended by the extrapolation/speculation of the present into the future, whether in plausible, possible, or annihilative terms. Concerning African postcolonial politics and its literary imagination however, there is a sense in which the paradigm of apocalypse as a sense-making framework and futurist narratives of critical (not classical) dystopian sensibility preempt, rehash, and connect with Mignolo's ruminations on the rhetoric of modernity, Santos's heterotopia and utopian-thinking, Sarr's Afrotopia, and decoloniality's emphasis on the crises of modernity/modern science. This paper is part of the author's interdisciplinary project of thinking through this relation, the theoretical convergence of Africanfuturism and decoloniality as political projects, and their epistemic implications for postcolonial modernity, African future or utopia (i.e., Afrotopia), and the productions of contemporaneous realities in African literary imagination. In order to ground the perspectives posed here in more pragmatic terms, a close-reading of Chinelo Onwualu's "Read Before Use" has been performed as a converging point for the arguments raised.

Keywords | Africanfuturism, Dystopia, Decoloniality, Crises of Modernity/Modern Science, Apocalypse, Heterotopia, Afrotopia, Utopian-thinking, Chinelo Onwualu

This article explores how the apocalypse imaginary and the dystopian sensibility[1] can interlink to fashion a political strategy in Africanfuturism as a framework that bears out future (re)imaginings as radical tactics of localizing a space of survival for Africans in the postcolonial present. To do this, the article ruminates on connections between Africanfuturism, Matthew Eatough's "utopian now," Felwine Sarr's African utopia (Afrotopia), Boaventura Sousa de Santos's conception of heterotopia, and critical dystopia as a utopia-bound episode. This article affirms the necessity of seeking alternative wisdom in living through the twenty-first century's social crises. In so doing, it attempts to make sense of how creating alternative realities by radically displacing the present in future terms constitutes a political intervention in the crises besetting the modern world and the African whose subjecthood is anchored on technoscience. Also of interest is how Africanfuturism relates to apocalypse as a sense-making framework and the crises of (Western) modernity as crises of African future. In connection with this, the article reflects on how Africanfuturism, as a "political tactic for restructuring experiences of the African present through imagining new African futures" (Sunstrum 199), draws on the sensibilities availed by dystopia as an episode and apocalypse as a myth of endings. To develop such a reading, this article rethinks and theorizes Africanfuturism in the light of a commonsense epistemology. And to substantiate and drive the arguments to a meaningful conclusion, the analysis sets up a close-reading of diasporic Nigerian writer Chinelo Onwualu's born-digital short story "Read Before Use" as a converging point for the ideas presented here.

To start, using Nigeria as a case study, if we were to imagine the year 2020 as an apocalyptic dystopian narrative, and its most severe moments of social chaos, political disenchantment, and cultural anarchism as plot materials—i.e., Covid-19 pandemic, #EndSARS protests, Lekki and Zabarmari Massacres, and Kankara Abduction to list but a few—what lessons about Nigeria's ecosystem as a postcolonial state are magnified by the narrative's plot?[2] More importantly, what hypotheses or conclusions are hazardable

[1]The dystopian sensibility here refers to a consciousness of and fixation (i.e., the cultural idioms that represent it) on impending catastrophes. More importantly, this consciousness or fixation, as well as its associated symbols, generate conflicting responses that cannot be easily bifurcated into categories of hopelessness and despair or of hope and redemption, and thus are capable of yielding surprising political implications.

[2]These events happened almost sequentially in 2020, rippling the Nigerian socio-cultural fabric by setting off a chain of political implications that has estranged the polity and the ruling elite and, consequently, portending possible cataclysmic futures for the nation-state. #EndSARS was a series of protests by the Nigerian youths against corrupt political leadership and police brutality; they occurred simultaneously in major metropolitan cities in the nation. Lekki Massacre was the response of the government to the protests; there is still no consensus on the number of protesters killed by the military deployed by the state to clamp down on the protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate, one of the more popular sites of the protest. The Zambari Massacre names the gruesome killings of farmers in Borno state by suspected Boko Haram terrorists, while

as regards the larger universe and, particularly, the postcolonial African subject? While it could be envisaged that responses will vary, imagining such a narrative will not fail to yield a political answer, however correct or corrective it may be in its valuation of the raised questions in particular and the human species in general.

The use of the terms 'correct' and 'corrective' here presages some of the pivotal issues interfacing this article—that of the chronopolitical implication of thinking against dominant imaginaries as they pertain to alarmist or more nuanced views of the fate of the human species, the lifespan/afterlife of the present cultural moment, and the alpha role of technoscience in knowledge- and culture-making. By chronopolitical, the article draws attention to Jane Bryce's postulation on speculative literature and futurist thinking as alternative mechanisms of existing within the social real, especially as against state-sanctioned apparatuses of control preserving the latter as it were (2). To her and Kodwo Eshun, who introduces the phrase as a vital intercession in the production and distribution of Black futures (292), this act is an intervening contravention of any lifeworld produced by the (postcolonial) state, Western modernity, and technoscience as a universalized epistemology. It is a method of correcting the present (its ways of knowing, seeing, living, etc.) by extrapolating as well as speculating[3] social facts or cultural baselines and inscribing these alternate futures as participatory in the longevity of human space-times. Thus, any politically correct or corrective answer that affirms the commitment of year 2020-as-narrative to unveiling new or even oppositional knowledge—against anecdotal or empiricist truth—gestures toward how apocalyptic occurrences and dystopian episodes act as the materiality of chronopolitical strategies targeting specific histories and potential futures. To exposit on this conclusion requires restating that there is a sense in which events of apocalyptic proportions and dystopian rigor can bare (un)known truths about societies and systems, and that there is also a sense in which they impose enduring lessons.

Dystopian narratives are generally regarded as patently divested of sanguinity—even if they aspire toward hope—in working with the apocalypse imaginary that proposes, at the surface, "the destruction of modernity as leading to a state of at least provisional suffering and oppression" (Hicks 7). Heather Hicks asserts this in her book *The Post-Apocalyptic Novel,* where she reads post-apocalyptic novels as invested in the death of modernity, but only as a means of achieving a better world by building from the ruins. In treating post-apocalyptic novels as "narratives of global disaster" troubling the

the Kankara abduction refers to the kidnapping of over 300 secondary school pupils from a boy's school in Kankara, Katsina state—an instance out of many similar kidnappings in the country.

[3]I am conscious of the controversy between extrapolation and speculation as modes of speculative/science fiction/futurist imagining. Without engaging with the dynamics of the debate, already sufficiently addressed by Landon Brooks, I subscribe to the technical difference(s) between both, especially as they relate to African literature and spirituality, on the basis of plausibility, even if—as widely accepted—both emphasize going beyond the known as the starting point of imagination and the unknown as its end or the future of the known. Extrapolation here would be paying fidelity to the known and the existing as the baseline scientific or sociological reality, and producing these 'knowns' as they were in constructed presents/futures—thereby emphasizing precision and extension as constituting its rhetoric of plausibility. Speculation could either be the formulation of "new sets of rules […] different by not being extrapolated from known facts" or by being extrapolated from a different but preceding speculation (Brooks 24). In other words, it could be a movement from extrapolation that is not bound by fidelity or precision in extending and reproducing what is known. Or it could be a movement toward speculation by extrapolating from existing speculative foundations or baselines.

"episteme of modernity" (1), she emphasizes the dystopian connection as "the story of the collapse of modernity itself" or of degraded societies hampered by "globalized ruin" (2). Her juxtaposition of dystopia and the post-apocalyptic as synonymous literary traditions is anchored on the premise of both as involving degraded societies and the profound absence of certainty in the pathway toward triumph.

However, unlike Hicks who acknowledges this synonymy, emphasizing a negligible difference[4] only based on the "social narratives" that hold such despoiled civilizations together, and James Baumlin who gives credence to it in his article exploring pandemics as apocalyptic events and their effects on conceptions of humanity within the posthumanist framework, this work does not entirely consider the apocalyptic and the dystopian as necessarily synonymous. At least not on the basis of the duration and extent of anguish that characterizes and survives an apocalypse, as seen in Baumlin's statement, "Apocalypse leads, paradoxically, to happy ending, *however terrifying the path toward that ending"* (29; emphasis added). Neither does it completely agree with Riven Barton's position that apocalyptic literature differs extensively from literary dystopias—given his claim that dystopia postdates apocalyptic events and that the former "regardless of how horrible it may be is not an end, but a struggle for continuation," nor that the distinction between the religious apocalypse tradition and secular post-apocalyptic content comes to be resolved in dystopian episodes (Barton 6). Disagreeing with these positions does not suggest that they are wrong; however, it is fueled by an understanding of appreciable overlaps in what these paradigms gesture at, the artifice of their materiality as interventional tactics, and their politics within a rhetorical knowledge cosmos. That is, they sometimes overlap in terms of what they signify—their implication as occurrences or their constitution as material possibilities, and the lessons they provide—the implication of which is that their ability to serve as knowledge paradigms with politico-cultural resonances is heightened. To cite an example, Onwualu's story involves a post-apocalyptic civilization about to witness another apocalypse, a social condition that marks it also as a dystopian narrative. The opposite can also be the case, and apocalypse can suggest a future redemption, which is also the case with the story's impending apocalypse. Thus, rather than completely subscribe to any of the above positions, this article proceeds from the supposition that one framework can integrate structures contrived by the other as a broader paradigm, a point Hicks admits in relation to the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic traditions. This suggests that dystopia can draw on the apocalypse framework as a period of suffering without necessarily being post-apocalyptic in outlook, that is, with an end in sight: for instance, apocalypse in its religious connotations signifies the annihilation of the human world (Baumlin 29), setting itself up as a myth of endings (Rosen xi). However, this end is neither infinite nor ultimate, as the gist is often the reconstitution of said world: a turbulent journey toward a new utopia. Re-echoing Baumlin's succinct avowal, the "[a]pocalypse leads, paradoxically, to a happy ending, however terrifying the path toward that ending" (29).

[4]Hicks acknowledges a difference between using dystopia and post-apocalyptic synonymously based on the former "presenting a world in which a single metanarrative" operates rather tyrannically, and the latter "depicting a social landscape punctuated by […] various micronarratives" (8). Her stance is revealed in her point that in either case there is no surety as to what constitutes progress, given how both manifest the absence of alternatives and uniformity that progress often requires.

To argue from this viewpoint is to recognize the slipperiness in making the following argument that should ordinarily buttress Barton's stance: that secular apocalypse redefined the apocalypse imaginary completely from a religious myth of endings—of complete annihilation—to a secular interpretive paradigm. This cannot be more untrue however. One, the explorative and expository scope of the secular apocalypse mythos is traceable to the latent promise of divine recovery and vengeance inherent to religious apocalyptic narratives. Within Judeo-Christian faith, the traditional or religious apocalyptic imaginary orients toward comforting those menaced by social vices/disruption. To this cohort, "the promise of apocalypse is unequivocal; God has a plan, the disruption is part of it, and in the end all will be made right" (Rosen xii). All of this prefigures a newness after destruction. In her work, Elizabeth Rosen unambiguously highlights the genus of corrective and expository intervention that apocalypse exhibits in its religious morphology: a promise of restoration and ultimate order, an avowal to right wrongs, and a specific pontification of what is wrong that requires restoration, which often can be avoided entirely through repentance (xi). Indeed, as will be shown in the latter parts of this article, there is also an insightful nexus between the kind of (judgmental) intervention implied by the religious sensibility of apocalypse as "a corrective response for a people who have not only failed unpardonably, but have also demonstrated an inability even to right its own wrongs" and the manner of intervention ascribable to present-day/secular apocalyptic imaginaries (Rosen xii).

In its multiple religious uses, this trope of newness—New Jerusalem being the conceptual term—is sacrosanct to the apocalypse mythos. Similarly important, in the religious context, apocalypse's functionality as a myth of endings also invariably signifies the annihilation of social crises and corruption that now obtains as the core of the secular apocalypse imaginary, which is why Lisa Yaszek, revisiting the knowledge value of apocalypse, describes it as "positively and negatively charged" (48). This confutes the widespread position that the religious apocalypse is principally concerned with the end of human history. In addition, in its classical Vedic, Hellenic, and Islamic moorings, the resonance of the apocalypse as a sense-making paradigm regulating social consciousness and baseline realities is not alien.[5] Apocalypse, after all, etymologically derives from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which means unveiling or uncovering. However, and this informs the stated ambivalence, it is also counter-intuitive to admit that the historical transitioning of the myth of apocalypse into its present-day symbolism is not heavily influenced by specific modern occasions. Events like Enlightenment and its drastic cut down on religious clout in regulating epistemology, Industrial Revolution and the rise of modern science as a militant knowledge system, World Wars and terrorism, late capitalism, the use of advanced weapons of warfare and mass destruction, epidemics and outbreaks, and more recently the Coronavirus pandemic have impacted our understanding of what apocalypse means.

[5]The etymology of apocalypse in Greek social and epistemological register frames it as concerned with unveiling profound things otherwise hidden, which suggests its acceptance as associable with knowledge. Teresa Heffernan's "Apocalyptic Narratives: The Nation in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children'" expounds on the expository and revelatory uses of apocalypse in different religions like Islam, pointing toward its function as a knowledge structure across cultures and religion. See also, Rosen, page 7, for how apocalypse functions similarly in Vedic cultures.

Although, like Rosen argues, while a palpable shift is noticeable in how the *zeitgeist* of Enlightenment/Western modernity dulled the restorative portion of the apocalypse formula, post-Enlightenment occurrences also consolidated apocalypse into an end-time narrative in the consciousness of the modern subject, dialing up the annihilative leanings of traditional religious apocalypse. Writers like Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, and H.G. Wells trended apocalypse as doomsday in popular imagination through the science fiction genre (Yaszek 48). The upshot of which is the fastening of that tenuous liminal link between subjectivity formation and *weltschmerz*—i.e., melancholy and world-weariness induced by a consciousness of specters of scary futures—as resonant in the maintenance of modern subjecthood. Retained therefore as a structure of feeling in the secular world is the morbid sensibility of the religious apocalypse. Thus, it can be safely supposed that in the process of wrestling with the growing paranoia caused by advancements in technoscience and the crises it facilitates, apocalypse assumed a more synonymous secular relation with destruction and catastrophe.

This development informs how the apocalypse myth can be said to foreshadow or evoke meaningless worlds: degenerate present with a chaotic past and a future devoid of possibilities. While, to Rosen, the episteme of hope within the apocalyptic framework suffers decreasing attention as a result of a consuming emphasis on its destructive tenor by a generation defined by incessant witnessing and fear of unrepentant crises (xv), its revelatory sensibility still retains a vibrant presence owing to various artistic traditions across continents reworking and refusing what Paik calls "the politics of catastrophe," which, as Yaszek explains, involves writers using the apocalypse imaginary to investigate or address racial and class tensions (49). It is commonly expressed in dystopian imaginations—critical dystopia to be precise, which Graham Murphy explains as an inversion of dystopia that began to appear in literary works of the late nineteenth century (473). Dystopian episodes manifesting this model of apocalypse as a revelatory framework recommend themselves as critical schemes evaluating the *longue durée* of human history, albeit with perceptible morbidity. So, while dystopian narratives intimate a "struggle for continuation," their obligation to the social real as "shadow projections of current society, hyper-ventilating problems and potential fears that already exist" (Barton 6) reveals a heavy reliance on the paradigm of apocalypse as a sense-making framework, especially since dystopia as a post-apocalyptic possibility shows capricious investment in the eruption, absence, or trickle of hope, despite the overwhelming clutter of despair.

It should be clear that the direction of this article's current premises is in emphasizing the dystopian utilization of the apocalypse imaginary as a framework. Also of importance is how this framework bolsters the critical sense of dystopian creations, as it cannot be discounted that the shift from reading apocalypse as a myth of the end of human socio-political history to a sense-making paradigm affords modern subjects the privilege of contriving paradigmatic modes of comprehending materiality and subjectivity (Kermode 28). One way this is oft-done is reworking the intervening poetics of apocalypse into a schema that fuses cultural mythology and secular imaginary in ways remindful of the ending of modern ecosystem and of social crises and political vices. When made manifest in dystopian conceptions, this paradigmatic structure justifies its

weight as a radical mode of evaluating nationhood, subjectivity, and progress.[6] At issue therefore is not dystopianism in its classic form of total annihilation, with no glimpse of redemption or hope, but a dystopian sensibility oriented toward utopianism, that is, a critical dystopia moving en-route social and political responsibility or dystopia that "[is] less driven by extremes of celebration or despair, more open to complexities and ambiguities, and more encouraging of new riffs of personal and political maneuvers" (Moylan 182).

In their description of the Covid-19 pandemic as a "magnifying mirror," Suri and Moquim corroborate this view of dystopian outcomes. Their reflection that the pandemic and its dystopian-scare "provides our world an opportunity to re-cognize itself in its reflection" (v) illuminates the foregoing and also stresses on alternatively reading apocalyptic events as radical ways of unveiling confounding social meanings. The logic being optimized here is the illustrative functionality of potential cataclysmic occurrences. Also optimized are the corrective potentials of such occurrences. To cite a useful instance, despite how damaging Covid-19 has been or how epidemics menace the very institutions that remotely make them possible, they jolt us to truths erstwhile discounted. Thus, the argument, put plainly, is that in leveraging the apocalypse paradigm, dystopian scare or catastrophes, while also imperiling the validity of modern systems, recommend themselves prophetically as remedies. Their apocalyptic nature, when read for their telegraphic potentials, disambiguates their origins, causes, or even catastrophic enactments into signposts of maturing crises, so that we can read them as warning signs or critical revelatory schemes foreshadowing possible practical steps against future mishaps.

The above proposition buttresses the position that there is a sense in which dystopian episodes interfacing the apocalypse myth can be apprehended as a mode of knowledge production. Moylan asserts that dystopian literatures narrativizing apocalypse do so with the goal of "exploring ways to change the present systems so that […] culturally and economically marginalized people not only survive but also try to move toward a social reality that is shaped by an impulse to human self-determination and ecological health" (189). His take affords us to see how this kind of dystopian episode loosely interprets the dystopian spirit of melancholy, which undeniably accounts for the critical shift from classical dystopia's more incorrigible pessimism.[7] The creative forms within which this shift finds resonance are often constituted by what he calls "social

[6]Teresa Heffernan's article "Apocalyptic Narratives: The Nation in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children'" is pertinent here as it reads how the apocalypse paradigm can be designed as a narrative tool to explore nationalism. Her article reads Rushdie's deployment of apocalypse as his questioning and skepticism of the idea of the modern nation, claiming fascinatingly that the revelatory potential of the apocalypse paradigm is animated in how the novel projects the idea of the nation as apocalyptic by rejecting marginalized communities or erasing their existence through homogenizing master-narratives, thereby suggesting the end of (alternative) history and the future they produce. Heffernan's article is rich in its sophisticated propositions of how the mythos of apocalypse, when adopted for its paradigmatic strength as a sense-making mode, can offer practical ways of understanding different aspects of the nation, and perhaps remedying, the failures or, to use the decolonial phrase, crises of modernity.

[7]Examples of texts with such overbearing pessimism are Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), Yevgeni Zamyatin's *We* (1920), Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1952), and Bernard Wolfe's *Limbo* (1952). Others are Olufemi Terry's "Stickfighting Days" (2010), H. G. Wells' *Time Machine* (1895), Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1907), George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932).

nightmares." As they are crises at whose core rests redemptive grace, through them critical dystopia intimates, explores, and renders ways to improve society, ironically lessening the dark overtones of apocalyptic wreck and infinite despondency and encouraging hope that is achievable by taking practical steps or relying on commonsense.[8]

It should be stated that the commonsensicality of the solutions tendered by these 'social nightmares' renders them as spectacles. There are several reasons for this: they are spectacles by being negations of dominant reality. Also, they are often simple, practical, but immeasurably productive steps toward self-preservation, self-affirmation, and the collective good in a world defined by wonders of modern science. Wonders that often fail and whose failures become the crises commonsense ironically applies itself against as solution—take for instance the relation between green gas and cancer, high-tech weapons of warfare and terrorism/inter-national wars, advanced technology and the rise or move of modern societies from welfare to surveillance states as revealed in the example of Edward Snowden, and the unpopularity and thus mythologizing of simple, almost outdated solutions like loving one's neighbor as oneself in the face of capitalism-backed individualistic approach to life. In addition, and this spotlights the irony of their spectacle, the remedial validity of these commonsensical solutions is locked away within the chaos they address as belated or prophylactic remedies. Put differently, these solutions self-reflect their chaotic interiority as harvestable of requisite solutions, hereby projecting their contradictory radicality into the realm of the spectacular where, negating the principle of causation, the cause is the solution. Critical dystopia therefore, in working with the apocalypse paradigm, tropes commonsense as realistic steps adoptable toward achieving restoration.

It would appear cautious to accede to Josef Broeck's conclusion in *The Apocalyptic Imagination in America* that apocalyptic thinking and writing have strayed away from any definite description so that there is simply "no common agreement on the form, content, or function" (94). Even where this is near accurate—for instance, Yaszek's work on African writers' relation to the apocalypse paradigm suggests several literary/imaginative uses—it is never the case that an astute observation cannot bare the presence of a procedural leaning toward a message of hope when it is constitutive in a narrative of apocalypse. It can be teased out because the procedures through which the message of hope is choreographed are the materials of the narration itself. Moylan calls them the social and aesthetic values of dystopian narratives, and this article proposes they are anchored on commonsense. Their manner of constitution as radical value systems points toward a politics of catastrophe that reconsiders the process through which utopia can be attained. We see this in how the procedures-as-materials achieve their radicality,

[8]Commonsense is used here in a way that draws on the basic principles of the Commonsense philosophy and the ideals of the Scottish realism of Thomas Reid that privileges experience and natural laws based off of perception of human nature and environment in making value judgments. Commonsense here thus refutes the total reliance on empiricist knowledge or positivist science in making net judgments of social worlds; relies on experience-based perception of the human world and the natural environment as constituting sound knowledge; and, importantly, affirms specific locales as capable of generating their own relevant site-related/situated knowledge. I refer to it as knowledge drawn from and by making sense of human observational experiences of natural and social realities in order to effect and affect people's lived experiences of both realities, thereby having a stake in human's circadian experience.

which, as posited earlier, is how they call forth the New Jerusalem motif from the same crises that produce and threaten it.

This returns the discussion to the thesis that there is a sense in which events of apocalyptic proportions and critical dystopian sensibility can uncover hidden fault lines as well as propose curative lessons. Re-framing this in a way that furthers the conversation, there is a sense in which we can attribute to a narrative of apocalypse the quality of a radical politics of possibilities. Thus, approaching dystopian narratives working with this paradigm as anchored on a "utopian imagination" is not illogical. Utopian-thinking or imagination, to define it in Sousa Santos's terms,[9] emphasizes what does not exist but is integral, and can be manifestly so, by being a possibility to what exists ("Three Metaphors" 572). That utopian-thinking orients toward substituting a dominate reality with an implied (alternative) possibility holds immense implication for Global Southern nation-states like Nigeria, its future, as well as the dystopia-apocalypse relation.

Out of the several theoretical imperatives that facilitate interlinking the apocalypse-dystopia as radical sense-making paradigm with Santos's utopian-thinking, three are germane for the discussion here. The first is that Santos stresses on an alarming paucity in utopian-thinking in our current social climate and posits this as the result of the advancement in modern science with epistemology and rationality as its instrument. It means that "exploring new modes of human possibility and styles of will," which is what utopian-thinking is, has been made impossible or unattractive by modern science, through its pervading and exclusionary dominance as a *rational* mode of seeing, knowing, and knowledge production ("Three Metaphors" 573). This may not sound ludicrous if we consider the implication of the rhetoric of modernity and its anthropocentric promises of conviviality, domination of nature, progress, liberty, salvation, etc., on the nature of global knowledge production.[10] However, the relation becomes clearer when we realize that this rhetoric with which modernity achieved universal dominance and undermined/marginalized other knowledge systems has itself become questionable (Santos, "Oppositional Postmodernism" 122–123).

For instance, since the 1950s, the human planet has lost about one third of its forests, with tropical forests responsible for about 40 percent of biomass and oxygen being affected, particularly in Mexico, where over 600,000 acres of forest have been destroyed ("Oppositional Postmodernism" 123). Multinationals fell forest trees at will and for neo-liberal gains, affecting about 12 million acres of Amazon Forest, bringing an onset of desertification and water scarcity, which already affects many third world countries like South Africa (124). We see the promise of peace and conviviality failing with the history of numerous conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe backed by the currencies of capitalism and the precision of advanced technologies of warfare in large-scale annihilation of humans and societies; this is also revealed by the

[9]Santos's interventions in diagnosing the problems of the century and its causes, and how indigenous cultures are wrapped into the colonial schemes of Western modernity make his advocacy for new theoretical paradigms in sustaining the relevance and visibility of non-Western indigenous cultures and epistemologies germane here. This work draws on Santos in particular—and Anibal Quijano, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Enrique Dussel, and Walter Mignolo more generally—for the implication of his theorical suggestions on decolonial discourse, specifically as it pertains to Africa.
[10]See Walter Mignolo's "Cosmopolitanism," page 116 for a comprehensive argument on this.

unmanageable refugee crises spilling out of several communities at intra- and international levels as a result of the inherent bias in labeling others as alien, foreigners, non-human, uncivilized, and intruders, etc. Progress, liberty, and salvation have become mirages: to cite Santos, "[w]hile in the eighteenth century 4.4 million people died in 68 wars, in our century 99 million people died in 237 wars" ("Oppositional Postmodernism" 123). Trade wars, guns trafficking, and violation of human rights have increased on an international scale, while the gap between the Global North and South widens on economic and technological fronts.[11] Dumping of pharmaceutical waste in Third World countries has ceased to be a myth; and in bastions of democracy like the United States and United Kingdom, racial injustice and intolerance, police killings, homophobia, xenophobia, and racial intolerance have reached unprecedented peaks since the Civil Rights era.[12] Ethnic cleansing, ritual killings, violation of women and children rights continue to mark several regions of the world beholden to science as the arbiter of knowledge and planetary wisdom or global harmony.[13]

Because the promises were contracted on the altar of modern science as a universal epistemology, they articulated its infallibility, timelessness, and ability to monopolistically offer solutions to modern problems. The rhetoric of modernity thus symbolizes the promises of modern science of futures that were to be secure, progressive, and, consequently, utopian. However, since this is not the case, not only is the present burdened by chaos, the futures promised by modernity and backed by science have lost their allure, ceased to be, and are plagued with inestimable crises. Thus, avowed is a futureless future. For postcolonial African nation-states and subjects re-made in the image of the colonizer, the situation is direr, since "it is in its name [modernity and its future] that they have lost other futures" ("Three Metaphors" 572). Putting it without equivocation, neither does this future have a place for them, nor can they rely on it. As Santos concisely argues, not only is it that "the future promised by modernity has no future [but the] great majority of people in the periphery of the world system [Africans] no longer believe in it" (572). Perhaps no better example is the Covid-19 pandemic, during which Africa and the Global South wait on America and the Global North for progress on a solution despite being initially spared relative to the death rate in the North, and even as the United States government continues to take alarmingly poor steps, underperforming while being embroiled in theatrical displays of international power

[11]See Kacowiz, Arie M. "Globalization, Poverty, and the North-South Divide." *International Studies Review*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2007, pp. 565–580. For data on guns-trafficking, see "Comprehensive Statistics of Illicit Firearms Trafficking Now Publicly Available on UNODC Data Portal." *United Nations*, 2019, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2019/October/comprehensive-statistics-of-illicit-firearms-trafficking-now-publicly-available-on-the-unodc-data-portal.html. See also, Vilmi, Lauri, et al. "The Trade War Has Significantly Weakened the Global Economy." *Bank of Finland Bulletin*, 2019, www.bofbulletin.fi/en/2019/4/the-trade-war-has-significantly-weakened-the-global-economy/.

[12]Akpan, Victor E. "Hazardous Waste Management: An African Overview." *MPDI*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2000, pp. 1–15.

[13]The literature on these subjects is extensive, but a good starting point with excellent take on these issues is Michael Mann's *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge UP, 2005. Also serving as a good overview on the subject of democracy's failure and ethnic killing is Michael Abramowitz's and Arch Puddington's "As Global Democracy Retreats, Ethnic Cleansing Is on the Rise." *Freedom House*, 2019. www.freedomhouse.org/article/global-democracy-retreats-ethnic-cleansing-rise. See Also, Riley, Dylan. "Democracy's Graveyards." *New Left Review*, 2007, pp. 125–136.

tussles.[14] While the Pandemic has since proven to be unpredictable in its manifestations, humbling decades of scientific reasoning, the arrogance of the West through its media in predicting a future of multiple and endless deaths in African countries,[15] even when less was known of the novel virus, speaks to a Western consciousness of the future that is at best dismissive of Africa and at worse patronizing, but cloaked under superficial multicultural narratives and false global solidarity. Herein lie two significant lessons, already well teased out by the Zimbabwean decolonial theorist Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni in his article, "Geopolitics of Power and Knowledge in the Covid-19 Pandemic: Decolonial Reflection on a Global Crisis." One is that decolonial love is "the soul of the post-Covid 19 world order based on a new ethics for living together, economies of care, a politics of conviviality, and hospitality as opposed to enmity" (1).

To clarify, the reference to decolonial love and its ethics here pinpoints the value in commonsensical behaviors and basic social ethics such as good hygiene, washing of hands, thoughtfulness, empathy in decision-making, and participation in resource consumption on the basis of need, which tends toward equitable and even resource distribution in times of crisis. These are all examples of humanistic consideration, which is generally the basis of ethics.[16] This makes good hygiene and thoughtfulness instances of selflessness: being considerate of people facilitates social equilibrium between an individual and others, and good hygiene is an effort at the personal level with ripple effects that promote human welfare at the collective level. However, this idea of 'selflessness' has been unveiled as profoundly absent in the social fabric of the twenty-first century modern world by the Pandemic: during its early days videos of individuals hoarding groceries down to toilet paper pervaded the internet. The consistent insistence on washing and sanitizing of hands, basically commonsensical, has made it a spectacle, implying a degree of disregard/absence owing to the kind of emphasis on it (global ads, sponsored jingles, funded research campaigns, etc.) and to the collective but false sense of security cultivated by an over-dependence on techno-science, modern drugs, and antibiotics. And while it can be argued that new cultural registers like social distancing signal new modes of relationships, this does not discount that the politics of conviviality, economies of care, or hospitality remain integral to the social fabric, because the very principle on which they stand is taking others (the vulnerable, children, frontline workers, foreigners, and other expressions of difference) into consideration, which is the logic behind the global call for social distancing. 'Flattening the curve' is a transcontinental

[14]While things have progressed from this, with new vaccines from the US, as at the time of writing this article, this was exactly the case then.

[15]For a summary of several positions on this issue, see Okereke, Caleb and Kelsey Nielsen. "The Problem with Predicting Coronavirus Apocalypse in Africa." *Aljazeera*, 2020, www.aljazeera.com/amp/opinions/2020/5/7/the-problem-with-predicting-coronavirus-apocalypse-in-africa. See also, Berhan, Yifru. "Will Africa Be Devastated by Covid-19 as Many Predicted? Perspective and Prospective." *Ethiopian Journal of Health Sciences*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2020, pp. 459–467. Also important is Cara Anna's "Africa Could See 300,000 Coronavirus Deaths This Year." published in *AP News* April 17, 2020, where it is reported that according to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, "under the worst-case scenario with no intervention against the virus, Africa could see 3.3 million deaths and 1.2 billion infections." The report goes as far as to claim that "even with intense social distancing under the best-case scenario the continent could see more than 122 million infections."

[16]For how humanistic consideration generally underpins ethics across many cultures, see the volume by Wiredu, Kwasi, ed. *A Companion to African Philosophy.* Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004. For additional reading, see also Williams, Bernard. *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics.* Cambridge UP, 1972.

welfare proposition requiring individual and collective participation on a planetary scale, synonymous to keeping everybody safe and the human species alive in its diversity as much as possible, regardless of how this is done. It is interesting to note that this sense of conviviality, where cross-cultural interactivity with non-hegemonic humanistic consideration is primary, is a key tenet of decoloniality as a political project with planetary implications. Thus, this corrective lesson dovetails with the enunciation of this article that crises of dystopian character do in fact offer practical and commonsensical lessons, particularly when we consider that these traditional ethics and commonsensical routines have proven to be effective ways of survival, even as they have been sacrificed on the altar of modern scientific progress.

The second important lesson is that the asymmetrical and pyramidal power relations that set modern science militantly against other forms of knowledge are in fact insidious to the future and continuity of the species. It is Ndlovu-Gatsheni's view that the poverty of "normal-times thinking,"[17] in combating the virus is consequent to the failures of modern science in learning from alternative epistemic systems that it discredited and impoverished on the global scale through colonial modernity and neo-liberal capitalism (4–5). That African states have experienced several epidemics makes it commonsensical to collaborate and learn from African history of epidemics in the war against the virus.[18] But the rhetoric of Western modernity, neocolonialism's hierarchical world-ordering, and the supposed perfection of modern science prevent this. However, to quote Santos's, since "[m]odern science was developed against other forms of knowledge and, most militantly, against common-sense knowledge," its persistent failures pose grave implications for modernity, that is, the world order it sustains ("Room for Manoeuver" 151). These failures strip away the immortality of modern science as flawless and a dependable epistemology. The crises of modernity therefore imply the crises of the social real it activates (e.g., Western modernity, African post-colonial present, etc.). This ripple effect is readable in the life of the modern African, whose subjecthood is an example of what Enwezor, in his article on postcolonial inflections of Euro-modernity, calls a "mimic modernity [achieved] through various European references" in present-day African socio-cultural reality, since it owes its constitution to European colonization and Euro-American imperial imposition of its culture and knowledge through Western modernity (2). Proceeding from Ndlovu-Gatsheni's and Santos's propositions, this article

[17]Normal-times thinking are common mental frames and thought systems that have become routine to the modern human social functioning. They are often racialized, gendered, religious, politicized, nationalist, ethno-culturalist, and dwarfed by the various cleavages around which humans mobilize as social agents. Hence, they are too provincial or insular, territorial or excessively nationalist, and fundamentalist or inflexible, which make them inadequate as patterns of thought and, thus, insufficient in generating necessary solutions. More so, they are sometimes causes of modern crisis; and in the sense of Santos's argument that solutions to the crisis of modern science cannot come from modern science, normal-times thinking cannot provide solutions.

[18]To avoid rehashing an argument already made in abundance, three sources are provided below that adequately address what lessons African states and their experience of epidemics have to offer in this period of Coronavirus pandemic. Bernault, Glorence. "Some Lessons from the History of Epidemics in Africa." *African Arguments*, 5 June, 2020, www.africanarguments.org/2020/06/some-lessons-from-the-history-of-epidemics-in-africa/. See also, Pilling, David. "How Africa Fought the Pandemic—and What Coronavirus has Taught the World." *Financial Times*, 23 Oct. 2020, https://www.ft.com/content/c0badd91-a395-4644-a734-316e71d60bf7; Dennis, Angie and Katherina Thomas. "Leaning about Epidemic Response from Sub-Saharan African Countries." *STAT*, 9 April 2020, https://www.statnews.com/2020/04/09/learning-about-epidemic-response-from-african-countries/.

relates to the latter's call to utopian-thinking—that "we [modern African subjects] must reinvent the future by opening up a new horizon of possibilities [future] mapped out by new radical alternatives [paradigms]" ("Three Metaphors" 572)—as a response to two unwritten imperatives: to avoid the dubious and obvious deficiency of normal-times thinking for utopian-thinking; and to conceive of a (new) future for Africa. Like Ndlovu-Gatsheni after him, Santos warns that we must define the alternative paradigms, since "merely criticizing the dominant paradigm, though crucial, is not enough" ("Three Metaphors" 572). This injunction is invaluable as it reaffirms the necessity of defining chosen radical alternatives and, more importantly, earmarks utopian-thinking as an efficient conduit. We come to an understanding of Santos's theoretical injunction first in his conception of utopia as "using the imagination to explore new modes of human possibilities and to oppose the necessity of what exists on behalf of something radically better that is worth fighting for," and then in his conception of utopian-thinking as "call[ing] attention to what does not exist as being the integral, if silenced, (counter)part of what does exists" ("Three Metaphors" 573). This ascription of instrumental utility to utopia as a radical alternative via 'utopian-thinking' by Santos invokes an oft-muted definition or conception of utopia that strengthens this article's dystopian connection.

Rather than seeing Santos's utilitarian and paradigmatic conception of utopia-thinking as the end result, it should be taken as accentuating a twofold imaginative process involved in achieving utopia as an invented, ideal, but previously non-existing society both in terms of positive and negative utopia (Murphy 473). This Manichean connotation of utopia as negative and positive is not a net value but an indicator of the genus of thinking involved, which makes sense given how our understanding of critical dystopia orients analogously to that of negative utopia. Murphy also makes a convincing case for this by claiming that dystopia as a negative utopia is not the "evacuation of eutopian hope" nor does it fall into the class of anti-utopia by divesting utopia of its defining attributes (473). It only extends beyond the hopes essentialized by utopia by emphasizing the terrors of human history, drawing, as argued by Moylan, through inversion "on the more detailed systemic accounts of utopian narratives" in order "not to undermine Utopia but rather to make room for its reconsideration and re-functioning in even the worst of times" (111, 133). Clarifying how dystopia could be a negative utopia, Sargent in his paper, "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited," argues that it is in its critical sense that it allows for imagining "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which the reader lived" (9). Hence, dystopia's attribution as negative utopia stems from the distinct critical functionality of this *worseness*, and in whose core rests the corrective capacity and expository/exploratory value that identify dystopia as a move toward utopia and, thus, a mode of utopian-thinking.

If we agree on the above—since the future conceived by the exclusionary and monopolistic nature of Western tradition has no place for Africa—it cannot be rebutted that Africa needs to conceive of its own future and re-imagine a different kind of utopia. Felwine Sarr, the Senegalese philosopher, has sought a way out of this conundrum in his work on re-calibrating African systems of knowledge and patterns of thought for future

invention[19] by proposing an Afrotopia, which not only "allows Africa to chart its own cause [and course]" but allows for Africans to invest organically in an "as-yet-inhabited site of Africa to come," a future that can be engineered through will, thought, and imagination (92, 100). In his words, this Afrotopia is an active utopia in thought, "a space of the possible that has not yet been realized, but where nothing insurmountable will prevent it from coming into existence" (102). Its difference from Western conceptions of utopia lies in its neat blending of the social real and the possible as it is conceived and shaped by Africans, outside of Western-derived epistemic paradigms, and thus suited to Africa's historical and socio-cultural needs.

In such a case, while the procedure is to engage in utopian-thinking, the utopian future as its product is not of the kind proposed by the one-size-fits-all model of Western knowledge, but a different type produced by indigenous and internal mechanisms of African thought and on Africa's terms. However, because achieving this specific sort of utopia (Afrotopia) involves what Santos calls heterotopia, the essential radical solution is not particularly in "the invention of a place elsewhere or nowhere," but "a radical displacement within the same place: our own place—from orthotopia to heterotopias."[20] This displacement allows for redistributing power by shifting it from the center, occupied by hegemonic forces, to existing or emerging zones of marginality. Sarr's position that the future must be thought and engaged with in the present, which involves utopian-thinking and which can be done by "identifying [and capitalizing on] the sites where new practices and discourses [of the future] have already begun to express themselves," cements the relationship between heterotopia and this African utopia (xiv). In other words, the radical strategy is not to locate this Afrotopia in a distant temporality, but to disrupt the Western-controlled postcolonial present through alternative thinking in order to create and actualize its space: this is to be done by locally producing and emphasizing an irruptive *zeitgeist* as Western modernity's contemporaneous substitute. That is, Africans must construct a heterotopia through utopian-thinking as the postcolonial space of onto-epistemological affirmation in order to secure a new African future: a space of interference, contestation, and negation of forced hierarchies, induced anxieties, and repressions by social power and hegemonic cultural paradigms.[21] To architecture such a disruptive space-within-a-space demands mentally giving life via utopian-thinking to what has been made marginal or absent by Western modernity and its science. For Africa, these marginalized materials are African indigenous knowledge and sensibilities, and the future possibilities they give life. Nevertheless, achieving this heterotopian reconfiguration of the postcolonial space for the re-integration of the repressed quotidian

[19]To have a better understanding of the limitless potential of this idea of Afrotopia, Felwine Sarr's book, *Afrotopia*, deals brilliantly with how Africa can invent and achieve new futures for itself across multiple facets of modern civilization.

[20]Orthotopia, as used by Santos, recognizes the displacement of autochthonous knowledge forms from their natural place of integrity by Western science, and the need to initiate a restoration, or a return, but a disruptive kind of restoration, that is "from the center to the margin" ("Three Metaphors" 573).

[21]For works that accentuate the disruptive value of heterotopia, see, Lvakhiv, Adam. "Cinema of the Not-Yet: The Utopian Promise of Film as Heterotopia." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature & Culture* vol. 5, no. 2, 2011, pp. 186–209; Johnson, Peter. "The Geographies of Heterotopia." *Geography Compass*, vol 7, no 1, 2013, pp 790–803; Knight, Kelvin. "Placeless Places: Resolving the Paradox of Foucault's Heterotopia." *Textual Practice*, DOI: dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2016.1156151; and Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things.* Tavistock, 1966.

or, as Sunstrum puts it, "occupation and taking-ownership-of the Not-Yet" is not only possible but a tactic of chronopolitical proportions through Africanfuturism (115).

Africanfuturism's chronopolitics is defined not only by its intervention in correcting the dominance of the West in its determination, design, and narration of Africa, but also by allowing a full participation of the latter in its multiple existences. To cite Sunstrum, Africanfuturism in its venture ahead of the past and the present to preside over the future allows Africans to "not only conjure worlds, inventions, alternatives, and possibilities, but also assert [themselves] as the proprietors of those conjuring[s]" (119). This means revoking the future industry's (often Western) monopoly on *future capital* that enables spawning tomorrows, while maintaining overlapping linkages between the past, present, and future as space-times. A type of non-monolith, non-anachronistic, and non-chronological timeline has already been identified in African literary imagination[22] that defines reality, and this utopian-thinking, like Sarr has proposed, capitalizes on this re-configuration of reality (Sarr 100). In place therefore is a sense of overlapping, interconnected, and asynchronously related space-times or historical moments, where the past is the future of an elapsed moment in history; the present, the past's future; and the future, the past or present of a yet-to-be defined moment in time (Adesanmi 229). That Africanfuturism inventively legitimates and utilizes these space-times for future-imagination sets it up as chronopolitical.

Africanfuturism is taken to be a literary political maneuver aimed at initiating a radical restructuring of African present through thinking new futures. Nnedi Okorafor, coining the phrase 'Africanfuturism'—to exhibit the neologism's nominal integrity as opposed to Sunstrum's adjectivized African Futurism or the other iteration AfricanFuturism[23]—defines it as a subgenre of literary imagination "specifically and more directly rooted in African culture, history, mythology and point-of-view as it then branches into the Black Diaspora [and which] does not privilege or center the West [but is] concerned with visions of the future […] it is rooted first and foremost in Africa" (np). Its preoccupation with African agency links it to postcolonial politics and transnational/cultural and global issues (Bryce 5; Sunstrum 114). Also reinforcing its postcolonial concerns is its realization of Eatough's "utopian now" which, as used by him in appreciating the developmental prospects of African future-oriented literature, is that component of utopian-thinking that allows the imagined future, as Santos's "new radical alternative," to co-exist with—by fragmenting the structures of—the postcolonial social present as co-spaces (Eatough 252). To paraphrase Eatough, this "utopian now" is the bringing into material existence alternative possibilities or heterotopias through the act of reading and imagining, which allows readers a glimpse of the utopian possibility lying beyond their social real (253). This kind of *spatial possibility* is boundary-fluid,

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[22]See Adesanmi, Pius. "Of Postcolonial Entanglement and Durée: Reflections on the Francophone African Novel." *Comparative Literature*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2004, pp. 227–242.

[23]Despite these nomenclatural distinctions and their areas of divergence, at stake for each version is the full agency of Africa. So, while Africanfuturism (as one word) is the version coined by Nnedi, I believe its ideological possibilities find resonance with Sunstrum's African Futurism in outlook, implication, and philosophy better. However, I have opted for Nnedi's nomenclatural version because I also believe the neologism is best articulated as a single nominal entity rather than adjectivized to fully manifest as an epistemic descriptor of a particular aesthetic and cultural philosophy.

shifting, and also liminal for being in-between, present, and at the same time exteriorized. It, however, owes its constructedness to Africanfuturism.

In other words, the "utopian now" completes Santos's heterotopia as enabling a new African future by signposting the interaction of imagined futures—through the materiality of the text as social object—with the social real as that of contemporaneous presents. Since Africanfuturism essentially allows Africans "to imagine the future in present tense [so as to] conjure possibilities for re-seeing the everyday present" (Sunstrum 121), it fits perfectly with Eatough's affirmation of future-oriented African literature as a postcolonial developmental strategy—a politically utopia-bound one, to add (Eatough 237). In heterotopian terms then, Africanfuturism initiates a radical displacement within the postcolonial present by making a proposition toward validating and affirming as integral that which is marginalized as exterior by Euro- and Western modernities.[24] To summarize the point here, Africanfuturism's proleptic and analeptic evaluation of African postcolonial realities provides modern African subjects with lessons in facing modernity's crises. By being a space of disruption and contestation, it not only refuses the kind of future projected for Africa by Western knowledge systems—for instance the media projection of African deaths during the Pandemic, the continued statistical pronouncements on Africa's technological dwarfism, and its prophesied self-destruction from the times of Kant and Hegel down to present-day prediction science.[25] It also allows for new and organic imaginations outside of patterns of thought imposed since colonialism by the West, which cannot be overemphasized enough since cultural/generational innovation starts from imagination and is the basis of the survival of any civilization. So, even though these imaginations can be dystopian or not, the value is in what they instruct; this is important because these lessons will emanate from Africa and its imagination, and also will be specific to it, as borders of the West and its universalized modernity.

This character of Africanfuturism not only reveals its revelatory/expository framework, but informs that as a mode of thinking in utopian register it dialogues with the decolonial idea that the solutions to modern problems exists outside modernity (Santos, "Three Metaphors" 570). In the same vein that the remedies proposed by utopian-thinking are alternatives to experiential facts, an Africanfuturist narrative points at what exists outside Western-controlled postcolonial reality as the alternative solution. This means as a mode of sense-making, Africanfuturism's harnessing of the paradigm of apocalypse and dystopian sensibility gears toward exploring and emphasizing reconsiderations of what exists by mainstreaming the indigenous knowledge that has been exteriorized outside factual reality as fantastical or illogical by modern science. The ways this is done varies: it can "journey into the distant past or alternate and parallel presents," or it can project an expected or new future (Sunstrum 117). This future,

[24]This article differentiates Africanfuturism from any other kind of futurism based on Bryce's essay that reads existing African-authored texts "not thought of as speculative" to establish myth, orality, and indigenous cosmogonic philosophies in the production of social reality and rewriting of history as invested in the strain of futurism (1).

[25]See Hegel, Friedrich. *The Philosophy of History.* Translated by J H Clarke. Dover, 1956. See also Immanuel Kant's 1775 work, "Of the Different Races of Human Beings," and his 1764 essay, "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime," collected in *Anthropology, History, and Education,* edited by Zoller Gunther and Robert Louden and published by Cambridge UP in 2007.'

however, is mostly always invented, even if its materials are familiar, depending on the extent of speculation and extrapolation. For it is in the process of invention that Africanfuturist imagination unveils itself as exteriority of a given reality, a condition through which it intersperses decoloniality's border epistemology/thinking, which articulates how and in what manner non-Western indigenous knowledge systems are positioned as exterior to Western modernity and how they can use this positionality to recover lost legacies by avoiding imposed patterns of thinking in deciding what is useful for development and knowledge production.[26]

Santos's crucial declaration that the solutions to modern (African) problems lie outside of (Western) modernity suggests within the exteriority of modernity and its epistemic structures—i.e., within the heterotopias Africanfuturism fashions. Walter Mignolo and Enrique Dussel, decolonial theorist and philosopher respectively, have expanded on the relevance of border thinking and border epistemology that connects directly to this theorizing of Africanfuturism. For instance, African states and their knowledge systems as part of the philosophies of the Global South are all bounded outside the borders of Western knowledge matrix by an oppressive economic order continually revitalized by structures of neo-liberal capitalism like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and ironically (American brand of) cosmopolitan globality and free market democracy. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Dussel, and Mignolo advocate for seeing and producing knowledge outside the imperial epistemic systems as the only way out of the grip of modern science and Western modernity. Particularly, Dussel enjoins creative and critical thinkers to reach inward into indigenous cultures and create new modes of knowledge that would maintain such cultures' distinctiveness against the unifying imperializing spirit of Western modernity (3). Mignolo theorizes this as epistemic disobedience and delinking, a vital locale-specific decolonial approach to intervening in the survival of non-Western cultures and their futures ("Coloniality" 40). The move toward rethinking Africanfuturism in this work from a product of literary imagination, or a sub-form of literature, to a driver of a new one, specifically as an epistemic framework oriented in the manner of utopian-thinking, is guided by these perspectives, and theorizing it as a radical and alternative epistemology derives from here.

This emphasis on epistemic value returns us to the second theoretical possibility that facilitates interlinking the apocalypse as radical sense-making paradigm with Santos's utopian-thinking in Africanfuturism, which, crucially, is also the first condition of arriving at an African utopia, i.e., Afrotopia, or enabling heterotopia: a new epistemology. To Santos, the new epistemology must not only refuse "the closure of the horizons [but also] offer alternatives" ("Three Metaphors" 573). The alternative Africanfuturism offers as a new epistemology is a mode of knowing that takes Africa primarily as its locus of enunciation in figurative, ideological, and literal proportions, manifesting a grounded futurity[27] in its creation of heterotopian alternatives, for the very

[26]For more on this, see Dussel's "Agenda of a South-South Philosophical Dialogue" and Mignolo, Walter. "Prophets Facing Sideways: The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference." *Social Epistemology: A Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy* vol. 19, no.1, 2006, pp. 111–127.

[27]This phrase specifically draws attention to one of Africanfuturism's cultural aesthetics as an African epistemic mode of knowledge-making, which is that it is primarily deeply rooted in African cosmic and

fact that it leans into and exists in the future while simultaneously being firmly rooted in an African onto-epistemological space and present. That is, it is not an inflected, domesticated, or localized variant of a thing alien, but organic to an African space-time, even as it resonates and branches elsewhere. This is explicitly evident in the creative practices it finds resonance: creative art forms working with primordial African legacies, evoking the animist re-enchantment of postcolonial modernity, and producing/occupying what Sunstrum calls "mythologies of the future" (116). This kind of autochthonous futurity works by reacting (re)imaginatively to the essence of modernity as it has operated in African spaces in its imperial versions: European/colonial modernity, Western modernity, and coloniality that entails the residual structural asymmetries retaining the influence of Euro-American imperial powers in ex-colonial sites (Mignolo, "Coloniality" 38).[28] As an epistemology, therefore, it not only labors to repair Western modernity's destruction and appropriation of indigenous knowledge systems, but also to offer and institute alternative ways of viewing the world and maintaining future continuity through literary and cultural production.

Approaching Africanfuturism from this perspective sets it against simple discipline- and genre-specific definitions worked for it by one of its earliest proponents, Nnedi Okorafor, who defines it as a sub-category of science fiction that "does not include fantasy unless that fantasy is set in the future or involves technology or space travel, etc." or as "often depict[ing] aliens, and sometimes witches, and […] mostly set in a recognizable future Africa, with African lineages—which are not cultural hybrids but rooted in history and traditions of the continent with no element or traits drawn from Western culture (or even pop culture)" (Praxis Editorial). Admittedly, Okorafor and this article share a fundamental view of Africanfuturism as, to put it in Hope Wabuke words, "ridding itself of the othering of the white gaze and the de facto Western colonial mindset" particularly by doing away with any primary American reference (Afrofuturism). However, this article takes a departure from these positions by way of anchoring Africanfuturism in the context of a frame of knowing that articulates African lifeworlds in their entirety (that is, harmonizing both postcolonial and indigenous dimensions of Africa,[29] and facilitating various artistic practices beyond science fiction or literature, inclusive of fantasy).

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techno-scientific worldviews and space-times, and from there ventures into the past and future, while also resonating in other cultures—all these without shearing off or detaching from its roots.

[28]For more on coloniality as it relates to Africa, see Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo. *Epistemic Freedom: Deprovincialization and Decolonization.* Routledge, 2018.

[29]While this debate has been largely avoided, Harry Garuba's article "Explorations in Animist Materialism: Notes on Reading/Writing African Literature, Culture, and Society" addresses the way modern African reality and its literature does away with such imperial dichotomies of fantasy/spirituality/magical realism and science fiction that keep dividing directions in African literary imagination, and foreclosing important perspectives. Also very important is Sunstrum's work, which helpfully articulates how African mythic modes and oral narrative codes work with/in science fiction and vice versa. Her perspectives refuse the erroneous and totalizing tenor in existing submissions that claim or work from the supposition that Sci-fi is "the only genre that enables African writers to envision from our African perspective" (Yaszek 51). Another equally germane article is Harry Garuba's "On Animism, Modernity/Colonialism, and the African Order of Knowledge: Provisional Reflections." It squarely addresses the need for and dynamics of alternative epistemologies that can conceive new futures for Africa. These three articles provide a rich foundational argument on Africanfuturism.

In being such an epistemological proposition, Africanfuturism takes as its provenance what Harry Garuba has trenchantly described as "re-enchantment of Africa," but also at the same time its disenchantment ("Explorations in Animist Materialism" 266). This means it goes beyond Garuba's accurate emphasis on "the different and alternative rationalizations that are increasingly coming to the fore in the histories of so-called Third World societies as they evolve or construct their own modernities […] where the rational and scientific are appropriated and transformed into the mystical and magical," to also reveal Africa's continued technologization, where lifestyle patterns are increasingly digitally networked, including the scaffolds of these alternative rationalizations (266). Thus, as a frame of knowing that fits Molefe Kete Asante's imperative call for an ethnocentrically-based epistemology from which Africa can be narrated and thought through in a world crafted to deny its visibility, Africanfuturism discharges a sensibility defined by its synchronous harmonization of the processes of technologization and re-traditionalization ongoing in Africa (Garuba, "On Animism" 50).

Thinking of Africanfuturism in this way re-conducts it from a literary form into a new commonsense of conviviality and decolonial love—where conviviality and love signify tolerance (openness) and thoughtfulness (relationality)—articulating African mode of knowledge-making in a knowledge economy dominated by the West. Put differently, as a commonsense epistemology, in all its mix of spirituality, technoculture, science, mythology, ritual, religio-mystical codes, folk praxes and lore, and indigenous/pre- and postcolonial orientations, Africanfuturism projects a transversal African experience of seeing, knowing, living, rationalizing, and knowledge production fully aware of its own elasticity, the mutability in the formation of collective subjectivity, and its non-doctrinaire modes of moving between everyday materiality and radical futurity.[30] This endeavor at fashioning a more encompassing epistemic code for the concept is an attempt to rescue it from the rapidly growing taxonomic straitjacket into which it has been cast. Also, it responds to Santos's criterion for a new epistemology, since as practical knowledge, it floods open congested horizons by extrapolating and speculating from African past to redefine the African present and that which is imaginable as African future. In any case, knowledge in its ideation and conceptual stages is almost always initially extrapolative and speculative, at least until its substantiation. So, while the creative forms usable in performing this knowledge and the institutional/disciplinary praxes that legitimate it will be analogously unique in their speculations, especially as regards their materiality, the agenda will always remain sustaining the validity of African states as viable ecosystems with defined historical trajectory and lasting knowledge centers.

[30]Africanfuturism has been emphasized as non-doctrinaire for it is underpinned by imaginative inventiveness and creative flexibility in how it is employed as a mode of utopian-thinking by those participating in the labors of decoloniality. Many African cultures are identified as open to innovations and, thus, immanently flexible without detaching from their African roots. A good example is the Yoruba culture—for a better understanding of this idea of flexibility, see Adeeko, Adeleke. *Art of Being Yoruba.* Indiana UP, 2017. Thus, in the spirit of being paradoxical—i.e., of being defined by its ability to continually transform while still persisting with historical antecedents—Africanfuturism is open to being re-calibrated at personal and collective levels.

This creed signifies Africanfuturism's fixation with repairing the fissures between the past and present enabled by the European destruction and invalidation of African plastic expressions and philosophies through enslavement and colonialism. It also reveals its preoccupation with inscribing this repaired relation as the denominator of any logical assumption of possible African futures. Doing so allows it to override future visions of doom in Africa projected by the West and its Futures Industry. No longer then is the question if Black cultures like Africa can imagine new futures as a result of a history of (neo)colonial grieving of the continent, or what kind of futures are imaginable, but *how* and *in what ways* are those imaginable futures relevant to the now. Because this philosophical inquiry operates at the heart of Africanfuturism, by diagnostically redirecting the present through prophetic imaginings that appear as specters or as spectacles, it reveals itself also as occupied with providing alternative solutions that could rescue Africa from crises engendered by the failures of Euro-American modernity. Accordingly then, either as specters or spectacles, Africanfuturist apocalyptic dystopia would no less than inform on or pre-empt commonsensical and practical corrective measures that could unveil the mortality of modern science. One outcome is that we can postulate the idea of an Africanfuturist subjectivity, whose performance as a negation of Western-charged reality is invested in enabling the mortality of Western science by refuting the dominance of Western knowledge systems in a way that forces the world to witness a spectacular unveiling of the limitations inhered to modern science but veiled by a history of grandstanding and showboating.

This subjectivity is a form of a specific psychology, which is the second requirement/condition proposed by Santos in achieving heterotopia, in this case, toward arriving at a new African utopia ("Three Metaphors" 573). This leads us to the third theoretical possibility undergirding this article's premise: the need for a new psychology. For both heterotopia and utopia to be achieved, the colonial subjectivity of conformity with the dominant paradigm (Western modernity and uncritical totalizing faith in modern technoscience) must be excised and replaced with a will that strives toward alternatives. This excision is vital for postcolonial Africa and its modern subjects who are fated to the success and failures of the West by/through colonial psychology. And initiating the required de-attachment is centered at the heart of Africanfuturism that propels the cultivation of the postcolonial subjectivity of deviance in modern African subjecthood. The act of imagining against Western-cultivated images of Africa is the vital oppositional act of decolonial delinking. However, also important is inventing new tomorrows that centralize African heritage and its mythic modes. These acts unveil the psychology as a defiant state of being. To characterize it succinctly, it is an Africanfuturist psychology forged from a complex of *zeitgeist* and *weltschmerz,* where the latter signifies a sobering awareness of the gulf between the ideal and the real worlds, and the former, structures of feeling ensuring subjecthood and, therefore, imaginative will. Hence, it is the chronopolitical grit of Africanfuturist decoloniality. Calibrated in epistemic disobedience, the Africanfuturist psychology feeds the logic that the functions of artistic practice, as made normative by Western discourse, can/should be sabotaged and re-engineered by fibrillating the power dynamics defining it, that it reproduces, or aspires to. With this re-configurative disposition, African literature can therefore, like painting, installation, performance, music, and other cultural arts, habituate the Africanfuturist subjectivity as its performative vessel and site of ratification.

To articulate how all these arguments and concepts fit together toward achieving a new utopia for African subjects and how they have practical lessons to draw from in dealing with postcolonial crises, below is an attempt that shows how an Africanfuturist narrative can be read as exhibiting a balanced pairing of *zeitgeist* and *weltschmerz* (i.e., the epistemology plus psychology of the decolonial subjectivity) required in (re)thinking new futures. This pairing resounds in Chinelo Onwualu's "Read Before Use" (RBU), a digital futurist short story whose invented world is circumscribed by anxieties and estimated perils, usually precipitated by the arrogance of Western knowledge modes and their pernicious appropriation of all possible and legitimate high-stakes solutions to social crises. Since the specter in RBU is an impending apocalypse, and this is tied to the failure of scientific technology, implied by the story is the necessity of a model world where technoscience is emptied of its epistemic arrogance. Prominent in the narrative then is the brand of futurity where an imagined society has survived an apocalypse, referred to in passing as the Catastrophe, to live in dread of another, which foregrounds its reliance on and repurposing of the apocalypse and the dystopian paradigm, respectively. As if taking its cue from Yaszek's position that the politics of catastrophe can function as a postcolonial critique of the haves and have-nots (53), RBU speculatively reworks this theme to extend its focus beyond the Global South and North tensions onto the dire consequences of hegemonic knowledge paradigms. By conceiving of these as the social baseline of RBU's post-apocalyptic universe, Onwualu can narrativize the postcolonial avowal that "the application of Western economic and technoscientific solutions to African problems result in the creation of seemingly new worlds […] that are, in fact, profoundly dystopian for their indigenous inhabitants" (Yaszek 53).

Satellite City, the near-Elysian dwelling of the Scions—the city's affluent who are defined by the Houses they belong to, coupled with their Cold-War-type politics and neo-liberal micro-aggressions—is in jeopardy. The mechanized dome protecting the city from the vast swathes of dystopian wasteland beyond its gates is dying. However, afar from these badlands roamed by rapacious beasts and faithless rogues are indigenous tribes classed by the Scions as bucolic and regressive. The crisis threatening to end the City is hence manifold: foremost is the failure of "the vast generators" powering and safeguarding the city from the *horrors* beyond its gates. Secondary but no less significant is the exclusionary role of the dome in relation to the indigenous tribes, a material reflection of the city's bigotry. While the technological workings of the failing generators are largely sidestepped, the import of this deterioration is clear as Onwualu pans in on the story's politics. Thus, we know there are some high-tech "weather machines" keeping the dome habitable and the circadian banalities within it on course, but which consistently loses power as a result of technological failure. This failure of technology and its science in safeguarding Satellite City speaks directly to the failure of modern science as an epistemology in fulfilling its promises and, thus, the crises of Western knowledge.

Also made obvious is that the solution to the impending doom lies far from Satellite City figuratively and literally, requiring a human with mystical abilities to retrieve it. This signals the story's autochthonous futurity, as it unveils itself as concurrently primordial and futurist, a characteristic Sunstrum explains as corollary of reworking African mythologies into science fiction tropes and vice versa (117). In ratifying the Africanfuturist philosophy, the story refuses the dominance of Western technoscience in the narrative of the salvation of the Black race, for not only are some of

its characters imbued with magical powers evocative of African ontological mythic codes like having superhuman night vision or controlling elemental forces like combusting fire, the space-time's futurity is also clearly fermented on an even mix of technoscience and spiritual mystique, or what Garuba calls animist materialism that induces the persistent re-enchantment of the world and spiritualizes/holds magical consciousness as constitutive of the materiality of a technoscientific humanity ("Explorations in Animist Materialism" 247). This retrieval of African spirituality to couple with technoscience signifies RBU's Africanfuturist cultural aesthetics, its troping of dystopian imaginary, and its style of gesturing toward utopia. This facilitates the story's engagement with postcolonial thematics like racism/ethnicity, multiculturalism, class hierarchies, capitalist opportunism, sexism, and neo-colonial politics, which are inventively rehashed through animist significations in shaping its chronopolitics.

In RBU, the protagonist, Alia, brown-skinned and of impressive intelligence, hails from the far-flung Zahabad tribe. The tribe is made foil to the Scion class, as well as their geographic externality to the dome and the bourgeoisie values it suggests. They are also discriminated against based on skin color. According to the narrator, Scions, represented by Shiloh Krestel, "a pure-blood Scion" and leader of the Krestel House, have "pale, colourless skin" (RBU). This gives them a false demeanor of being phenomenal and fuels the myth of their being more-than-human. This could be read as a metaphor of whiteness, which is not off-mark when placed in context of the narrative's asymmetrical power-plays. Shiloh is Alia's patron, like his mother Ramal Krestel who had recruited Alia to Satellite City and its prestigious City University from Zahabad where Alia "had been the Ivory Tower's [the University in her hometown] leading scholar in pre-Catastrophe texts" (RBU). Shiloh would finance her search for the city's next source of power, even though he has little faith in her theories.

Like the global power inequalities determining the frontiers of knowledge, knowledge production, and who gets to participate, the politics backdropping the city is essentially exclusionary. For instance, while Scions find Alia's presence in the city contemptible, Scribes—Alia's eventual colleagues at the University—disregarded her intelligence, subjecting her to intelligence evaluation, "which only non-Scions were required to take." To quote the narrator, "[d]espite her credentials and consistently stellar performance on those texts, many of her colleagues and the Council of Scribes were still unconvinced that a woman born outside the dome could be worthy enough for their ranks" (RBU). Other signifiers of the classist and racial nature of this space-time is the unspoken but social outlawing of public fraternity between the University's academics and those branded as rogue scholars for their non-conformity to cultural etiquettes and social codes. Gilead Two Rivers, love interest symbolizes this. A brilliant academic, he is stripped off his academic position because his intended wife hailed from a Great House, and he from the socially maligned and countrified Forest Tribe. Gilead's dismissal is a miniaturization of the classism of capitalist states as it reflects the text's Cold War concealed by the "modest but immaculately constructed" Scion Quarters, where the lack of walls or fences suggests amiableness and communitarian spirit between the Houses, but only at surface level. Consuming the community from within is a vicious rivalry, redolent of Western capitalism's brazen pursuit of profit and self-preservation and neo-liberalism's cutthroat competition camouflaged as open-market mercantilism. This situation reveals how capitalist centers of knowledge embroiled in divisive rhetoric not

only stifle true knowledge but also foreclose progress, especially ones instrumental to averting extinction-level occurrences. This is true of Onwualu's story as it is true of Covid-19 and other events in the world where normal-times behavior (often sexist, classist, racist, combative, cunning, and conservative) proves highly counter-productive to progress, precluding timely resolution of issues that demand unconventional tactics, utopian-thinking, and alternative strategies.

How this is true for RBU is readable in the failures of the Houses to join forces to correct the impending crisis. The *haves* would rather resort to subterfuge, superficial niceties, and mutual deceit than apply commonsense even as the community degenerates. They would rather profess incorrigible faith in technoscience and dismiss alternative solutions, as seen in Shiloh Krestel's rejection of Alia's suggested solution as illusion: "A delusion shared does not make it reality, professor" (RBU). It is why Alia hides her elemental powers: the world of powerful machines and Artificial Intelligence earmarks such powers as aberrations. However, thanks to Gilead and his experiences as a collector of rare artifacts, he is able to provide Alia the navigational knowledge she requires in surviving Raven's Crag, a dystopian dead zone *par excellence* outside the City and populated by cannibalistic creatures and fire-breathing dragons. In decolonial fashion, it is there the alternative solution to the city's crisis, the *Mechanichron,* is kept.

The *Mechanichron* is a sort of engineering manual created by the Ancients, a tribe of Master Builders who lived before the Catastrophe. These Ancients "had a source of unlimited energy that powered all their artifacts [technologies]" (RBU). They recorded their knowledge of how to power those technologies in a manual that was hidden away. It is more spectacular than ordinary that this "myth," as Krestel puts it, is the city's only solution; also noteworthy is that it lies outside the city in a zone written off as the gutter of civilization. It is ironic that its eventual discovery would demand Alia's unconventional research methods and her knowledge of ancient languages and mythic wisdom traceable to her Zahabad heritage. This puts to shame the Council of Scribes as well as the technoscientific knowledge that could not save the city but required the intelligence and folk/mythic wisdom of a minority in remaining relevant. Alia's Zahabad heritage would prove valuable in discovering the book, as she could read the languages of books found in the library of the Master Builders. Also, this heritage improves her chances of finding the book, for we discover that the filing system used by the ancient library in storing its books is similar to that of the university in Alia's Zahabad homeland.

However, Gilead's inability to escape the web of capitalist psychology undermines Alia's progress. He reveals himself as a double agent for the House of Crow, metaphorizing Western capitalism's drive for competitiveness rather than mutual survival. His betrayal of Alia is his strategy of getting in the good graces of Obed Crow, his father. He seeks to attain his rightful place as heir which he has been denied for hailing from the Forest Tribe. In his logic, betraying Alia by stealing the book at knifepoint would confer him full "reinstatement to the Academy" and perhaps recognition as rightful heir. When Alia reminds him of the classist politics that such discovery could only hope to obliterate, Gilead responds with a classic racist speech, "I am city born with the blood of scions running through me. I am nothing like You!" What he fails to apprehend, as only Alia can comprehend the prints on the *Mechanichron's* front cover, is that the book is one of a pair. Its contents instruct only on assembling the *Mechanichron's* parts, not its use. Gilead knocks out Alia and leaves her to die at the

precipice of a mountain. The latter, in a moment of existential dread, realizes what is really at stake is the fate of humanity at the hands of technoscience. That is, those living within the City relied so much on the safety that the dome offers they do not care if their attempt at self-preservation lacks a consideration for others. In other words, the dome cultivated a selfish kind of humanity.

It is thus commonsense that Alia thinks up when she concludes that "it was time for the machines to die. Perhaps if the dome were to come down, the proud scions would finally be forced to open up their city" (RBU) and face their humanity in all its inter-relational magnanimity, conviviality, and mortality—the same commonsense knowledge that eluded Gilead, since he forgot that saving the City means he gets to save his heirship. In Alia's words, "maybe, in time, they would come to appreciate the richness of the worlds beyond their own, and understand that they were no better than those they scorned" (RBU). This is *weltschmerz* at its most spectacular, provoking a commonsense of openness that ridicules the grandstanding of science and emphasizes its dogmatism and imperfections with its own lucidity, practicality, and correctness, while also offering the decolonial and age-old wisdom that conviviality and selfless love is the way. Besides, it unveils the real chaos and threat in Satellite City as classism coupled with racial/ethnic bigotry. Deciding her choice as best, Alia sets herself and the second part of the *Mechanichron* pair ablaze, reducing to flames any hope of saving Satellite City from the specter of a dystopian fate, and kick-starting a social nightmare required to achieve a utopian society. This social nightmare, to appropriate Rosen, is the punishment-as-a-corrective-measure apocalypse as myth-of-ending metes out to people like Gilead and the Houses for "not only [having] failed unpardonably, but hav[ing] also demonstrated an inability even to right [their] own wrongs" (Rosen xii).

In light of the afore-discussed, it is important to see Alia's martyrdom not as a total denunciation of technoscience, but its unveiling as limited, fallible, and, therefore, a mortal epistemology. Equally significant is to see it as an expository critique of the postcolonial social real. Onwualu's Africanfuturist post-apocalypse dystopia is buoyed by postcolonial archetypes, and it anchors its chronopolitical campaign on this. For throughout the narrative we see how true this decolonial submission is. As Yaszek puts it, for African writers, "the path toward a truly balanced future is most likely to emerge at the intersection of Western and indigenous practices," particularly to the extent that this refers to magic, myth, and technology and the realms they validate (56), but on Africa's terms. This intersection accounts for the earlier-discussed re-enchantment of the different alternative rationalizations shaping Africa, where the rational and scientific are transformed into the mystical and magical, as well as the technologization of these rationalizations as components of an increasingly digitalized space. This is visible in the coupling of old and new in Alia's character as a modern researcher able to produce fire to facilitate her research, as well as operate AI technologies to ease her quotidian experiences. More importantly though, the story allows us to conceive how social nightmares can be repurposed as correctives in post-apocalyptic dystopian Africanfuturist narratives, evidenced by how they disambiguate social chaos to tease out solutions from them and also promise redemption.

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Politics of Minor Literature: Decolonized Space and Posthumanism in *Xenogenesis* Trilogy

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Abstract | This essay examines the hierarchic structures present within Octavia E. Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy in order to explore the problematics of colonisation and subjugation along with the following generations of post-colonial subjectivity that lead toward a questioning of hybridization and originary voice. Consequently, this inquiry will be grounded within a broader theorization of place and space, in order to position the *Xenogenesis* trilogy within the literary space of minor literature—promoting a mode of action for minority voices within the major language of the coloniser. The text charts the paths of both individual and communal journeys, moving beyond simple understandings of self, identity, community, and place toward a more empowering recognition of and for the potential available in collective histories—toward a posthuman space where, "identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed" (Hall 14).

Keywords | Space and Place, Minor Literature, *Xenogenesis* Trilogy, Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Colonial Hierarchies, Hybridization, Post-Colonial Subjectivity, Posthumanism, Octavia E. Butler

"Alive! Still alive. Alive…again […] helpless, alone, and ignorant" (Butler 5). The opening lines of Octavia E. Butler's seminal *Xenogenesis* trilogy finds the primary protagonist, Lilith Iyapo, confined in a *space* of *nowhere*. Butler positions the trilogy around the central character Lilith, an African-American woman and mother to the descendant generations of the coming novels, who is awakened on an alien ship between the known world of the past and the new world to come. Consequently, the *Xenogenesis* trilogy[1] reverberates with the echo of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the subsequent generations that must deal with the effects of a past they can never know nor escape. However, Butler's text is far from a reductive re-telling of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and middle-passage. The primary narrative conflict that remains throughout the trilogy begins with a contradiction—that of intelligence and hierarchic tendencies—and the want for power over others with the intelligence to do so. The question of *slaver* or *savior* remains throughout the novels, but Butler's text is in constant motion. As Gerry Canavan posits, Butler "made science fiction 'messy' – or, rather, showed how messy it had always been," offering that "there are no easy answers, no manifestos or utopias to be found within her pages" (15–16).

Consequently, it is with regard to these *spaces* of colonization, hierarchy, and generational motion and change that this essay will take a line of flight. However, it is not the intent of this essay to necessarily revise or offer a solution to the problematics of hierarchy but, in a rather Butlerian way, to posit the import of an active mode of questioning that sews the seeds of new possibilities within the problematic(s) of colonization and hierarchic tendencies through a close analysis of the three novels—*Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989)—of the trilogy.

By exploring the generational descendants affected by the initial act of colonization, Butler situates the import of the act of questioning one's position, *place*, and *space* in-the-world as paramount. Echoing this sentiment, and acting as something of an epithet to this essay, Derrida offers, "[…] the question is such, and such the nature of my answer, that the place of the one and the other must constantly be in movement. If words and concepts receive meaning only in sequences of differences, one can justify one's language, and one's choice of terms, only within a topic [an orientation in space] and an historical strategy" (70). It is the act of *questioning* then, that will ground the over-arching inquiry into the problematic(s) of colonization and the potential for the generations that follow to speak toward new trajectories of *being-in-the-world*—toward the act of questioning one's own *place* and *space in-the-world,* as an ethical act of *care. Place* and *space* then will be differentiated and determined by *lived experience*. Broadly speaking, *place* will be shown to differ from *space* with regard to physicality and

[1]Of note, the *Xenogenesis* trilogy was rebranded in 2000 as *Lilith's Brood*, but this essay will continue to use the author's originally published title.

location. However, this is not an attempt to reduce *place* to mere locality, but rather to illustrate that *place* and *space(s)* coexist and overlap—that both *place* and *space* affect and are affected by each other—specifically that *space can* exist both inside and outside of *place*.

What remains is a question of *space*, *place*, and *perspective*(s); speaking to both the individual and the collective, the minor and the major, and the colonizer and the colonized. However, prior to an engagement with the simple, yet seemingly esoteric questions that drive the overarching critical considerations for this essay, a working differentiation between *place* and *space* must be constructed. The construction of this critical and conceptual model will enable a threshold or passage toward the metaphoric *spaces* of authorial *lived experience* and *embedded historicity* that are in motion both inside and outside of the narrative, speaking toward a consideration of the heterotopic *space(s)* of reflection, contestation, challenge, and subversion present within the *place* of the text. However, "the heterotopic site is not freely accessible […] Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering […] prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission" ("Of Other Spaces" 26).

Consequently, for the purposes of this essay, as mentioned above, *place* can be understood as differing from *space* with regard physicality—it is the terrain upon which *space*(s) are in motion. In accord with this differentiation, Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* offers *place* as "an instantaneous configuration of positions […] implying an indication of stability" (117). Andrew Merrifield similarly defines *place* as "the terrain where basic social practices – consumption, enjoyment, tradition, self-identification, solidarity, social support, and social reproduction, etc., are lived out […] *place* is where everyday life is situated" (522, italics added). Similarly, J. Nicholas Entrikin, suggests that "[f]or this reason our relations to place and culture become elements in the construction of our individual and collective identities […] that as individual agents we are always 'situated' in the world" (1, 3). Here, Entrikin is highlighting the relationship between "*place* and culture," or rather what will come to be realized as the relationship between *place* and *space*, as primary to individual and communal identity. Consequently, if *place* can be understood as the terrain, the ground on which one stands—where *life as such* unfolds—then *space(s)* must be considered as the social, historic, and cultural sphere(s) active and mobilized within a given *place*—as *life as such*.

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre posits that *space* is neither a material object nor an empty or static vessel; *space* is not a thing. Rather, *space* "subsumes things produced and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity" (73). *Space* then, quite simply, speaks to relations. If *place* can be conceived as the material object or "ground," *space* is the flow that passes within and without, above and below—both inside and outside of that constructed *place*-ness. As De Certeau posits, *space* is "composed of intersections of mobile elements […] modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts" (117). For Merrifield, space is "alive," "it embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations" (523).

Further, Lefebvre offers that these interrelationships, as coexistent and simultaneous—specifically under capitalism—are hierarchically fragmented within a

space of power relationships whereby, "[e]verything that is dispersed and fragmented retains its unity, however, within the homogeneity of power's space; this is a space which naturally takes account of the connections and links between those elements that it keeps paradoxically, united yet disunited, joined yet detached from one another, at once torn apart and squeezed together" (365–366). Space then, as interrelationships and hierarchically fragmented power relationships, speaks directly to subjectivity—toward a phenomenological perspective of multiplicities, accounting for both socio-cultural-histories and individual lived experiences—both determining subjectivity and being determined by subjective experience, both the genesis and the exodus of an ontological being-in-the-world.

If it can be accepted then that De Certeau, Merrifield, Entrikin, and Lefebvre are speaking to *place* as the physical environment of our living experience in-the-world, and *space* as the subjectivities and perspectives of lived experience and socio-cultural histories, then for the purposes of this essay, *place* can be understood as both the literal narrative setting of the text and the geographic location of its production—referring to both the generic positioning and authorial location—as the *place* or terrain of *lived experience*, where life as such unfolds. *Space* then is life as such, both inside and outside of the text, both the protagonists and antagonists of the literal narrative as well as the *lived experience* and *embedded historicity* of authorial and generic *place*.

As a result, the conceptualization or imagining of *space* as such opens a passage for a renewed and enriched consideration of subaltern voices, by way of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of minor literature. Minor literature, much like Lefebvre's differential *space*, speaks to the experience of difference within a given place, to a type of discrimination based on difference. Consequently, minor literature and minority voices are both part of the homogenous whole and simultaneously fractured from it—both "inside and outside" (Lefebvre 355). As a result, the text as minor literature will be posited as the *connector* between an individual and collective enunciation, between experiences of *place* and *space*—as Derrida's "la brisure"—both a breach or separation between the two as well as a hinge that links both the past-present and present-future, the individual and the communal (66–67). The *space* of minor literature then speaks to the necessity of a political reading, experimentation, and activation for Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy, prompting the overarching question that drives this essay, which asks: How does the work chart the paths of both individual and communal journeys, moving beyond simple understandings of self, identity, community, and place, toward a more empowering recognition of and for the potential available in their collective histories—toward a space where, as Stuart Hall suggests, "identity [individual or communal] is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed" (14)?

However, before proceeding with Butler's trilogy, it must be understood that in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari posit that minor literature is not a lesser literature, nor the literature of a minority language, "it is rather that which a minority constructs within the context of a majority language," both a part of the major language and separate from it—a fragmentation that is both inside and outside the homogenous whole (16). However, Gregg Lambert in his recently published *The People are Missing: Minor Literature Today* (2021) elaborates, offering that the minority voice within a major language is not limited to syntax, to a type of creolization or pidgin version of the major language, but rather that, "a minority [is] defined by the absence of a state-

form and territorial location, that is, a distinctive political identity" (Lambert 116). Accordingly, the major language as such can be understood as speaking to the larger socio-historic-cultural sphere or *place* of power and governance. Minor voices and minor literature then can be understood as a *space* of action, politics, and collectivity for the author and the broader collective voice(s) of their respective group, operating both within and separate from the majority sphere of political, social, and economic power and dominion. Minor literature speaks to subaltern voices and diasporic experience. Consequently, the author, according to Christopher Warnes is "ambivalently positioned both inside and outside metropolitan culture, they could neither accept the terms of Western cultural hegemony nor reject them entirely" (41).

Therefore, because minor literature is both inside and outside the major language, it can neither wholly submit to the major language nor can it exist as fully separate. As a result, minor literature is "insistently political; it constructs out of the reigning deployments of power" (Barnett 552). Minor literature then, much like Donna Haraway's cyborg writing, "is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other," whereby "cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin in Western culture," specifically the fallacy of transcendental signification, as if there was an origin of origins, universal for all narratives and lived experience (2215). However, minor literature is not limited to a point of entry for the text but speaks more broadly toward a potential line of flight away from majoritarian nationalism without reducing minority groups, as Lambert offers, into "ethnic minorities or nationalist subgroups that […] fall prey to nationalism, populism, tribalism, religious fanaticism and racism" (113–114).

In order to ground the concept of minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari posit that there are three principles that all minor literatures presuppose: [1] there is a *deterritorialization* of the major language (*Kafka* 16), whereby a group of hierarchically organized relationships (differential *space*) within a given terrain or territory (*place*) are reorganised, creating new contexts, relationships, and new sensibilities. Meaning that minor literature, and consequently the act of deterritorialization, does not function to represent the minor voice within a majority language, "but rather constructs a real thing that is yet to come, a new type of reality" (*Thousand Plateaus* 142). As a result, the act of deterritorialization challenges or rather changes the territory of the majority language, reterritorializing it (the major language) into new contexts; it is an act of deconstruction and appropriation, subversion and revolution, thus enabling the second and third principles: [2] that "everything in them is political" and [3] "everything takes on a collective value" (*Kafka* 17).

"It is a literature that produces an active solidarity […] if the writer is in the margins […] this situation allows the writer all the more possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility" (*Kafka* 16–17). Meaning that, according to Lambert, for a work of minor literature to exist, the artist/author must have the capacity for an *idea* that coincides with, or is supported by a people or cultural group willing and able to accept and embrace this *real thing yet to come* or *new type of reality*. As Lambert posits, "it is only when [these] two powers encounter each other in a work that the idea has actual existence," that the "artist or writer must merge with the objective idea of the people who must recognize it as their own idea" (119–120). Lambert here speaks to the import and knowledge of the

external limiting structures (spatial and temporal) that delimit and frame any creative act within a context of engagement—from where does one speak, and with what voice. As a result, minor literature speaks toward heterotopic *spaces*—which according to Michel Foucault is "a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live" ("Of Other Spaces" 24).

However, Deleuze and Guattari, in their desire to establish "the conditions of the [creative] act" deny "the *fact* of individual enunciation in their axiom that *there are only collective assemblages of enunciation* […] avoiding the need for any dialectical mediation between the individual and the collective" (Lambert 122). Lambert notes and has offered significant regret in this regard, in that "readers have failed to apply their concept [minor literature] to all literature and not only works written by minorities, thus reattaching the category of the subject as 'the connector' in the relay to collective enunciation" (123). In this way, Lambert highlights minor literature as speaking toward a heterotopic "system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable" ("Of Other Spaces" 26). Foucault offers, "We are in an epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a lifelong developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein" (22). These Juxtapositions "of the near and the far […] of the dispersed" speak to heterotopic *spaces*, offering something of an echo to Deleuze and Guattari's *space* of minor literature as being "something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites […] are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality" ("Of Other Spaces" 24). Consequently, in Lambert's regret and call for an actualization of Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual framework toward all literature, we find evidence and potential for the subject (work/text) to act as a *material-force* or *place* of transmission—a passage between the past and present, between *place* and *space*(s)—that continues to produce effects into the future. It is the hinge or heterotopic *space* that represents, contests, and inverts differential experiences, connecting the individual and collective enunciations toward a more empowering recognition of and for the potential available in shared socio-historic-cultural journeys.

In turning toward our *material-force*, the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, it is found that Butler is an African-American female author writing within the genre Science Fiction—a genre which, according to Butler in an interview with Gerry Canavan, "since its inception has been, as she put it, 'nearly all white, just as until recently, it's been nearly all male'" (Canavan 15). Butler completed the *Xenogenesis* trilogy during the late 1980's, a time when the genre, according to Thulani Davis of the Village Voice,[2] "lacked the richness and possibilities she sought in her own life: futures in which living black cultural communities survive, grow, and influence the world around them" (De Witt and Ranu 353). Davis argues that the genre "commonly create[s] futures in which white men thrive and dominate" (De Witt and Ranu 353–354). As a result, Butler chose to *write herself in*—speaking from a *space* of lived experience—both inside and outside of the whole, a

[2]De Witt and Ranu, are summarizing from Thulani Davis's 1983 essay in the Village Voice, "The Future May Be Bleak, But It's not Black" pp. 17–19.

minority voice writing within the majority language of Science Fiction,[3] writing as though it were happening in her neighbourhood. Butler challenges and subverts the majority language of Science Fiction that has traditionally spoken to an "imperiled white masculinity" and conquest, toward what De Witt and Ranu posit as a *space* more akin to both her individual and collective cultural experiences, highlighting "the difference that a writer's unique social and historic embodiment can make in her work" (355). By *writing herself in*, Butler adds an imaginative engagement and testimonial authority that enriches her work with a renewed intimacy and more comprehensive modes of contact.

By situating Butler's text as minor literature, and in accord with De Witt and Ranu's position, the text can be seen to function as an act of deterritorialization by speaking to Butler's own *space* of both lived experience and socio-cultural histories that deconstruct the primitive territory of Science Fiction toward the reconstruction of new sensibilities and things *yet to come*, creating new realities and possibilities for the collective voice that Deleuze and Guattari favour. Consequently, Jeffery A. Tucker posits that Butler's text informs "the construction of the subject position from which Butler writes, and enables an assertion and celebration of intra- and extra- textual and cultural diversity that the novel and its author endorse" (171). As a result, Butler's text becomes the *connector* or "la brisure," between the individual and the collective, encouraging a mediation between the two that Lambert champions with regard to all literature, minor and major. In moving forward then, to the *place* of the text, we find that the *Xenogenesis* trilogy presents a narrative of an initial rupture, abduction, colonization, and subjugation; and the consequent generations of resistance, hybridization, and creolization that follow. The *space* of the trilogy is one of movement, dislocation, change, and survival. Narratives of hierarchic authority are present from the beginning to the end, but as Canavan offers, "there are no easy answers, no manifestos or utopias to be found within her pages" (15–16).

Set roughly 250 years in the future after an apocalyptic event on earth—an event of humanity's own doing—the remaining humans are involuntarily "rescued" and displaced from their known world to an "otherworldly" space-craft (where they remain for the first novel), only to be genetically modified, hybridized, and later re-integrated with a *posthuman* earth. The remains of humanity are now the minority in an alien world that they are both a part of and separate from. The alien *Oankali*, as they call themselves, look like bipedal sea mollusks and are covered with tentacles. They are "gene traders" who seek difference and intend to inter-breed with the remaining humans to create a new hybrid species between the two. The remaining humans have been genetically altered with heightened immune systems, extra strength, and increased lifespans, but their ability to reproduce (in the normal human way) has been removed due to what the *Oankali* refer to as humanity's contradictory aspects of intelligence and hierarchic tendencies—the want for power over others and the intelligence to do so. However, it is this contradictory aspect of intelligence and hierarchic tendencies that becomes a quantifiable difference for the *Oankali* to their own supposed value of life, qualifying them to rule, govern, and

[3]It should be noted that Science Fiction is spoken of as the majority language, but more broadly, it could be said that Butler, as an African-American female author, is a minority voice in the English language. As Deleuze and Guattari note when talking on Kafka, "this [minor literature] can be compared in another context to what blacks in America today are able to do with the English language" (17).

subject humanity to their own accord: "They need us now. They won't have children without us. Human sperm and egg will not unite without us" (Butler 245).

Of interest however, regardless of the very plain language that speaks to planetary destruction and colonisation, Canavan notes that "much of the academic criticism on the novel […] has taken the *Oankali's* side of the debate," whereby the *Oankali* "seem on the surface to be quite compatible witnh the postmodern, postcolonial politics of difference" (83). As examples, Canavan cites Donna Haraway's presentation of the *Xenogenesis* trilogy as an "ironic salvation history," Nolan Belk's focus on "vegetarianism" and suggestion that the "goal" for the *Oankali* is "to work for the betterment of life," and Nick DiChario's characterization of the *Oankali* as "non-hierarchical, non-violent, very cooperative" which Canavan offers is "probably the 'intended' reading of the novel" (83). However, it is the intention of this essay not to take one or the other side, but rather to activate the *space(s)* the work speaks to, producing a dialogue that effectively engages with the inevitable "becoming" that generational distance from an originary moment inevitably produces.

Regardless of the *Oankali*'s claim to adore all life—to the point of vegetarianism—their logic of a "flawed human nature" speaks to a type of enlightenment rationality whereby they create a dominion by way of *same-ness*. Meaning, the dominant power exudes control over the subaltern (or minority) *other* through and by a way of difference, whereby those who do not exhibit the *same* priorities as the ruling class, are considered beneath and need ruling. The *Oankali* speak directly to a colonial mindset whereby they are quick to "critically ascertain the other with little attempt to recognize the other" (Léger 92–93), speaking to a language of colonial subjugation and the inability to see the *other* as a unique cultural group. The remaining humans of the *Xenogenesis* are told "it will be done our [Oankali] way. Not yours" (Butler 74). By the end of the first novel, the reader learns that some of the remaining humans have been returned to earth, but Lilith, the primary protagonist of the first novel and *mother* to the coming hybrid generations, remains on the interstellar ship. Given the option of a painless death presented as a "gift," "[i]f you want it," Lilith choses the future, she chooses to survive (Butler 43–44). However, this survival comes with a high price, which in reality is an act of *extreme violence*. Given a *choice* to die, presented as a *gift*, the *Oankali* violently thrust upon Lilith by way of her *choice* to survive, as Canavan notes, the "inducement to accept anything that follows as the result of her own 'choice' to live" (85). The price Lilith pays for such a choice is the repeated presentation of "eroticized rape" (Canavan 85): "Your body said one thing. Your words said another […] This is the position […] Be grateful" (Butler 190). She is later told that she has been impregnated in the *Oankali* way, without consent. Lilith learns that she will bear the first hybrid children, and is told by Nikanj, her *Oankali* captor, that, "Your children will know us, Lilith. You never will" (112). In the final pages of the first novel Lilith is told, "[o]ur children [*Oankali* and human hybrid] will be better than either of us" (247).

Lilith experiences a violent displacement and rupture from a known world, and consequent subjugation by a foreign body that impregnates her against her will. She is raped and offered no consolation but an expectation of "motherhood" and is told that it is what *she* wanted, that she is "ready," that "nothing about you but your words reject this child" (247). Jeffery A Tucker posits that "although she does develop affection for her offspring, 'Lilith's response to her pregnancy echoes the ambivalent feelings of these

women slaves whose pregnancies were the result of forced mating's or rape'" (30). *Dawn* and Lilith speak to a world of forced acceptance and non-consensual adaptation, to survival, to the subjectivities of a colonised and enslaved people, to a world of rape and utter dependence, to the history and legacies of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its lineage for African-American diasporic experience(s).

Though the first novel, *Dawn*, speaks toward the major language of earlier Science Fiction, that of an alien invasion, colonialism, and conquest—a genre criticized by Ursula K. LeGuin as having a "habit of casting the future as the 1880s British Empire"—the *Xenogenesis* trilogy refuses to set the stage for a grand rebellion by the remains of humanity (qtd. in De Witt and Ranu 354). Rather, according to Sharon DeGraw, Butler challenges "the traditional (white, male) Western concept of heroism which requires unconditional resistance to 'tyranny' no matter the cost, in this case, individual death and/or extinction as a (human) race" (6). He posits that, by casting an African-American woman, Lilith Iyapo, as the primary protagonist of the novel, Butler speaks to "the importance of patience, of understanding the oppressor, and of compromise to ensure the survival that one day might lead to freedom, independence and equality" (6). DeGraw suggests that "[a]s an African-American woman, Butler's experiences may shape her feminist expectations and more broadly her belief in the possibility of progressive social change" (6).

Despite DeGraw's statement speaking to a rather antiquated notion of feminine passivity, her position can perhaps be better understood as speaking to Butler's metaphoric restructuring of the middle-passage and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which constituted the capture, enslavement, and forced movement from a known world to a new world, whereby the captives were at the absolute mercy of their new rulers. This "middle passage" as Charles Piot suggests, echoing Paul Gilroy in the *Black Atlantic*, is a *place* where "time stopped and started again" (158). It is a *space* that Butler speaks to in order to use "historical imagery of the Middle Passage to convey physical as well as metaphysical shifts that extend beyond the past and into the present and future" (Lillvis 80).

Piot furthers the import of this "originary moment" as having as much constitution toward the formation of African diasporic culture(s) as the "heterodox identities that result from cultural mixing" (158). However, it is this "cultural mixing" that Gilroy prioritizes in his attempt to sever African-American or black Atlantic culture from the "primacy of connection that has long been posited between black America and Africa [re-reading] black expressive forms and the works of North American black intellectuals in a transoceanic, transnational perspective" (qtd. in Piot 158). While *Dawn* speaks to Piot's position of the middle passage as an "originary moment," *Adulthood Rites* and *Imago* will begin to sever (as Gilroy posits) the connection to a past that has been lost, speaking toward a trans-species perspective and new identities that can no longer strictly be linked to a past which can never be known.

Consequently, Butler speaks toward the import of authorial locale, lived experience, and embedded historicity. Gerry Canavan offers that Butler once said, "If we are interested in stories about brutal invaders who come in technologically advanced ships from far away, who kidnap, murder, rape, and enslave, we do not need to look to outer space; that is already Earth's actual history" (15). This is a sentiment echoed by

John Rieder, positing that it is not just the "fevered imagination of science fiction writers but rather the bare historical record of what happened to non-European people and lands after being 'discovered' by Europeans and being integrated into the capitalist world economy from the fifteenth century to the present" (374). For the African slaves who moved to the *new world*, much as the remaining humans in the new *Oankali* earth, this was not a battle to be won, but one that was lost before it began. Lilith and the remains of humanity are left with little choice, merely to survive or die. However, the *Xenogenesis* trilogy is far from a reductive future oriented retelling of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. With Butler's trademark ambiguity, the second and third novels move beyond the loss of an ancestral homeland and identity, a *space* of *nowhere*, and rather speaks toward the creation of new identities that are the effect of such an act, as *now here*.

Adulthood Rites, the second novel of the trilogy, introduces Lilith's first male Human-*Oankali* hybrid child named Akin—a name that speaks to his mother's human heritage, a Yoruba word meaning "hero." Within the English language "akin" means to be of relation or similar in character, almost the same but not quite. Akin exists between and within worlds, with relation (social and genetic) to both the Humans and the *Oankali*. Born into this new world, never knowing a human world prior to the *Oankali*, nor an *Oankali* world sans humanity, Akin operates in a *space* of overlap and eccentricity both within and outside of each. Much as Lillvis describes Caribbean and American black subjectivity for the generations that came after the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Akin and his fellow Human-*Oankali* hybrids, "did not pre-exist the colonial act, but were literally the creation of that act" (Wynter, qtd. in Lillvis 101).[4] To the same degree, as W. E. B. Du Bois posits with regard to the "double-consciousness" of African-American experience in an emancipated America, Akin is "born with a veil" and "ever feels his two-ness […] two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body." Akin's journey speaks to "[t]he history of the American Negro […] this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self [and] in this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost" (Du Bois 2–3).

Within the second novel, we find Lilith and her brood in a village on Earth occupied by several "new" families, each composed of two humans (male and female) and two *Oankali* (male and female) with a third-sexed (neither male nor female) *ooloi Oankali* at the center. The *ooloi* are the gene manipulators, with the ability to carry out reproduction between species, occupying a *space* of hierarchic privilege amongst both the Human and the *Oankali*. Regardless of his new-ness and difference, the humans of the new Earth are drawn to Akin. "He's beautiful […] He looks completely Human" (Butler 254). However, soon after the second novel begins, Akin is kidnapped by resisting humans due to their own inability to have children and the fact that he still looked more human than *Oankali*. Following his abduction, Akin is sold by his captors to a resister village. Given no choice but to accept his position as *property*, Akin *chooses* to acquiesce as an act of survival, echoing Lilith's own *choice* of survival in *Dawn*. Akin experiences a middle-passage in his own right (though in something of a reversal of Lilith's experience)—he is dislocated from his known world and subjected to new identities. Consequently, there is an interesting shift in the narrative speaking to

[4]Here, Lillvis is citing Wynter with regard to the translation of Glissant, in her "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles." *World Literature Today*, vol. 63, no. 4, Autumn 1989, pp. 637–48.

perspectives of something lost, and a bifurcation of time and *space* that the middle-passage commands in both regards. Akin is the product of both the original middle-passage as well as a second middle-passage of his own abduction. Consequently, and perhaps even more so than Lilith, Akin occupies what Édouard Glissant refers to as a "liminal temporality" whereby he "must chart alternative postcolonial chronologies in order to understand not only […] time but also […] identity" (qtd. in Lillvis 100).

Having been told only the *Oankali* perspective of the *rescue* and *salvation* of Humanity—of the necessity of *trade* as being *natural*—Akin, via his abduction, experiences the loss of control and non-consensual exploitation of another living *being* for *trade* (monetary or genetic) that was subjected onto the Human race by the *Oankali*. Though fearing for his life, Akin witnesses simultaneous acts of kindness and violence, attraction and repulsion, love and fear, contradiction and ambiguity. Akin is conflicted by these "resister" humans he was told to fear—these humans that "could be dangerous" (Butler 264).

Left to live among his human captors, Akin learns that the *Oankali* "want him to know the humans […] they want him to learn so that later he can teach" (Butler 376–379). Here, Akin's position, as subjugated onto him by the *Oankali*, resonates toward the colonial mimic man—what T.B. Macaulay suggests as "a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern […] a mimic man raised through our […] School […] a corps of translators […] employed in different departments of Labour" (qtd. in Bhabha 128). Macaulay's mimic man, according to Homi Bhabha, is seen less as an individual, but as a tool, "[h]e is the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis"[5] (128). Left alone with the humans that he was taught to *fear*, Akin sees his human captors as a walking contradiction of love, fear, hatred, and kindness, making him wonder, "[w]ho among the *Oankali* was speaking for the Humans? […] that it might not be enough to let Humans choose either union with the *Oankali* or sterile lives free of the *Oankali*? […] He was *Oankali* enough to be listened to by other *Oankali*, and Human enough to know that resister Humans were being treated with cruelty and condescension" (Butler 404).

Akin is rescued after years amongst the humans and returns to the extra-terrestrial ship, choosing to speak for the humans and gains support. However, he soon realizes that the generations to come "will be an *Oankali* species […] and the Humans will be extinct […] something we consumed […] What are we then that we can do this to whole peoples? Not predators? Not symbionts? What then?" (Butler 443). He is told quite simply that the *Oankali* are "[a] people, growing, changing" (444). Akin speaks to the heart of colonization as an act of consumption, presenting a language that acknowledges humanity's right to live as they are. However, when the *Oankali* leave Earth, they leave behind only a husk of a planet. His only success is in the consolation that the humans who will not pair with *Oankali* mates will be sent to a colony on Mars, but they will ultimately die, even with their reproduction restored. Without question, Akin acknowledges and accepts that the humans will not survive, that they could only hope for a "long, slow death." Akin is told by an older, earlier form of his *Oankali* brethren that

[5]Here, Bhabha is referring to both: T.B. Macaulay, "Minute on Education," in *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. II, ed. William Theodore de Bary, New York, Columbia UP, p. 195; and Mr. Thomason's communication to the Church Missionary Society, September 5, 1819, in *The Missionary Register*, 1821, pp. 54–55, as a limited perspective of the "anglicized" colonial subject's role in the colonial empire.

"it is cruelty. You and those who help you will give them [humans] the tools to create a civilization that will destroy itself as certain as the pull of gravity will keep their new world in orbit around its sun" (475). Yet, Akin chooses to speak for humanity.

Testifying to the flaws of the colonising body, Akin speaks to the words of V.S. Naipaul, and the positions of ambivalence as being caught in a world between worlds as "reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new" (Bhabha 128). Akin, speaking for Humanity, reminds us by way of Bhabha, in the words of Sir Edmund Crust, "A fundamental principle appears to have been forgotten or overlooked in our system of colonial policy – that of colonial dependence. To give a colony the forms of independence is a mockery; she would not be a colony for a single hour if she could maintain an independent station" (qtd. in Bhabha 125). Though Akin chooses to speak for the resisting humans who will not pair with *Oankali* mates, to the right of the individual and community to be able to live *as they are* or *as they choose*, he still concedes that they must go to Mars, refraining from telling them the whole truth that when the new hybrid *Oankali* species leaves Earth, "what was left behind would be less than the corpse of a world," that "[t]he salvaged Earth would finally die" (Butler 365).

Though speaking toward the requisite heroism of earlier Science Fiction, Akin acknowledges and readily admits humanity's ultimate doom—speaking and acting by way of his *Oankali* heritage—he is deciding the destiny of an entire cultural group. However, in contrast to the majority language of traditional Science Fiction, Akin the hero fails in his attempt at salvation of humanity by way of his own subjectivity and socio-historic-cultural sphere of influence. Caught between two groups, Akin cannot help but accept the logic of his *Oankali* heritage. Akin, as a middle-man of history and a new being in a changing world, accepts the situation as it is with no hope of a return to an ideal origin. His is not the voice of an absolute resistance to tyranny at any cost, but the voice of something changing—a translator between the coloniser and the colonised, a new being in a changing world. Much like Lilith before him, Akin chooses to survive, maintaining the hope for a better future-not-yet, while simultaneously accepting the futility of such an act.

Akin, as is shown with Jodahs in the third novel, speaks to Butler's own lived and socio-historical-cultural *space* as a generational descendant of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. However, both are detached from the initial rupture and origin echoing Édouard Glissant's ideations of "*transversal subjectivity* [which] like Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic structure of knowledge releases the individual from 'the linear, hierarchical vision of a single History,'"[6] whereby "subjects experience multiple, intersecting histories that interrupt the lasting power of a colonial past" (qtd. in Lillvis 101, italics added). Their subjectivity is not a *space* of dislocation but rather the effect and product of that dislocation and rupture. In an interview with Charles H. Rowell, Butler offers that her mother and her mother's mother were born on a plantation in Louisiana and that her grandmother "chopped sugar cane, and she also did the family laundry, not just her own family but the white family for whom they worked. She washed clothes in the big iron pots with paddles and all that" (Rowell 50). However, Butler herself was born in Pasadena, California, and she stated that "I never went to a segregated school or lived in a segregated neighbourhood, so I never had the notion that black people, or any other

[6]Lillvis, here is citing Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. 1989, p. 66.

ethnic or cultural type, made up the world" (qtd. in McCaffery 57). Both Butler and Akin (as well as Jodahs, as is shown in the third novel) were born into a world of diversity and cultural over-lapping. In her characteristically ambiguous fashion, when speaking toward her own history as a generational descendant of the African slave trade to America, Butler highlights that she was raised in a non-segregated community. Much like Akin, Butler resides both inside and outside of the majority language of the socio-cultural dominant power—both a part of and separate from the dominant regime of power—consequently enabling the ability to speak to and for multiple cultural groups, the major and the minor.

Though the past remains present for both Butler and her protagonists of the second and third novels of the trilogy, theirs is a *space* already separated from an origin. If *Dawn* speaks to a history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and new subjectivities forced upon a disenfranchised people by a colonising regime, *Adulthood Rites* speaks to the inevitable hybrid generations and the social *space*(s) that follow in the wake of such a disruption. Akin speaks to the ambivalence and double-consciousness of a generation that has no choice but to be affected by both a past they can never return to and a present they cannot escape, speaking to a generation of African-American experience(s) that follow the emancipation of slavery, struggling to situate themselves in a world of segregation, caught between the world of coloniser and colonised, belonging fully to neither yet affected by both.

Butler's approach of w*riting herself in*, much like Akin's want to speak for humanity, echoes Hélène Cixous' position that, "By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display" (Cixous 1946). Though speaking to feminist theory and writing practices—which are very much a part of any discussion of Butler's oeuvre—Cixous' idea of returning to the body which has been confiscated speaks to Akins' plight for a humanity that has been dislocated from who they are, returning them to their body(s). Similar to Cixous' call for female (minor) voices to write themselves as they are, to recognize that "my body knows un-heard of songs" (1943), so too does Akin choose to speak/write humanity into *Oankali* discourses beyond a rationality of interpretable difference that the voice humanity speaks with should be acknowledged. Though Cixous speaks specifically to the female voice, both she and Akin call for the import of minority voices and minor literature as a political and collective agency that must be acknowledged.

Consequently, the second and third novels of the trilogy speak to a *double vision* or *double-consciousness* and *ambivalence* of a second (and third) generation that cannot help but disrupt the authority of the coloniser. Bhabha offers, "[t]he menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" meaning that the social *space*(s) and effects of overlapping cultural influence can no longer be accounted for within a binary dialectic between two poles positing a *place* between, but rather accounts for a *space* of movement that can deconstruct the major territory, consequently activating a body politic and collective enunciation for that minor *space* (129).

In the third and final novel of the trilogy, *Imago*, we are introduced to Jodahs, another descendant of Lilith and the first human-*Oankali ooloi*—the third sex, neither male nor female—the gene manipulators and the controlling body for reproduction. With

Jodahs, we have the completion of the new species that is both human and *Oankali*, but neither human nor *Oankali*—much like Akin. Jodahs is something new, but more so, bringing to this new species an autonomy that is no longer reliant on the colonizing *Oankali* for reproductive capabilities. While Lilith speaks to the initial rupture and loss of origin and Akin (caught in a space of in between-ness) chooses to speak for humanity's right to exist *as they are,* Jodahs speaks to new life, toward a new paradigm that while connected to both cultural groups is bound by neither. Jodahs represents both the inclusion of and departure from the binary relationship between humans and *Oankali*, offering a threshold toward the future, echoing Stuart Hall's position that began this exposition suggesting that, "identity [individual or communal] is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed" (14).

Consequently, Jodahs's journey speaks toward motion, to adaptability and becoming. As a result, the bulk of the novel is invested in Jodahs metamorphosis—a time of sexual maturity. Throughout the metamorphosis, Jodahs's appearance changes, growing more head and body tentacles, looking more like *Oankali.* Reflecting on the changes occurring in its body, Jodahs states,

> "[S]omething was growing between my hearts […] Every construct had some version of it […] the *Oankali* organelle […] We were what we were because of that organelle […] *Ooloi* said we *were* that organelle – that the original *Oankali* had evolved through that organelles invasion, acquisition, duplication, and symbiosis […] Yashi, the *ooloi* called their organ of genetic manipulation." (Butler 543–544)

The interest of this passage is that Jodahs and the larger *Oankali* have already been colonised by this organelle called "Yashi" and consequently are both the products of and the producers for this continual colonisation. However, through the mating with humanity, this organelle, at full maturity would allow Jodahs to "be able to change […] to create new forms, new shells for camouflage" (547). "That's why the Humans are such a treasure. They've given us regenerative abilities we had never been able to trade for before […] Humans called this condition cancer […] To them, it was a hated disease" (551).

What becomes evident within these two small passages is the overarching ideations of diasporic movement and becoming that drive this essay and broader positioning of questioning one's *place*, *space*, and perspective. While *Dawn* speaks to an initial rupture and *Adulthood Rites* to a *space* of "in-between-ness" and speaking for a voiceless *other*, *Imago* and Jodahs testify to the inevitability of change and motion, as always already present. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza posits, specifically with regard to the African diaspora, "simultaneously a state of being, and a process of becoming, a kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning, a navigation of multiple belongings" (41). Consequently, Jodahs, even more so than Akin, exhibits a *transversal subjectivity* or *transversality*, "floating free, not fixed in one position in some primordial spot, but extending in all directions in our world through its network of branches" (Glissant qtd. in Lillvis 101). Jodahs is a continuation of this process, physically manifesting change and adaptability as a part of his very being.

Though unknowingly, a perpetuation of the initial colonisation by *Yashi* and Jodahs's genetic disposition and ability to change (by way of the *Yashi* and humanity's cancer) speaks toward a subjective space of malleability, to what Lambert (by way of Immanuel Wallerstein) offers toward an understanding of "peoplehood" as being "in no sense a primordial stable social reality, but a complex, clay-like historical product" (Lambert 115). Jodahs has the ability to empathise with his potential mates, physically shifting its appearance to appeal to their wants, desires, and needs. Jodahs is told by an ooloi, following an encounter with a potential mate, "you look like her you know […] Your body has been striving to please her. You're more brown now – less grey. Your face has changed subtly. You look like a male version of her […] We fit ourselves into our mates' kin group. You may fit in better than most of us" (Butler 588).

Consequently, Jodahs as a product of the product (ad infinitum) of the originary colonising act of the *Yashi* can no longer be viewed in the terms of his *Oankali* predecessors. Jodahs is becoming something new, though tied to a past he cannot escape and can never truly know. Jodahs is becoming what *is* instead of trying to be what *was*, appealing to the subjective desires of its potential mates, further evinced by a resister human in the closing pages of the final novel who states, "My god, if there had been people like you around a hundred years ago, I couldn't have become a resister. I think there would be no resisters" (740). However, unlike its predecessors that came in technologically advanced ships that took Humanity as its prisoner by demanding cooperation or death, Jodahs has the newly acquired ability to appeal to the subjective *spaces* and desires of its potential mates. On being asked, "Are you man or woman? […] you appear to be a young woman […] too thin perhaps, but very lovely," Jodahs reflects, "I wasn't surprised this time. My body wanted him. My body sought to please him […] I had grown breasts myself, and developed an even more distinctly Human female appearance. I neither directed my body nor attempted to control it […] It's easier to do as water does: allow myself to be contained, and take on the shape of my containers" (Butler 598–612). Jodahs's subjectivity and malleability speaks toward a posthuman diasporic identity that is fluid—a "being in a state of constant transformation that indicates the intimacy of past, present, and future temporalities as well as 'self' and 'other' identities […] 'a heterotopic self' situated in 'an equally fluid environment' that 'not only encompasses the subject but passes through it'" (Lillvis 3, 102). Its physical manifestation can consequently be paired with Haraway's "cyborg" as "this chimeric monster, without claim to an original language before violation, that crafts the erotic, competent, potent identities of women of colour" (2214).

Though still perpetuating the initial colonising act of the *Yashi*, Jodahs is less restricted by a centre-peripheral dialectic of difference and authority. The remaining humans that Jodahs encounters continue to be repulsed by the colonising *Oankali* but are drawn to Jodahs. Though not necessarily becoming one with the marginalized human resisters, Jodahs chooses, or is able to adapt to their desires, *caring* for humanity: "I smiled, liking him. It seemed I couldn't help liking the people I seduced" (723). Jodahs is no saviour, but speaks to a *space* of overlap beyond hybridization, planting the seeds of "independent life" (Butler 746), establishing, new relationships and sensibilities for a new species. Jodahs's *space*, or *being-in-the-world* is directly tied to a relational subjectivity, exemplifying what Lillvis posits as a "shift from power structures based on difference to systems rooted in posthuman solidarity" (9).

Unlike his *Oankali* predecessors, Jodahs chooses not to violently oppress humanity, but rather chooses to become more like them in order to activate new possibilities and futurities, recognizing the *space* of over-lap not as a colonizing body, but in an acknowledgement of the *spaces* at play within the *place* of the new Earth, speaking to the seeds of an "independent life" that is bound by neither a center or a peripheral perspective, but rather the acknowledgement and appeal to both voices that are simultaneously inside and outside of that *place* of consideration, acknowledging the *spaces* and movements that pass within.

Jodahs becomes the connector or Derrida's "la brisure," a rupture or distance from the colonising *Oankali* and the colonised Humanity, but too, a connecting apparatus—a hinge—encouraging motion between the two as a bilateral highway and *space* of dialogue that occurs within the "place-ness" of this new world. In opposition to the domination exhibited by the colonising *Oankali* of *Dawn*, Jodahs speaks to the language of minor literature, whereby, "[t]he genetic idea of the artist or writer must merge with the objective idea of the people who must recognize it as their own idea," preparing "the way for the confidence to create their own laws […] to become self-legislating subjects, no longer subjugated by an external authority to the status of being a minority" (Lambert 119–120). Jodahs states, "We represented the premature adulthood of a new species. We represented true independence – reproductive independence – for that species, and this frightened both *Oankali* and constructs" (Butler 742). As the trilogy comes to a close, Jodahs speaks toward a line of flight away from the previous generation's binary dialectics, but remains within a minority *space*, both inside and outside of the majority languages of Humanity and the *Oankali*. Less restricted by a centre-peripheral dialectic of difference and authority, Jodahs is not necessarily becoming one with the historically marginalized other, nor fully submitting to the dominant regime of power. Jodahs speaks toward what Lillvis posits with regard to black posthumanism's *multiple consciousness* as "viewing the self from outside the system of signification altogether" (81), allowing "the subject to understand and potentially surmount this alienation. Viewing identity as part of but separate from the system of signification corresponds with the posthuman imperative to blur dividing lines but celebrate distinctions between temporalities and subjectivities, an imperative reflected in posthuman constructions of identity and solidarity" (Lillvis 81).

Within this context or *space* of Lillvis' black posthumanism, Jodahs can be seen as echoing Lilith's words: "They change us and we change them […] I don't like what they're doing […] But they're in this with us […] some of what makes us Human will survive, just as some of what makes them *Oankali* will survive" (Butler 282). Speaking toward new futurities and identities (individual and communal) that *are not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed*, Jodahs echoes Haraway's position that argues for the "*pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction […] in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end. The cyborg incarnation is outside salvation history […] the cyborg has no origin story" (2191, italics in original). With no origin story, one must create new identities in the present-future, challenging, contending, and subverting Western narratives of linearity and colonisation toward a posthuman subjectivity with multiple belongings and connectivity. Though Jodahs and the Human-*Oankali* hybrid generations are in many ways a continuation of

the *Oankali* rupture and colonization of humanity, it is the choice to speak for the voiceless other, along with the adaptability and concern for the needs and desires of humanity that was missed by the original colonizing regime that speaks to the potentials of new, unknown futurities—a *space* where worlds and identities can be created anew. Consequently, it is the questioning of *space* both inside and outside of any given *place* that takes priority. Much in line with Butler's characteristic ambiguity, eccentricity and mobility are paramount for our new worlds. Far from *nowhere*, Jodahs and posthumanism is *now here*.

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